

16 Feb 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Urban heat islands in India

Context

- There was a study that was conducted by IIT Kharagpur called “Anthropogenic forcing exacerbating the urban heat islands in India”.
- According to the study, the **urban areas are comparatively warmer than the suburbs**.

Details

- The research was a detailed and careful analysis of urban heat islands in India.
- It studied the difference between urban and surrounding rural land surface temperatures, across all seasons in 44 major cities from 2001 to 2017.
- The study found evidence of mean daytime temperature of surface **Urban Heat Island (UHI Intensity)** going up to 2 degrees C for most cities, as analyzed from satellite temperature measurements in monsoon and post-monsoon periods.
- Researchers also noticed a similar rise in daytime temperatures in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai.

Urban Heat Island (UHI)

- Temperatures in the urban areas are often a few degrees warmer than the rural areas surrounding it. This temperature discrepancy is the result of a phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect.
- The heat gets trapped near the earth’s surface as a result of a decline in green cover, rapid urbanisation, energy-intensive activities, and concrete structures.

Reasons for UHIs

The increased use of manmade materials and increased anthropogenic heat production are the main causes of the UHI.

- When houses, shops, and industrial buildings are constructed close together, it can create a UHI.
- **Building materials are usually very good at insulating, or holding in heat.** This insulation makes the areas around buildings warmer.
 - Materials used for pavements, roads and roofs, such as concrete, asphalt (tar) and bricks, which are opaque, do not transmit light but have a higher heat capacity and thermal conductivity than **rural areas, which have more open space, trees and grass**.

- Trees and plants are characterized by their '**evapotranspiration**'—**evaporation** involves the movement of water to the surrounding air, and **transpiration** refers to the movement of water within a plant and a subsequent lot of water through the stomata (pores found on the leaf surface) in its leaves.
 - Grass, plants and trees in the suburbs and rural areas do this.
 - The **lack of such evapotranspiration in the city** leads to the city experiencing a higher temperature than its surroundings.
- People and their tools, such as cars and factories, are always burning off energy.
 - UHI's thus decrease air quality in the cities, because of the pollution generated by industrial and automobile exhaust, higher extent of particulate matter and greater amounts of dust than in rural areas.
- Some species like lizards and geckos thrive in higher temperatures. Due to the increase of temperatures in the urban setup, their number increases.
 - Insects such as ants are more abundant here than in rural areas; these are referred to as ectotherms.
- Nighttime temperatures in UHIs remain high. This is because buildings, sidewalks, and parking lots block heat coming from the ground from rising into the cold night sky. Because the heat is trapped on lower levels, the temperature is warmer.

Effects of Urban Heat Island

- This might impact the **health** of people living in urban areas **due to heat waves apart from pollution**.
- Cities tend to experience heat waves which affect human and animal health, leading to **heat cramps, sleep deprivation and increased mortality rates**.
- Water quality suffers. When warm water from the UHI ends up flowing into local streams, **it stresses the native species** that have adapted to life in a cooler aquatic environment.
- Increased temperatures during summer in cities **amplify energy demand** for air conditioning.
 - This means the increased demands for cooling or air-conditioning during summer contributes to **higher energy bills**.
 - Also, during exacerbated periods of urban heat islands, the resulting demand for air conditioning can overload systems which can lead to **power outages and blackouts**.

Control of UHIs and mitigation

Industrialisation and economic development are vital to the country, but the control of UHIs and their fallouts are equally vital.

- The best way to make cities liveable is to contain sprawl and **increase the amount of vegetation**.
 - We need to plant as many trees and plants as possible.
 - Trees provide shade, absorb carbon dioxide, release oxygen and fresh air, and provide a cooling effect.
 - Deciduous trees are the best for urban areas because they provide a cooling effect in summer and they don't block warmth during winter.
- Building water-retentive pavements and **installing reflective roofs** can be adopted to combat surface heat.
 - Using light-coloured concrete (using limestone aggregates along with asphalt (or tar) making the **road surface greyish or even pinkish** (as some places in the US have done); these are 50% better than black, since they absorb less heat and reflect more sunlight.

- Green roofs present a great method of lessening the impacts of the urban heat island.
 - Green roofing is the practice of planting vegetations on a roof, just like they are planted in a garden.
- **Conservation of water bodies** in and around cities could be an effective strategy.
- The construction of buildings and infrastructure with **eco-friendly materials** could also prove to be crucial to mitigating the effects of heat islands.

Conclusion

- The need of the hour is to control urban sprawl and put in place stringent policies for sustainable urbanization.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India ticks off Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his remarks on Kashmir

Context

- Speaking to MPs at a joint session of Pakistan's Parliament, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed Turkey's affection for Pakistan and strongly backed its position on Kashmir.

Turkey-Pakistan: Traditional good ties

- Turkey and Pakistan have historically had good relations. This was the fourth time that Erdogan addressed Pakistan's Parliament in Islamabad
- The Turkey-Pakistan friendship goes back to the days of the Cold War when both countries were American allies.

Kashmir and terror-financing

- India's relations with Turkey have been deteriorating steadily in recent times. This is linked primarily to **Turkey's support for the Pakistani position on Kashmir**, as well as its backing of Pakistan at the FATF.

India's Stand

- India urged Turkey to not interfere in its internal affairs and reminded Ankara of the threat of terrorism emanating from Pakistan. It has also rejected all references to Jammu and Kashmir as J&K is an integral and inalienable part of India

2. Masood Azhar and family missing, Pakistan tells terror financing watchdog FATF

Context

- Pakistan has informed global terror financing watchdog **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** that Masood Azhar, founder of terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), and his family are "missing."
- Azhar was listed as a designated terrorist by the United Nations Security Council 1267 Committee on in 2019.

A look at his reign of terror

1979-1989: Azhar was chosen as the head of Harkat ul-Ansar's department of motivation

Early 1990s: Azhar became the general secretary of Harkat ul-Ansar and visited many international locations to raise funds

▪ Was part of Harkat ul-Mujahideen or Harkat ul-Ansar, when arrested in India in 1994

▪ In 1994, Omar Shaikh kidnapped four Europeans from Delhi



to release Azhar. He was arrested

▪ In July 1995, HuM aka HuA kidnapped 5 Europeans in Kashmir and killed them by Dec. 1995 to seek the release of Azhar and Shaikh

▪ JeM was formed in 1999 after the release of Azhar on Dec. 31, 1999, after IC-814 was hijacked on Dec. 24, 1999

Jan. 1, 2016: Orchestrated the Pathankot attack

August 17, 2016: Militants killed two soldiers and a policeman in Baramulla

On September 18, 2016: 18 soldiers were killed in Uri

On Feb. 14, 2019: JeM carried out a suicide attack in Pulwama and killed 40 CRPF personnel

▪ **May 1, 2019:** Designated as a global terrorist by a UN committee

Note:

- Pakistan has claimed that there were only 16 U.N. designated terrorists in Pakistan, of which “seven are dead”.
- Out of the nine who are alive, seven had applied to the U.N. for exemption from financial and travel restrictions. They are: Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed, LeT financiers and members- Haji Muhammad Ashraf, Zafar Iqbal, Hafiz Abdul Salam Bhuttavi, Yahya Mohammad Mujahid and Arif Qasmani and al Qaeda financier Abdul Rehman.
- The restrictions involve freezing of bank accounts.

Also read about Hafiz Saeed conviction:

[Comprehensive News Analysis: 14th Feb Hafiz Saeed Conviction](#)

Category: HEALTH

1. Convalescent plasma therapy tested on critically ill COVID-19 patients

Context

- As part of controlling the spread of novel coronavirus and to develop vaccines for the patients China's pharmaceutical company has turned to plasma taken from people who have recovered from the infection to treat critically ill patients.
- They have called people who had recovered from the new coronavirus to donate blood plasma, because it might contain valuable proteins that could be used to treat sick patients

What are Antibodies?

- Antibodies are proteins that the immune system makes to fight invaders such as viruses, bacteria or other foreign substances. Antibodies are specific to each invader. However, it takes time for the body to ramp up its production of antibodies to a completely new invader.

- If that same virus or bacteria tries to invade again in the future, the body will remember and quickly produce an army of antibodies.
- People who have recently recovered from COVID-19 still have antibodies to the coronavirus circulating in their blood.
- **Injecting those antibodies into sick patients could theoretically help patients'** better fight the infection.
- This treatment will transfer the immunity of a recovered patient to a sick patient, an approach that has been used previously in flu pandemics

Examples from the past

- This is not the first time that plasma from recovered patients has been used to treat people infected with certain viruses for which drugs are not available.
- When Ebola struck Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia in 2014, the [World Health Organization](#) prioritised the evaluation of treatment with convalescent plasma derived from patients who had recovered from the disease.

Issue Area

- Antibodies in the plasma bind to the virus and prevent them from entering the cells. But by the time it is given, many cells would have been infected. Hence, convalescent plasma therapy is not very effective
- The New England Journal of Medicine had published an article which said convalescent plasma in a trial carried out in Ebola patients was not beneficial.

Treatment Options

- Plasma infusions are just one of many ways experts are considering to treat COVID-19.
- Others include repurposing **antivirals or looking for brand-new molecules that can block the binding of the virus into cells**

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Board for aligning RBI's fiscal year with govt.'s FY

Context

- The Reserve Bank board has recommended that the financial year of the central bank align with the government's fiscal year from the current financial year.
- The [RBI](#), which was established in 1935, used to follow January-December as its accounting year before **it was changed to July-June in 1940**.

Details

- The Central Board of Directors of the RBI reviewed the current economic situation, global and domestic challenges and various areas of operations of the Reserve Bank.
 - It recommended **aligning the financial year of RBI, currently July-June, with the government's fiscal year (April-March)** from the year 2020-21

- It approved forwarding a proposal to the government for its consideration
- For this financial year, **2020-21, it will start on July 1, 2020, and be for nine months up to March 31, 2021.**
- Thereafter, all financial years will start on April 1 every year, aligned with that of the government.

The decision to align RBI's financial year with the government's fiscal year was recommended by the **Bimal Jalan committee**

- The Jalan committee in its report had said the alignment of the fiscal years of the RBI and the government would ensure that the **central bank was "able to provide better estimates of the projected surplus transfers to the government for the financial year for budgeting purposes"**.
- The committee had noted that the need for an interim dividend to be paid by the RBI would be reduced and would be restricted to "extraordinary circumstances", and the move brought "greater cohesiveness in the **monetary policy projections and reports published by the RBI, which mostly use the fiscal year as the base**".

Significance

- Once implemented, the interim dividends and dividends will be aligned with the government's fiscal year of April-March.
 - RBI gives interim dividends in February and final pay-outs in August currently.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: **POLITY**

1. When can a judge opt out of a case?

Context

- Justice Mohan M Shantanagoudar, Supreme Court judge, recused from hearing the petition filed by Sarah Abdullah Pilot, sister of former J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, challenging his detention under the J&K Public Safety Act.
- The case was finally heard by another bench.

Definition

- Recusal is to remove oneself as a judge in a particular proceeding, usually because of conflict of interest or has a prior association with the parties in the case.

What are the rules on recusals?

- There are no written rules on the recusal of judges from hearing cases listed before them in constitutional courts. It is left to the discretion of a judge. The reasons for recusal are not disclosed in an order of the court.
 - Some judges orally convey to the lawyers involved in the case their reasons for recusal, many do not.
 - Some explain the reasons in their order.
- The decision rests on the conscience of the judge.

When can the Judge recuse?

- Bias of prejudice
 - It typically means the judge has acted/ taken a stand or publicly spoken in a way that prevents him or her from treating the party in a fair and impartial manner.
- Where a judge has **appeared for one of the litigants at some stage** in the same dispute.
 - A judge's fairness and impartiality may be compromised when he or she has had a business or professional relationship with a party.
 - In cases where the judge was a party's business partner or attorney, as well as in cases **where the judge was a member of a law firm representing a party**, the potential for bias or prejudice is almost always too great to permit the judge to preside over the case.
- In disputes where a **judge has a financial interest in the litigation**, where a judge owns shares in a company which is party to the case, the judge can recuse.
- Judge's **family member's economic interest in the case**.
 - The judge is related to a party or spouse of either party (usually) within three degrees of kinship.
 - Sometimes a judge or one of his or her immediate family members will have an economic interest in the subject matter of the case, one that could be significantly impacted by the outcome of the proceedings

Judges who excused oneself from hearing a case

- **Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi** disqualified himself, purportedly because he was set to be a part of the selection committee tasked with choosing a new CBI Director. He then assigned a bench presided by Justice A.K. Sikri to hear the case.
- **Justice U.U. Lalit** recused himself from hearing **the dispute over land in Ayodhya** after senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan pointed out that the judge had appeared for former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh in a related contest.

Recusal can harm rule of law

- Refusing to recuse himself from the Constitution Bench hearing a question of law on the **Indore Development Authority v. Manohar Lal** (the issues involved in the case related to a reading of Section 24(2) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013), Justice Arun Mishra said **acquiescing to the wishes of parties to recuse himself would sound the death-knell for judicial independence**.
 - The petitioners had objected to Justice Mishra leading the Constitution Bench which was hearing a question of law challenging his own earlier judgment in the case.
- In 2019, in the middle of a hearing of a PIL filed by activist Harsh Mander about the plight of inmates in Assam's detention centres, the then-Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi was asked to recuse himself. In an order, **Justice Gogoi said a litigant cannot seek recusal of the judge**.
 - "Judicial functions, sometimes, involve performance of unpleasant and difficult tasks, which require asking questions and soliciting answers to arrive at a just and fair decision. If the assertions of bias as stated are to be accepted, it would become impossible for a judge to seek clarifications and answers," the court observed.
- In the Judge Iyappa Case, Recusal, the court observed, would mean abdication of duty.
- Judiciary should not allow recusals to be used as a tool to manoeuvre justice, where parties decide the benches **ultimately evading judicial work**.
 - To withdraw from a case merely because a party suggests that a judge do so impairs judicial fairness. It allows parties to cherry-pick a bench of their choice.

Should the reasons be put on record?

- In his separate opinion in the **National Judicial Appointments Commission judgment in 2015**, Justice Kurian Joseph, who was a member of the Constitution Bench, highlighted the **need for judges to give reasons for recusal as a measure to build transparency**.
 - "It is the constitutional duty, as reflected in one's oath, to be transparent and accountable, and hence, a judge is required to indicate reasons for his recusal from a particular case,"
- In Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (2015), Justice Chelameswar said "Where a judge has a pecuniary interest, no further inquiry as to whether there was a 'real danger' or 'reasonable suspicion' of bias is required to be undertaken, but in other cases, such an inquiry is required, and the relevant test is the 'real danger' test."

Conclusion

- Judicial impartiality is a significant element of justice. Judges should decide legal disputes free of any personal bias or prejudice. As a result of a conflict of interest, a judge may be unable to maintain impartiality in a case and thus should be disqualified.

- Even where a judge is impartial, but appears not to be, recusal is necessary and this should be structured.

Category: ECONOMY

1. What does 'developed' tag mean for India?

Context

- The office of the United States Trade Representatives (USTR) has updated its list of developing and least-developed countries, removing India from the list of countries that are designated as developing.
- These countries will now be classified as “developed” economies, thus stripping them of various trade benefits.

Background

- In the **Uruguay Round Agreements Act (URAA)**, the US Congress had amended the **Counter Vailing Duty (CVD)** law in order to confirm US obligations under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on **Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM)**.
 - Under this SCM agreement, countries that had **not yet reached the status of a developed country** were entitled to special treatment for purposes of countervailing measures.
- This meant that imports from the member countries included in the list by USTR **were subject to different thresholds for determining if countervailing subsidies are “de minimis”** and whether import volumes are negligible.
- Further, as per the **Tariff Act of 1930**, Congress delegated the responsibility to designate those WTO members whose imports would be subject to **these special thresholds to the USTR**.

What is the USTR list of Developed, Developing and least-developed countries?

- The office of USTR maintains a list of countries that it classifies as **“developing”, “developed”, and “least-developed”**.
 - Countries that are classified as “developing” are allowed to export certain goods to the U.S. without being hit by punitive tariffs that are usually imposed on goods from “developed” countries.
- USTR is **required to publish this list of designations and update it** if necessary in the Federal Register.
- To determine these designations, the **USTR relies on data such as World Bank’s data on Gross National Income (GNI) and trade data obtained from the Trade Data Monitor**.

- This also contains official data from national statistical bureaus, customs authorities, central banks and other such government agencies.

Is such a classification justified?

- Any classification of whether a country is “developing” or not is bound to be arbitrary. While the economic progress that India and China have achieved over the last few decades is seen by some as reason enough to get rid of their special status, others point to the various development indicators in which India and China still lag behind the rich world.
- The global community is further divided on its opinion on whether such a classification is required in the first place.

Why is India being stripped of this status?

- The U.S. administration under President Trump has repeatedly **accused fast-growing countries such as India and China of wrongly claiming trade benefits** that are reserved only for the truly developing countries.
- In support of its actions, the Trump administration has argued that countries like India and China have witnessed significant growth in the last few decades. This, it believes, is enough reason to scale back the various trade benefits.
- It has further cited the share of **global trade enjoyed by India and China and their membership in the G20 club** to argue that they enjoy significant economic power.
- Moreover, many developed countries also classify themselves as “developing” in order to escape tariffs.
- Therefore, Mr. Trump has sought to renegotiate trade deals with countries like China, essentially trying to make these deals more “fair” to the interests of the U.S.

The revocation of India’s developing country status does not mean we have moved up the development ladder but it defines India’s future trade relationship with the US.

How does the revocation of developing nation status impact India?

- India has traditionally been one of the **largest beneficiaries under the GSP**, with over 2,000 goods having been exempted from import tariffs. The GSP status was suspended in 2019. With the current change in India’s status under the USTR’s classification, the task of reclaiming the lost GSP benefits now becomes even harder.
- **Indian export** has remained under pressure due to increasing competition from other countries. With this move the exports might decrease.
- Apart from that, the CVD laws also allow the US to hold an investigation into the trade policies of other countries to determine whether they are harming the US trade. With India no longer in the list of beneficiaries, the US can now hold an investigation.

- If the investigation finds that India's policies allow exporters to sell their products in the US at a lower rate and consequently harm the domestic traders there, the US can impose counter-vailing duty, a form of import tax, to make the Indian goods more expensive in the US markets.

How will the U.S. decision affect global trade?

- Any move to end duty-free access for foreign goods into the U.S., which becomes more likely after the change in trade status, will **increase the overall tax burden on goods crossing international borders**.
- This will add **further pressure on the global economy**, which has already witnessed a slowing of growth.
- **Tariff war could rise further** if countries that are stripped of their "developing" economy status decide to retaliate by imposing tariffs on goods that they import from the U.S.

Conclusion

- Thus India won't get special preference from US leading to drop in the exports and the global economy could witness tensions of trade war.

2. Why have LPG prices seen a sharp rise?

Context

- Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) prices have been substantially raised

What influences LPG prices in India?

- Domestic prices of LPG are based on a formula — the **Import Parity Price (IPP)**, which is based on international LPG prices.
 - IPP represents the price that importers would pay in case of actual import of product at the respective Indian ports and includes the elements of Free on Board (FOB) price + Ocean Freight + Insurance + Custom Duties + Port Dues, etc.
 - Saudi Aramco's LPG price acts as the benchmark for the IPP
 - This dollar-denominated figure is converted into rupees before local costs — such as local freight, bottling charges, marketing costs, margins for oil marketing firms and dealer commissions and the Goods and Services Tax — are added.
- This helps the government arrive at the retail selling price for LPG.
- The **government resets the LPG price every month**, the decision being influenced by international prices and how the rupee has behaved against the dollar in the immediately preceding weeks.
- International **LPG prices tend to move in tandem with the price of crude oil**, the key raw material.

What are the implications for the broader economy?

- At a time when consumer demand, in general, for goods and services in the country has slumped, more cash in the hands of the retail consumer may have helped spur demand. It is ironic that the government has raised LPG prices now.

- It takes away disposable income from those consumers who pay market rates for LPG. As a result, **household budgets are bound to go up**, especially for those not availing the subsidy.
- The increase in LPG price could spur headline inflation even further.

What is the outlook?

- With international crude prices on the downtrend, it is plausible the LPG prices too would see a slump.

F. Tidbits

1. Tamil Nadu achieves drop in maternal mortality

Context

- Tamil Nadu's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has dipped to 57 per one lakh live births in 2019 according to the State Health Management Information System (HMIS) data.
- This reduction figured in the budget presentation of Deputy Chief Minister

How was it achieved?

- Monitoring of high-risk mothers has been one of the focus areas of the authorities
- Timely admission of high-risk pregnant women.
- It included women who are anaemic, those with cardiac ailments, pregnancy-induced hypertension, bad obstetric history, previous caesarean section and elderly primigravida.
- Women were also identified at the time of antenatal registration
- Obstetricians and gynaecologists were appointed as mentors in districts
- Nutritional kits along ambulances/dedicated vehicle facility to pick up high-risk mothers and bring them to the CEmONC (Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care) centres were provided for pregnant women

Direct appointment of specialists, improvement in infrastructure, protocol-based management and full strength of village health nurses has helped to accomplish this feat.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Sammakka Saralamma Jatara/ Medaram Jatara

- It is a tribal festival of honouring the goddesses celebrated in the state of Telangana
- It commemorates the fight of a mother and daughter, Sammakka and Saralamma, with the reigning rulers against an unjust law.

- It is held every two years (biennially)
- The Sammakka Sarakka Jatra is a State Festival of Telangana.
- The rituals related to the Goddesses are entirely conducted by Koya tribe priests, in accordance with Koya customs and traditions.
- Medaram is a remote place in the Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, a part of Dandakaranya
 - Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary is a wildlife sanctuary located in Eturnagaram village in Telangana
- It is believed that after Kumbha Mela, the Medaram jatara attracts the largest number of devotees in the country.

2. Kambala

- It is an annual buffalo race held in Karnataka
 - The contest generally takes place between two pairs of buffaloes.
 - It is a popular sport among the farming community of the State.
- In this traditional race the jockey runs along with the buffaloes he is shepherding
- The Kambala racetrack is a slushy paddy field.



3. Lorcaserin

- Lorcaserin, marketed under the brand name Belviq is a weight-loss drug

Context

- Indian doctors have cautioned against the use of lorcaserin (brand name Belviq or Belviq XR), a weight-loss drug that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently said is linked to a “possible increased risk of cancer.”

Details

- The FDA approved lorcaserin in 2012 and made the medication available the following year, but continued clinical trials on the drug to evaluate cardiovascular risks. Instead, it found an increased cancer risk.
- FDA has now said that health care professionals should stop prescribing and dispensing the drug to patients.
- Eisai Co. has been asked to withdraw its weight-loss drug

4. Asur Tribe

- They are a particularly vulnerable tribal group living in **Jharkhand**.
 - Besides Jharkhand, members of the tribe live in pockets of **Bihar, West Bengal** and a few other states.
- They belong to the Austroasiatic ethnic group.
- Asurs are traditionally iron-smelters. They were once hunter-gatherers, having also involved in shifting agriculture
- Asuri language, is on the verge of extinction, with less than 8,000 people speaking it.
 - It figures in the list of [UNESCO](#) Interactive Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger.

Sohrai

- It is a harvest festival celebrated by this tribe
- It is celebrated after harvest and coincides with the festival of Diwali.
- The festival is celebrated on Amavasya (new moon) in the Hindu month of Kartik (October-November).

Context

- The Asur tribe has been using mobile radio to transmit local news and songs which is helping them revive the dying tribal language

5. Munich Security Conference (MSC)

- It is an annual conference which debates international security policy.
- It has been held in Munich, Germany since 1963.

- The objective is to build trust and to contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts by sustaining a continuous, curated and informal dialogue within the international security community.
 - It provides a platform for official and non-official diplomatic initiatives, bringing together leaders and security experts from across the world and their ideas to address the world's most pressing security concerns.
- The conference assembles more than 450 senior decision-makers and thought leaders including heads of state, ministers and personalities from international and non-governmental organisations, industry, media, academia and civil society, to engage in intensive debate.
- It publishes **Munich Security Report**, an annual digest of relevant figures, maps, and research on crucial security challenges.

Context

- External Affairs Minister attends the Munich Security Conference

6. Four Balance Sheet Challenge

- In the paper named 'India's Great Slowdown', Arvind Subramanian mentions the new 'Four balance sheet challenge'.
- The Four Balance Sheet challenge includes the original two sectors – infrastructure companies and banks, plus NBFCs and real estate companies.

Twin-Balance Sheet (TBS)

- Subramanian, in his role as the CEA, had argued in the Economic Survey of 2017-18 that the economy was facing a TBS problem.
- The two balance sheets he referred to belonged to the **Indian banks** (especially public sector banks or the government-owned banks) and the **corporate sector**, respectively.
- He pointed out that the balance sheets of Indian banks were burdened by a high proportion of non-performing loans and the balance sheet of corporates were clogged because they had over-borrowed and were unable to pay.
- This essentially meant that neither the Indian companies were in a position to invest nor were the Indian banks in a position to lend.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements about the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

- 1) It is a statutory body
- 2) It comes under the administrative control of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

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

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

Ans: b

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in 2007 under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005
- It is a **statutory body** under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005 under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India**.
- The Commission's Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Child is defined as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group.

2. Bimal Jalan committee was primarily set up

- a) To provide Roadmap on Fiscal Consolidation
- b) To review the economic capital framework of the RBI.
- c) To simplify the Income Tax Act, 1961
- d) To suggest changes in rules on market frauds and insider trading

Ans: b

- RBI in consultation with the government, had constituted a committee chaired by former RBI governor Bimal Jalan to review the extant economic capital framework of the RBI.

<https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/various-committees-and-their-purpose-for-upsc/>

3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

- 1) A starred question requires a written answer and hence, supplementary questions cannot follow.

2) An unstarred question requires an oral answer and hence supplementary questions can follow.

Options

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

Ans: d

- A starred question (distinguished by an asterisk) requires an oral answer and hence supplementary questions can follow.
- An unstarred question, on the other hand, requires a written answer and hence, supplementary questions cannot follow.

Context

- 1,120 unstarred questions asked in RS session

4. Which of the following rivers flow into the Black sea?

- 1) Rhine
- 2) Danube
- 3) Elbe
- 4) Dniester
- 5) Vistula

Options:

- a) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- b) 3, 4 and 5 only
- c) 2 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only

Ans: c



I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

- the Urban Heat Island Effect? Discuss the
United States Trade Representatives (USTRA)
country list. Explain in detail how the