

13 Dec 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. [SC forms panel to probe killing of Telangana rape-murder accused](#)

Context:

The Supreme Court has set up an inquiry commission led by its former judge, Justice V.S. Sirpurkar, to probe the circumstances of the police 'encounter' killing of four persons accused in the gang-rape and murder of a veterinarian in Hyderabad.

The issue has been covered in the 7th December 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis, under the editorials segment. [Click here](#) to read.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. SC, ST quota in Parliament extended

Context:

Parliament has passed a Constitutional amendment giving a 10-year extension to reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies and ending the provision for the nomination of two Anglo-Indians.

Details:

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Amendment) Bill, 2019, was passed unanimously by the Rajya Sabha, two days after it was passed by the Lok Sabha.
- The Bill extended the reservation for SCs and STs in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, which was due to end on January 25, 2020, for 10 years, the seventh such 10-year extension given since the Constitution was enacted in 1950.
- The Bill also ended the provision for the nomination of Anglo-Indians.

The issue has been covered in the 10th December 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

2. Anti-CAB protests rage through Assam

For an in-depth understanding of the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019, [Click here](#).

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Will pay GST compensation to States: FM

Context:

With States not being paid compensation for loss of revenue due to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) implementation since August 2019, Finance Minister has assured that the Centre would honour its commitment.

Background:

- The GST Act promises states enough compensation from the Centre to keep their annual revenue growth 14% for five years despite any likely loss due to the implementation of the indirect tax regime.
- Most prevalent indirect taxes were subsumed by the new GST structure, which came into effect on July 1, 2017, and states are eligible for the compensation till 2021-22.

Issue:

- A few states demanded the release of the Goods and Services Tax compensation due to the states

from the Centre, following the Central government's delay in releasing GST compensation.

- The states raised the opinion that the Centre should raise the cess, if needed, to compensate the States and continue to compensate the States for the funds' shortfall incurred on introducing GST.
- The Centre then wrote to all States voicing concern that due to the lower Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections, the compensation cess might not be enough to pay for losses arising out of the tax system.

The topic has been covered in the 9th December 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

2. CAG hints at massive diversion of LPG

Issue:

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, in a report on the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), has highlighted the risk of diversion of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial use, as 1.98 lakh beneficiaries had an average annual consumption of more than 12 cylinders.

- The CAG said this level of consumption seemed improbable in view of the BPL (below poverty line) status of such beneficiaries.
- It also exposed a mismatch in the names of 12.46 lakh beneficiaries between the PMUY database and SECC-2011 data.
- The audit also highlighted the delay of more than 365 days in the installation of 4.35 lakh connections against the stipulated time period of seven days.

Details:

- The scheme was launched to safeguard the health of women and children by providing them with clean cooking fuel. Its target was revised to eight crore LPG connections.
- As on 31 March 2019, the oil marketing companies had issued 7.19 crore connections, which is about 90% of the target to be achieved till March 2020.
- To rule out existing LPG connections in beneficiaries' household, de-duplication was to be carried out based on Aadhaar of all family members.

Read more about [Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana](#).

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Bougainville- Nation #194?

- Bougainville Island is the main island of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville of Papua New Guinea.
- It is named after French colonizer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, a scientist who undertook sea voyages, particularly to the Pacific in 1776, to colonise new territories for France.



What is the Bougainville referendum about?

- Between 1988 and 1998, political factions in Bougainville were involved in an armed conflict with the government of Papua New Guinea, in an attempt to force Papua New Guinea to divest control of the resource-rich island.
- This historic referendum is a result of one of the three provisions of the **Bougainville Peace Agreement, signed in 2001** and enacted through an amendment of the Papua New Guinea Constitution, the other two provisions being weapons disposal and autonomy.
- The peace agreement of 2001 brought an end to the violent conflict between the people of Bougainville and the government of Papua New Guinea.
- Voters in Bougainville had the option of choosing between ‘greater autonomy’—a greater degree of autonomy than current arrangements within the framework of the Papua New Guinea Constitution—or independence for Bougainville from Papua New Guinea.
- However, the referendum is not binding and would still have to be passed by the Government and the Parliament of Papua New Guinea, in consultation with the Autonomous Bougainville Government, before a final decision is made.

Why does Bougainville want complete independence from Papua New Guinea?

- There has subsequently been dissatisfaction among Bougainvilleans over the implementation of the agreed arrangements for Bougainville autonomy, particularly in regard to the **constitutionally guaranteed financial grants** to which the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) is legally entitled, but which the (Papua New Guinea) National Government has not provided in accordance with the ABG’s calculations.
- The conflict in Bougainville and the desire of the Bougainvillean people for independence is rooted in the **historic plunder of the resource-rich island that has large deposits of copper** and the

unequal distribution of wealth that followed.

How does a territory become a new country?

- There is no straightforward rule. Beyond a few set requirements, a region's quest for nationhood mainly **depends on how many countries and international organisations it manages to convince to recognise** it as a country.
- The **biggest sanction of nationhood is the United Nations recognising a territory** as a country.

Why UN recognition matters?

- UN recognition means a new **country has access to the World Bank, the IMF, etc.** Its currency is recognised, which allows it to trade.
- By and large, so far, **a country swinging the UN's opinion in its favour has depended on how many of the big powers back it**, and how much international clout its parent country wields at that time.
 - **East Timor, then a Portuguese colony**, was invaded by Indonesia in the 1960s. But the western powers then needed Indonesia as an ally against Russia, and East Timor's woes didn't get much attention.
 - By the 1990s, power alignments had changed, and East Timor managed to hold a referendum by 1999 and declare independence in 2002.

What criteria must a nation-hopeful meet?

Broadly, four, as decided in **1933's Montevideo Convention**. A country-hopeful must have:

- a defined territory,
- people,
- government, and
- the ability to form relationships with other countries.

A country's "people" are defined as a significantly large population sharing a belief in their nationality. Factors also kept in mind are if a majority has clearly expressed the desire to break away from the parent country, and if the minority communities' rights will be safeguarded.

Self-determination versus territorial integrity

- In June 1945, **the right of "self-determination" was included in the UN charter**. This means that a population has the right to decide how and by whom it wants to be governed.
- However, another of the oldest, widely accepted international rules is that of **countries respecting each other's territorial integrity**. This is conflicting.
 - While a population has the right to break off from the parent country, quick recognition of their claim would mean other nations are agreeing to the carving up of one country.
- The **right to self-determination was introduced when a few colonial powers were dominating most countries**, and questions of rights were relatively easier to settle.
- Today, the issue becomes thorny and shapes up either as granting of greater autonomy to certain regions within a country, prolonged armed conflicts, or both.
 - Thus, though Taiwan says it is a country, other nations defer to China's feelings about it.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Not many lessons learnt from water planning failures

Background

- The Central government had launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) which is a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign.
- It is not a funding programme and did not create any new intervention on its own.
- Its only aim was to make water conservation a 'people's movement' through ongoing schemes like the MGNREGA and other government programmes.
- The JSA is partly modelled and driven by some **sporadic success stories** such as NGO Tarun Bharat Sangh's experiment in Alwar, Rajasthan and Anna Hazare-led efforts in Ralegan Siddhi, Maharashtra. These projects primarily involved building tanks and ponds to capture rainwater and building recharge wells to recharge groundwater.

Concerns around JSA

- Water planning should be based on hydrological units, namely river basins. And, **political and administrative boundaries of districts rarely coincide** with the hydrological boundaries or aquifer boundaries.
 - However, contrary to this principle of water management, **JSA was planned based on the boundary of the districts**, and to be carried out under the overall supervision of a bureaucrat.
 - This resulted in the division of basins/aquifers into multiple units that followed multiple policies.
- The JSA's portal displays impressive data, images and statistics.
 - For example, it claims that there are around 10 million ongoing and completed water conservation structures; 7.6 million recharge structures. The website also says that one billion saplings have been planted and that six million people participated in awareness campaigns.
- But, data and statistics can deceive or lie.
 - For example, the data displayed on the JSA portal do not speak anything about the **pre-JSA water levels**, the **monthly water levels** and the impact of monsoons on the water levels across the 255 districts with critical and over-exploited blocks. They also don't convey anything about the quality of the structures, their maintenance and sustainability.
- Moreover, it is difficult to say whether measures like JSA can provide long-term solutions. Most of the farm bunds are built with soil which can collapse within one monsoon season.
- Further, there are issues like **lack of proper engineering supervision of these structures**, involvement of multiple departments with less or no coordination, and limited funding under MGNREGA and other schemes.
- Finally, there have hardly been any efforts undertaken to dissuade farmers from growing water-intensive crops such as paddy, sugarcane, and banana, when it is widely known that agriculture consumes 80% of freshwater.

Shallow Assumptions

True, the aim and intent of JSA are noble. But the assumptions are distorted.

- For example, it assumes that **common people in rural areas are ignorant and prone to wasting water**; on the contrary, they are the ones who first bear the brunt of any water crisis.
- The per capita water allocation to those living in **rural areas is 55 litres**, whereas the same for urban areas **like Delhi and Bengaluru is 135-150 litres**.
- Therefore, the JSA's move to reach out to poor people and farmers, asking them to 'save water', appears **hypocritical, particularly when district administrations blatantly allow the sewage**

generated from towns and cities to pollute village water sources such as tanks, ponds and wells.

Conclusion

- The steps taken by Central Government under this program indicate a good start but it will require addressing of the above-mentioned issues to find a solution to the water crisis prevalent in India.

Category: POLITY

1. Should the creamy layer norm be extended to SC/STs?

Why reservation was given to SC/STs?

- Reservation in politics, services and institutions is given to SCs particularly because they were **denied the right to property, education and industries for nearly 2,000 years**. Besides they were treated as untouchables.
- Discrimination continues even today in society. The argument was that to provide them the **safeguard [against discrimination] and compensate them** to some extent for past exclusions, they should be given representation as per their population share.
- Because otherwise, due to persisting discrimination in services, enterprises and agriculture, they won't get their due share.

What is creamy layer?

- According to the 1993 order, sons and daughters of Group A/Class I Officers of the All India Central and State Services (direct recruits), Group B/Class II Officers of Central and State Services (direct recruits), employees of Public Sector Undertakings, etc. and armed forces fall within the creamy layer, and, therefore, they would not be entitled to reservation benefits.

Why creamy layer concept should be applied to SC/STs?

- Creamy layer is required because a majority of seats reserved in the central and state institutions and the employment opportunities are taken away by the established and the economically better. By taking away these seats the poor in the community miss the opportunity of moving up the economic ladder.

Creamy layer should not be applied to SC/STs

- We have to recognise that while both OBCs and SCs get reservations, the social reality under which Dalits live and the situation under which OBCs live are very different.
 - For the OBCs it is only economic backwardness but for the Dalits, it is social discrimination.
- The **reservation policy is against discrimination**; it is not based on economic consideration because discrimination is independent of economic standing.
- Women are asking for reservations. **Have they ever raised the issue that relatively better-off women should not get political reservations?** Because they are discriminated based on gender, poor or non-poor.
- The point is that the reason for reservations for Dalits is not economic backwardness. It is the **stigma that comes on account of the untouchable status**. And even though legally untouchability has been abolished, there is a lot of data that show that people still practise untouchability. So for the stigma that comes on account of an untouchable status, reservation is only a tiny remedial measure for that.
- The economically better-off also face discrimination, in service and many other spheres. They also need a safeguard and that safeguard is the affirmative action policy.

- Since they are economically better-off, don't give them economic advantages like subsidies. They can afford that but one cannot extend this argument to say reservation should be withdrawn for the better-off.

Reservation in Promotion

- According to statistics, there is huge discrimination once a person gets into service.
- There are about 12,000 cases lying with the SC/ST Commission, complaining about discrimination in service. Therefore, they need protection in promotion.
- The Supreme Court and government should further undertake a study.

Way forward

- Under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, it is the government's responsibility to undertake a study every five years, to bring out the nature of discrimination and untouchability faced by Dalits. The **government's SC/ST Commission report is supposed to have a separate chapter on untouchability**.
- Therefore we need a data-based, evidence-based approach to judging reservations. We need to have greater transparency and data-based evidence to support any claims.

2. In the name of a majority

Read about CAB here:

[Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019](#)

F. Tidbits

1. IRDAI forms group to study loss prevention

What's in News?

A ten-member working group has been constituted by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to suggest segment-wise ways and means to improve loss prevention and loss minimisation in the general insurance industry.

- The move is aimed at all stakeholders working together towards a common end on a common platform.
- It is opined that, though a crucial aspect for the insurance industry, loss prevention and loss minimisation measures have remained very company-specific. There may be considerable overlap in the way companies approach the issue, yet there is little in terms of knowledge-sharing, something that the working group sought to formalise.
- Steps for loss prevention and loss mitigation not only help the insured and the insurer but also help mitigate economic losses in a larger context.
- The working group is expected to evaluate current practices followed by the insurance industry in the area of loss prevention and loss minimisation.

Read more about [IRDAI](#).

2. IBM's weather forecast system to tap users' phones for data

What's in News?

International technology company IBM plans to make a high-resolution weather forecast model that will also rely on user-generated data to improve the accuracy of forecasts available in India.

- IBM GRAF, as the forecast system is called, can generate forecasts at a resolution of 3 kilometres. This is a significantly higher resolution than the 12-kilometre models used by the India Meteorological Department to generate forecasts.
- These weather forecast techniques rely on dynamic modelling and collect a trove of atmospheric and ocean data, crunch it in supercomputers and generate forecasts over desired time-frames — three days, weekly or fortnightly.
- For its forecasts, IBM relies on a global network of sensors — automatic weather stations, data bouys and barometric pressure data from cellphones of users who've downloaded the application.
- Weather forecasts will be available to individuals for free download and can be used by farmers.
- A study by IBM found that 72% of Indians believed that the local economy had been disrupted by a severe weather event in the past year and 89% were concerned that climate change could negatively impact the economy.

3. 2001 Parliament attack

Context

- December 13 will mark 18 years since the deadly attack on Parliament by terrorist groups linked to Pakistan.

Background

- On December 13, 2001, five terrorists entered Parliament House Complex in an Ambassador car fitted with a red light and a forged Home Ministry sticker on the car's windshield.
- The perpetrators belonged to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), two Pakistan-based terrorist organisations.

India's response

- The nature of the December 13, 2001, terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament brought about an Indian reaction significantly different from the restraint exercised in the past, influenced by the ongoing global "war on terror".
- India's response to terrorism became dynamic and multi-faceted, with alternating emphasis on a variety of measures, including diplomatic, military, political, administrative, and legal.
- Considerable emphasis was also placed on international cooperation, especially with the U.S.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Index of Industrial Production

What's in News?

A combination of contraction in industrial activity and rising inflation has led experts to fear that India is entering a phase of stagflation (a situation in which there is persistent high inflation combined with stagnant or declining demand).

Read more about [Index of Industrial Production](#).

2. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act

Read more about [POCSO Act](#).

3. Bharat Bond ETF opens for subscription

The public issue of Bharat Bond ETF, the country's first corporate bond exchange-traded fund aimed at retail investors opened.

The topic has been covered in the 5th December 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. GST Council is a joint forum for the Centre and the States.
2. Prime Minister is the Chairman of the GST Council.
3. The GST Council will make recommendations to the Union and the States on the important issues related to GST.

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

GST Council is a joint forum for the Centre and the States. The Union Finance Minister will be the Chairperson of the GST Council. Article 279A (4) specifies that the Council will make recommendations to the Union and the States on the important issues related to GST, such as whether the goods and services will be subject or exempted from the Goods and Services Tax.

Q2. Which of the following ancient dance forms finds place in 'Machupalli Kaifiat'?

- a. Bharatanatyam
- b. Kathakali
- c. Kuchipudi
- d. Odissi

Answer: c

Explanation:

Machupalli Kaifiat, dated 1506 AD, records a performance of Kuchipudi bhagavatulu in the presence of King Veeranarasimharayalu. Written by traveller McKenzie, the document describes how Kuchipudi artistes

observed the torture of people by the chieftain of their village for extracting taxes from them.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Inner Line Permit (ILP):

1. ILP is issued by the central government.
2. ILP is obligatory for all those who reside outside the protected states.
3. ILP can solely be issued for travel purposes.

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

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period. It can be issued for travel purposes solely. The ILP is obligatory for all those who reside outside the protected states. An ILP is issued by the state government concerned.

Q4. An economy is said to be experiencing 'stagflation' when:

1. Economic growth stagnates or slows down.
2. General prices in the economy rise.
3. General prices in the economy fall.

Choose the correct option:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

Stagflation is a condition of slow economic growth and relatively high unemployment, or economic stagnation, accompanied by rising prices, or inflation. It can also be defined as inflation and a decline in the gross domestic product (GDP).

I. Practice Questions for UPSC Mains Exam

1. A program, scheme or policy initiative without the backing of sufficient, periodic and scientific data is a recipe for failure in public policy. Explain the statement with respect to Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA). (10 Marks, 150 Words).
2. The biggest sanction of nationhood is the United Nations recognising a territory as a country. Evaluate its importance and illustrate with examples, the Independence Movements around the world. (15 Marks, 250 Words).

3. Should the creamy layer norm be extended to SC/STs? Critically examine. (15 Marks, 250 Words)

