

## 21 Jan 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Pak. urges U.S. to get it off FATF grey list

##### Context:

The upcoming **meeting of the FATF in Beijing**.

##### Background:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the **international terror financing watchdog, based in Paris**.
- FATF in October 2019, decided to keep **Pakistan on its 'Grey' list for failure to curb terror financing**.
- Pakistan was blamed of funnelling of funds to terror groups like LeT and JeM, among others.
- Pakistan had earlier submitted a review report to the FATF outlining the steps taken by Pakistan to **implement the group's recommendations**.
- If Pakistan is not removed off the grey list by April 2020, Pakistan may be moved to the **'black' list** of countries. These countries are **subjected to severe economic sanctions**.

##### Details:

- The current session will involve the **Financial Action Task Force Working Group** scrutinizing Islamabad's efforts to adopt **stricter laws against terror financing and money laundering**.
- It will also involve reviewing if Pakistan has complied with an earlier agenda presented to it by the Paris-based financial task force.
- This meeting is very important for Pakistan as it leads to a **plenary meeting in Paris in April 2020**, where FATF will decide whether Pakistan remains on the grey list or is taken off.
- Pakistan has urged the U.S. to support its bid to exit from the grey list of the FATF.

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Supreme Court declines to stay poll bond scheme

##### Context:

Chief Justice of India's (CJI) statement clarifying that **the electoral bond scheme** will not be stayed by the SC.

#### Background:

- There have been pleas filed in the SC calling for a stay on the Electoral bond scheme.
- **In the April 2019 interim order**, the SC had directed **all political parties to provide complete information to the EC** consisting of the particulars of the donors, the amount of each bond. The Parties were allowed to submit this information **in sealed covers**.
- The SC had **decided against staying of the operation of the scheme**.

#### Details:

- New pleas have been filed in the SC, calling for the staying of the Electoral Bond scheme.
- Major concerns regarding the scheme:
  - **The scheme favoured the ruling party** more than the others, destroying a level playing field for the political parties.
  - Given the **opacity in its operation**, it might become a mechanism to **funnel Benami funds to political parties**.
  - Recognizing the concerns about the scheme, **both the Election Commission (EC) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had strongly objected to the scheme** and raised the red flag against it.
  - The ECI has expressed reservations about the effect the scheme might have on the **transparency in political funding**. It submitted to the Supreme Court that the electoral bonds **legalized anonymity of donors**. ECI has argued that **the right to vote also meant the right to make an informed choice**. The voters should also know the source of funding of political parties who fund the candidates.
- The government has justified the scheme as a move to eradicate black money.

## 2. 'Needn't tell Governor when suing Centre'

#### Context:

- The Governor of Kerala has sought an explanation from the state government of Kerala for its failure to apprise him of the state government's decision to file an appeal in the SC, against the CAA, 2019.

#### Details:

- Legal luminaries have stated that normally the State government may as a form of "courtesy" apprise the Governor before challenging an important legislation in court, but is not mandated to do so.

- Jurists say there is **no constitutional requirement or convention** for a State government to inform the Governor about its executive decision to file a case.

#### Shamsher Singh case:

- **The Supreme Court judgment in the Shamsher Singh** case helps throw light on the relationship between the elected government and the Governor.
- The judgment holds that **the Governor is not a rival centre of power** but would only facilitate the smooth functioning of the administration.
- The judgment notes that the Governor is **only a formal head and the real executive powers are vested in the Council of Ministers** who are collectively responsible to the legislature.
- The Judgment also takes into account the observations made by **the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State relations** which notes that even **though Article 167 allows for the Governor to seek information from the Chief Minister**, it does not imply that the Governor will have dictatorial overtones.

For more information on this issue: Check CNA dated Jan 20, 2020

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. Virus outbreak spreads to Beijing, Shanghai

#### Context:

The outbreak of a **new coronavirus** has spread to more Chinese cities.

#### Details:

- The new virus belongs to the **same family of coronaviruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)**, which killed nearly 800 people globally during a 2002-03 outbreak that also started in China.
- The virus outbreak which started in Wuhan has spread to the capital city of Beijing and Shanghai.
- Cases have been **reported beyond China's borders** in South Korea, Japan and Thailand.
- The number of patients infected by the coronavirus has more than tripled leading to three deaths.

#### Concerns:

- There is little knowledge about the origins of the new virus type. This **lack of knowledge can severely undermine efforts to curb and contain its spread.**
- Many Chinese will be travelling domestically and abroad during the Lunar New Year holiday season which **increases the chances of transmission of the virus.**

- **Human-to-human transmission has been confirmed** in the outbreak of the new coronavirus, a development that raises the possibility that it could spread more quickly and widely.

For more information on this topic: Check CNA dated Jan 19, 2020

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. IMF lowers India's growth forecast to 4.8%

##### Context:

Update of the **World Economic Outlook (WEO) report of the International Monetary fund (IMF)**.

##### Projections for India:

- The IMF has lowered India's economic growth estimate for the current fiscal to 4.8%. This marks a lowering of its own estimate of 6.1% made in October 2019.
- The growth markdown largely reflects a **downward revision to India's projection**.

##### Reasons:

The WEO lists the following reasons for the slowdown in growth estimates for India:

- Weak rural income growth leading to the decline in rural demand growth
- **The sharp decline in consumer demand**
- Stress in the non-bank financial sector
- **Sluggish credit growth**

##### Positives:

- **India's growth is projected to improve** to 5.8 per cent in 2020 and 6.5 per cent in 2021 (1.2 and 0.9 percentage point lower than the October 2019 WEO projections).
- The WEO notes that the growth momentum should improve in the coming fiscal due to:
  - The positive impact of **corporate tax rate reduction**.
  - The positive impact of **monetary stimulus by the RBI** and fiscal stimulus by the government.
  - **Subdued oil prices**

##### Projections for global growth:

- The IMF's new projections estimate that global growth would be 2.9% in 2019, and would increase to 3.3% in 2020 and 3.4% in 2021.
- However, compared to the October 2019 WEO forecast, the estimate for 2019 and the projection for 2020 represent 0.1 percentage point **reduction** for each year while that for 2021 is 0.2 percentage point lower.

Reasons:

- The downward revision in growth forecast is mainly **due to weaker growth across emerging economies, including India, Mexico and South Africa.**
- The subdued growth forecast for India accounts for the largest share of the downward revisions in global growth estimates.

Risks:

- The IMF has categorized **rising geo-political tensions**, especially between the United States and Iran, as a notable downside risk for the global economy.
- **Deterioration in economic relations between the US and its trade partners** due to higher trade tariffs could further undermine the growth prospects.

Positives:

The IMF notes that market sentiment has improved due to the following reasons:

- The broad-based shift toward **accommodative monetary policy** in most economies.
- Favourable news on **US-China trade negotiations** in the form of the first phase of the trade deal.
- **Diminished fears of a no-deal Brexit.**

**Way forward:**

The WEO suggests the following measures for strengthening economic activity and forestalling downside risks to growth:

- Stronger **multilateral cooperation.**
- **Balanced policy mix** at the national level, considering available monetary and fiscal space.

## **2. Liquidity, credit flow figured at RBI board meet, minutes show**

**Context:**

Placing of the minutes of the board meeting of the RBI in the public domain.

**Details:**

- This is the **first time the RBI has released the minutes of a board meeting in the public domain** in a bid to **enhance transparency** regarding its functioning.
- The minutes were made available **under the Right to Information Act**. There are proposals to place the minutes on the RBI's website voluntarily.
- The board of RBI discussed the following issues:
  - The **prevailing liquidity situation** and flow of credit from banks and non-banking finance companies to the economy.
  - The case of **Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank**.
- The central board **does not discuss interest rates**, which are set by the monetary policy committee.

## Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### 1. Govt. yet to seek green nod for water aerodromes

#### Background:

- The water aerodrome or seaplanes services were planned to be introduced under the **UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme**. The scheme offers sops for development of such aerodromes on water bodies.
- A waterdrome can be described as **a water body that complies with certain minimum requirements for the landing of an aircraft**.
- UDAN is **under the regional connectivity scheme** that aims at regional airport development with the objective to let the common citizens of the country fly, by making air travel affordable and widespread. This would help **boost inclusive national economic development**.
- In January 2019, the government announced winners of the third round of UDAN scheme under which airlines have been awarded 10 aerodromes in **Gujarat, Assam, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Telangana and Andaman and Nicobar**.

#### Significance of Aerodromes:

- Water aerodromes are expected to overcome bottlenecks in regions not connected by air transport due to lack of runway based airport. An alternative mode of air transport is expected to beat the lacuna and facilitate air travel **increasing connectivity**.
- The proposed aerodromes in tourist places will lead to an increase in incoming tourist numbers leading to an **increase in tourism activities** and hotel business at the local level. This will **create employment opportunities for local people**.

- Establishment of water aerodromes in the Islands like Andaman and Nicobar will contribute to an increase in the level of current **social infrastructural facilities**.

#### **Environmental clearance:**

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation appointed a consultant to prepare a detailed project report in August 2019.
- Subsequently, a proposal was sent to **the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) seeking the “terms of reference” for conducting an environmental impact assessment (EIA)** for three waterdromes in Andaman and Nicobar.
- The process of seeking environmental clearance requires a lot of data such as bathymetric test which needs to be included in the EIA.
- Once the EIA is finalised, **the apex body under the MoEF, Environment Approval Committee, will take it up for clearance.**

#### **Concerns:**

- A proposed waterdrome in Chilika Lake was dropped recognizing the **environmental impact it would have on the important ecosystem of the lake**. There are similar concerns with the waterdrome allotted.
- Even a year after the allotment of the aerodromes, **the government is yet to seek environmental clearance for the projects in Andaman.**
- The process of seeking terms of reference from the Environment Ministry is yet to be undertaken for the remaining waterdromes.

## **2. T.N. opposes amendment exempting hydrocarbon project from consultations**

#### **Context:**

**The Environment Ministry’s notification** granting exemption to oil and gas firms involved in exploratory drilling, from seeking environmental clearance.

#### **Background:**

- The earlier **Environment Impact Assessment notification of 2006** mandates prior environmental clearance for certain projects, placed under ‘Category A’. The offshore and onshore oil and gas exploration, development and production projects are under ‘Category A’ projects.

#### **Details:**

- There was an **amendment** to the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 by the Ministry.



- The new amendments demote exploratory projects to the category of 'B2' projects, which implies that the project appraisal would be conducted by the States concerned and **will not require an EIA**.

#### Concerns:

- Projects involving exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons have always faced strong resistance from farmers/activists and other stakeholders in Tamil Nadu.
- **Most of the projects in Tamil Nadu are situated in the Cauvery delta districts, which are ecologically fragile zones and fertile regions**, contributing to the rice production of the state. There are concerns that apart from **ecological degradation** it might also **affect agricultural production affecting the nutritional security and economic state of the people**.
- Considering that it is essential to take the locals and all stakeholders along while implementing projects and the fact that the recent amendments will exempt the hydrocarbon exploratory project proposed in the Cauvery delta region from **public consultations** would only add to concerns among the locals.
- **The state government was not consulted prior to the notification**, depriving the opportunity for the stakeholders and the State government to offer views on the issue.

For more information on this topic: Check CNA dated Jan 19, 2020

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Redesigning India's ailing data system

##### Context:

The article offers a critique of the current official data and suggestions to improve it.

##### Background:

- A new series of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures with 2011-12 as the base, was released in 2015.
- The administration has **delayed the release of employment-unemployment data and consumer expenditure data**.

- **The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and the National Statistical Commission have been brought under the fold of National Statistics Office**, altering the long-standing arrangement.

#### **Significance of data:**

- **Data is the new oil in the modern networked economy.** It has an important role to play in the **socio-economic development of a country.**
- **Official statistics are a public good** and give vital information regarding the state of the economy and the success of governance.
- The economic data **influence markets**, signalling investment sentiments, the flow of funds and balance of payments.

#### **Concerns:**

##### Flaws in approach:

##### *Problems with price adjustment:*

- The **data on GDP is initially estimated at the current price and then deflated for the constant price** for comparability of data over time.
- The present series encountered **serious problems with respect to price adjustment**, specifically for the services sector contributing about 60% of GDP, in the absence of appropriate price indices for most service sectors.
- Price indices going into a low and negative zone in 2014-17 distorted the real growth.

##### *Enterprise approach:*

- **The shift from the establishment to enterprise approach, replacing Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs MCA21 data**, posed serious data and methodological issues.
- The use of MCA21 data without weeding out defunct enterprises, and the insufficient mapping of comparable ASI data, was a major lacuna.

##### Deficiencies:

- India is an evolving economy that is **constantly experiencing technological and institutional transitions** in the economy.
- The present national accounting and analytical framework **miss out on many important dimensions of the economy and its complex character.**

##### Unchanged approach:

The approach for the collection of data remains largely unchanged for long even when more effective methodologies are available.

#### *Agriculture:*

- Agricultural development is a major developmental issue in India and productivity is a major concern for agriculture.
- **The yield rate for rice is still being estimated based on crop cutting experiments.**
- Instead of collecting data on factors such as soil conditions, moisture, temperature, water and fertilizer use can help in a more accurate determination of yield rates.
- Israel a pioneer in agriculture technology, collects data on the above factors for analysis to support productivity.

#### *Reliance on field surveys:*

- There is still the high reliance on field surveys for collection of data on employment-unemployment, consumer expenditure, industrial output, assets and liabilities.
- **Though field surveys help validate projections and form an integral part of the official statistical discourse, the failure to integrate the new methodologies** is a concern.
- The initiatives under **e-governance** which have enabled the capturing of a huge amount of data needs to be collated for use in the production of official statistics.
- **The process of collection and collation of data needs modernisation using technology.**

#### **Way forward**

##### Newer aspects:

- The major focus of official statistics has been on estimating GDP.
- The official statistics should also focus on data to **assess competitiveness, inclusive growth, environmental protection, sustainable development and social welfare.**
- The GDP data needs to be linked with a host of other data for **deeper insight.**

##### Need for granular data:

- India is **vast and heterogeneous**, and there would be **differences in approach** while setting goals for development and reducing regional imbalance.
- Data should help the state pursue the right policy right from the level of a district to the country at large. It should also help evaluate performance for efficiency.

- There is a need to re-engineer the existing system, **creating an integrated system populated with granular data.**

#### Committees:

- Previously any data inconsistencies in official statistics were addressed by setting up committees to address the concerns.
- However thoughtful and well-meaning key recommendations of the Rangarajan Commission and subsequent recommendations from 2006 onwards by successive National Statistical Commissions have faced stumbling blocks in implementation.
- The committees should have the support of a dedicated team for audit, and the **ability to implement decisions** by cutting red tape.

#### Data logistics:

- There is the need for systems which have **the capability to analyze large volumes of data**, with high levels of **reliability, validity, consistency and coherence.**
- There is a need to adopt **big-data technology.**

#### Newer framework:

- There is a need for a new framework for the analysis of the **complex and evolutionary economic system.** This should involve the aspects of **automation, robotization and other labour-replacing technologies.**
- There is the need to know in greater detail the role of technology and advanced research, changing demand on human skills, and enterprise, which are all complex.

#### Move towards Micro-economic framework:

- The generally used **macroeconomic framework of analysis** assumes symmetric income distribution and does not get into the depth of structural issues. These can have a **profound impact on the usefulness of the data.**
- The new approach should **consider the micro-behaviour of individuals, and the structure of their mutual interactions.** Given the availability of microdata, we need to build a system to integrate the micro with the macro, maintaining distributional characteristics.

#### Transparency:

- There is the need for a renewed commitment to produce the official statistics transparently, **following internationally accepted standards.**

As the statistics reflect on the performance of the government, it is necessary that its **independence is maintained**.

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. Guaranteeing healthcare, the Brazilian way

#### Context:

Potential of **India-Brazil co-operation in the health sector**.

#### Background:

- **Brazil** is currently the only country in the world where more than **100 million inhabitants have a universal health system**. Considering the fact that Brazil is often classified as a **developing country** makes it an even more laudable that Brazil has achieved universal health coverage.
- **India's Ayushman Bharat is currently the world's largest and most ambitious government health programme**.
- Ayushman Bharat Yojana or **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)** or National Health Protection Scheme is a national scheme that is aimed at making necessary interventions in primary, secondary and tertiary health-care systems. It was launched in 2018, under the aegis of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in India**.

#### Details:

##### Brazilian experience:

##### *The Unified Health System (SUS):*

- Brazil's efforts to achieve universal coverage have been through the establishment of a **government-funded system**.
- **The Unified Health System (SUS), which guaranteed free health coverage** that included pharmaceutical services, was **written into the new Constitution in 1988**.

##### *The Family Health Programme:*

- **The Family Health Programme (Programa Saúde da Família) of Brazil**, relies on a **community-based healthcare network**.
- It helped in the **rapid expansion of health coverage in Brazil**. From 4% of coverage in 2000 to up to 64% of the overall population in 2015, it was able to reach even the rural areas and the poorest states of the country.

- The strategy is based on an **extensive work of community health agents** who perform monthly visits to every family enrolled in the programme.
- The health agents carry out multiple tasks. They conduct health promotion and prevention activities, oversee compliance in treatment regime and manage the relationship between citizens and the healthcare system.
- Research shows that the programme has **drastically reduced IMR and increased adult labour supply**.

#### *Impressive progress:*

- In the last 30 years, Brazilians have experienced a **drastic increase in health coverage as well as health outcomes**. Life expectancy has increased, while the Infant Mortality Rate has declined. Polio vaccination has reached an impressive 98% of the population.
- A 2015 report notes that 95% of those that seek care in the SUS are able to receive treatment.

#### *High-cost efficiency:*

- Unlike the universal health systems in other countries which consume around 8% of the GDP, **Brazil spends only 3.8% of its GDP on the SUS, serving a large population**.
- The impressive progress in healthcare has been made possible even amidst a scenario of tightening budget allocation in Brazil.

Given Brazil's impressive performance, India and Brazil can explore cooperation and strategic partnership in healthcare.

#### **Way forward:**

- Achieving universal coverage in India, a country with a population of 1.3 billion, will be a big and complex challenge. India may consider the following to ensure Universal health coverage.

#### Steady improvement:

- India should **focus on steady growth and improvement**. India must record details of improvement in terms of access, production and population health on a year-by-year basis.
- Any deficiencies should be addressed through **appropriate corrective actions**.

#### Increased funding:

- **Public health expenditure is still very low in India, at around 1.3% of GDP in the 2017-2018 fiscal year**. There is a need for increasing this in line with the national health policy.

#### Primary health care:

- Wellness centres form a major pillar of the primary health care system in India.

- The Brazilian experience in the implementation of its successful Family Health Programme can inform the design of the **establishment of 1,50,000 wellness centre by 2022.**

Differentiated approach:

- India is composed of many States with their own set of challenges and strengths. **A one-size-fits-all approach for such heterogeneous conditions would be ineffective.**
- The challenge must be met by an intricate **combination of standardised programmes and autonomy** to adopt policies according to their needs.
- The diversity can act as a powerful source of policy innovation and creativity and should be encouraged.
- **Regional disparities in terms of resources and institutional capabilities must be addressed.**

## F. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. Thanjavur gets a Sukhoi squadron

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) inducted a squadron of Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jets armed with **BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles**, at its Thanjavur Air Force Station.
- This is also the first Sukhoi squadron of the IAF with BrahMos missiles.
- The BrahMos is a **medium-range ramjet supersonic cruise missile that can be launched from submarine, ships, aircraft, or land.** It is the **fastest supersonic cruise missile in the world.** It is a joint venture between Russia and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The deployment is significant given the **increased focus on the Indo-Pacific** and also the increase in forays by the Chinese Navy into the Indian Ocean.

### 2. 'Implement Verma report on crime against women'

- The Justice J.S. Verma Committee report deals with the issue of crime against women and children.

### 3. Plea in SC against welfare schemes for minorities

- The Union Government set up **the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.**

- **Five religious communities:** Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians (Parsis) have been notified as minority communities by the Union Government. The government is invested with the power to declare a community as a 'minority community'.
- **Article 15(4) maintains that the State can make special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens** or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
- **Article 340 of the Indian Constitution lays down conditions for the appointment of a Commission to investigate the conditions of the backward classes.** The President may by order appoint a Commission consisting of such persons as he thinks fit to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to the UDAN Scheme:**

1. It is a part of the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP).
2. The Scheme is funded jointly by the Centre and the State governments.
3. The primary objective of the Scheme is to facilitate regional air connectivity.

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

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3 only
- d. None of the above

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) is under the regional connectivity scheme that aims at regional airport development with the objective to let the common citizens of the country fly, by making air travel affordable and widespread. The scheme is funded jointly by the Centre and the State governments.



**Q2. World Economic Outlook report is published by:**

- a. International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- b. World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- c. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- d. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

The World Economic Outlook is a biennial report published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

**Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF):**

- 1. It was founded on the initiative of G 20.
- 2. It is responsible for setting global standards on anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT).
- 3. India is a full-time member of FATF.

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

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was founded on the initiative of G 7 to develop policies to combat money laundering. It is responsible for setting global standards on anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT). India is a full-time member of FATF.

**Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to BrahMos:**

1. It is a long-range ramjet supersonic cruise missile.
2. It can be launched from submarine, ships, aircraft, or land.
3. It is the fastest supersonic cruise missile in the world.

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

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

The BrahMos is a medium-range ramjet supersonic cruise missile that can be launched from submarine, ships, aircraft, or land. It is the fastest supersonic cruise missile in the world. It is a joint venture between Russia and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Given the significance of data in the modern networked economy and concerns regarding the current official approach to data collection and processing, there is the need for a complete overhaul of the system. Comment. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. Given Brazil's impressive performance in increasing health coverage, India and Brazil can explore cooperation and strategic partnership in healthcare. Comment. Discuss the steps to be taken in India to ensure Universal health coverage. (15 marks, 250 words)