

10 Jan 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. U.P. tops list in crimes against women

Context:

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) published the annual Crime in India Report 2018. The NCRB also released the Accidental Death and Suicides in India 2018 report.

Details:

- It was published with provisional data, as five States — West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Sikkim — did not send clarifications sought by the NCRB despite repeated reminders.
- The 2017 annual crime report was published in October 2019, after a delay of two years.

Findings of the annual Crime in India Report 2018:

- According to the report, 3,78,277 cases of crime against women were reported in the country, up from 3,59,849 in 2017.
- Uttar Pradesh topped the list, followed by Maharashtra and West Bengal.
- The conviction rate in rape-related cases stood at 27.2% even though the rate of filing chargesheets was 85.3% in such cases.
- Cruelty by husband or his relatives (31.9%) followed by assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (27.6%) constituted the major share of crimes against women.
- Cognisable crimes showed an increase of 1.3% in the registration of cases compared to 2017.
- As many as 27,248 cases of cybercrimes were registered in 2018, up from 21796 cases in 2017.
- Rioting accounted for 75.2% of the offences against public tranquillity.

Findings of the Accidental Death and Suicides in India 2018 report:

- Suicides by people working in the farm sector accounted for 7.7 % of the total number of suicides in the country in 2018.
- The highest number of suicide victims were daily wagers comprising 22.4% of such deaths.
- The majority of the suicides was reported in Maharashtra followed by Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.
- Many States and Union Territories have reported nil data on suicides by farmers, cultivators and farm labourers.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Nirbhaya Case: Two convicts file curative pleas

Context

Curative petitions have been filed in the [Supreme Court](#) by two convicts in the Nirbhaya case.

Curative Petition:

Curative Petition is the last judicial resort available for redressal of grievances in court which is normally decided by judges in-chamber. It is only in rare cases that such petitions are given an open-court hearing.

- The concept of the curative petition was evolved by the Supreme Court of India in the matter of Rupa Ashok Hurra vs. Ashok Hurra and Anr. (2002) where the question was whether an aggrieved person is entitled to any relief against the final judgement/order of the Supreme Court, after the dismissal of a review petition.
- The Supreme Court, in the case, held that in order to prevent abuse of its process and to cure gross miscarriage of justice, it may reconsider its judgements in the exercise of its inherent powers.
- For this purpose, the Court has devised what has been termed as a “curative” petition.

Certain specific conditions are laid down by the Supreme Court to entertain the curative petitions. They are:

1. The petitioner will have to establish that there was a genuine violation of principles of natural justice and fear of the bias of the judge and that the judgement adversely affected him.
2. The petition shall state specifically that the grounds mentioned had been taken in the review petition and that it was dismissed by circulation.
3. The petition is to be sent to the three senior-most judges and judges of the bench who passed the judgement affecting the petition, if available.
4. If the majority of the judges on the above bench agree that the matter needs hearing, then it would be sent to the same bench (as far as possible).
5. The court could impose “exemplary costs” to the petitioner if his plea lacks merit.

Article- 137: Review of judgments or orders by the Supreme Court subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament or any rules made under Article 145, the Supreme Court shall have power to review any judgment pronounced or order made by it.

Note:

- In the current context, if the Curative Petition is rejected, the convicts can file an appeal for Mercy Petition with the [President of India](#).
- As per the Constitution, whenever a crime has been committed and the person concerned has also been punished by the court of law, he may present a mercy petition to the President of India under Article 72 of the Constitution of India, where the matter falls within the ambit of Article 72.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Eurasia Group places India as 5th highest geopolitical risk in 2020 list

Context:

The Eurasia Group has placed India as the 5th highest 'geopolitical risk' in the 2020 list, in its report titled "Top Risks 2020".

Details:

- India has been ranked the 5th highest “Geopolitical Risk” in 2020, according to a list of 10 global risks in the year ahead, compiled by the Eurasia Group, a leading global political risk management consultancy.
- It said that in its second term, the present government’s “social” policies were affecting India’s economic agenda and foreign policy image.
- “Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spent much of his second term promoting controversial social policies at the expense of an economic agenda. The impacts will be felt in 2020, with intensified communal and sectarian instability, as well as foreign policy and economic setbacks,” said the report.
- The report pointed to the widening fiscal deficit, low GST collections, and the latest six-year low in GDP growth.
- According to the report, amongst the risks for India in 2020 are “sectarian conflict”, anti-CAA protests, and possible violence in Kashmir, which it describes as a “powder keg” after the dilution of [Article 370](#).
- Amongst the other risks listed for 2020 are U.S. governance and institutional conflicts with President

Donald Trump, the U.S.-China trade rift, European geopolitics, climate change, and Turkey.

Why is the report significant?

- What makes the Eurasia Group listing significant is that this is the first time in many years that India has been mentioned for social and political developments.
- The group had referred to India mostly due to its economic potential in the past.
- In 2016, for example, the Eurasia report on top global risks said that Mr. Modi's "strong leadership... focused on economic reform and longer-term strategy" would actually reduce geopolitical risks.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Forest Committee approves scheme to 'trade' in forests

Context:

The Forest Advisory Committee has approved a scheme that could allow "forests" to be traded as a commodity.

Forest Advisory Committee (FAC):

- The Forest Advisory Committee is a key statutory body which considers questions on the diversion of forest land for non-forest uses such as mining, industrial projects, townships and advises the government on the issue of granting forest clearances.
- It is an apex body tasked with adjudicating requests by the industry to raze forest land for commercial ends.

What is the system followed at present?

- In the current system, the industry needs to make good the loss of forest by finding appropriate non-forest land — equal to that which would be razed.
- It also must pay the State Forest Department the current economic equivalent — called Net Present Value — of the forest land.
- It's then the Forest Department's responsibility to grow appropriate vegetation that, over time, would grow into forests.

Details:

- Industries have often complained that they find it hard to acquire appropriate non-forest land, which has to be contiguous to an existing forest.
- Nearly 50,000 crores had been collected by the Centre over decades, but the funds were lying unspent because States were not spending the money on regrowing forests.
- The Supreme Court intervened; a new law came about with rules for how this fund was to be administered. About 47,000 crores had been disbursed to States until August 2019, but it has barely led to any rejuvenation of forests.
- In 2015, a 'Green Credit Scheme' for degraded forest land with public-private participation was recommended, but it was not approved by the Union Environment Minister, the final authority.

Green Credit Scheme:

- The proposed 'Green Credit Scheme', allows agencies — they could be private companies, village forest communities — to identify land and begin growing plantations. After three years, they would be eligible to be considered as compensatory forest land if they meet the Forest Department's criteria. An industry needing forest land could then approach the agency and pay it for parcels of such forested land, and this would then be transferred to the Forest Department and be recorded as forest land.
- The participating agency will be free to trade its asset, that is plantation, in parcels, with project proponents who need forest land.

Benefits of the scheme:

- One of India's prongs to combat climate change is the Green India Mission that aims to sequester 2.523 billion tonnes of carbon by 2020-30, and this involves adding 30 million hectares in addition to existing forest.
- If implemented, the new scheme allows the Forest Department to outsource one of its responsibilities of reforestation to non-government agencies.
- The FAC believes that such a scheme will encourage plantation by individuals outside the traditional forest area and will help in meeting international commitments such as sustainable development goals and nationally determined contributions.

Arguments against the scheme:

- A few experts opine that it does not solve the core problems of compensatory afforestation.
- It is believed that it would create problems of privatising multi-use forest areas as monoculture plantation plots.
- It is also argued that forests would be treated as a mere commodity without any social or ecological character.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: DEFENCE

1. CDS and the path to jointmanship

Context

- Bipin Rawat was appointed as the first **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**, which is one of the key policy decisions made by the Narendra Modi government.
- It was a long-pending reform (the establishment of a CDS), which was recommended by the Kargil

Review Committee in 2001.

Role of CDS

- The CDS will be “first among equals” in that he will consult and **solicit the views of the services, but the final judgment will be taken by CDS alone.**
- His views will be confined to the acquisition matters exclusive to each service and won't extend to the procurement of big-ticket items such as warships or fighter aircraft, which will remain under the firm control of the **Department of Defence (DoD)**.
 - CDS will enjoy the rank of Secretary within the DoD and his powers will be confined to only the revenue budget.
- The CDS will be the **single-point military adviser to the Defence Minister** on matters involving all three services and the service chiefs will be obliged to confine their counsel to issues pertaining to their respective services.
- The CDS is also vested with the authority to provide directives to the three chiefs.
 - Additionally, the CDS will lead the **Department of Military Affairs (DoMA)** dealing with the three services.
 - While the CDS does not enjoy any command authority, in his capacity as DoMA, he will wield control over issues governing promotions, travel, appointment to key posts, and overseas assignments. Consequently, the CDS will enjoy a substantial amount of influence.
 - Above all, his core function will be to **foster greater operational synergy between the three service branches of the Indian military** and keep inter-service frictions to a minimum.
- Fundamentally, the CDS will perform two roles:
 - One, as the single point military advisor to the Defence Minister.
 - Two, as head of the DoMA.

Advisory role in the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA)

- Since the CDS will also administer the Strategic Forces Command, this measure will go a long way in enhancing the credibility of our nuclear deterrent.
- Given the differing interpretations of India's nuclear doctrine voiced by the **Government of India (GoI)** functionaries from time to time, the CDS would do well to initiate an early review of the doctrine.

Significance of this move

- With the creation of the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** headed by CDS, the military will, for the first time, be admitted into the central edifice of the **GoI** and become a participant in policy-making.
- Designation of the CDS as **Principal Military Adviser (PMA)** to **Raksha Mantri (RM)** will enable unhindered access to MoD, accelerating the process of decision-making and accord of approvals.

Challenges

- There are concerns over **matters relating to service parochialism.**
 - If the CDS privileges support for parent service, it is likely to have opposition from the other two services.
 - Any parochialism could potentially derail the primary objective of creating the CDS — promoting synergy and shaping acquisition priorities both within and between the services.
- CDS's role is not simply about tri-service cooperation, it is equally about **fostering better cooperation between the MoD bureaucracy and the services** and ensuring that projected and planned acquisitions of the services do not exceed capital allocations.

- Indian Army consumes the lion's share of the defence budget. As it is a manpower-intensive fighting force, pruning the number of personnel in the Army will remain perhaps the most vexed challenge.
- The final challenge facing the CDS will be **the extent to which he can encourage the services to support indigenisation**.
 - Cost-saving is not simply about reducing manpower in the Army, it is equally about getting all the services, particularly the capital-intensive services, to rally behind a **committed enterprise to support the native Research and Development** for production and eventual deployment of weapons systems, which when procured from abroad drive a massive hole in the budget.

Steps that can be undertaken

- There are no instant remedies, but one pointer is **towards greater investment in Artificial Intelligence (AI)** over the long term, a process that has already begun, but will require a dedicated push from the CDS over the course of his tenure.
 - The **application of AI technology is likely to lend itself to tanks and artillery systems**, as is visibly evident from the vigorous pursuit of AI by China's People's Liberation Army.
- To ensure adequate availability of expertise, **civilians** will need to be inducted into DMA and **military personnel** into DoD. This will require the CDS to vigorously pursue enabling amendments to GoI Business Rules and the Central Staffing Scheme.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. A continent on fire: on Australia wildfires

Introduction

- Fire is no stranger to Australia but the fires now burning across the nation have been described as unprecedented with over 10 million hectares of land damaged, killing at least 25 people and tens of millions of animals, besides forcing the evacuation of communities.
- Bushfires are actually a part of Australia's ecosystem. Many plants depend on them to cycle nutrients and clear vegetation. In fact, eucalyptus trees in Australia depend on fire to release their seeds. But all this **usually happens during a few weeks in late January-February**, when the country is at its driest. The prolonged blaze in 2020 has coincided with Australia's harshest summer.
- Much of Australia is **facing a drought** that is a result of three consecutive summers **with very little precipitation**. This, according to climate scientists, is unprecedented.
- Australian Bureau of Meteorology's 2018 State of the Climate report notes, "Australia's climate has warmed by just over 1 degree Celsius since 1910, leading to an increase in the frequency of extreme heat events." This has led to **more rainfall in northern Australia, but created drought-like conditions in the more densely populated southeast**.

Political decisions of the Government criticized

The Government has sought to downplay the impact of changing climate.

- It ignored calls from fire experts to prepare in advance to reduce the damages due to fire.
- Australia is a major producer of fossil fuels, and among the world's top exporters of coal and liquefied natural gas.
 - The Prime Minister has further pledged to maintain Australia's position as a world-leading coal exporter.

- It continues to support aggressive development without giving importance to the environment and sustainable development.
- The government has prioritized the needs of business over action to cut carbon emissions.

Concerns

- Australia's encounters with devastating fires could become more frequent, perhaps even once in eight years, **making large parts of the continent uninhabitable**.
- Australia is home to nearly 250 animal species, some of them like the **koalas and kangaroos are not found elsewhere**. But the region also has the **highest rate of native animals going extinct** over the past 200 years. The fires will aggravate this situation.
- The fires have also caused a **drop in the bird, rodent and insect populations**. These creatures are the building blocks of the ecosystem and the fall in their population is bound to have long-term impacts.

Conclusion

- The situation is **bound to worsen without policy change**, as temperatures are predicted to soar to 50°C.
- Over the past half-century, the number of hot days and very hot days each year have steadily increased. It would **be tragic if this scientific insight is ignored**.
- Long-term prosperity for Australians and a future for its charismatic animals can be **secured only through policies that foster environmental protection**.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Mining deep: on Cabinet easing mining laws

Context

- The Cabinet has cleared the **Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2020**, which will open up the coal mining sector completely, enabling anyone with finances and expertise to bid for blocks and sell the coal freely to any buyer of their choice.

Present Scenario

- Until now there were **restrictions on who could bid for coal mines** — only those in power, iron and steel and coal washery business could bid for mines — and the bidders needed prior experience of mining in India.
- This effectively limited the potential bidders to a select circle of players and thus limited the value that the government could extract from the bidding.

Now, all end-use restrictions have been removed, easing the entry of companies not engaged in any coal-use industry in coal mining.

- Moreover, existing private owners will now be able to sell their surplus coal in the market.

Why this is a very important step?

- The ordinance essentially **democratises the coal industry** and makes it attractive for merchant

mining companies, including multinationals such as BHP and Rio Tinto, to look at India.

- India is one of the largest coal producers in the world with an output of 729 million tonnes in 2018-19. However, despite sluggish economic growth, import shipments have surged from 190 million tonnes in 2016-17 to 235 million tonnes in 2018-19 — in value terms, imports touched \$26.18 billion in 2018-19, up from \$15.76 billion in 2016-17.
 - This surge in coal imports, along with oil and electronics imports, has exerted pressure on the country's current account in recent years.
 - The relaxation in regulations, along with previous initiatives such as allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment through the automatic route in commercial coal production, **can aid in boosting coal production in the country and help reduce imports.**

Advantages

- Large investment in mining will **create jobs and set off demand in critical sectors such as mining equipment** and heavy commercial vehicles.
- The move to amend the law will help India gain access to high-end technology for underground mining used by global miners.
- The steel industry would get cheaper inputs, leading to an increase in 'competitiveness'.
- The move will help create an efficient energy market, usher in competition and reduce coal imports, while also ending the monopoly of state-owned Coal India Ltd.

What should the Government do?

- The government needs to reduce the time for approval of mining leases and also ease the procedures for clearances.
- The opening up of coal mining effectively ends Coal India's (CIL) monopoly status.
 - CIL is a Maharatna PSU and tremendous public resources have been invested in the company over the years. It is the government's responsibility **to ensure that CIL is not compromised the way BSNL has been** by opening up to private players.
 - The company employs about three lakh people, is listed and is a national asset. It has to be nurtured even as private players are welcomed.

Conclusion

- How quickly these investments fructify depends on the kinds of coal blocks offered, the infrastructure available, the government's ability to ease the regulatory hurdles such as the process of obtaining clearances, and clearing of mining plans, that have complicated the process so far.

F. Tidbits

1. India, Sri Lanka FMs meet, discuss skill development projects

- India and Sri Lanka discussed the "entire gamut of bilateral ties", during talks between visiting Sri Lankan Minister of Foreign Relations, Skills Development, Employment and Labour Relations, and External Affairs Minister of India.
- The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister reiterated the importance laid by President Rajapaksa on exploring newer areas of cooperation with India with emphasis on skill development, vocational training and

G. Prelims Facts

1. EU Council

What's in News?

- The President of the European Council defended the crumbling Iran nuclear deal after U.S. President Donald Trump urged Europe to quit it, but warned Tehran against “irreversible acts” that would sink the accord.
- The President of the European Council used a call with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani to call for a de-escalation of tensions after Tehran carried out missile strikes on U.S. military bases in Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of one of its top Generals.

Details:

- The European Council (informally EUCO) is a collective body that defines the European Union's overall political direction and priorities.
- It comprises the heads of state or government of the EU member states, along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission.
- Established as an informal summit in 1975, the European Council was formalised as an institution in 2009 upon the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.
- While the European Council has no legislative power, it is a strategic (and crisis-solving) body that provides the Union with general political directions and priorities, and acts as a collective presidency. The European Commission remains the sole initiator of legislation, but the European Council is able to provide an impetus to guide legislative policy.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court has the ability to review any judgment declared by it.
2. Review Petition, Curative Petition and Presidential Pardon are the resources available to those seeking relief from an Order of the Supreme Court.
3. Curative Petition is the last judicial resort available for redressal of grievances in court.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

The Supreme Court does have the ability to review any judgment declared by it. Review Petition, Curative Petition and Presidential Pardon are the resources available to those seeking relief from an Order of the Supreme Court. Curative Petition is the last judicial resort available for redressal of grievances in court.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to the European Council (EUCO) :

1. EUCO is a collective body that defines the European Union's overall political direction and priorities.
2. It comprises the heads of state or government of the EU member states, along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission.
3. The European Council has legislative powers.

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

European Council (EUCO) is a collective body that defines the European Union's overall political direction and priorities. It comprises the heads of state or government of the EU member states, along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission. The European Council has no legislative powers.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) :

1. It is a Constitutional Body that draws inspiration from India's constitutional provision of Article 21.
2. It has Original Jurisdiction on matters of substantial question relating to environment and damage to the environment due to specific activity (such as pollution).

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: b

Explanation:

The National Green Tribunal has been established in 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010. It draws inspiration from India's constitutional provision of Article 21, which assures the citizens of India the right to a healthy environment. It is a statutory body. It has Original Jurisdiction on matters of "substantial question relating to environment" and & "damage to the environment due to specific activity" (such as pollution).

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) is under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. NCRB publishes the 'Crime in India' report.
3. NCRB is entrusted with the responsibility for monitoring, coordinating and implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) project.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

National Crime Record Bureau is under the Ministry of Home Affairs. It compiles and publishes National Crime Statistics. NCRB brings out the annual comprehensive statistics of crime across the country ('Crime in India' report). NCRB was entrusted with the responsibility for monitoring, coordinating and implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) project in the year 2009.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. What is Green Politics? Is the world witnessing the dearth of Green Politics due to increasing industrialisation and urbanisation? (15 Marks, 250 Words).
2. Discuss the significance of the Centre's decision to liberalise norms for entry into coal mining and the relaxation of regulations on mining. (10 Marks, 150 Words).

