

25 Jan 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Centre seeks to revamp child care scheme in urban areas

Context:

NITI Aayog's draft policy to revamp the government's **Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)**.

Background:

- ICDS provides for **anganwadis or day-care centers** that deliver a package of six services for the children, including **supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education, nutrition and health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services to hospitals**.

Details:

- Urban areas are likely to receive a renewed focus under the government's ICDS programme.
- In line with this proposal, NITI Aayog will prepare a draft working paper, which once approved would be circulated to different ministries for consultations.

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Urban Housing and Affairs and the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation would be involved in the consultation process.

The peculiarity of urban areas:

- **The first-ever pan-India survey on the nutrition status of children** provides useful insights with respect to the urban areas.
- The survey has brought to light, the fact that malnutrition among children in urban India is characterized by **relatively poor levels of breastfeeding as mothers have to travel long distances for work.**
- The survey also found a **higher prevalence of obesity** because of relative prosperity and lifestyle patterns, **along with iron and Vitamin D deficiency.**
- Given that **urban areas are characterized by higher population density, transportation challenges, and migration issues**, it may not be possible for a community worker to keep in contact with the beneficiaries, unlike in rural settings.

Concerns:

- **Urban areas have far fewer anganwadis as compared to rural areas.** According to government data from 2018, anganwadis of urban areas constitute only 1.38 lakh out of the total 14 lakh anganwadis across the country.
- Health and ICDS **models that work in rural areas may not work in urban areas** because of the different characteristics of the two settings.

Way forward:

- The government's efforts in improving service delivery under the ICDS programme must involve the aspect of **improving infrastructure and safety in the anganwadi centers of the urban areas.**

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Can't pass 'blanket order' against invoking NSA: SC

Context:

Supreme Court's observation on pleas challenging the imposition of the **National Security Act (NSA)** in New Delhi.

Background:

- The National Security Act (NSA) has been imposed in Delhi for a **period of 3 months** starting from January 19, 2020.
- **The notification on NSA** was issued amidst protests in the Capital, against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019.

The National Security Act:

- **The National Security Act of 1980**, provides for the **provision of preventive detention in certain cases**. The Act empowers the Central Government and State Governments to detain a person to prevent him/her from acting in any manner prejudicial to the **national security of India, the relations of India with foreign countries, the maintenance of law and order, or the maintenance of supplies and services** essential to the community.
- The act also gives power to the governments to detain a foreigner in a view to regulate his/her presence or expel from the country.

Details:

- The Supreme Court has refused to pass a blanket order against New Delhi's Lieutenant Governor's decision to place Delhi under the National Security Act (NSA).
- This was in response to a **petition challenging the imposition of NSA**, which claimed that NSA was being used to scare ordinary people from expressing their **Fundamental Right to dissent** on issues like the CAA. The petition claimed that LG's notification was violative of the **Right to Free Speech and Expression and the Right to Dignity**.
- The court has stated that it cannot pass general directions, which would **limit the options available for the authorities to handle law and order issues**.

The court has held that it cannot pass a general direction restraining the government from invoking NSA, but **can definitely act if individual cases of misuse of NSA by authorities are challenged**.

2. Aspirants with criminal past should not get a ticket, EC tells SC

Context:

The Supreme Court has agreed to examine a **suggestion made by the Election Commission (EC) to ask political parties to not give a party ticket to those with criminal antecedents.**

Background:

- **In September 2018, Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court** through its judgment had directed political parties to **publish online the pending criminal cases** against their candidates.
- The five-judge Bench had held that the **rapid criminalization of politics** cannot be arrested by merely disqualifying tainted legislators but should also **involve the cleansing of the political parties.**
- The judgment had also **urged Parliament to bring a strong law to cleanse political parties** of leaders facing trial for serious crimes.
- **A contempt petition has been filed in the SC**, seeking action against the authorities and political parties for not complying fully with the September 2018 judgment.

Concerns:

- The Supreme Court, in spite of its long list of judgments has still not been able to avoid criminalization of politics.
- The petition filed in the SC **claims that 46% of Members of Parliament have criminal records.**
- The Election Commission too has tried several measures to curb criminalization of politics but to no avail.

Details:

- The Bench has asked the petitioners to come up with a proposal, to ensure that parties did not fall in with criminal politicians. This would serve both **national and public interest.**

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. ‘President Bolsonaro, PM Modi share views on idea of a nation’

Context:

Brazilian President’s visit to India as the Chief Guest for Republic Day

Details:

- India and Brazil are expected to sign a number of agreements, including a **Strategic Partnership action plan and a Bilateral Investment Treaty** during Brazilian President's visit.

Significance of the bilateral relations:

- Brazil and India are **two of the biggest democracies in the world**. The countries share **common values**.
- **The two countries share a common worldview**. India and Brazil have shared some common foreign policy postures on the issue of strategic autonomy, **need for reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**, **strengthening the relationship with the U.S. and opposition to China's**

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

- Brazil considers India, one of the main partners in its new international strategy and foreign policy as a whole. The two countries may **leverage their position in all international fora**, in the United Nations and the Security Council for mutual benefit.
- There is the scope for this relationship to give rise to a common platform projecting a **more 'South-South centric' worldview**.

Challenges:

- The Brazilian administration has been publicly skeptical of climate science, particularly in the context of Amazon fires. Given India's stakes and stance in climate change negotiations, there seems to be a **divergence of views on the issue of climate change**.
- **Brazil has filed a complaint against India's sugar pricing policies at the World Trade Organization**, stating that it is exceeding its domestic support commitments. This move would directly threaten the livelihoods of five crore Indian sugarcane farmers and also **affect bilateral collaborations on biofuels derived from sugarcane**.
- In 2018-19, **India overtook Brazil to become the world's largest sugar producer**.
- Unlike Brazil, India's sugar sector is not geared towards global trade. Brazil holds a 35% share **of the global exports market**, in comparison with a **mere 5% share for India**, according to Food and Agriculture Organisation data. **Most Indian sugar is consumed domestically**.

Way forward:

- There is a need to **strengthen bilateral relations** between the two nations, given the potential of the relation.

- There is a need to explore a **satisfactory, non-litigious solution to the bilateral disputes** between the two countries which addresses the concerns of Brazil as well as India's development goals.

C. GS 3 Related

Category:ECONOMY

1. Direct tax collections set to drop for first time in two decades

Context:

Direct tax collection assessment.

Background:

- The government was targeting direct tax collection of Rs. 13.5 lakh crore for 2019-2020, which would have marked a 17% increase over the previous fiscal year.
- The government had lowered its own estimate to forecast a 5% growth in direct tax collection for the fiscal year, amid fears of a slowdown in the economy. This estimate marks the slowest in 11 years.

Details:

- The initial estimates point out that the direct tax collections for this financial year **will likely fall below the Rs. 11.5 lakh crore collected in 2018-19.**
- India's corporate and income tax collection for the current year is **likely to fall for the first time in at least two decades.**

Causes:

- A sharp fall in economic growth:

The fall in economic growth is mainly being attributed to the **sharp decline in the demand**. This has **forced the companies to cut investment and jobs, which has in turn dented the tax collections.**

- The cut in corporate tax rates:

The **cut in headline corporate tax rate in 2019** aimed at wooing manufacturers and boosting investment in the Indian economy is another key reason behind the sluggish tax collections.

Concerns:

- The tax collections will be even **below the lowered estimates of the government**, raising the **fears of an economic slowdown in India**.
- Given the fact that the **direct taxes typically account for about 80% of the government's projections for annual revenue**, the shortfall may leave the government needing to boost borrowing to meet expenditure commitments. This might **increase the fiscal deficit of the government against the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) act**.

2. Monetary policy has its limits, reforms must continue: Das

Context:

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor's views.

Background:

- RBI's primary objective is price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth, as defined by the RBI Act.
- Since the establishment of the **Monetary Policy Committee in 2016**, the RBI follows a flexible inflation targeting framework defined **by a target of 4% for consumer price headline inflation**, with a tolerance band of +/- 2% around it.
- Inflation which was previously high had fallen successively and averaged below 4% since 2017-18. However, there has been a **recent increase in inflation, driven mainly by food prices**, especially the sharp increase in vegetable prices, mainly due to the adverse impact of unseasonal rains and cyclone.

Details:

- The Reserve Bank of India Governor expressing his views has stated that the **monetary policy has its own limits**.
- Previously, since the inflation rates were within the allowable limits, the RBI was able to bring down the interest rates to help boost growth.
- Now, given the recent **spike in inflation rates and the associated fears of stagflation in the economy**, the RBI cannot afford to further decrease its benchmark Repo rates.

Way forward:

Fiscal policy:

- **The structural reforms and fiscal measures** may have to be continued and further activated to provide a durable push to the demand and boost growth.
- There is a need for a **renewed focus on potential growth driver sectors like food processing industries, tourism, e-commerce and start-ups.**
- The government should focus on **improving the backward and forward linkages** of these sectors to give a significant push to growth. The efforts should be directed at **aligning the Indian companies with the global value chains.**
- The government should **focus on infrastructure spending** which would augment the growth potential of the economy.

Monetary policy:

- The suggestions for **considering financial stability as a key consideration for monetary policy** needs serious deliberations.
- There is a need to review the present system where the central bank still functions as the lender of last resort, despite the developments and refinements in the policy frameworks across countries, including India.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today !!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Justice for Rohingya

Context:

The **International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling** in the Rohingya case.

Background:

Reports by UN and human rights groups:

- There have been reports by the UN and human rights groups on the prevalence of **hate speech, mass atrocities of rape and extra-judicial killings**, and torching of villages in Myanmar's Rakhine province, leading to the forced migration of thousands to Bangladesh.

Plea in ICJ:

- Gambia had filed a suit in ICJ on behalf of the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**.
- The suit alleged that the **brutalities by the defence services amounted to crimes of genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention**. It called for action against Myanmar for its failure to prevent the alleged acts of genocide against the Rohingya Muslims.

Independent Commission of Enquiry in Myanmar:

- An Independent Commission of Enquiry was established by the Myanmar government.
- The Commission acknowledged that **war crimes had been committed during the military campaign when about 900 people were killed**. But it found no evidence to back the claims of an intended genocide.

Details:

Holding the government responsible:

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in a unanimous ruling, has **pinned legal responsibility on Myanmar's government** for the military's large-scale excesses of 2017.
- The ruling also stipulates the civilian government to submit an update of the steps it has taken to preserve evidence of the systemic brutalities, which would be used in the subsequent adjudication process.
- Myanmar has also been asked to furnish six-monthly reports until the conclusion of the case, which relates to genocide accusations.

Still vulnerable:

- The court has noted with concern that an **estimated 600,000 Rohingya residents in Myanmar are still highly vulnerable to attacks from the security forces**.

Myanmar's defense:

- Myanmar has expectedly, rejected the ICJ's ruling and has accused rights groups of presenting the Court with a wrong picture of the situation in Myanmar.

- Myanmar has defended the army's action as a **legitimate response to violations of the law by the insurgent Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.**

Significance:

Ray of hope for the refugees:

- Although it could take years before the ICJ pronounces the final verdict in the genocide case, the ICJ's injunction in the case holds hope **for Rohingya refugees languishing in the Bangladesh refugee camps.**

Scope for international pressure:

- The ruling **empowers the UN Security Council to prevail upon Myanmar** to take appropriate measures for the **rehabilitation and repatriation of displaced communities.**

India's interest:

- India has its own interests in an amicable resolution of Myanmar's internal dispute. This would reduce the pressure on India to accept the incoming refugees.

Return of normalcy in Myanmar:

- Finding an appropriate closure to the current dispute would aid Myanmar's return to normalcy.

For more information on this topic refer:

18th Dec 2019 CNA & 24th Jan 2020 CNA

Category:POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. The long and the short of Uttar Pradesh

Context:

The articles argues for the division of Uttar Pradesh into smaller states to ensure development.

Details:

Low rankings in most surveys:

- There has been a view that over the last two decades, U.P. has witnessed some form of progress and decreased inequality. However, some official reports and surveys have noted otherwise:
- However, in the **UN Human Development Index Report for 2017**, U.P. along with Bihar has scored the lowest among all the States of India.
- A State Bank of India Research report of March 2019 noted that **P. had not bettered its human development index over the last 27 years.**

Social issues:

- P. is plagued by the social issues of communalism, caste killings, **gender-based brutality**, etc.
- **Communalism, casteism** has been often used to seize political power in the state. Localized, regular, “small” communal conflagrations are often manufactured for political benefits.
- **The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation’s “Household Social Consumption” survey of 2019** and NITI Aayog’s **“School Education Quality Index”** of 2019, measuring the participation of girl children in education, have U.P. taking the last spot.

Crime rate:

- **The “Crime in India Report” for the year 2017**, released by the **National Crime Records Bureau**, notes that U.P. has topped the list with **10% of India’s total crime** and three lakh registered First Information Reports (FIRs).
- It has the highest **number of crimes against women.**
- P. leads in arms possession and gun licenses. The no of cases filed **against illegal possession of arms** is also the highest in India.

Economic issues:

- Given the **large population of the state and the low development level** in U.P., the state is facing the economic **problem of unemployment and underemployment.**
- A large number of the poor from U.P. are forced to **migrate to other states in search of better livelihood opportunities.** They are subjected to **sub-human treatment** as migrant labour in other parts of India leading to their exploitation. They are often subject to onslaughts from nativists.
- In spite of this, **illiteracy and poverty are still concerns for these migrant workers.**

Reasons:

Too big to administer:

- **The state of Uttar Pradesh being the most populous and being a geographically large state is too big for administrative convenience.**
- Countries in Africa, Europe, and South America have fewer people than U.P.
- In the ‘**Report of the States Reorganisation Commission**’, first published in 1955, the historian K.M. Panikkar, had also noted the disproportionate size of U.P.
- There have been demands from **Purvanchal (east U.P.)**, **Bundelkhand**, **Awadh (central U.P.)** and **Paschim Pradesh (west U.P.)**, for higher resource allocations and greater power devolution.

Modernization in traditional societies:

- When any change such as “modernity” or “democracy”, is attempted, it usually **activates nativist identity politics which can lead to a spurt in ethnic conflict in societies.**
- Scholars have often attributed Hindu-Muslim and caste conflicts to the pressures of so-called modernization.
- **The unevenness in modernization** has worsened the condition in an already uneven society, pushing U.P.’s citizenry into collective religious and caste conflicts.

Way forward:

- There have been strong arguments for the **breaking up of U.P. into smaller administrative units.**
- Uttarakhand split from U.P. has made notable progress since its separation from U.P.

In the 2020s, for the sake of U.P.’s citizens and Indian democracy, it is imperative to consider and deliberate on the issue of division of U.P.

F. Tidbits

1. CJI wants speedy resolution of cases

- Speaking at the 79th foundation day of the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, the Chief Justice of India (CJI), expressing his views on the **tax administration in India** has stated that while **tax evasion was**

injustice to fellow Indian citizens, arbitrary or excessive taxation resulted in social injustice by a government.

- The just and speedy resolution of tax disputes would act as an **incentive to taxpayers**, inspiring public faith in the judiciary and also would help **free the funds locked in litigation, for the tax collectors.**
- The **use of technology** like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data, in judicial work, can help in ensuring speedy justice.

2. Plea for judicial probe in custodial death cases

- **Section 176(1A) of the Code of Criminal Procedure**, provides for **mandatory judicial inquiry in cases of death, disappearance or rape in police and judicial custody.**
- Since the enactment of Section 176(1A) in 2005, the National Human Rights Commission has recorded 24,043 custodial deaths/rapes between 2005-2006 and 2018-2019.
- The National Crimes Records Bureau's annual reports from 2005 to 2017 state that **judicial inquiry was not conducted in about 80% of the cases recorded by it.**

The reports also notes that the **case registration and charge-sheet rate are very low and the conviction rate stands at zero.**

3. 41 mn people in 13 cities locked down as virus spreads in China

- Chinese authorities have **expanded the quarantine effort** aimed at containing a deadly contagion to prevent the disease from spreading further. It has been **expanded to 13 cities and 41 million people.**
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has **not declared it a global emergency despite confirmed cases in half a dozen other countries.**
- The WHO has stated that **China faced a national emergency** but stopped short of making a declaration that would have prompted greater global cooperation.
- The virus referred to as **the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)** has caused alarm because of its similarity to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which killed hundreds across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-03.
- The government has halted all travel out of Wuhan, shut down its public transport and told residents to stay home. Deepening the isolation, there were only a few flights available to the city.

4. Travel advisory extended to 12 more airports

- **The World Health Organisation (WHO)** has noted that 834 cases of coronavirus infection had been reported from China, along with 26 deaths.
- **The Union Health Ministry has extended its travel advisory** to 12 more airports in addition to the current seven.
- The Health Ministry is in touch with the WHO for a **coordinated effort to tackle the novel virus and dynamic situation**.
- The WHO has maintained that the **novel coronavirus (nCoV) spread was not a global health emergency, but is an emergency in China**.
- No nCoV case has been detected in India so far.

5. India growth slowdown temporary: IMF

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief has stated that the **present growth slowdown in India appeared to be temporary and that momentum of growth would improve going ahead**.
- Addressing the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2020, the IMF chief has stated that there has been a marked improvement in the economic situation and prospects since the IMF announced its World Economic Outlook (WEO) in 2019.
- The positive momentum included **receding trade tensions after the U.S.-China first phase trade deal and synchronized tax cuts**, among others.
- There have been concerns that a growth rate of 3.3% is not ideal for the world economy. There is a **need for fiscal policies to be more aggressive and the need for structural reforms and dynamism in policy-making**.

6. Schools in Odisha's Jajpur remain closed as elephant runs amok

- According to the Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO), which keeps a tab on the **human-elephant conflict**, 102 persons have died. The loss of human lives in elephant attacks in Odisha has crossed the 100-mark in a year, for the first time.
- **The high number of human deaths has only led to retaliation from the villagers**, which is contributing to the alarming number of **unnatural deaths of elephants**.

7. 'Work awarded for Delhi-Mumbai Expressway'

- The 1290-km-long access-controlled **Delhi-Mumbai Expressway passes through Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra**.

- The expressway could prove to be a **growth engine for the region** with logistics, educational and health hubs coming up alongside it and also creating job opportunities for the youth.
- There is also the possibility of converting the expressway into an “**electric highway**” like those in the European countries with buses and trucks running with electric cables.
- **22 Greenfield Corridors of 7,500 km length are being developed by the government.**
- A **National Highways Authority of India portal** has been launched to expedite and bring greater transparency into the decision-making process of granting contracts in the projects.

8. Forex reserves at life-time high of \$462.16 bn

- The latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) noted that the country’s foreign exchange reserves have increased to touch a life-time high of \$462.16 billion.
- The rise in reserves was mainly on account of an **increase in foreign currency assets, a major component of the overall reserves.**

G. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today !!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which of the following statements are correct with respect to The National Security Act?

1. It is applicable to the citizens of India only.
2. The maximum period for which any person may be detained shall be six months from the date of detention.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option d

Explanation:

- The NSA also gives power to the governments to detain a foreigner in a view to regulate his presence or expel from the country.
- The maximum period for which any person may be detained shall be twelve months from the date of detention.

2. Which of the following are not covered under the Integrated Child Development Scheme?

- a) Immunization
- b) Formal pre-school education
- c) Supplementary nutrition
- d) Health check-up

Answer:

Option b

Explanation:

- ICDS provides for anganwadis or day-care centers that deliver a package of six services for the children, including supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education, nutrition and health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services to hospitals.

3. Which of the following country is the largest sugar producer in the world:

- a) Brazil
- b) India
- c) United states of America
- d) China

Answer:

Option b

Explanation:

- In 2018-19, India overtook Brazil to become the world's largest sugar producer.
- Brazil holds a 35% share of the global exports market, in comparison with a mere 5% share for India, according to Food and Agriculture Organisation data. Most Indian sugar is consumed domestically.

4. Arrange the following in increasing order of their contribution to the tax revenues of the government.

1. Corporation tax
2. Income tax
3. GST
4. Custom duties

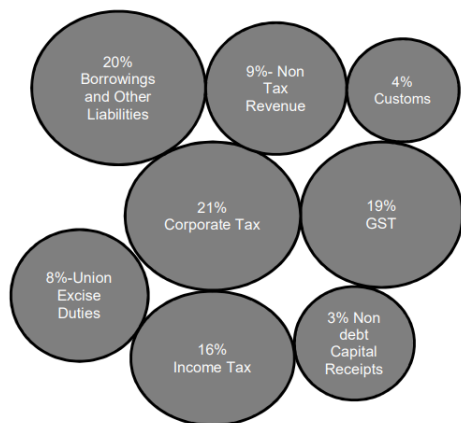
Options:

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

Answer:

Option a

Explanation:



Data from Budget 2019.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Given the current inflation trends, the monetary policy has its own limits in helping boost India's slowing growth. The need of the hour is more structural reforms and fiscal measures. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. The NITI Aayog's draft policy to revamp the government's Integrated Child Development Scheme in the urban areas is a welcome relief, considering the distinctive characters of the urban areas and the corresponding health needs. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)