

# 04 Mar 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. [U.N. rights body to move Supreme Court on Citizenship Amendment Act](#)

#### Context:

The Geneva-based Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has announced that it plans to file an application in the Indian Supreme Court, asking to be impleaded in the petitions challenging the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

#### Details:

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the United Nations body had no right to file a petition that will ask the court to appoint the Commissioner for Human Rights as an assistant or ‘amicus curiae’ in the case.
- The High Commissioner [Michelle Bachelet] intends to submit an ‘amicus curiae’ brief shortly on the Citizenship [Amendment] Act [CAA] in the Indian [Supreme Court](#), in accordance with the Court’s established procedures, and she has informed the Indian Permanent Mission in Geneva of her intention.
  - As amicus curiae, the High Commissioner will focus on providing an overview of relevant and applicable international human rights standards and norms to support the Court’s deliberations in the context of its review of the CAA.
- MEA spokesperson asserted that the Citizenship Amendment Act is an internal matter of India and concerns the sovereign right of the Indian Parliament to make laws. He also pointed out that it is strongly believed that no foreign party has any locus standi on issues pertaining to India’s sovereignty.

Read more about [Citizenship Amendment Act](#).

## Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### 1. Centre working on exclusive body for river-linking projects

#### Context:

The Central government is working on the establishment of an exclusive body to implement projects for linking rivers.

#### Details:

- The exclusive body for implementation of projects for linking rivers would be called the **National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA)**.
- The proposed body is expected to take up both inter-State and intra-State projects.
- It will also make arrangements for generating funds, internally and externally.
- Once approved, the projects will be pursued as national projects, wherein the Centre will absorb 90% of the cost and the States concerned the rest.

#### Inter-Linking of Rivers (IRL) Projects:

- As of now, six ILR projects — the [Ken-Betwa](#), Damanganga-Pinjal, Par-Tapi-Narmada, Manas-Sankosh-Teesta-Ganga, Mahanadi-Godavari and Godavari-Cauvery (Grand Anicut) — have been under examination of the authorities.
- With regard to the peninsular rivers, the Centre has chosen to focus on the Godavari-Cauvery link than the earlier proposal to link the Mahanadi-Godavari-Krishna-Pennar-Cauvery Rivers. The latter has eluded consensus, given reservations from Odisha.

#### Note:

- National Water Development Agency (NWDA), which is responsible for the formulation of proposals of the linking of rivers, has said that an updated draft Cabinet note has been circulated to other Ministries in the Central government.
- On receipt of comments, the note will be finalised by the Ministry of Jal Shakti and sent to the Union Cabinet for approval.
- No specific timeline has been determined for the constitution of the Authority.

## 2. Centre in talks with States wary of NPR

### Context:

The Centre has said that it is in discussion with States that had expressed concerns about the updation of the National Population Register (NPR) from April 1 to September 30, 2020.

- Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh are some of the States that have expressed apprehensions about the proposed new format of the NPR and are critical of the exercise.
- Many State governments have objected to the new fields in the NPR such as “the place of birth of parents” as sometimes in villages, and even in cities, people may not be aware of even their own place of birth.

This topic has been covered in 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

## 3. Centre yet to notify CVC, CIC appointments

### Context:

Two weeks after a high-power committee (HPC), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, selected the new [Chief Vigilance Commissioner \(CVC\)](#) and the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC), the Centre is yet to officially notify the appointments.

- The delay could be linked to fresh objections raised in a letter to the Prime Minister citing conflict of interest against the CVC designate.

This topic has been covered in 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. COVID-19 |The SARS-CoV-2 is mutating, say scientists

### Context:

Senior scientists at Australia’s national science agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), have said that the virus dubbed SARS-CoV-2 is mutating.

### Significance:

- The physical and molecular characterisation of the virus is also being investigated to find differences and similarities with other known coronaviruses.
- Some of the errors in the virus known as ‘mutations’ may be significant for the development and evaluation of new diagnostics, drugs and vaccines, so it is very important to understand the mutations.

### Details:

- The COVID-19 is already estimated by the Asian Development Bank to result in \$100 billion in global economic losses based on a comparison with the 2003 SARS outbreak.
- The potential loss of tourism revenues due to a severe epidemic outbreak could be substantial.

#### **Corona Virus:**

- Experts and scientists believe that there are over 500 coronaviruses identified in bats, but their true number may be 10 times higher, according to the WHO.
- Due to a combination of factors, they can jump from their natural host (usually bats but not always) to humans via intermediate host, but not all human coronaviruses cause severe disease.
- For instance, HCoV-NL63 and HCoV-229E caused only mild symptoms, whereas SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV and the current SARS-CoV-2 are associated with relatively severe symptoms.

Read more about [COVID-19](#)

## **C. GS 3 Related**

### **Category: ECONOMY**

#### **1. Govt. imposes curbs on drug exports**

##### **Context:**

India has restricted the export of common medicines such as paracetamol and 25 other pharmaceutical ingredients and drugs made from them.

- The restrictions have been imposed in order to prevent shortages amid concerns of the COVID-19 outbreak turning into a pandemic.
- Besides over-the-counter painkiller and fever reducer paracetamol, drugs restricted for exports include common antibiotics metronidazole, those used to treat bacterial and other infections, as well as vitamin B1 and B12 ingredients.

##### **Restricting exports:**

- A notification by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said the export of 26 active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and formulations would require licence.
- In February 2020, the Department of Pharmaceuticals asked the DGFT to issue orders restricting the export of 12 APIs and formulations in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.
- A high-level committee formed by the Department of Pharmaceuticals had recommended the restrictions.

##### **Details:**

- Although India is source of about 20% of the world's generic drug supply, pharmaceutical companies in the country are dependent on China for two-thirds of the chemical components needed to make them.
- The outbreak of COVID-19 has shut factories in China and impacted supplies, leading to fears of a shortage.
- India's API imports, the raw material used for pharmaceuticals, stand at around \$3.5 billion per year, and around 70%, or \$2.5 billion, come from China.
- Although India is heavily import-dependent for APIs from China, it exports a limited quantity of pharma ingredients.

## Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### 1. Black carbon levels spike at Himalayan glaciers

#### Context:

A study by scientists at the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG) states that the black carbon concentrations near the Gangotri glacier rose 400 times in summer.

#### Details:

- The spike in carbon levels during summer is associated with forest fires and stubble burning from agricultural waste, and triggers glacial melt.
- The team of scientists from WIHG measured variations of black carbon concentration at Chirbasa, near the Gangotri glacier in the Indian Himalaya, and located at an altitude of 3,600 metres, during the year 2016.
  - Being a pristine zone far from sources of pollution, the measurements are critical to establishing a baseline for pollution loads and estimating the contribution of various sources to pollution.
- Black carbon results from the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels and biomass.
  - The fine particles absorb light and about a million times more energy than carbon dioxide.
  - It is said to be the second-largest contributor to climate change after CO<sub>2</sub>.
  - But unlike CO<sub>2</sub>, which can stay in the atmosphere for years together, black carbon is short-lived and remains in the atmosphere only for days to weeks before it descends as rain or snow.
  - Black carbon absorbs solar energy and warms the atmosphere.
  - When it falls to earth with precipitation, it darkens the surface of snow and ice, reducing their albedo (the reflecting power of a surface), warming the snow, and hastening melting.
- India is the second-largest emitter of black carbon in the world, with emissions expected to increase dramatically in the coming decades, says an April 2019 study in the journal Atmospheric Research, with the Indo-Gangetic Plains said to be the largest contributor.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

## Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### 1. A blow against social justice

#### Context:

- Supreme Court **judgment on Reservation and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes promotions.**
- The author of the article offers an argument against the observations made in the judgment.

#### Details:

- **The two-judge Supreme Court Bench** has ruled that **no individual could claim reservation in promotions** and that the **court could not issue a mandamus** directing State governments to provide reservation.
- The verdict has raised four important constitutional questions:

- Whether reservation in promotions is a fundamental right or not.
- Whether a court can direct the state to provide reservations.
- Whether quantifiable data for inadequate representation is a must for giving reservation in promotions.
- And whether it is the obligation of the state to give reservation.

### Concerns:

- The author of the article notes several concerns with the judgment.

### Two judge bench:

- Worryingly, the present judgment has been delivered by a two-judge bench.
- Since the case **involves multiple constitutional issues**, it should have been dealt with by a larger constitutional bench that included a Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) judge.

### Impact on social justice:

- Denying application of reservation in promotions has largely confined SCs and STs to lower cadre jobs. Hence, this verdict has **affected social justice and the advancement of the underprivileged**.

### Administrative efficiency:

- The judgment has also noted that the decision of the State government to provide reservation for SC/STs should not affect the efficiency of administration.
- With the **lack of evidence to prove the inter-relation between performance in administration and caste**, the observation which implies that the entry of SC/STs in the job market can reduce the quality of administration is by **itself discriminatory**.

### Quantifiable data:

- The responsibility of collecting data on representation by the Backward Classes lies with the state, which has been **reluctant to carry out the caste-based census**.
  - The last caste-based census was in 1935. After Independence, no government has had the inclination to conduct a caste-based census due to political reasons.

### Interpretation as enabling rights:

- The recent judgment has **interpreted Articles 16 (4) and 16(4A) only as enabling provisions**.
  - Enabling provisions mean that these provisions empower the state to intervene and it does not mean the state is not bound to provide it.
- Interpreting the Constitution by paraphrasing and **selective reading may not be the ideal way** to interpret this provision of the Constitution.

### Details:

- The author argues against the Judgment on the basis of the constitutional questions that the verdict has given rise to.

### Reservation as a Fundamental Right:



- The scope for reservation for the Backward Classes is promised in **Part III of the Constitution under Fundamental Rights.**
- **Articles 16(4) and 16(4A) empowers the state to provide reservation for SCs and STs.** This article deals with equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
- Though there have been arguments that reservation provisions are against the **right to equality as propounded by Article 16 of the Indian Constitution**, these arguments tend to ignore the fact that the absence of equal opportunities for the Backward Classes due to historic injustice by virtue of birth entails them reservation.
  - The absence of a level-playing field among the castes calls for the need for reservations.
  - **Articles 16 (2) and 16(4) are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive in nature.** In fact, they are complementary to each other.
- The right to equality is also **enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution**, wherein there is the mention of securing social, economic and political justice to all Indian citizens and ensuring equality of status and of opportunity for all.

#### Reservation in promotions:

- India possesses a distinctive hierarchical arrangement of caste manifesting in the form of **poor representation of SCs and STs in higher posts.**
- Denying application of reservation in promotions has kept SCs and STs largely confined to lower cadre jobs.
- In cases when there is no direct recruitment in higher posts, the implementation of the reservation is justified at every level to get a reasonable representation at all levels. Hence, **providing reservation for promotions is justified and appropriate to attain equality.**
- There are concerns that the judgment destabilizes the very basis of reservation in India. By delineating the scope of reservation at the entry-level and in promotions, it will only lead to confusion in the implementation of reservation.

#### Court's power to issue a mandamus:

- Given the arguments that reservations can be considered a fundamental right, the Judiciary is well within their rights to direct the state to provide reservation in promotions.
- The Supreme Court has extraordinary powers under **Article 142**, which empowers the Court to pass any order necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it. The court can make use of this provision even if there are arguments against the right of courts to issue mandamus.

#### Need for quantifiable data:

- Previous judgments of the SC like in the **Indra Sawhney vs Union of India case**, have stressed on the need for quantifiable data to show an inadequate representation of reserved category people as an argument for reservations.
- The Indian Constitution's **Article 16(4)** reads: "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State."
  - The phrase, 'in the opinion of State' should not be misrepresented to mean the discretion of the state to give reservation or not. It should rather mean that if the state feels that SCs and STs are under-represented, then it is in the duty of the state to provide reservation.
- Moreover, Article 16(4) clearly mentions that if the state, in its opinion, feels that SCs and STs are not adequately represented, then it can provide reservation for them. **There is no mention of "quantifiable data" in the Constitution.**

#### The obligation of the state:

Given the fact that reservation rights are in Part III of the Indian Constitution as Fundamental Rights, it is the obligation of the state to ensure reservation to the underprivileged.

For more on the issue, please refer to [11th February 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. Growing numbers

#### Context:

India, which remained mostly unaffected by the global spread of the COVID-19, has reported **three more cases recently**, bringing the total number of confirmed cases in India to six.

#### Details:

##### Imported cases:

- The first three cases in India were reported from Kerala, among the people who had arrived directly from China.
- Among the three new reported cases, two cases involved Indians who had arrived from Italy and Dubai. Italy and the UAE have reported local transmission of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), thus **marking all the five as imported cases**.
- Detection of the new three cases is no surprise considering that hundreds of passengers have arrived in India from China and other countries where local transmission of the virus has been going on for the last couple of weeks.

##### Local transmission in India:

- The Health Ministry has stated that six people in Agra who had come in contact with the COVID-19 infected person in Delhi have been detected with high viral load and have been kept in isolation. Their samples have been sent to the **Pune-based National Institute of Virology** for confirmation.
- The confirmation of COVID-19 among the samples would **indicate the local transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in India**.

##### Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) network:

- **Community transmission could be possible** given the fact that the six confirmed cases had come in contact with many people before their infection status was confirmed.
- Subsequent efforts to prevent the spread of the virus will need to trace the previous contacts of the infected person, isolate them and treat them if found to be infected. In the present context, the success of the efforts will depend upon the ability of the system to trace and test people who have come in contact with the index case.
- **The Health Ministry's Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) network** is in hot pursuit to trace people who have come in contact with the six people whose samples have been sent for confirmation.
- Around 26,000 arriving passengers have been put under **community surveillance of the IDSP network**.

#### Concerns:

##### Limitations of thermal screening:



- India is undertaking universal screening of passengers arriving from 12 countries.
- **Thermal screening at airports and seaports** is being used to detect people with a fever so that further screening and testing can be performed to ascertain the infection status.
- The data available has revealed that the median **incubation period** after infection is three days. However, one study has noted that the incubation period can also last more than three weeks.
- Since infected **people do not show symptoms during the incubation period**, hence thermal screening at airports and seaports will be unable to detect such cases.

#### Limitations of molecular testing:

- Studies have noted that **molecular testing does not have very high sensitivity** and hence may turn up **false negatives**. One negative test may not indicate that the person is not infected.
- People and healthcare providers are not very aware of this fact and may limit isolation efforts to contain the spread of the virus.
- It should be made necessary that at least two negative tests are obtained before a person is certified as being uninfected.

#### Concerns with community surveillance:

- There have been reports of two adults in Kerala, under community observation for coronavirus, leaving the country unnoticed.
- Given the high chances of such an incident occurring domestically and the initial reports pointing towards the **high transmission rate of the virus**, the virus spread could only increase in India despite the efforts of the administration to isolate the infected and suspected cases.

#### **Conclusion:**

- India cannot be complacent while dealing with the possible spread of COVID-19.
- Currently, success in limiting the spread of the virus will depend on India's ability to detect cases early and isolate people who test positive for the virus.
- Given the limitations with respect to thermal screening and molecular testing, it is essential that people who have arrived in the country or the people who might have come in contact with the infected people **seek immediate medical care and testing when symptoms show up**.

## **2. A COVID-19 response that is quick off the blocks**

#### **Context:**

The global spread of COVID-19.

#### **Background:**

- As of March 2, 2020, according to the World Health Organization, there are **around 89,000 confirmed cases from 65 countries and 27 countries have reported local transmission**.
- Apart from China, there are now COVID-19 epidemics in South Korea, Iran, Italy and Japan.
- **India has reported six confirmed cases till date**.
- Given the **COVID-19's uniqueness of being a respiratory pathogen with the capability of community transmission**, medical experts are of the view that there is an impending pandemic and believe that it is a question of when this will happen and how many people will be affected.

#### **Concerns:**

#### Possible epidemic:

- Given the global spread of the COVID-19, India could anticipate the **possibility of a rapid viral spread in India.**

#### Lack of adequate resources:

- The **current healthcare resources in India will be inadequate** for the response.
- The number of beds available in the hospital, medical personnel available and ICUs available will fall drastically short in the case of an epidemic in India.

#### Lax infection prevention and control practices:

- In India, **infection prevention and control practices in healthcare facilities are often overlooked.** The reasons range from non-availability of personal protective equipment to a **relaxed attitude** towards safety norms.

#### The Ebola example:

- An outbreak which is unaddressed will have **short- and long-term impacts on health.**
- The **2014-15 West Africa Ebola outbreak overwhelmed the local fragile health systems.** Many front-line health workers and prominent doctors fell victim to the outbreak leaving the health system without any grassroots level workers.
- The outbreak response **absorbed all available health resources** and impacted other critical programmes such as routine immunization leading to measles outbreaks in West Africa.
- The response plan should be able to maintain ongoing regular health programmes while at the same time devoting adequate resources to the response. This would prove to be a challenge to the **resource and personnel poor medical system of India.**

#### Suitability of models implemented in other countries:

- The State will have to determine whether **cluster containment measures** such as those practised in China are feasible in the Indian context given its diversity and resources.
- It will have to determine the effectiveness of adopting such a model and also have to set a time frame for its implementation if it decides to implement it.
- The response should be informed by the requirement to **balance public health measures and the rights of people** who would be impacted by containment measures.

#### **Way forward:**

##### Stages of the response:

- The objective of the response should be to adapt to the stage of the outbreak.
- In the initial phase of an outbreak**, such as the current status in India, when cases are few and manageable, it makes sense to do **extensive screening**, testing of all suspected cases and carrying out contact tracing to prevent its spread into the wider community.
- In the advanced stages of an outbreak**, with signs of sustained community-wide local transmission, testing will lose its significance as a large number of cases may overwhelm the laboratory capacity.
  - At this stage, the system response should **change from containment efforts to mitigation efforts.** The efforts should focus on reducing the severity of the challenge to ensure that the health system is able to sustain the number of cases.

##### Components of the response:

- India needs to be ready to mount a **coordinated, coherent and sustained response** against COVID-19.

#### *Co-ordination and coherent response:*

- Worryingly, **India has a fragile health system which is highly fragmented**. In such a scenario, it is critical to mount a coordinated and coherent response to contain the outbreak.
- Co-ordination would not only mean the **involvement of both public and private sectors** but also allopathic and non-allopathic medical systems, different departments such as police, fire, transportation, tourism, food supplies and other sectors.
- **The National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) framework**, envisaged to be set up in situations of large natural calamities, should be leveraged. It should coordinate across ministries and departments.
- NCMC will have to work in conjunction with duly constituted State and district-level crisis committees.
- Given the limited resources and personnel in the country's medical system, **resources from other departments and the general public in the form of finances, material resources and personnel**, need to be pooled and mobilized.

#### *Transparency:*

- The response to the outbreak should be proportional and **based on scientific principles while ensuring transparency**.
- Transparency and fact-based information are hugely important as in moments of crisis, rumours and unsubstantiated claims spread rapidly and act as an impediment to the efforts and are damaging to the public interest.
- The administration should consider setting up a **dedicated web portal** including a dashboard with key indicators, current case definitions, guidelines, risk communication materials and micro plans.
- **The potential of social media and media outlets in dispersing critical information** must be leveraged.

#### *Risk communication:*

- Given the reports pointing to the high transmission capacity of the virus, the response plan should ensure that **critical personnel across sectors such as health, energy, defence, and food supply are identified and protected**.
- Priority needs to be given to **protecting front-line health workers**, intensive care unit nursing staff, doctors including specialists such as intensivists, pulmonologists, etc.
- Risk communication should address the lenient attitude towards infection prevention and control practices.
- The government should **draft and publish clinical guidelines** for triage, admission, discharge, ventilator support and other components, as applicable for various levels of the health system and these should be **updated on a regular basis**, as more knowledge about the virus emerges.

#### *Non-governmental efforts:*

- Preparedness and response cannot be considered the sole domain nor the prerogative of the government alone.
- **All institutions, entities, firms both private and public and even individuals and households should make contingency and advance preparedness plans**.
- **Companies** need to decide on putting in measures such as work from home, suspension of non-essential travel, and reinforcing workplace hygiene and health information protocols, expansive leave policies for the sick or those under quarantine.

- **Local authorities** can make plans for school closure, home isolation and social distancing.

*People led efforts:*

- **Currently, there is no definitive cure nor a vaccine for COVID-19.** Despite the best efforts worldwide, the development of the vaccine will need an extended timeframe.
- Hence currently, the response plan relies on basic measures such as health education, social distancing, and home isolation to reduce the speed at which the outbreak will spread.
- Apart from the important role played by the medical personnel, Ebola was brought under control by people who within a short time changed their long-held traditional burial practices and routines such as handshaking.
- Given the low levels of hygiene and sanitation in India, **large-scale behaviour changes will be the cornerstone of a successful response.**
- Simple yet effective measures like compulsory washing of hands, better sanitation practices will aid the efforts against COVID-19. The government should aid this by **imparting the necessary health education.**

*Long term plan:*

- Even if COVID-19 does not reach epidemic status in India, it is well-advised to continue to **develop and maintain infrastructure to respond to new novel infectious** agents capable of rapid spread, given the fact that over the past decade India has been witness to outbreaks of swine flu and [Nipah](#).
- Outbreak preparedness is a worthwhile investment as preparedness allows a health system to take proactive steps to mitigate or lessen the adverse impacts of an outbreak and to be in control of the situation.
- COVID-19 has given us an opportunity to test our systems and **build resilience for the future.**

**Conclusion:**

- The unprecedented containment measures taken by China have bought the world some lead time against the COVID-19 outbreak. India must devote efforts to **getting the system ready for a possible epidemic.**

## F. Prelims Facts

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Tidbits

### 1. Cut in Budgetary allocation will jeopardise tourism: House panel

**What's in News?**

In its report, a Parliamentary panel has said that the Finance Ministry's move to cut down the budgetary allocation for the Tourism Ministry in the upcoming financial year will 'seriously jeopardise' the targeted tourism outcomes during 2020-21.

- In the [Union Budget 2020-21](#), the Tourism Ministry has witnessed a reduction in the allocation of funds due to "broad budgetary cuts" imposed by the Ministry of Finance.
- The allocation is short of Rs. 147.42 crore, against the projected demand.

- The Parliamentary Panel also hit out at the Ministry, stating that the pattern of shortfall in allocation of funds indicated that budgetary requirements were being projected by the Ministry more on the basis of theoretical anticipation rather than on actual trend of requirement.
- In its analyses of the Budget, the panel added that since development of tourism infrastructure was capital intensive, the budgetary allocation for the upcoming fiscal was low and it would be difficult for the Ministry to take up significant activities related to on-going infrastructure development with this budget.

Stating that availability of adequate resources to the tourism sector is sine qua non for achieving tourism growth as well as inclusive growth, the committee asked the Ministry of Tourism to bring the recommendation to the notice of the Ministry of Finance and also intimate the committee its response.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Black Carbon:**

1. Black carbon is formed through the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biofuel and biomass.
2. Black carbon can stay in the atmosphere for years together.
3. India is the second largest emitter of black carbon in the world.

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

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

Black carbon is formed through the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biofuel, and biomass. But unlike CO<sub>2</sub>, which can stay in the atmosphere for years together, black carbon is short-lived and remains in the atmosphere only for days to weeks before it descends as rain or snow. India is the second largest emitter of black carbon in the world.

**Q2. Consider the following statements:**

1. All human coronaviruses cause severe diseases.
2. The virus that causes COVID-19 and the one that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) are related to each other genetically.
3. There have been no outbreaks of SARS anywhere in the world since 2003.

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

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

**Answer: a**



**Explanation:**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. Not all human coronaviruses cause severe disease. For instance, HCoV-NL63 and HCoV-229E caused only mild symptoms, whereas SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV and the current SARS-CoV-2 are associated with relatively severe symptoms. The virus that causes COVID-19 and the one that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) are related to each other genetically. There have been no outbreaks of SARS anywhere in the world since 2003.

**Q3. The Chief Information Commissioner is appointed on the recommendation of a committee consisting of:**

1. The Prime Minister.
2. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.
3. A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
4. Minister of home affairs.

Choose the correct option:

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

RTI Act 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of:

1. The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee.
2. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.
3. A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

**Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Sukhna Lake:**

1. It is located at the foothills of Shivalik Hills.
2. It is included in the list of Ramsar sites in India.
3. The Lake has been declared as a living entity.

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

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

Sukhna Lake in Chandigarh is a reservoir at the foothills (Shivalik hills) of the Himalayas. It is not included in the list of Ramsar sites in India. The list of Ramsar sites (related to wetlands) in India comprises Indian wetlands deemed to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. Punjab and Haryana High Court have declared Chandigarh's Sukhna Lake as a living entity.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In the light of new cases being reported in India and the possibility of local transmission, discuss the associated concerns in the Indian context. Elaborate on what should be the major components of India's response plan to COVID-19 (15 marks, 250 words).
2. The recent Supreme Court judgment in the Mukesh Kumar v. State of Uttarakhand case, ruling that no individual could claim reservation in promotions as a right, upholds the right to equality as propounded by Article 16 of the Indian constitution. Critically examine (10 marks, 150 words).