

# 23 Sep 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS1 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Delhi, Dhaka to boost maritime ties

##### Context:

Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh is on a visit to Dhaka where maritime and security issues would be discussed.

##### Details:

- The visit is intended to enhance the bilateral maritime relations.
- Top among the discussions is the proposal to bring Bangladesh into India's coastal radar chain network which several countries in the region have already joined.
- The issue of coastal radar chain network in Bangladesh will be discussed to fast-track it.
- As part of its foreign cooperation initiatives, the Navy already imparts extensive training to Bangladesh at all levels and also provides assistance in hydrography among others.
- As Dhaka looks to expand its domestic ship building industry, India has offered assistance in ship design.
- The Chittagong Dry Dock Limited is looking to build six frigates for which India has offered to build some under the \$500-million Line of Credit to boost 'Make in India' efforts and also assist in building some locally.
- This year the two Navies will hold their second coordinated patrol and then the first bilateral naval exercise.
- India will join Bangladesh to commemorate 100 years of 'Bangabandhu', the founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 2020.
- India will also join an International Fleet Review in 2021 to mark 50 years of the Liberation of Bangladesh.
  - Both sides are working on a proposal for a joint boat expedition with veterans from both sides to retrace the voyage of the Mukti Jodha from Khulna to Hoshangabad during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

While cooperation has expanded with high-level visits and engagements, issue of fishermen and Dhaka's expanding defence cooperation with China remain areas of concern for India.

### **India-Bangladesh Relations:**

- New Delhi's shift of regional focus toward the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) away from the defunct South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) complements its Act East policy, as well as its effort to contain Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean region and explore the potential of that ocean's rim region.
- Because of its location as a bridge between South and Southeast Asia, Bangladesh has been a linchpin to India's sub-regional initiatives such as BIMSTEC, the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal Initiative (BBIN) and the Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar initiative (BCIM).
- Bangladesh is bound by India to the north, east and west and this geographic reality makes it better connected to India in terms of rail, road, waterways, sea and air than any other neighbor.
- Bangladesh is India's largest trade partner in South Asia.
- Bilateral trade is expected to surge further once the countries work out infrastructural and duty-related issues.

To know more about **India-Bangladesh Relations**, check: <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/india-bangladesh-relations/>

## **C. GS3 Related**

### **Category: ECONOMY**

#### **1. Ahead of 'Howdy, Modi!', India struck big-ticket LNG deal**

##### **Context:**

Petronet, an Indian liquefied natural gas (LNG) importer, has decided to invest \$2.5 billion in American company Tellurian Inc., in an agreement that will give India access to up to five million tonnes of LNG a

year.

#### Details:

- The agreement is an updated version of what was inked in February 2019.
- Under the agreement, the finalised deal is due to be completed by March 31, 2020.
- The MoU in return gives India, the rights to up to 5 million tonnes of LNG per year over 40 years.
- At a meeting of the Prime Minister with the heads of 17 heads of energy companies, they pointed to certain systemic issues with the Indian market.
- Problems with arbitration and the dispute resolution mechanism in India were discussed.
- Some suggested Mr. Modi to consider a unified Ministry for all energy issues instead of separate Ministries for Petroleum and Natural Gas, coal and renewable energy to streamline processes.
- The CEOs lauded the government's efforts towards ease of doing business, steps taken towards deregulation in the energy sector.

#### What is the symbolic value of the agreement?

- Increasing natural gas use will enable India to fuel its impressive economic growth to achieve the goal of a \$5-trillion economy.
- It would contribute to a cleaner environment.
- The U.S officials opine that the agreement shows India's intent to become a major energy buyer for American companies.

“Howdy Modi” has been covered comprehensively in BYJU’S Comprehensive News Analysis dated 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019. Check: <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/upsc-exam-comprehensive-news-analysis-sep22-2019/>

### Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

#### 1. Cannabis high for Manipur’s start-up dream

##### Context:

The Manipur Chief Minister has announced the state government’s plan to legalise cannabis, or marijuana, to enable units of companies using it as an ingredient for medicines or for other industrial purposes to open.

##### Details:

- States such as Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have legalised cultivation and harvest of cannabis for medicinal purposes.
- Oil extracted from cannabis is known to be useful in strengthening nerves and treating people suffering from paralysis.
- Cannabis competes with opium across large swathes of land in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.
- Drug enforcement officials say the cannabis grown in remote areas of Manipur is considered the “best weed” across the country.
- It is also believed that the state government’s move will help boost its economy.

##### Medicinal benefits of Cannabis:

- Appetite stimulation in people suffering from HIV/AIDS.
- Helps in the reduction of cancer growth by reducing the migration of cancer cells in the body.

- The weed is effective in reducing neuropathic pain.
- It is believed to be effective for treating cases of chronic pain.

### Concerns in legalising Cannabis:

- Surveys by the NCB and some private agencies say much of the marijuana in Manipur has been cultivated for at least four decades.
- Agencies such as the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) destroy poppy cultivation but have a tough time checking cannabis grown on a large scale in interior areas.
- Many cannabis plantations are in areas controlled by extremist groups.
- Manipur is on the edge of the Golden Triangle of drug trade, comprising Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and China.

## Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### 1. 'Reuse of contaminated material biggest challenge'

#### Context:

The infamous garbage hills of Delhi at Okhla, Bhalswa and Ghazipur will be "biomined" in order to have them cleared.

#### What is biomining?

- Biomining is the process of using microorganisms (microbes) to extract metals of economic interest from rock ores or mine waste and other solid materials.
- Biomining techniques may also be used to clean up sites that have been polluted with metals.
- It is typically done using fungi or prokaryotes.
- Biomining is an appealing solution as it offers the option of progressive reduction in height of waste dumps and their eventual disappearance.
- A small part of the recovered material can be used for recycling or generating energy.
- It is presently used to yield about 5% of the world's gold and 20% of the world's copper.
- It is also used to a smaller extent to abstract nickel, zinc, cobalt and rare earth elements.

#### Challenges in carrying out the biomining exercise:

- The bulk of the segregated material produced by biomining that looks like soil and gravel, contain several contaminants which were present in the original waste.
- Even though the waste has undergone biodegradation as well as washing, over the years, contaminants are present.
- Reuse or disposal of the contaminated soil-like material is the biggest challenge.
- A study determines the presence of dangerous levels of toxicity in the leachate (dark-coloured liquid produced when water seeps through garbage) produced from such excavated and processed landfill material.
- The leachate has high soluble salts and elevated heavy metals in comparison to the local soil.
- The base of deep pits, created by mining in the past, is close to the groundwater table. The fractures and fissures in the base rock act like small conduits interconnected to the groundwater.
- Placing excavated and segregated soil-like material from landfills on the base of these pits, in close proximity of the water table, without polluting it, is a daunting task.
- Biomining is a slow process involving the use of rotating screens (trommels) to segregate the material.
  - A critical step relates to drying of the wet excavated waste by spreading and aeration (sun-

- drying) prior to screening, which is a natural process that takes time.
- Trommel screening of dry waste is desirable for good quality of segregation, but it produces dust.
- If the waste is not dried adequately, it forms lumps and clods which clog the screens of trommels.
- A fine balance is needed to prevent dust emissions or the entire operation has to be performed under a gigantic cover.
- Operations would be interrupted during the monsoon season.

#### Way forward:

- Specific guidelines need to be laid down for off-site application of segregated material, often referred to as 'secondary soil'.
- Certain varieties of trees could be planted over the site to absorb toxic material. However, the level of penetration of the roots into the soil and their ability to absorb heavy metals will have to be considered.
- Safeguards will also have to be kept in mind while dealing with biomining exercises.
- Liner systems, cover systems and leachate collection systems must be implemented in order to avoid contamination of groundwater and the subsoil.
- Several trommel screening plants could be concurrently used to speed up the drying process if adequate land area is available.

## D. GS4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

#### 1. The nationalist hindrance to climate actions

##### Context:

United Nations is hosting the Climate Action Summit 2019 in New York. It seeks to spur national pledges and action to address climate change in the face of mounting information that the community of nations is doing too little, and too late.

##### Concerns:

- The summit occurs amid a steady drumroll of scientific alarm.
- The scientific advisory group to the summit, reports that:
  - The five years since 2015 is set to be the warmest of any equivalent recorded period.
  - Sea level rise is accelerating.
  - Oceans have become 26% more acidic since the dawn of the Industrial era.
- Recent weather events bring into focus the likely implications of a warming world.
  - This summer saw Delhi-like temperatures across southern Europe.
  - Hurricane Dorian rendered large parts of the Bahamas unliveable.
  - The world witnessed simultaneous raging fires in the Amazon, central Africa and even Siberia.
- Scientists are increasingly able to link these individual events with climate change — the heatwave

in France and Germany was made eight to 10 times more likely by climate change.

- Yet, concentrations of carbon dioxide continue to rise, and current country pledges would not be able to stem this increase even by 2030.
- A number of small and mid-sized countries have already committed to achieving the objective of making their economies net carbon neutral by 2050.
- By contrast, several large countries, notably the United States, Brazil, Australia, Canada, Japan and Mexico are reportedly not even going to participate in the event at a high level.
- China and India have issued statements hinting that they are doing quite enough, and India has highlighted the need for enhanced finance if it is to do more.

#### **Details:**

- The growing evidence of climate change, scientific and experiential, has spurred an upwelling of social action, notably among the youth.
- While more noticeable in the global North, young people are also mobilising in India and other countries in the global South.
- It was reported that organisers estimate four million youth turned out in protest (on Friday) against inaction on climate change around the world.

Read more about the Fridays for Future movement covered in Comprehensive News Analysis on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September. Check: <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/upsc-exam-comprehensive-news-analysis-sep21-2019/>

#### **How is political disconnect affecting the global initiatives against climate change?**

- Unfortunately, national politics in country after country is trending in the wrong direction.
- A turn toward nationalism in multiple countries has created a short-term, look-out-for-our-own mentality that is harmful to the global collective action needed to address climate change.
  - In the United States, President Donald Trump not only refuses to enhance actions, he has actively rolled back measures in the electricity sector and actions to limit methane emissions in the name of competitiveness.
  - In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro has made it clear he sees environmental protections as limiting Brazilian business.
- And nationalism in some countries makes it harder to pursue aggressive action even in countries where the politics is more conducive.

#### **How can the UN Summit swing the tide of global movements towards enhanced action?**

- In an exercise of diplomatic pressure, countries have been urged to enhance their pledges for action made as part of the Paris Agreement, committing to lower future emissions.
- The second track seeks to induce changes in real economies around a set of 'action portfolios'. Domestic objectives are central to these conversations. If the UN Summit is to result in enhanced action, this is believed to be the more fruitful track.
- These include, for example:
  - Furthering and accelerating an energy transition toward low-carbon energy
  - Making cities more climate-friendly and more resilient to climate disruption
  - Starting the process of turning energy-intensive sectors such as steel and cement more carbon friendly.
  - Promoting solar energy for energy security reasons.
  - Making cities more liveable and making industries more efficient and therefore competitive.
- These initiatives serve as a focal point for broader conversations including coalitions of business and researchers.

## A path for India:

- Considering that India is a deeply vulnerable country to climate impacts. The prospects of effective global action required to address climate change are so weak is extremely bad news for India.
- It would be wise for India not to be a status quo player in this context, but to argue for enhanced global collective action.
- India has the potential to show the pathway to accelerating action on climate change even while pursuing its development interests. A notable example is its energy efficiency track record, which helps limit greenhouse gases even while saving the nation energy.
- However, there are inconsistencies in India's story as a climate champion.
- Recent developments risks signalling that India sees its energy independence as tied to enhanced fossil fuel use.
- India needs domestic energy policies that are more clearly and coherently tuned to a future low carbon world.

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. India's opportunity at the UN

#### Context:

India's Prime Minister is set to address the UN General Assembly on September 27, 2019. It is for the first time in some years that India is in the cross hairs of some segments of the international community owing to its decision to dilute Article 370 in August 2019.

#### Concerns:

- While governments around the world have largely remained quiet, some influential voices have harshly criticized New Delhi's decision.
- It has been a long time since there was so much negative noise about India in Washington.

#### An opportunity to India to push back against growing threats to its image:

- The annual UNGA meetings offer the Indian government an opportunity to regain its footing in the court of international public opinion.
- India needs to clearly acknowledge the international community's concerns about human rights in Kashmir.
- India must also throw light upon its robust efforts to tackle the global development challenges that attract considerable concern in the UN and beyond, issues such as health, sanitation, and climate change.
- India must underscore its bona fides as a rising and responsible global power, in contrast to what are perceived by some overseas observers as irresponsible actions in Kashmir.
- By homing in on India's track record in tackling challenges that affect nearly every nation, the PM can project India as a willing and able global partner.

#### Conclusion:

Indeed, one UNGA address would not eliminate the critical global narratives about India that have emerged since August 5, 2019. So long as the Kashmir lockdown remains in place, and likely after it's lifted as well, those narratives will be present. However, this is an opportunity that would be a pity to miss.

## 1. Seeking to secure: on linking Aadhaar-GST registration

### Context:

- The GST Council has decided in principle to recommend linking Aadhaar with registration of taxpayers.
- Besides, verification of the unique identification number (Aadhaar) would be compulsory for new dealers from January 2020 to curb malpractices in paying Goods and Services Tax.
- The council also took an in principle decision to prescribe reasonable restrictions on passing of credit by risky taxpayers in order to tackle the menace of fake invoices and fraudulent refunds.

### Issues:

- Ever since Goods and Services Tax (GST) was adopted, the federal council that is tasked with overseeing all the regulatory aspects of the indirect tax has had its hands full.
- The GST Council has had the onerous task of laying out the policy framework for administering the tax in a manner that benefits all stakeholders – the governments, the consumers and the suppliers along the value chain.
- It has become an enduring challenge to ensure optimal outcomes, with the complexity of the legacy taxes that GST subsumed and replaced.
- Revenue that should have accrued to the Centre and the States has leaked while allowing these elements to derive illicit profits.
- It has been noticed that a large number of fly-by-night operators are registering themselves as GST dealers and are also making fake invoices.
- There are significant concerns relating to the loopholes that unscrupulous operators have sought to exploit.

### Details:

- Against the backdrop of frauds totalling up to a staggering ₹45,682 crore being detected since the roll-out of the tax in July 2017, the GST Council has decided in principle to recommend linking Aadhaar with registration of taxpayers.
- In its (recent) 37th meeting the GST council also agreed to appraise the possibility of making the Aadhaar mandatory for claiming refunds.
- The GST Network has already made it mandatory for new dealers registering under the composition scheme for small businesses to either authenticate their Aadhaar or submit to physical verification of their business, from January 2020.

### Conclusion:

In the present state of the Indian economy, neither the Centre nor States can afford to forego even a rupee of revenue that is due to the public coffers. The GST council needs to follow the GST network's lead and move swiftly to recommend mandatory linking for refunds especially since that has proved to be the main source of most frauds.

## F. Tidbits

### 1. New research at Nalanda varsity to raise farmers' income

- A new research entitled "Aquifer Storage & Recovery for Sustainable Agriculture" (ASRA) is being



carried out by the School of Ecology and Environment Studies to create a model of “Aquifer Storage and Recovery” (ASR) technology using floodwaters.

- It is aimed at providing an opportunity to farmers to raise their income.
- The research is being undertaken with support from the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research.
- The model aims to help farmers of south Bihar to raise their income through agriculture and allied activities with the help of assured irrigation from reuse of water stored beneath the surface during episodes of high rainfall, run-offs and waterlogging.
- ASRA research will reveal if there is a net recharge of aquifers and if there is a positive impact on the natural water systems related to underground aquifers.
- The university research is focussed on converging water solutions that primarily address the irrigation needs of an agrarian community.
- It could also provide drinking water security with appropriate safeguards.
- The project would also deliver a comprehensive aquifer map for recharge and estimation of the potential injection of surface water into the selected aquifer.

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. Endosulfan

- Endosulfan is an organochlorine insecticide and acaricide that is being phased out globally due to its acute toxicity.
- In 2011, the Stockholm Convention initiated a global ban on the manufacture and use of this chemical because of its threats to the environment and human health.
- It is highly toxic and has a large potential for bioaccumulation. It is also an endocrine disruptor.
- Endosulfan pesticide was used widely on crops like cashew, cotton, tea, paddy, fruits and others until 2011, when the Supreme Court banned its production and distribution.
- The health effects of the chemical include neurotoxicity, late sexual maturity, physical deformities, poisoning, among others.
- People, especially newborns, have suffered deformities, health complications and loss of family members due to exposure to the agrochemical.

The endosulfan tragedy which occurred in Kasaragod district of Kerala is considered as one of the worst pesticide disasters to happen to a region and its people.

For more about **Endosulfan, its negative effects on health and its ban in India**, check <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/endosulfan/>

### 2. Naga Chilli

- Naga Chilli (*Capsicum chinense*) also known as King Chilli, is more popular as Bhot Jolokia.
- It derives its name from the popular belief that it originated in the hills of Bhutan.
- The Guinness Book of World Records had in 2007 named it as the hottest chilli but lost its position first to a U.K. variety called Infinity and then the U.S. developed Carolina Reaper.
- The chilli has now been used by a Naga panchakarma specialist in India for an acupuncture theory.
  - Panchakarma, entailing five procedures, is the purification therapy used in Ayurvedic medicine.
- The higher degree of pungency compared to the traditional mix, is believed to make the nutrients penetrate deeper to particular tissues that need to be stimulated for pain relief.
- Traditionally naga chillies are used for treating asthma, gastro-intestinal abnormalities, toothache, muscle pain, arthritis, etc.

### 3. Asian Elephant

- The Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), also called Asiatic elephant, is the only living species of the genus *Elephas*.
- It is distributed throughout the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, from India in the west, Nepal in the north, Sumatra in the south, and to Borneo in the east.
- It has been classified as “Endangered” in the IUCN Red List.
- Asian Elephant Alliance is an umbrella initiative by five NGOs, has come together to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.
- Elephant corridors are narrow strips of land that connect two large habitats of elephants.

### 4. WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

- The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is the world's first public health treaty enacted under the World Health Organization (WHO).
- It is the biggest global initiative in tobacco control.
- The WHO FCTC was developed by countries in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic. It aims to tackle some of the causes of that epidemic, including complex factors with cross-border effects, such as trade liberalization and direct foreign investment, tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship beyond national borders, and illicit trade in tobacco products.
- WHO-FCTC provides for various measures to reduce the demand as well as the supply of tobacco.
- India is a signatory to this treaty since 2004.
- India played a leading role in FCTC negotiations to finalize its provisions and was the regional coordinator for the South- East Asian countries.

### 5. Side Pocketing

- Side pocketing is a procedure introduced by SEBI allowing Asset Management Companies to separate out a section of their portfolio corresponding to the bad debt held by them.
- Investors receive units in the segregated portfolio and these units are held separately.
- When a scheme side-pockets a doubtful bond, any recovery from the bond is distributed to all investors who were invested in the scheme when the downgrade happened.
- Investors who got into a scheme after the downgrade, get to buy only into the main portfolio excluding the doubtful bond.
- SEBI rules allow debt funds to side-pocket only those bonds that are downgraded below investment grade by rating agencies.
- SEBI has not made side-pocketing compulsory for all bonds that turn non-investment grade. This decision is left to the discretion of the AMC and its trustees.

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. “Khan Quest” is a bilateral exercise between India and Mongolia.
2. It is an annual exercise organised for sharing of practices for multinational peacekeeping operations.

Which of the given statement/s is/are NOT correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

“Khaan Quest” originally began as a joint exercise between the Mongolian Armed Forces and the U.S. Pacific Command. It became an international military exercise in 2006. The international exercise “Khan Quest” was initially started in 2003 by the United States and Mongolia. At present, India also participates in “Khan Quest”, besides “Nomadic Elephant” which is a bilateral exercise between the two countries. It brings together over a dozen foreign militaries to engage in the sharing of practices for multinational peacekeeping operations. In the exercise, personnel gain United Nations peacekeeper training as well as certification for support of peacekeeping operations. India and Mongolia at carry out regular bilateral military exercise named “Nomadic Elephant” since the year 2004.

**Q2. Consider the following statements:**

1. Fiscal Deficit is the sum of budgetary deficit and net increase in internal and external borrowings.
2. It is an indication of the total borrowings needed by the government.
3. Fiscal responsibility and Budget Management Act concerns both Fiscal and Revenue deficit.

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

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

Fiscal Deficit = Budgetary Deficit + Borrowings and Other Liabilities of the government. The difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government is termed as fiscal deficit. It is an indication of the total borrowings needed by the government. The fiscal deficit is the primary deficit plus interest payments on the debt. Fiscal responsibility and Budget Management Act concerns both Fiscal and Revenue deficit.

**Q3. Which of the following countries border the Caspian Sea?**

1. Iran
2. Azerbaijan
3. Russia
4. Kazakhstan
5. Uzbekistan

Options:

- a. 1, 2 and 4
- b. 1, 2, 4 and 5
- c. 1, 2, 3 and 4
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

The Caspian Sea is bordered in the northeast by Kazakhstan, in the southeast by Turkmenistan, in the south by Iran, in the southwest by Azerbaijan, and in the northwest by Russia.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. GST Council is a statutory body for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to Goods and Service Tax.
2. The GST Council will suo moto notify the rate of tax to be levied under the Central Goods and Services Tax Act.

Which of the given statement/s is/are NOT correct?

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is governed by the GST Council – a constitutional body. Article 279 (1) of the amended Indian Constitution states that the GST Council has to be constituted by the President within 60 days of the commencement of the Article 279A. In the GST Council, the Centre would have 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the voting strength and the remaining 2/3<sup>rd</sup> voting strength vests with the states. Central Government will notify the rate of tax to be levied under the Central Goods and Services Tax Act as per the recommendations of the GST Council.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. At a time when India is going through an economic slowdown, discuss the need for a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) or a similar independent fiscal institution. What are the challenges associated with the establishment of such an institution? (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. What is bio-mining? Examine its application in solid waste management and associated challenges. (15 Marks, 250 Words).

