

3 Jan 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India, Nepal to hold talks on Kalapani border issue](#)

Background

- In November 2019, India released fresh maps of the newly created Union Territories (UTs) of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, along with a map of India depicting these UTs.
- In the maps, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was part of Jammu and Kashmir, while Gilgit-Baltistan was included in Ladakh.
- The map also included the Kalapani area.
- The Nepal government then lodged a protest against the inclusion of the Kalapani area, claiming it as

Nepalese territory.

Context

- The Ministry of External Affairs has now said Nepal and India will resolve the Kalapani border issue through dialogue.

Geographical Location



- Kalapani is a 35 square kilometre area, which is **claimed by both India and Nepal**. **River Mahakali**, earlier known as river Kali, flows through Kalapani, which is situated on the eastern bank of the river.
- Both India and Nepal claim Kalapani as an integral part of their territories — **India** as part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district and **Nepal** as part of the Darchula district.
- Kalapani is also a tri-junction point, where the Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan (Chinese) borders meet. The region has been manned by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police since 1962.

What is the dispute?

- The source of river Mahakali is at the heart of the dispute between the countries.
- The **1816 Treaty of Segauli**, signed between British India and Nepal, defined river **Mahakali** as the western border of Nepal. River Mahakali has several tributaries, all of which merge at Kalapani.
- **India** claims that the river begins in Kalapani as this is where all its tributaries merge. But Nepal claims that it begins from Lipu Lekh Pass, the origin of most of its tributaries.
- **Nepal** has laid claim to all areas east of the Lipu Gad — the rivulet that joins the river Kali on its border, a tri-junction with India and China.

Politics of Kalapani

- The origin of the dispute goes back to the early 19th century; politically it emerged as a contentious issue between India and Nepal after the two countries signed the Treaty of Mahakali in 1996.
- The two countries had formed the Joint Technical Boundary Committee in 1981 to resolve the dispute. Though the committee managed to resolve a large part of the dispute, they failed to reach a final settlement.
- Eventually, the issue was referred to the foreign secretaries of the two countries and they have been trying to find a resolution to the dispute.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Arogya Sanjeevani Policy

Context

- The [Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India \(IRDAI\)](#) asked health and general insurers to offer the product to cover the basic health needs of clients by offering them a minimum of Rs 1 lakh and a maximum sum-insured of Rs 5 lakh.
- The product will be called Arogya Sanjeevani Policy succeeded by the name of the insurance company.

Details

- As per the regulator, the health insurance market has a number of individual health insurance products at the moment.
- It may be challenging for the customers to choose an appropriate product as each of the products has unique features.
- The standard product should have the basic mandatory covers, no add-ons or optional covers are allowed to be offered along with the standard product and the insurer may determine the price keeping in view the covers proposed to be offered subject to complying with IRDAI guidelines.

What should the policy include?

- The mandatory covers under the standard health product include hospitalisation expenses, other expenses such as cataract subject to sub-limits, dental treatment and plastic surgery that have been necessitated due to disease or injury, all daycare treatments and expenses on road ambulance subject to a maximum of Rs 2,000 per hospitalisation.
- It should also include expenses incurred on hospitalisation under AYUSH treatment, pre-hospitalisation expenses incurred for a period of 30 days prior to the date of hospitalisation, post-hospitalisation expenses for a period of 60 days from the date of discharge from hospital.
- The product may be distributed across all channels including micro insurance agents, point of sale persons and common public service centres.
- IRDAI has fixed the minimum entry age as 18 and maximum as 65 years and said the policy is subject to lifelong renewability.

Category: ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

1. India records less than 100 tiger deaths for the first time in three years

Context

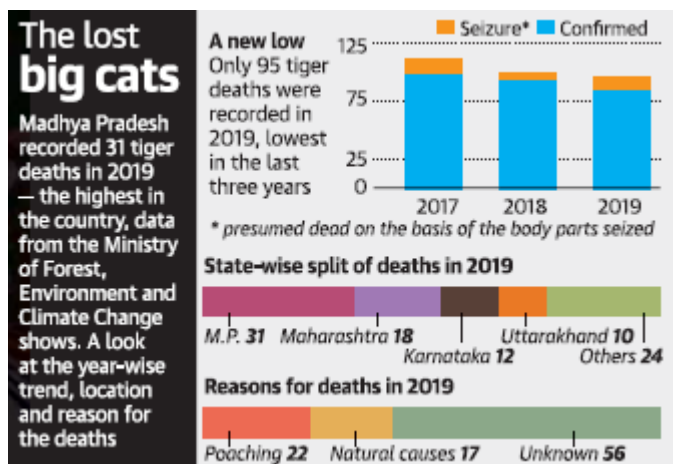
- According to data from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), for the first time in the past three years, the number of tiger deaths in a year in the country has been less than 100.

A look at stats

- In **2019**, there were 84 cases of tiger deaths in the country and 11 cases of seizures (in which a tiger is presumed dead on the basis of body parts seized by authorities). Both put together, the number of

tiger deaths **was 95**.

- The data on tiger mortality also confirms 22 cases of poaching in the country and one case of tiger poisoning in 2019.
- In **2018**, the number of tiger deaths recorded was **100** (93 mortalities and seven seizures).
- In **2017**, the number of tiger deaths was **115** (98 mortalities and 17 seizures).
- In **2016**, it was **122** (101 mortalities and 21 seizures).



Figures from the States

- Madhya Pradesh, which has the highest number of tigers in the country (526, as per the last census), has recorded the most number of cases of tiger deaths, with 31 tiger deaths reported from the central Indian State in 2019.
- It is followed by Maharashtra, which reported 18 deaths.
- Karnataka, another State with high tiger population, recorded 12 deaths, and Uttarakhand recorded ten deaths.
- Tamil Nadu recorded seven cases of tiger deaths.

How was this achieved?

- The reduced numbers of tiger mortalities are because of surveillance, good management of Tiger Reserves and a lot of awareness and education programmes on tiger conservation.
- M-STriPES (Monitoring System for Tigers-Intensive Protection & Ecological Status) patrolling app was deployed and used in every Tiger Reserve.

Recommendations

- Tigers are coming out of Reserves and covering long distances, so there is a need for more Tiger Reserves.

Also read: [Tiger Conservation in India](#)

Category: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. Indian Science Congress (ISC)

Context

- Prime Minister inaugurated the 107th edition of the Indian Science Congress in Bengaluru.

Details

- The objective of the ISC is to build a scientifically literate country and mould younger generations empowered with critical thinking and scientific temper.
 - Article 51A (h) mandates that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- The theme of ISC 2020 is “Science and Technology: Rural Development”.
- The event brings together science fraternity across the world to discuss scientific innovation and research.

Indian Science Technology and Engineering facilities Map (I-STEM) Portal

- The web portal ‘I-STEM’ has been developed by scientists from the Indian Institute of Science - Bengaluru.
- I-STEM will allow researchers to identify the specific facility they need located closest to them for their R&D work in India.
- Termed as ‘**One Nation One Research Web Portal**’ for the scientific community, the portal will link researchers and resources, hold a database of all the R&D facilities established in institutions around the country, and enable their sharing in a transparent manner.
- A secure payment gateway and SMS-based booking confirmation would enable them to compare the usage charges, make payments and schedule the time-slots.
- In the near future, there are also plans to include private laboratories and universities in the database, which could also benefit start-ups.

Need for the Project

- At present, there is no mechanism for young scientists to gain access to facilities needed for experiments, which are not available in their labs. As a result, they have to individually approach institutes to seek permissions to use their facilities, a process that is tedious.
- By the time a researcher gets a time slot to make use of the facility, their samples get degraded. The aim, therefore, is to make the entire process hassle-free.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. In the ruins of unilateralism

Introduction

The year 2019 had many issues that defined global politics.

- There were protests by students against the establishment in several parts of the world — from Santiago, Hong Kong, Beirut to New Delhi.
- The rise of assertive China both in trade and foreign policy and the relative decline in America’s power.
- Iran’s dangerously aggressive, yet calculated behaviour and the rise of Turkey as a new power in

USA's domination in World Politics after the fall of the Soviet Union

- The U.S. is the world's mightiest military power and arguably the centre of the post-Soviet world order.
- In the 1990s, the U.S.'s dominance was at its peak with **international and multilateral organisations getting overshadowed** by its pre-eminence.
- In 2001, after the September 11 terrorist attacks, it got international support for its war in Afghanistan.
- In 2003, the U.S. went ahead with the plan to bomb Iraq despite the UN opposition, reminding the world of imperial invasions.

But the global situation is different, and more complex today.

Three developments in 2019 suggested that the U.S.'s ability to shape global politics is clearly declining.

1. The Afghan experience

- The U.S. went to Afghanistan in October 2001, with a vow to destroy Al-Qaeda and topple the Taliban regime. After years the US is now desperate to get out of a stalemated conflict and has started direct negotiations with the Taliban.
- The whole Afghan experience shows how the U.S. botched up the war.
 - The U.S. has a **superior hand in conventional warfare**.
 - But winning a war abroad is not just about toppling a hostile regime, but also about stabilizing the country after the regime is toppled.
- The U.S., history shows, is good at the former but fares poorly in the latter. It is now left with no other option but to reach an agreement with the Taliban for a face-saving exit.
- That would leave Kabul's fragile, faction-ridden government exposed to the Taliban insurgency, just like how the Mohammed Najibullah government was left to the Afghan Mujahideen in 1989 after the Soviet withdrawal.

2. The Iran stand-off

- The U.S.-Iran tensions were triggered by President Trump's unilateral decision to **pull the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal**.
- Trump's plan was to put "maximum pressure" on Iran through sanctions and force Tehran to renegotiate the nuclear deal. But Iran countered it through "maximum resistance", instead of giving in.
- The year 2019 saw Iran repeatedly provoking the U.S. and its allies.
 - It **shot down an American drone** over the Gulf, captured a **British tanker** and is believed to have either carried out or **orchestrated multiple attacks on oil tankers** that pass through the Strait of Hormuz.
 - Two Saudi oil facilities came under attack, which temporarily cut the kingdom's oil output by half. Iran was blamed for the attacks.
- The only counter-measure the U.S. took in response to Iran's growing provocations was imposing more **sanctions**.
- The U.S.'s inability to shape outcomes of the wars it launches is acting as a deterrent against its own war machines.

3. Cracks in the NATO

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Cold War alliance that was formed as a

counterweight to the Soviet Union, continued to act as a vehicle of Western military dominance under the leadership of the U.S. in the post-Soviet order.

- The alliance has come under pressure in recent years with the rise of nationalist-populist leaders, like Mr. Trump, who have a favourable view of Russian President Vladimir Putin and are critical of NATO.
- These contradictions sharpened in 2019, suggesting that there are growing cracks in the alliance.
- Turkey invaded northeastern Syria's Kurdish held-territories, which had housed U.S. troops during the war against the Islamic State.
 - Ankara practically forced the Trump administration to pull back troops from the areas before it started airstrikes.
 - The U.S. was relegated to the role of a spectator when a determined Turkey first captured some towns on the border and then struck a deal with Russia to create a buffer between Turkey and the Kurdish-held territories of Syria, which will be manned by Russian and Turkish troops.

Conclusion

- These incidents do not mean that the U.S.'s dominance over global politics is over. But they do show that America's long wars and its inability to shape post-war outcomes are impacting its stature in an international system that centres around it.
- The relative decline in America's power coupled with the rise of new and old powers point to a structural churning in the post-Cold War order.
 - New economic powers (China) are on the rise and an old military power (Russia) is making a comeback.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. A weak test: On Swachh ranking of cities

Background

For background, check the link below:

[CNA dated March 22, 2019](#)

Introduction

- Sanitation and public health are responsibilities of State governments and the States have failed at managing growing volumes of municipal and hazardous waste.
 - The problem has been compounded by the absence of plans that take a holistic view of housing, sanitation, water supply, waste management and transport.
- To address these issues and unleash the competitive spirit among States, the Union Government had launched Swachh Survekshan.

Ahead of the launch of Swachh Survekshan 2020, the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is once again trying to stir up competition among cities, by pre-ranking them for their performance.

Issues

- The idea of competition seems good but in reality, the problems confronting urban India require large-scale infrastructure creation, full adherence to legal requirements on waste management, and transparent technical audits.

- Many cities remain clueless about handling their waste, one shocking example being the rising mountain of garbage at the Ghazipur landfill in Delhi.
 - Ironically, Bhopal, which figures among the top five cleanest cities, continues to live with the effects of the gas disaster of 1984.
- Ranks and prizes clearly cannot solve the national waste management crisis.

Steps to be taken

- The Urban Affairs Ministry has identified ambitious targets: “100% processing and safe disposal of waste and wastewater treatment and reuse.”
 - The Ministry has also sanctioned funds under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) to help States set up facilities necessary to manage waste.
- **States should ask for extended funding** under such schemes to create the infrastructure for a future-focused clean-up and, simultaneously, institute measures to reduce waste.
- The **emphasis should be on creating a circular economy** centred at the principle of material recovery from all kinds of waste, reuse, recycling and reduced pressure on natural resources.

Conclusion

- A sound ranking of cities and towns is important but this will also require changes in the policy formulation and a switch to alternative sources to eliminate single-use plastic.

2. Minimising the housing divide

Provision of Urban Amenities to Rural Areas (PURA)

- PURA was aimed at the provisioning of urban amenities and livelihood opportunities in rural areas to bridge the rural-urban divide thereby reducing the migration from rural to urban areas.
- PURA was for holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Panchayat (or group of Panchayats) through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) by providing livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to improve the quality of life in rural areas.
- It included
 - Simultaneous delivery of different schemes.
 - Deployment of funds for operations and maintenance of assets along with capital investment for the creation of assets.
 - Synergy in operations of schemes – leading to optimal use of resources.
 - Standards for service delivery in rural areas at par with those set for urban areas.
- The realisation of PURA’s transformative potential **depends on public policies** that recognise that its design goes beyond the mere creation of economic infrastructure and employment opportunities in rural areas. It also **aims to develop social infrastructure**.

To further this paradigm, access to good housing, including housing amenities, should become a priority.

Issues with the housing sector

- Unfortunately, housing in rural areas is one sector that has consistently suffered from the lack of meaningful market interventions, including the supply of developed land and financing for housing.
- India has taken steps in the past but it has not worked in minimising urban-rural divides. The incompatibilities in supply and demand also mean millions of Indians dwell in unsecured housing.
 - Officially, the incidence of this form of housing-related poverty is in the order of 25.85 million (82% in rural areas and 18% in urban).
 - Menial occupation workers and low-income earners have been facing these forms of poverty the most.

- Thus, development interventions must focus on rural and urban areas with due consideration for new construction and redevelopment.

The way forward

If India is to have a real chance to minimise the housing development divide, it requires an **integrated housing development strategy for the rural context**, to be implemented in “mission mode”. Such a mission should have:

- First, a definite **time frame**.
- Second, it requires **political will** as expressed in party election manifestos. There must also be accountability in terms of implementing such a mission agenda on a continuous basis, with social audits at multiple levels of governance.
- Third, realistic resource allocation is required given the cost of redevelopment and new housing units besides other development costs of drinking water supply, household latrines, energy, and drainage connectivity.
- Fourth, penetration of the market, including the cooperative sector for the supply of critical inputs such as land and finances, is the need of the hour.
 - Public-private-partnership projects should be encouraged on public or government-owned lands, with fiscal and other incentives. Landowners should be encouraged to develop incentive-based affordable housing projects.
- Last, the people facing housing poverty must be made partners. Microfinance and self-help groups could be roped into this end.

Kindly note:

PURA is a predecessor to Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM).

[su_box title="**Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM)**" box_color="#7960a0" title_color="#ffffff"]

- The Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) is a scheme launched by the Government of India in 2016 to deliver integrated project-based infrastructure in the rural areas, which will also include the development of economic activities and skill development. The preferred mode of delivery is through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) while using various scheme funds for financing.
- The Mission aims at the development of rural growth clusters which have latent potential for growth, in all States and Union Territories (UTs), which would trigger overall development in the region. These clusters would be developed by provisioning of economic activities, developing skills & local entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities. The Rurban Mission will thus develop a cluster of Smart Villages.
- For the purposes of SPMRM, Rurban areas refer to a cluster of 15-20 villages having about 30 to 40 lakh population.
- The clusters will be geographically contiguous Gram Panchayats with a population of about 25000 to 50000 in plain and coastal areas and a population of 5000 to 15000 in desert, hilly or tribal areas.
- The funding will be through various schemes of the government converged into the cluster.

Components of the scheme:

- The scheme will function with **14 mandatory components** to ensure an optimum level of development of a cluster, which includes **skill development training linked to economic activities, digital literacy**, fully equipped mobile health unit and inter-village road connectivity, developing skills & local **entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities**.

- The other components of the scheme in clusters will be providing citizen service centres - for electronic delivery of citizen-centric services and e-gram connectivity, public transport, LPG gas connections, agro-processing, agri services including storage and warehousing, sanitation, provision of piped water supply, solid and liquid waste management and upgrading education facilities.[/su_box]

F. Tidbits

1. Mannequins to handle traffic surveillance

Context

- As an innovative measure, the Karimnagar Commissionerate of Police has decided to install mannequins for traffic surveillance in various parts of the district.

Details

- The mannequins wearing traffic police gear, including uniform, reflector jacket, cap, boots, mask and sunglasses, would be installed at strategic locations to regulate traffic and prevent accidents.
- The mannequin traffic police would also keep surveillance with a secret camera and take photos of traffic violators.

Significance

- It will create fear among commuters about traffic policemen watching them and hence reduce traffic violations.
- The mannequins would be of immense help as there is a shortage of traffic policemen at unmanned junctions.

2. NCLAT decision is a recipe for disaster, Tatas tell SC

Context:

- Tata Sons Private Limited has moved the Supreme Court against the ruling of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) to reinstate Cyrus Mistry as its Chairman which they claim is a major blow to corporate democracy and rights of the Board of Directors.

Grounds for appeal

The Tata Group's petition seeks to quash an order to restore **Cyrus Mistry** as chairman. Excerpts from the petition:

- Restoration of Cyrus Mistry "undermines corporate democracy". He was replaced after a majority in the Board voted against him
- Mistry never sought reinstatement after his tenure ended
- NCLAT's conclusions are based on an error that Tata Sons

continues to be a public company

- NCLAT imposed an "unwarranted and unsolicited consultative process" by asking the Tatas to consult minority stakeholder Shapoorji Pallonji Group before appointing the executive chairman



Background:

[22nd Dec 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis](#)

G. Prelims Facts

1. Young Scientists Labs

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Defence Research and Development Organisation's ([DRDO](#)) Young Scientists' Laboratories to enable focused research in advanced technologies.

Details

Investment in the future technology is the need of the hour and innovation is necessary to protect our citizens, borders and interests.

- The lab lays down the foundation for research and development of futuristic technologies.
- Each lab will work on key advanced technology of importance to the development of futuristic defence systems, such as artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, cognitive technologies, asymmetric technologies and smart materials.

Significance

- In the field of defence manufacturing, DRDO will come up with new innovations to make India self-reliant.
- In promoting a Vibrant Defence Sector, DRDO's innovations have a huge role in strengthening [Make in India](#).

2. Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO)

- The Foreigners Registration Office is the primary agency to regulate the registration, movement, stay, departure of foreigners, and also for recommending the extension of stay in India.
- The FRRO is an office exclusively for the services of foreign tourists in the country.

- The FRRO comes under the administrative control of the Union Home Ministry.

‘e-FRRO’ (e-Foreigners Regional Registration Office) scheme

- e-FRRO scheme is aimed at building a centralized, transparent online platform for foreigners to avail visa related services, and to provide Faceless, Cashless and Paperless services to the foreigners with a user-friendly experience.

How does it work?

- e-FRRO includes online FRRO Service delivery mechanism without the requirement of visiting FRRO/FRO Office barring exceptional cases.
- Using this application, foreigners are required to create their own User ID by registering themselves.
- Afterwards, they can apply online through the registered User-ID for various Visa and Immigration related services in India viz. Registration, Visa Extension, Visa Conversion, Exit Permit, etc.

Advantages of e-FRRO

- It includes the facilitation of legitimate foreigners through “Digital India” vision of the Government.
- Foreigners need not visit FRRO/FRO office – “Services from the comfort of home”.
- Convenient and time-saving.
- An exclusive dashboard for User-friendly experience and Uniform & Standardized Services across the country.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements about Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) :

1. CPCB is a statutory organization under the Ministry of Environment and Forests.
2. It was established under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both
- d) None

Ans: b

Explanation:

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) was constituted in 1974 as per the provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.

Q2. When will an elected member be disqualified under the Anti-Defection law?

1. If an elected member voluntarily gives up his membership of a political party.
2. If he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party.
3. If a nominated member joins a political party after 6 months of nomination.

Options:

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

Ans: d

Explanation:

- A nominated member of a House becomes disqualified for being a member of the House if he joins any political party after the expiry of six months from the date on which he takes his seat in the House.
- This means that he may join any political party within six months of taking his seat in the House without inviting this disqualification.

Q3. Which of the following is/are correctly matched?

1. Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve- West Bengal
2. Satkosia Tiger Reserve - Odisha
3. Rajaji National Park- Uttarakhand
4. Buxa Tiger Reserve- Maharashtra

Options:

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

Ans: b

Explanation:

- Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve- Maharashtra
- Satkosia Tiger Reserve - Odisha
- Rajaji National Park- Uttarakhand
- Buxa Tiger Reserve- West Bengal

Q4. Arrange the following from west to east:

1. Kanchenjunga
2. Annapurna
3. Dhaulagiri
4. Mt Everest

Options:

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

d) 4-3-2-1

Ans: c

Explanation:



I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In global politics, the hegemony of a single power is temporary. Explain the statement with reference to the USA? (250 words, 15 marks)
2. If India is to have a real chance to minimise the housing development divide, it requires an integrated housing development strategy. Discuss. (150 words, 10 marks)