

# 18 Jan 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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# A. GS 1 Related

## Category: Social Issues

### 1. 'Bru deal could fuel tensions'

#### Context:

- The signing of the agreement between the Government of India, Governments of Tripura and Mizoram and Bru-Reang representatives.

#### Background:

- In 1997, **Brus to escape ethnic violence in Mizoram moved to adjoining Tripura.**
- More than 40,000 Brus have been living in six **refugee camps in northern Tripura's Kanchanpur sub-division since 1997.**
- Only a small fraction of the total refugees returned to Mizoram after nine phases of repatriation till November 30, 2019.
- **Most of the Brus declined the Centre's rehabilitation packages citing insecurity and poor living conditions in Mizoram.**

#### Details:

- The agreement aims to end the 23-year-old Bru-Reang refugee crisis by **seeking to settle some 35,000 Bru tribal people in Tripura.** It allows only those who have stayed back to be resettled in Tripura.

#### Concerns:

- The move to settle the refugees in Tripura and not in Mizoram from where they were actually displaced, **could encourage the creation of ethnocentric States in the northeast.**
- The move has the potential of **creating conflicts between the Brus and indigenous communities of Tripura.**

**For more information on this issue refer:**

17th January 2020 CNA

## **B. GS 2 Related**

### **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

#### **1. '2020 will be an important year for Indo-U.S. relations'**

##### **Context:**

U.S. President's proposed official visit to India.

##### **Background:**

- The partnership between India and the United States has been growing from strength to strength in recent times.
- **Defence Minister and External Affairs Minister** of India met **the US Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State** in Washington DC, in December 2019 for the **second annual India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue.**
- The 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism between India and the U.S. and provides for a review of the security, defence and **strategic partnership between the two countries.** The 2019 edition was the second 2+2 meeting and the first in the U.S.
- **The inaugural 2+2 dialogue was held in New Delhi in 2018.**

##### **Outcomes:**

- One of the major outcomes of the 2+2 talks was both sides reiterating their commitment to **advance towards a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.**

- Both countries have committed to **further deepen military-to-military cooperation**, including between the Indian Navy and the US Navy Fleets under US Indo-Pacific Command, Central Command, and Africa Command and intend to expand similar cooperation between their respective Armies and Air Forces.
- The two sides also concluded the **Industrial Security Annex** during the summit.
- Priority initiatives have been identified for execution under **the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) programme**. These measures will provide momentum to collaboration between the private defence industries of both India and the US.
- The two sides also agreed to enhance their engagement in the **area of defence innovation**.
- During the 2+2 talks in Washington, both countries had agreed to promote **practical cooperation in infrastructure development, counter-terrorism, cybersecurity and regional connectivity**.

#### Details:

Setting the agenda for a proposed Official visit by the U.S. President to India, the U.S. officials have stated that the focus of the Indo-U.S. engagements in 2020 would be to implement decisions taken during the 2+2 meeting in December 2019 and on trade.

#### Blue Dot Network (BDN):

- In line with the spirit of enhancing cooperation in infrastructure development and regional connectivity, **the U.S. has launched “Blue Dot Network” (BDN) to encourage private investment in infrastructure projects**.
- **BDN already has Japan and Australia** on board along with the U.S.
- **The BDN is a “rating mechanism”** that would grade infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific region on different **parameters like debt, environmental standards, labour standards, etc.**
- Given that it **involves citizen participation, it will ensure transparency in infrastructure development** and is planned as a direct counter to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, **unlike the BRI, the BDN would not offer public funds or loans for the project**.
- With India refusing to join China’s BRI, there have been efforts to get India to join the U.S.-led BDN.
- Given India’s increasing prominence and stakes in the region, India would have an important role in BDN.

## 2. U.K. plans govt.-to-govt. framework for future defence deals with India

#### Context:

In the last few years, India has concluded **high-value defence deals through the Inter-Governmental route**, major examples being that of the **Rafale jets, S-400 air defence systems and stealth frigates**.

#### Background:

- In the face of **unending delays in defence modernization**, mostly due to long delays in the conclusion of defence deals, India has of late shown increasing interest in Inter-Governmental arrangement for defence deals.
- Despite several efforts, **the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) remains cumbersome and deals invariably get delayed leading to price escalations**.
- **An Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) between two sovereign governments ensures transparency and is a lighter model**. It has become useful to conclude pending critical deals.
- India has used this route previously also, most notably with Russia with which it has a long history of IGAs.

#### Details:

- Given India's preference for the Inter-Governmental arrangement for defence deals, the U.K. government is working on a government-to-government framework for defence deals in future, with India.
- The U.K. presently does not have such a mechanism but given the lucrative market that India offers it is keen to adopt it.
- Unlike **the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route of the U.S. government**, where the government levies a small service charge, The U.K. model has no such overheads built into the contract.
- The U.K. has made a pitch to India for **collaboration in the areas of aircraft carriers and development of 6th generation fighter aircraft technologies**.
- The Indian Navy has shown interest in the U.K.'s progress in integrated electric-propulsion.
- The two countries have also exchanged subject matter experts, deepening **defence technology development partnership between the two countries**.

#### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

##### 1. Death sentence for rape-murder in 2019 highest in 4 years: NLU report

#### Context:

The fourth edition of '**The Death Penalty in India: Annual Statistics**' published by Project 39A of National Law University (NLU)-Delhi.

#### Details:

- The report notes that a **high number of death sentences awarded in India in recent years relate to cases of sexual offences.**
- The trial courts in India imposed 102 death sentences in 2019, a significant drop from 162 death sentences in 2018. However, the percentage of sexual offences in these cases increased.
- This trend was also seen at the High Courts, where 65.38% (17 out of 26) cases of confirmations of death sentences involved sexual offences along with murder, the highest in four years.
- The Supreme Court in 2019 dealt with 27 capital punishment cases, the highest number since 2001.
- **National debates and legislative trends**, as well as data on administration of death penalty in the report, indicate that **the issue of sexual violence against women and children is now at the heart of the debate on capital punishment in India.**

#### Causes:

##### Public outcry:

- **The frequent occurrence and impunity of sexual violence and the deficiencies within the criminal justice system perpetuating the cycle of sexual violence** has led to a public outcry for harsher punishments.
- There was widespread public outcry following a brutal gang-rape and murder in Hyderabad. Following which, **Andhra Pradesh amended the Indian Penal Code to introduce the death penalty for rape.**

##### POCSO amendment:

- **The amendment to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, introducing stringent mandatory minimum punishments and death penalty** for penetrative sexual assault on children was a major development.

#### Concerns:

- There was an increase in death warrants issued in 2019, it being six as against one in 2018. **All these warrants were eventually stayed by the courts.**

- All warrants that were issued **lacked compliance with the guidelines issued in the case of Shabnam vs. Union of India**. The guidelines issued by the SC requires that a warrant for execution not be issued until reasonable time for exhausting all remedies under the law has lapsed and also specifies procedures to be followed in issuing such warrant.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Centre sets higher GST mop-up target

##### Context:

Measures being taken to increase **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** collections.

##### Background:

- **Lower-than-expected GST collection and compensation cess collections** have been a matter of concern in the past few months.
- **The GST collection has fallen short of the Budget Estimate** by as much as 40 per cent during the April-November period of 2019-20, according to government data.
- **The shortfall could be Rs. 40,000 crores, all of which may be borne by the central government**, considering that the states have been guaranteed 14% annual revenue growth under GST laws.
- The compensation requirements have increased significantly and are unlikely to be met from the compensation cess being collected.

##### Details:

- There are 1.2 crore GST registrants across India.
- With only three months to go before the current financial year ends, enforcement actions have increased and pressure has mounted on revenue officers to augment GST collections in the remaining period of the fiscal to meet the revenue targets.
- The **Revenue Department has fixed the GST target** for January and February 2020 at Rs. 1.15 lakh crore each while the March 2020 collection is to be Rs. 1.25 lakh crore.

##### Use of Data Analytics:



- The field officers have been directed to **go after tax evaders and non-filers using data analytics**.
- Official sources have stated that about 40,000 companies have been **red-flagged for availing excess or fraudulent ITC (Input Tax Credit) and other tax-related wrongful issues like using fake invoices or inflated or fake e—way Bills**, through data analytics.
- GST authorities would look into the mismatch of supply and purchase invoices, mismatch in GSTR-1, GSTR-2A and GSTR-3B, failure to file returns and over-invoicing, to identify the tax evaders.
- Field officers have been directed to **conclude ITC recovery without any overreach** but in a stipulated time frame.

#### Amnesty:

- Taxpayers, who have taken ITC wrongfully, can **voluntarily repay amounts equal to the inadmissible credit before punitive action is taken**. This would save them the penalties and action under the law.

#### High-level Monitoring:

- Principal Chief Commissioners and Chief Commissioners would have to update their efforts to curb tax evasion and leakages, checking fake or huge ITC claims, mismatch in returns filed, etc. on a daily basis.
- The Revenue Secretary would be closely monitoring the exercise and holding high-level review meetings with top officials.

### **Category: INTERNAL SECURITY**

#### **1. 30 experts hired to curb cybercrimes across country**

##### **Context:**

**Strengthening anti-cybercrime framework in India.**

##### **Background:**

- **Cybercrimes in India almost doubled in 2017**, according to statistics released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in 2019.
- Though cybercrimes accounted for less than a percentage (0.43%) of the total cognizable crimes in 2017 it is significant given that India aspires to **become a trillion-dollar digital economy**.
- Cybercrime in India has been evolving rapidly in the 21st century with **increasing intensity and complexity**.



**Details:**

- 30 people have been shortlisted to join the **National Cyber Forensic Lab (NCFL)**.
- It is an effort to strengthen NCFL and upgrade the existing cyber forensic facilities in order to help the investigating officers and security agencies across the country to **prevent, contain, mitigate, investigate and prosecute latest and complex cybercrimes**.
- **Delhi Police Cyber Prevention, Awareness & Detection Centre (CyPAD)** which hosts NCFL was tasked by the Ministry of Home Affairs with the hiring of personnel.
- The hired personnel, come from varied backgrounds and experiences in forensic science and will be deputed to different labs like Cryptocurrency Lab, Cloud Forensic Lab, and Network Forensic Lab. The team will be working under the supervision of senior officers at CyPAD.
- **The CyPAD was set up in 2019 with an aim to provide cyber investigation, cyber forensics, cyber safety and security-related services to the citizens as well as to police units and agencies of Delhi.**
- **The MHA is executing the scheme called I-C4 (Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre) through its Cyber and Information Security division with NCFL being a part of it.**

**Additional Information:**

- **The Information Technology Act, 2000**, passed by the Parliament of India in May 2000, had aimed to curb cybercrimes.
- In 2001, India and the United States had set up an India-US cybersecurity forum as part of a counter-terrorism dialogue.
- **The Ministry of Home Affairs (India) runs a Twitter handle called “Cyber Dost” to create cybersecurity awareness since March 2018.**

**Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****1. GSAT-30 gives India a communication boost****Context:**

The launch of GSAT-30.

**Details:**

- **The communication satellite, GSAT-30**, was launched into space from the Guiana Space Centre in **Kourou, French Guiana**.
- The high-power GSAT-30 satellite is equipped with 12 normal C band and 12 Ku band transponders.
- GSAT-30 will **replace the INSAT-4A** launched in 2005 by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

#### Utility:

- GSAT-30 will provide **DTH [Direct To Home] television services, connectivity to VSATs** [that support working of banks] **ATMs, stock exchange, television uplinking and teleport services**, digital satellite news gathering and **e-governance applications**.
- Notably, the satellite will also be used for **bulk data transfer**.

#### Launch vehicle:

- ISRO had to opt for the foreign launch vehicle for GSAT-30 because the GSAT-30 (3357 kg) is much heavier than the 2,000-kg lifting capacity of **ISRO's Geostationary Launch Vehicle GSLV-MkII**.
- Though the **GSLV-MkIII of ISRO can lift up to 4,000 kg**, the space agency plans to save the upcoming MkIIIs for its **first human space flight Gaganyaan of 2022 and two preceding crew-less trials**. The first Indian crew-less test flight is planned for the end of 2020.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Quiet, for now

##### Context:

The signing of **phase one trade deal between the U.S. and China**.

##### Details:

- **China will boost purchases of the U.S. goods and services by \$200 billion over two years in exchange for the rolling back of some tariffs**, under an initial trade deal signed by the world's two largest economies, defusing an 18-month row that has hit global growth.

#### Concerns:

- The phase one trade deal is **only a temporary truce that leaves the key issues of the trade dispute unresolved**.
  - The pact still leaves intact nearly **three-fourths of punitive tariffs slapped on China** since the onset of the trade rift in 2017.
  - **Agricultural exports** which have been an important area of concern for the American farming community **forms the smallest proportion of the latest offers** relative to manufactured goods and services.
  - Washington still remains wary of Chinese guarantees on the **contentious aspects of the trade dispute involving Intellectual Property (IP) protection and alleged forced technology transfers**.
  - Questions over **government control of China's state-owned firms and industrial subsidies** which remain the core bilateral dispute are yet to be resolved.
- Under the deal, China is to buy \$200-billion in goods and services from the U.S. in the coming two years, which marks **an unprecedented increase**. This has caused speculation on the **impact these steep targets could have on China's other trading partners**. Countries previously exporting to China would be losing their market to the U.S. now.

#### Significance:

- The phase one trade deal **sets the political stage for further bilateral negotiations** between the two countries. Officials have stated that the negotiations on a phase two agreement would begin immediately.
- The deal could help **stem a further deterioration in the global growth scenario and boost the global growth prospects**.
- The deal gains prominence in the **backdrop of Washington's decision to withdraw the tag of a "currency manipulator" upon Beijing**. There could also be a possible revival of an erstwhile Obama-era **mechanism for economic dialogue** that was abandoned under the present administration.
- The new forum could set the tone to **address sensitive issues that have dogged Beijing's relations with the U.S.**

For more information on this topic refer:

17th January 2020 CNA

**Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

### 1. One government proposes, the next disposes

**Context:**

The trend of **incumbent governments cancelling the projects and proposals of precedent governments.**

**Background:**

Andhra Pradesh:

- After coming to power, the new government in Andhra Pradesh has cancelled or put on hold a number of **high-profile State contracts and projects**, many involving foreign partners. Most notably in the case of planning for the proposed **city of Amaravati.**
- In addition, the incumbent government has made other reversals, including challenging the contracts awarded towards the massive **Polavaram dam project**, **sacking a large number of State bureaucrats**, and **restricting liquor licences** and sales.
- There have been attempts to **renegotiate existing power purchase agreements** and other high-value tenders.

Maharashtra:

- The new State government of Maharashtra is considering cancelling public work commitments made by their predecessors like the **Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project** and the **Mumbai-Pune hyperloop project.**

Similar instances have been **noted in states which have witnessed changes in the government.**

**Incumbent Government's arguments:**

- Reviewing commitments made by the previous government will help **increase accountability** and **possibly decrease corruption in the State.**

Increasing accountability:

- The review exercise may help **verify if any project has been awarded at allegedly uncompetitive pricing** to favour any particular person or group.

#### Changed circumstances:

- The review might help ascertain the **viability of the project** or contract in changed circumstances. For example, the attempts to **renegotiate existing power purchase agreements make sense in the light of falling power prices and consumption.**

#### The case of Amaravati:

- Going by facts and figures, some of the Andhra Pradesh government's actions have merit, most notably in the case of planning for Amaravati, the proposed new State capital city.
- There were **recommendations from a Central government expert committee** to expand an existing city in the State, instead of choosing a reportedly flood-prone area.
- **Funding was never assured for Amaravati**, even with Central government money, private bonds, and loan pledges by the World Bank.
- The new government also faces external hurdles to attract investment.
  - The Central government has reneged on a **previous promise to grant Andhra Pradesh "Special Category Status"**, which would have enabled the State to provide tax holidays to new investors.
  - **The neighbouring, business-friendly Hyderabad** with the infrastructure and resources already in place has attracted many investors.
  - Many investments announced during the previous government have failed to materialize.

#### **Concerns:**

##### Favouritism:

- There are concerns that the major intention behind reviews is to **refashion deals to benefit new government officials and their supporters.**

##### Affecting Genuine Investors:

- Genuine investors face a lot of difficulties in the wake of reviews. **The subsequent delays lead to huge losses for them.**
- Cancellations expose the State and also the genuine investors to potentially **costly and damaging legal challenges.**

### Attracting Investors:

- The constant reviews **risk alienating potential investors**. The relative **lack of information about how the reviews are being made**, and whether **stakeholders have a real voice** in the outcome, will be a major concern to the investors.
- It will become extremely hard for the States to attract foreign investors in the future.
- **In the case of Andhra Pradesh**, potentially at risk is the reputation of what has been considered one of the most business-friendly states in India. It might come across as **a less transparent, less predictable and less open economy**.
- Given the **increasing competitive federalism**, there have been increased numbers of potential Indian business destinations which means that investors can look elsewhere if things in any State get tough.

### Affecting Development:

- Without investments, it will be harder for the State to **raise the revenue it needs for social programmes and economic development**.
- Cancelling multiple high-profile public projects may imperil the **state's ability to create new jobs and opportunities and subsequent development**.

### India's status:

- If more and more States follow this trend, the **dependability of India as a foreign direct investment destination may be negatively affected**.

### Impact on Indian economy:

- Recent events in two of India's largest state economies of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have chilled investor enthusiasm. **In the backdrop of the slowing Indian economy**, this is worrisome given that it will lead to a further slowdown of the economy.

### **Way forward:**

- The States should create a **set of governing rules and guidelines** for future reviews of projects and programmes.
- Establishing procurement regimes that allow for **open tendering, stakeholder engagement, and outside audits** would reassure domestic and foreign investors that **governments are fair and open to all for business**.

Newly-elected governments certainly have the **right to review potentially unjust or unwarranted deals**. However, a State must be careful to provide clear evidence when making its case to trigger such reviews. The review should have the right intentions.

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. A bleak winter for Kota's children

#### Context:

- The death of more than a hundred children in a span of one month in Kota, Rajasthan.

#### Details:

- **The deaths of 100 children in the Kota based hospital** in December 2019 followed by more deaths in the first week of 2020 has brought a renewed **focus on the country's maternal and child health care system**.
- News of the children's deaths from **mostly preventable causes** and the bad state of the government hospital has sparked a nationwide furor.
- Though the children's families have blamed the staff of the hospital for negligence, various studies show that the government hospital is poorly equipped and understaffed.
- The failure of the healthcare system in India as a whole has led to the deaths of children in such large numbers.

#### Concerns:

##### The high number of child mortalities:

- Though the **infant mortality rates have been decreasing**, the **number of deaths due to preventable causes is still high**.
- Figures from the **National Family Health Survey** depict a gradual decline in both infant and maternal mortality, **but the pace has not been satisfactory**.
- In the midst of outrage caused by the death of infants in Kota, disturbing figures of similar deaths emerged from Jodhpur and Bikaner as well as Gujarat's Rajkot and Ahmedabad.

##### Poor facilities:



- Most of the government hospitals **lack sufficient facilities** and beds to cater to the **large patient numbers**.
- The hospitals **lack even basic systems** like centralized oxygen system, ventilators, infusion pumps, nebulisers and warmers.
- **The medical equipment available is also of inferior quality**, which puts the children's health at risk.

#### Unhygienic surroundings:

- **Extremely unhygienic and filthy surroundings** have been reported from the government hospitals which eventually **aids disease transmission** and further worsens the health conditions of the patients.

#### Overworked staff:

- The government **hospitals face a shortage of staff**, and subsequently, the resident staff are generally overworked.

#### Out of pocket expenditure:

- The lack of a quality health system at government hospitals leads to people inadvertently moving towards private hospitals. This leads to **higher out of pocket expenditure and often pushes families into poverty**.

#### Political blame game:

- The Kota episode, followed by deaths reported from elsewhere, has unleashed a political blame game between the ruling government and the Opposition resulting in **lack of efforts to correct the underlying causes**.

#### Pressure on tertiary health care:

- It would be wrong to attribute the issue of infant deaths in Kota only to the failure of the tertiary segment. It is, in fact, the **manifestation of the collapse of the public health system at all levels**.
- Unless **maternal health services, child health services and primary health care facilities are strengthened**, we cannot expect lives to be saved only through treatment at the tertiary level.
- There is a need to **reduce the patient load at the tertiary level**. Tertiary health care is catering to a much higher number of patients than what it is meant to cater to, while **primary care facilities are grossly underutilised**.

### Low budget, unutilised funds:

- The infant mortality is a consequence of **poor budgetary allocation for medical and public health, combined with the problem of unspent capital funds**. This impacts the infrastructure and maintenance of medical equipment in government-run hospitals.

### **Way forward:**

- As a temporary measure, the hospitals should **ensure regular visits of paediatricians to the maternity ward and plug the loopholes in the system**.
- In the long run, the **resources to the health system and infrastructure are to be strengthened**.
- There is an urgent need to **increase health and nutrition budgets**, which are abysmally low, in order to get the mandated outcome from healthcare facilities.
- There is a growing call for **revamping the entire public health system from bottom to up to emphasize more on primary health care systems**.

## **F. Tidbits**

### **1. Amazon to create 1 mn new jobs in India by 2025: Bezos**

- American multinational Amazon has announced plans to **create 1 million new jobs in India by 2025** through investments in technology, infrastructure and its logistics network.
- **Jobs will be created both directly and indirectly and across industries** such as information technology, skill development, content creation, retail, logistics, and manufacturing including software development engineering, cloud computing, content creation, and customer support. This will be in addition to the 7 lakh jobs the company has enabled in India over the last six years.
- The firm would invest \$1 billion to **help bring 10 million traders and micro, small, and medium-sized businesses across India online, enabling \$10 billion in cumulative exports by 2025**.

### **2. Local bodies to pay compensation for failure to treat waste, says NGT**

- In the backdrop of the huge gap in the amount of waste generated and treated in India, **the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has stated that local bodies will be liable to pay a compensation** of Rs. 10 lakh per month for a population of above 10 lakh if there was **continued failure to treat generated waste**.

- The NGT has directed that an **'environment monitoring cell'** be set up in the offices of **Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories**.
- The move aims to **fix accountability on the appropriate authorities**. The move aims to address the consequences of failure on the part of local bodies in managing the waste generated.
- The green panel has specified that **financial burden may be shared with the State governments** in case the local bodies are unable to bear the costs for remedial action.

### 3. Plea in SC says Internet access should be a right

- A petition filed in Supreme Court claims that the **arbitrary and unreasonable Internet shutdowns by the government are a violation of the fundamental rights** protected by the articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution.
- The petition argues that access to the Internet is **merged with manifold fundamental rights like education, information, communication, free speech and expression, privacy and health** among others. It **claims that access to the Internet should be a fundamental right**.
- The petition notes that there were more than **100 instances of Internet shutdowns in 2019 in India**.
- The petition comes shortly after the Supreme Court declared in a **judgment in the Anuradha Bhasin case** challenging the Jammu and Kashmir restrictions that free speech and expression on the Internet was a fundamental right and constitutionally protected under Article 19.
- The judgment, **restrained from delving into the question of whether the right to access the Internet is a fundamental right under the Constitution**.

### 4. Govt. failed in e-mobility mission, says plea in SC

- A petition filed in the Supreme Court alleges **non-implementation of the National e-Mobility Mission Plan, 2020**.
- The plan was **initiated in 2012** and had made several recommendations for the **adoption of electric vehicles, including electric-powered government fleets and public transportation and subsidies** for those who opt for electric and zero-emission vehicles.
- The petition contended that the governmental apathy has **violated the fundamental rights of citizens to health and clean environment guaranteed under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution**.
- A Bench led by Chief Justice has directed that the Union Ministry of Surface Transport and Highways through its Minister be impleaded in the case.

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. China sees second death due to SARS-linked virus

- Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a viral respiratory disease of zoonotic origin caused by the SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV).
- Antibiotics are ineffective, as SARS is a viral disease. Treatment of SARS is mainly supportive with antipyretics.
- The SARS coronavirus is one of several viruses identified by WHO as a likely **cause of a future epidemic** in a new plan developed after the Ebola epidemic for urgent research and development before and during an epidemic toward new diagnostic tests, vaccines and medicines.

Read more about Coronavirus in **17<sup>th</sup> January PIB Summary and Analysis**.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

### 1. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. The central administrative tribunal (CAT) has been established in pursuance of Article 323A of the Indian Constitution.
2. The members of the defence forces, officers, staff of the Supreme Court and the secretarial staff of the Parliament are not covered under the jurisdiction of CAT.
3. The appeal against the orders of a tribunal could be made only in Supreme Court.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option a

Explanation:

The appeal against the orders of the CAT could be made in High Court and not in Supreme Court.

### 2. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. The Constitutional Amendments with respect to federal provisions will need the ratification by at least 50 per cent of the state assemblies.

2. The states are required to ratify within 6 months of passage by the parliament, failing which the bill lapses.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option a

Explanation:

There is no time limit within which the states should give their consent to the bill.

### 3. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. The GSAT-30 is a communication satellite of India which was placed in the geostationary orbit by the Ariane launch vehicle.
2. The GSLV-MkIII launch vehicle has a capacity of placing 4 tonne class satellites of the GSAT series into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbits.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

Self-explanatory

### 4. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. The “Blue Dot Network” (BDN) encourages private investment in infrastructure projects Indo-Pacific region by offering public loans to viable infrastructural projects.
2. Currently the U.S., Japan, Australia and India are its members.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option d

Explanation:

- The BDN is a “rating mechanism” that would grade infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific region on different parameters like debt, environmental standards, labour standards, etc.
- Unlike the Belt and Road initiative of China, the BDN would not offer public funds or loans for the project.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The phase one trade deal between the U.S. and China though is only a temporary truce that leaves the key issues of the trade dispute still unresolved, it is still a significant step forward. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. In the backdrop of large number of infant deaths being reported from Kota and other places in Rajasthan discuss the major underlying causes and also the associated concerns. Suggest suitable measures to address the challenge. (15 marks, 150 words)