18 Oct 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Britain clinches Brexit deal with EU

Context:

Britain has secured a Brexit deal with the European Union, more than three years after Britons voted to leave the bloc.

What next?

- EU endorsed the deal soon after it was announced.
- Prime Minister Boris Johnson must still win a knife-edge vote in Parliament in an extraordinary session to get the agreement approved.
Details:

- Under the deal, the whole of the U.K. will leave the EU but Northern Ireland will stay in the EU’s single market for goods.
- The U.K. can impose tariffs on goods entering Northern Ireland from third countries as long as they are not at the risk of entering the EU single market.
- For the goods that are at risk of entering the single market from third countries via Northern Island, tariffs will be applied.
- Practically, there will be a customs border between Great Britain and the island of Ireland, with goods being checked at Northern Irish ports.

What are the issues?

- The Northern Irish party that Mr. Johnson needs to help ratify any agreement, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), has refused to support it, saying it is not in Northern Ireland’s interests.
- The conundrum is how to prevent the frontier becoming a backdoor into the EU’s single market without erecting checkpoints that could weaken the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.
- The agreement will keep Northern Ireland in the U.K. customs area, but tariffs will apply to goods crossing from mainland Britain to Northern Ireland if they are headed to Ireland and into the bloc’s single market.
- The agreement scraps the “backstop”, a mechanism envisaged earlier to prevent a hard border being introduced on the island of Ireland, and would have bound Britain to some EU rules.

What is Good Friday agreement?

- The Belfast Agreement or the Good Friday Agreement was a major political development in the Northern Ireland peace process of the 1990s and has provided Northern Ireland’s divided society with a political framework to resolve its differences.
- The agreement ended decades of conflict in the province.
- Northern Ireland’s present devolved system of government is based on the Agreement which has created a number of institutions between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Conclusion:

- The British parliament defeated similar deals struck by Johnson’s predecessor, three times.
- With the Conservatives’ ally Democratic Unionist Party as well as the opposition Labour refusing to support the deal, its passage is in doubt.
- The possible outcomes still range from an orderly departure to a chaotic exit or even another referendum that could reverse the entire endeavour.

2. FATF may keep Pak. on grey list

Context:

Pakistan could escape being blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), but the international watchdog on terror finance is likely to issue strong warnings to it and keeping the country on the grey list.

Details:

- In the period under review, Pakistan registered 228 TF cases and convicted 58 individuals.
- The latest mutual evaluation report by the Asia Pacific Group (APG) on CFT and AML released on October 14, 2019 assigned a national risk-rating of ‘medium’ to Pakistan.
The report said that since February 2018, Pakistan had taken positive actions against these organisations “but UNSCR 1267 is not being fully implemented”. Pakistan is expected to be kept under significant and sustained” pressure to deliver on the 27-point action plan by February 2020, when the next plenary session will be held.

Why Pakistan may avoid Blacklisting?

- Three votes are mandatory for any country to escape the blacklisting.
- Pakistan is relying on support from China, Turkey and Malaysia.
- China is presiding over the ongoing FATF plenary in France.

FATF:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 by the Ministers of its Member jurisdictions. It is headquartered in Paris.
- The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- It is the global standard-setting body for anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT).
- In order to protect the international financial system from money laundering and financing of terrorism (ML/FT) risks and to encourage greater compliance with the AML/CFT standards, the FATF identifies jurisdictions that have strategic deficiencies and works with them to address those deficiencies that pose a risk to the international financial system.
- Jurisdiction subject to a FATF call on its members and other jurisdictions to apply counter-measures to protect the international financial system from the ongoing and substantial money laundering and financing of terrorism risks.

What does getting black listed mean?

- The FATF blacklist means the country concerned is “non-cooperative” in the global fight against money laundering and terrorist financing.
- A black-list would mean enhanced financial scrutiny of its government, possible sanctions against its central bank, and a downgrade of its financial and credit institutions.
- If blacklisted, Islamabad faces financial consequences and economic setbacks at a time when its economy is facing a balance of payment crisis.
- If Pakistan does avert blacklisting it will be just a temporary relief until the FATF meets again in February 2020.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Legislative Council abolished in J&K

Context:

Ahead of the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories, the 62-year-old state legislative council came to an end with the state administration issuing orders for its abolition.

Background:

- The 36-member state council was established in 1957 after an act was passed by the Parliament.
- These legislations created a bicameral legislature for J&K.
The council functioned as an upper house for the state assembly.

The Centre had on August 5, 2019 abrogated the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir for residency and government jobs.

Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, which was passed in August revoked the special status granted to J&K and bifurcated the state into two Union territories of J&K and Ladakh.

Details:

- Jammu and Kashmir will be a union territory with a state assembly.
- Consequent to the abolition of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council in terms of Section 57 of Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019, it is ordered that all the staff of the state legislative council shall report to the general department.

Read more about the State Legislature. [Click here](https://byjus.com).

**Category: HEALTH**

**1. TB cases see decrease in India**

**Context:**


**Global Tuberculosis (TB) Report:**

- The report provides a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of the TB epidemic and progress in the response at global, regional and country levels for India.
- It also features data on disease trends and the response to the epidemic in 202 countries and territories.
- This includes trends in TB incidence and mortality, data on case detection and treatment results for TB, multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), TB/HIV, TB prevention, universal health coverage as well as financing

**Details:**

- The tuberculosis incidence rate in India has decreased by almost 50,000 patients over the past one year, according to the Report.
- The treatment success rate has increased to 81% for new and relapse cases (drug-sensitive) in 2017, which was 69% in 2016.
- In India, of the estimated 2.69 million TB cases emerging in 2018, 2.15 million were reported to the Government of India — leaving a gap of 5,40,000 patients who are going unreported.
- The India TB Report 2019 notes that India is closest ever to covering all TB cases through the online notification system (NIKSHAY).

**Conclusion:**

According to experts, TB remains the top infectious killer in the world claiming over 4,000 lives a day. This report presents progress towards targets set at the first-ever United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on TB in 2018, that brought together heads of state, as well as the targets of the WHO End TB Strategy and Sustainable Development Goals.
What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

- The Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacterium causes TB.
- It is spread through the air when a person with TB (whose lungs are affected) coughs, sneezes, spits, laughs or talks.
- Since antibiotics began to be used to fight TB, some strains have become resistant to drugs.
- Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) arises when an antibiotic fails to kill all of the bacteria that it targets, with the surviving bacteria developing resistance to that antibiotic and often others at the same time.

What are the key challenges being faced by the government in its quest to restrict the spread of TB?

- There is no initial categorization of patients. The Category of TB that a patient is suffering from is not checked in the beginning and the first-line treatment is given which is useless for MDR cases thereby worsening the situation.
- TB treatment should be on a daily basis however alternate day treatment leaves the programme ineffective.
- There is poor monitoring of the fact whether the patient is regularly taking the doses or not. This is often wrongly reported.
- Actual number of cases reported in the National Register for TB is far less than the number of patients actually affected and hence the disease, being contagious, keeps on spreading.
- Demand and supply gap of the drugs is quite wide. Specific drugs are rather expensive, especially for the rural masses. There is lack of research and research-related funding towards patient-specific drugs.
- The TB Programme continues to face the challenge of under-reporting of cases from the private sector, which caters to a majority of cases.
- There is a poor sense of awareness and responsibility on the patient’s part to complete the TB course.

Nikshay:

- A web-based application called ‘Nikshay’ was launched in 2012 to help providers notify cases to the authorities.
- Doctors need to download the app. The data of the patients entered in the app will be linked to a server in CTD. This will help avoid its duplication.
- Apart from web-based technology, SMS services have been used effectively for communication with patients and monitoring the programme on a day-to-day basis.
- It has been developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC).

C. GS3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!
1. The secondary monsoon: On rainfall behaviour

**Context**

- The Southwest monsoon finally commenced its withdrawal. With this, the **2019 monsoon has remained the longest season ever**, with the retreat being termed as the most delayed one to commence over India.

**Southwest and Northeast Monsoon in India**

- The **NE monsoon rains** contribute about 20% of India’s annual rainfall and span October to December.
- The **Southwest Monsoon** has been studied for centuries. It has well-established correlations — for instance, temperatures in the Central Pacific, or land surface air temperature in north-western Europe — between them as well as the quantity and distribution of monsoon rainfall, **no such determining parameters exist for the NE monsoon**.

**What prompts the withdrawal of the monsoon every year?**

- Normally, the monsoon withdrawal begins from extreme northwest parts of the country, covering Rajasthan and Punjab, around September 1 and reaches central India states such as Maharashtra by October 1, with the changeover from **cyclonic to anticyclonic conditions**.
  - This change is caused by the Earth's rotation and the relative position of the Sun.
- The withdrawal of the monsoon begins with the **development of a high-pressure area over northwest India**.
  - **High-Pressure Zones** represent settled weather and low wind movement, whereas intense **Low-Pressure Zones** attract moisture-bearing winds and therefore host weather disturbances like rains, thunderstorms or lightning.
  - This year (2019), the presence of **multiple low-pressure weather systems over the subcontinent, especially northern and western India**, prevented the timely formation of high pressure (i.e. anticyclonic) conditions essential for the rains' withdrawal.
- The weather agency **declares monsoon withdrawal generally when an anticyclonic circulation** is formed over northwest India with significant reduction in the moisture levels over the region and a reduction in rainfall over the region for at least five consecutive days.
- However, this year(2019), the withdrawal was highly delayed owing to the **monsoon getting re-activated and both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal pumping-in moisture** to the mainland.
  - Though, the withdrawal features seemed to appear from time-to-time, none persisted long enough.
  - Besides, **very severe cyclonic storm, Hikka** too, was formed in the Arabian Sea towards the fag end of the season which contributed to moisture incursion over Kutch, Saurashtra and Maharashtra.
    - Though the system moved towards Oman, it caused rainfall over the north-western areas during September in the initial days of its formation, off Gujarat coast.
  - Another **cyclonic circulation, that originated in the Bay of Bengal**, caused widespread rainfall over Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

**Similar incidents in the past**

- The most delayed withdrawal in the past years has been recorded in 1961 [1st October 1961],
followed by 30th September in 2007.

Stats

- **Monsoon rains in south India have been 15% above normal.**
  - In Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where the Central Water Commission monitors over 30 reservoirs, their water levels were 44.2 billion cubic metres, or 84% of their total live capacity, and **much higher than the 10-year average of 66%.**
- According to the IMD, **North and Western Indian states** have collectively received 160% excess rainfall in the period from October 1 to October 6, 2019.
- In **Rajasthan alone**, the excess rain has been over 4 times the normal. This is indicative of the lingering low-pressure that has delayed the monsoon's withdrawal.

This means that excessive rains could contribute to the saga of urban inundation.

**Irregularity in monsoon and lack of fixed model**

- Among the signatures of **Global Warming** is intense rainfall being concentrated over short spells and pockets and long periods of drought.
- The **El Niño phenomenon**, which has been linked to the abnormal warming of the equatorial waters off the central and eastern Pacific, has been connected with the failure of the **southwest monsoon**.
  - However, researchers over the years have noted that this had an **opposite effect on the NE monsoon** leading to more voluminous showers in the winter and particularly over South India.
- This summer, the IMD, along with other meteorological agencies around the world, bet that **monsoon rains would be on the lower side due to the possible emergence of an El Niño**.
  - Even after the threat of El Niño had waned, it didn’t indicate that rains would be torrential in August and September.
  - Conditions in the Indian Ocean turned favourable and led to excessive monsoon activity in 2019.
- This shows that there is a **paucity in understanding the behaviour of the Indian Ocean** and its influence on the monsoons.
- India is moving to a system where **Dynamical Models** that run on powerful computers will become the mainstay of monsoon forecasting.
  - However, these too are **heavily reliant on the behaviour of the Pacific Ocean and El Niño-related swings**.

**Way forward**

- India needs to **step up research to improve the performance of these models**.
- With climate change set to inescapably alter the ocean temperatures around the Indian neighbourhood, giving more **importance to understanding the vagaries** of the NE monsoon ought to be among India’s key prongs to adapting to climate change.

**Category: ECONOMY**

1. **What can India do to overcome the global slowdown?**

**Introduction**

Read it under the Topic: 1. Economic Slowdown
The IMF expects global economic growth to be just 3% this year, the lowest since the 2008 global financial crisis.

Unlike in 2008, when India was insulated from a global economic meltdown, the economy now is on the ebb, with growth in the first quarter of 2019-20 hitting a six-year low of 5% and growth projections being slashed by agencies for the rest of FY20.

Reasons for Slowdown

- The latest IMF World Economic Outlook says there is a synchronised global economic slowdown. The trigger was probably the trade slowdown.
- Recently, the WTO also indicated that world trade growth would be 1.2%, down from 3%.
- So, a very anaemic or even a flat growth rate in trade is pulling down the economy. And because this is the age of global integration, all economies get affected.
  - As the Indian economy has gradually opened up since 1991, the global economic situation has had spillovers in India.
  - Between 2003 and 2008, the Indian economy was averaging between 8% and 9% growth. After the collapse of Lehman Brothers, it came down to 6.2%, but we were very solid.
  - There is always a spillover of global headwinds on the Indian economy.
- The trigger also lies in the protectionist tendencies of world economies and the U.S.-China trade war.
- India is also affected by this and other domestic issues.
  - The demand for capital goods is down, as is car sales.
  - Real estate is in trouble. The flow of credit to some of these sectors, which were an important determinant of sales, has been affected.
  - This has resulted in a spillover in the rest of the economy.

What reforms can India pursue at this stage to align its manufacturing and trading activity with global demand patterns and protect itself from the world’s growth pangs?

- There is a slump in demand. The Govt should look at fiscal stimulus as Public investment is very critical.
- Then there should be some kind of social spending which affects people in need with a high propensity to consume. Any cash reaching the poor will find its way into the market quickly.
  - The reduction of corporate tax will have only have a medium-term impact.
  - In the short term, we need to get the money in the hands of the poor which pushes them to the market so aggregate demand gets generated and, in the process, we also address the inequalities in recent times.
- India need’s to tap the Asian markets. In that context, the RCEP [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership] is an important initiative.
  - It gives us a possibility to integrate the Indian economy and production with the value chains in east-Asian countries.
  - Indian industry has grown with the comfort of having a large domestic market. We need to nudge industry to look at global and regional markets, especially for labour-intensive goods.
  - We need to avoid the appreciation of the rupee if we are to strengthen the domestic manufacturing industry. Any appreciation of the rupee facilitates more imports and less exports, adversely affecting domestic production.
- Going forward we need to increase domestic finance and improve governance mechanisms.

2. Vital additions to empirical research
This issue is covered under the Topic: 1. Economics Nobel for Abhijit (Economics of poverty)

CNA dated 15 Oct, 2019

F. Tidbits

1. Turkey agrees with U.S. to pause Syria assault while Kurds withdraw

- S. Vice-President Mike Pence has announced that Turkey has agreed to a ceasefire to allow the Kurdish forces it was battling to safely withdraw from an area in northern Syria.
- However, the agreement essentially gives the Turks what they had sought to achieve with their military operation in the first place, removal of the Kurdish forces from the border “safe zone.”
- After the Kurdish forces are cleared from the safe zone, Turkey has committed to a permanent ceasefire but is under no obligation to withdraw troops.
- In addition, the deal gives Turkey relief from sanctions the administration had imposed.

The Issue has been covered in 10th October Comprehensive News Analysis. Click here to read.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Saharan silver ant

- The Saharan silver ant is declared the world’s fastest ant.
- It is the fastest of the world’s 12,000 known ant species, covering a 855 millimetres — nearly a metre — per second.
- The ant is six-legged and covers 108 times its own body length per second.
- The ants are outpaced only by a few invertebrates: The Australian tiger beetle and the California coastal mite.
- The Saharan silver hits top speed racing at midday across desert sands that reach 60°C.
- The ants’ super speed is likely one of their adaptations to life in the harsh desert, allowing them to go about their business quickly before getting roasted in temperatures.
- At top speed, the Saharan silver easily outpaces its nearest ant competitor Cataglyphis fortis — despite having significantly shorter legs.

2. Army gets precision ammunition

- 155-mm Excalibur precision-guided ammunition acquired under the fast track procedure from the U.S., have recently been inducted into the army.
- The Excalibur ammunition gives the artillery guns extended range and the ability to hit targets with very high accuracy.
- It can be fired over extended ranges.
- The Excalibur projectile is developed by Raytheon and BAE Systems Bofors.
- After a gap of three decades, the Army inducted its first modern artillery guns in November 2018: M-777 Ultra-Light Howitzers (ULHs) from the U.S. and K9 Vajra-T self-propelled guns from South Korea.
- The Army has the older battle-proven Bofors 155-mm guns in service, and is inducting the 155-mm Dhanush towed gun.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Rashtriya Gokul Mission:

https://byjus.com
1. Rashtriya Gokul Mission aims to conserve and develop indigenous breeds of cattle.
2. It is a component of the National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development (NPBBDD).

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

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

The “Rashtriya Gokul Mission” aims to conserve and develop indigenous breeds in a focused and scientific manner. The Mission is implemented with the objectives to: a) development and conservation of indigenous breeds b) undertake breed improvement programme for indigenous cattle breeds so as to improve the genetic makeup and increase the stock; c) enhance milk production and productivity; d) upgrade nondescript cattle using elite indigenous breeds like Gir, Sahiwal, Rathi, Deoni, Tharparkar, Red Sindhi and e) distribute disease free high genetic merit bulls for natural service. The NPBBDD was formulated by merging four ongoing schemes of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries in the dairy sector. Rashtriya Gokul Mission is one of its components.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Global Hunger Index:

1. The component indicators of Global Hunger Index are undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, child mortality.
2. It is published annually by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

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

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool that measures and tracks hunger globally, by region, and by country. Created in 2006, the GHI was initially published by the US based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Germany based Welthungerhilfe. In 2007, the Irish NGO Concern Worldwide also became a co-publisher. 2018 onwards, the GHI is a joint project of Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide, with IFPRI stepping aside from its involvement in the report.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Tulagi Island is a part of the Soloman Islands.
2. It lies in the South Pacific, directly between Australia and the U.S.
Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

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

**Answer:** c

**Explanation:**

Tulagi is an island within the Solomon Islands, which are located in the South Pacific, directly between Australia and the U.S. It is about two square kilometres (0.8 square miles) with a population of 1,200. It is the site of a former Japanese naval base and was the scene of fighting in World War II.

**Q4. Which of the following are Zoonotic diseases?**

1. Zoonosis can be caused by virus, fungi or parasites but not by bacteria.  
2. Both Dengue and Ebola are Zoonotic diseases.

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

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

**Answer:** a

**Explanation:**

Zoonosis is another name for a zoonotic disease. Zoonosis can be caused by a virus, parasite, bacteria or fungi. This type of disease passes from an animal or insect to a human. Malaria, Ebola and Dengue are all zoonotic diseases.

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### I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Explain the phenomenon of retreating monsoon in India. Why is retreating monsoon, if delayed – a cause of concern? (15 Marks, 250 Words)

2. The latest IMF World Economic Outlook says there is a synchronised global economic slowdown. What reforms can India pursue at this stage to align its manufacturing and trading activity with global demand patterns and protect itself from the world’s growth pangs? (15 Marks, 250 Words)