

06 May 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. ‘Darbar Move’ burdens exchequer, says J&K HC

Context:

The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has asked the Centre and the Union Territory (UT) administration to take a final call on the continuation of the 148-year-old practice of shifting capitals annually between Srinagar and Jammu, which burdens the exchequer.

Details:

- The court observed that the Darbar Move results in wastage of tremendous amount of time, efforts and energy on inefficient and unnecessary activity. It is taxing for security forces too.
 - Over 10,000 employees shift capital annually.
 - Hundreds of trucks are usually plied to carry furniture, office files, computers, and other records to the capital.
- Evaluating the cost incurred by the Darbar Move on the exchequer, the court noted that if the practice was rationalised, the amount of money, resources and time which could be saved, could be utilised towards the development of the Union Territory, which has otherwise witnessed much turmoil.
- Over the years, there have been voices raised against the century-old practice which involves heavy funding towards ensuring the smooth conduct of the move.
- However, the regional parties advocate the continuation of the practice to help in the emotional integration between two diverse regions of J&K.

Darbar Move:

- It is a bi-annual movement of the 'darbar' between Jammu and Srinagar.
- It is the name given to the bi-annual shift of the secretariat and all other government offices of Jammu and Kashmir from one capital city to another.
- From May to October, governmental offices are housed in the state's summer capital, Srinagar, and the other six months in its winter capital, Jammu.
- The practice was introduced in 1872 by a Dogra monarch to escape the harsh winters of the Kashmir Valley.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Amid high inflation, Iran to get a new currency

Context:

The Iranian Parliament has authorised the replacement of the rial with another basic unit of currency called the toman.

Background:

- For many years, Iran's government debated changing the national currency, the rial, by slashing four zeros off its face value.
- It is an acknowledgement of how American sanctions and economic mismanagement have contributed to inflation in the country.
- Since 2018, when the Trump administration repudiated the nuclear agreement and reimposed sanctions on Iran, the value of Iran's currency has fallen by roughly 60%.
- The [COVID-19](#) pandemic, that turned Iran into a regional epicentre of the disease, appears to have played a decisive role, contributing to a further devaluation of the rial since February 2020.

Details:

- Each toman will be worth 10,000 rials under the new system.
- This decision has been taken in a move to simplify the transactions.

- Slashing the extra zeros would vastly simplify financial calculations in Iran by eliminating the need for Iranian shoppers to carry loads of rials to make purchases.
- The change is the outcome of a draft bill presented in early 2019 by the Governor of Iran's central bank.
- It is worth noting that the currency has been devalued 3,500 times since 1971 and that Iran had no choice but to save the face of its national currency.
- The Guardian Council, a body of conservative clerics that supervises Parliament, is expected to ratify the law, and then the central bank will have two years to implement the change — removing rials from circulation and issuing tomans instead.

Criticisms:

- Opponents argued that the plan was an added expense at a time when the government was already facing a budget deficit of between 30-50% for the coming fiscal year.
- The effect of the currency change, the critics opine, amounted to just cosmetic window dressing.
- Fereydoun Khavand, an Iranian economist in Paris, said governments typically arrived at changing the national currency as the last stage of an economic overhaul like European countries had done after the Second World War or Turkey in recent years.
 - Iran has done the opposite, partly because of the crippling effect of U.S. sanctions, which have severely limited the country's ability to sell oil or to conduct international financial transactions.
 - Under these circumstances, he said, other basic economic changes the Iranian government may want to undertake are difficult.
- It is opined that the Iranian government is in a financial bind with no prospect of financial aid coming from outside or from inside, so they are trying this.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. China launches new rocket, spacecraft

Context:

China has successfully launched a new rocket and prototype spacecraft.

Details:

- The launch of 'The Long March 5B' rocket is a major test of the country's ambitions to operate a permanent space station and send astronauts to the Moon.
- Following the launch of the rocket, an unmanned prototype spaceship successfully separated and entered its planned orbit.
- It is expected that the spaceship will be instrumental in transporting astronauts to a space station that China plans to complete by 2022 — and eventually to the Moon.
- It would have capacity for a crew of six.
- China plans to send an astronaut to the Moon in about a decade and then build a base there.
- The new Long March 5B rocket has been specially designated to propel modules of the future space station into orbit.
- This is a step forward in its deep-space ambitions of building an orbiting space station, furthering its aspirations to rival the U.S., Russia and private companies in outer space exploration.

Note:

- The United States is so far the only country to have successfully sent humans to the Moon.
- But China has made huge strides in its effort to catch up, sending astronauts into space, satellites into orbit and a rover to the far side of the Moon.
- The U.S., however, has banned most space cooperation with China out of national security concerns, keeping China from participating in the International Space Station and prompting it to gradually develop its own equipment.

Category: SECURITY

1. 'Copycat' groups come to the fore

Context:

The Delhi police have cracked down on the 'Bois Locker Room', an Instagram page where teenage boys were allegedly discussing gang rape of minor girls.

Details:

- The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) had issued notices to Instagram and the Delhi Police.
- About 10 members of the group have been identified and are being dealt with as per the provisions of the [Juvenile Justice Act](#).
- The police have registered a case under Sections 465 (forgery), 471 (using as genuine a forged document or electronic record), 469 (forgery for purpose of harming reputation), and 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the IPC and Sections 67 (publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form) and 67A (publishing or transmitting of material containing sexually explicit act in electronic form) of the Information Technology Act.

Issues:

1. Rumour mongering:

- One of the fallouts of the matter was the rumour-mongering that started either to take focus away from the core issue or to malign others in a similar way with fabricated evidence.

2. Copycat groups:

- Cyber experts have observed scores of Copycat groups with similar names or themes that were formed within hours of the matter becoming public knowledge.
- Cyber experts said the copycat groups were trying to capitalise on the dubious fame and gain followers.
- The pages have been created with the obvious intent to cash in on the attention and gain followers.

3. Lack of clarity in laws:

- There are no clear laws for many of the instances that are coming to light.
- For example, there are so many instances of body shaming but no laws that deal with cyber bullying.

4. Effect on Free Speech:

- While it is argued that the firms (here, Instagram) are liable if platforms are misused, punitive action could have a 'chilling effect on free speech'.
- Without an actual crime being committed, it will be tough for platforms to provide user data to law enforcement.
- This could also lead to grave harm when it comes to conversations around politics or other thorny issues that often happen in chat groups online.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Pathways to a more resilient economy

Context:

- The author of the article articulates **the necessary changes in the economic system in the face of the pandemic crisis.**

Details:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically affected the economies and lives, and has challenged the tenets of economics that have dominated public policy for the past 50 years. Such a situation necessitates the **redesign of economies, businesses and lives.**
- The author of the article discusses ideas to build a more resilient economy and a more just society.

Idea of De-growth:

- Traditionally, GDP has been considered the supreme goal of progress. The given scenario, where even the richest countries are failing to contain the damage of the pandemic, calls into **question the prominence of GDP as a goal.**
- Goals for human progress must be reset. There is a need for better measures to gauge human development.
 - A five-point 'de-growth' manifesto by 170 Dutch academics has recently gained a lot of attention.

Idea of national boundaries:

- Boundarylessness has been often promoted by hyper-globalizers based on the argument that **boundaries impede flows of trade, finance and people.** They have argued that removing such boundaries would be good for global growth.
- The author argues that **boundaries between countries are good.**
 - Since **countries are at different stages of economic development,** and have different compositions of resources, they will **have to follow different paths to progress.** The presence of boundaries allows them to do so.

- The breakdown of the [World Trade Organization](#) serves as an example of the importance of borders. Under the WTO, all countries were expected to open their borders, which caused harm to countries at different stages of development, and their reluctance has been a drag on WTO negotiations.

Necessity of government's role:

- The recent past has witnessed the **growing importance of market economy**, leading to the subsequent decrease in the government's role. Capitalist corporations have wanted governments out of the way to make it easy for them to do business.
- However, the current crisis has brought to light the **critical role of the government in critical times**. Governments are having to bail out businesses. This calls for higher roles for governments in any future system.

Limitations of market economy:

- **Market economy, though allows for higher efficiency, leads to unequal access to resources.**
- Those who have money and power can acquire goods and services from the markets, while the poor do not have money to obtain what they need. The **"marketization" of economies has contributed to the increasing inequalities** in wealth over the last 50 years.
- There is a need to **revalue the emphasis on market economy**.

Justice and dignity:

- There are inherent **differences between a consumer and a citizen**.
- **Citizens have a broader set of needs than consumers**. Citizens' needs cannot be fulfilled merely by enabling them to consume more goods and services. They value **justice, dignity and societal harmony** too.
- Traditional economists' evaluations of the benefits of free trade and competition policy are based on consumer welfare alone, and fail to account for negative impacts on citizens.
- **Citizen welfare must be the objective of progress**.

Importance of collaboration:

- The faith in **"Darwinian competition"** which propounds the principle of the survival of only the fittest, **fails to recognize many deficiencies in modern societies and economies**.
- **Competition must be restrained and Collaboration must be promoted**. This could involve collaboration among scientists in different disciplines, and among diverse stakeholders, and collaboration among sovereign countries.
- Improvements in abilities to share and govern common resources have become essential for human survival in the 21st century.

Public ownership of IPR:

- Recently, there has been an increasing emphasis on **recognizing intellectual property rights as a means to promote innovation and development**.
- The author calls for recognizing intellectual property as belonging to the public for the following reasons:
 - The **current era of knowledge** accords more power and wealth to those who own knowledge. Intellectual property monopolies are producing enormous wealth for their owners, though many were developed on the back of huge public investments.
 - Powerful **technologies can be used for benign purposes**.

- The author calls for evolving new institutions for **public ownership of technologies and for the regulation of their use.**

Way forward:

Structural changes:

- Unlike the financial crisis of 2008, which was basically a crisis of liquidity in the system wherein the solutions were obvious, the **COVID-19 crisis** has revealed structural weaknesses in the global economy, and would **require structural changes in the system.**
- Though currently global attention understandably is focused on relief and recovery, it is equally important to redesign the entire system for resilience.

Integrated approach:

- The economic system cannot be redesigned by domain experts devising solutions within their silos. There is a **need for an integrated approach to redesigning the system** where the new **policies complement and supplement each other** and increase the effectiveness of the changes.

Innovative approach:

- Innovations are required at many levels to create a more resilient world. **Innovation is essential in the overall design of the economy.**
- Innovations will be required in business models for business survival.

Basic changes:

- Changes will be necessary in human life patterns, **work and consumption habits, and human priorities.**

Category: HEALTH

1. The mark of zero

Context:

- Kerala's relatively successful attempt in containing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:

- Kerala has been relatively successful in its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Kerala appears to have **flattened the curve** with zero fresh cases on three days in May 2020. Over the past two weeks, the numbers of new cases reported have remained either the same or fewer than the number of recoveries.
 - The state has reported only a **small number of cases** (499) thus far.
 - The **recovery rate has been good** and there have been just three deaths. The case **fatality rate of Kerala stands at 0.6% as against the national average of 3.3%.**
- The ICMR has lauded Kerala for its containment and testing strategies and referred to it as the "**Kerala model**".

Reasons behind the success:

Preparedness:

- Kerala state had **containment strategies in place** even before the first case of novel coronavirus was detected in Kerala.
- When the number of cases began increasing, even before WHO declared the coronavirus a pandemic, Kerala shut down all educational institutions and entertainment centres, banned large gatherings and appealed to people to avoid visiting religious places.

Execution:

- Kerala, which had witnessed a **2018 Nipah outbreak**, fully realized the merits of containing virus transmission by quickly tracing all the contacts, and ensured **extensive contact tracing and testing**, as a result of which, the containment efforts have yielded results.
- There has been **active involvement of all the stakeholders who have complemented each other during the crisis**.
- There has been **strict adherence to epidemiology protocols**.
- There has been a **close and complete involvement of the government at all levels with the bureaucracy and local community**.

Existing scenario in Kerala:

- Given the legacy of decades-old social revolution and development, Kerala has very **good health-care infrastructure** in place, down to the primary health-care centres.
- The **health-seeking behaviour of the people and high literacy in Kerala** have also played a pivotal role in the war against the pandemic.

Way forward:

- Despite the impressive performance of Kerala, under no circumstances can the State lower its guard given the possibility of a resurgence of the outbreak.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. It's time for a virtual judiciary

Context:

- The article evaluates the advantages of **adopting a system of virtual judiciary in tax cases**.

Details:

- During the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, it has become clear that many activities can be done online.
- In these exceptional circumstances, 'work from home' as a concept has been employed extensively, and it seems to have gained enough traction even in the post lockdown scenario.
- The author evaluates the advantages of having a virtual judiciary for tax cases in India.

Arguments in favour of a virtual judiciary system:

Speedy disposal of cases:

- The pendency of cases in various courts in India is huge.
- The major concern with the present court system is that lawyers on both sides need to be physically present in court. Cases are often adjourned due to various reasons. Virtual judiciary can help **address such avoidable adjournments**.
- Important submissions and papers can be submitted via mail. The **productivity of lawyers will increase substantially** as visits to courts and long waiting hours will be more of an exception than the rule.

Ease of legal access:

- Thousands of Indians cannot afford to go to court as **legal costs are high and legal procedures are complicated**.
- Since most tax cases do not necessitate personal hearings, the system of virtual judiciary can **ease legal access to many**.

More efficient system:

- The [Economic Survey of 2019-2020](#) evaluates the huge pendency of tax cases and revenue cases and argues for more court infrastructure and judges to solve the problem of pendency. However, the Survey fails to recognize the fact that the already existing infrastructure is grossly under-utilised.
 - Tribunals, such as the Income Tax Tribunal, function only for limited times. Judges are not accountable for efficiency and performance.
- In the case of virtual judiciary, judges can decide the case based on all the information available transparently. Virtual judiciary will **enhance the quality of the judgment and also eliminate obvious errors**.
- Virtual systems will help increase the efficiency of the judiciary.

Cost savings:

- A virtual judiciary results in **substantial savings in costs for both the judiciary as well as the litigants** through the speedy disposal of cases.

Uniqueness of tax cases:

- The fact that the jurisdiction of a court is defined by geography makes no sense in matters such as taxation and company law. All judges should be empowered to handle any case, wherever it originates.
- The change to **remote, non-personal electronic court hearings** will bring several benefits.
 - **Better utilisation of manpower and infrastructure** by the equitable distribution of work.
 - **Malpractices will be limited** as there will no longer be familiarity between lawyers and judges in a city.
- The use of the court hall to decide tax cases is superfluous. Many of these **cases can be decided even without going to court**.

For more related information, refer to:

[CNA dated April 28, 2020](#)

[CNA dated April 7, 2020](#)

1. Qutub Minar

- One of the finest examples of Indo-Islamic architecture, Qutb (Qutub) Minar is a 240 ft tall tower.
- It is the tallest brick minaret in the world.
- Qutub-ud-din-Aibak laid the foundation of the Qutb Minar in Delhi.
- It was named after a Sufi saint Khwaja Qutb-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki.
- Qutb Minar was completed by Aibak's successor and son-in-law Iltutmish.
- The ground storey of the Minar was constructed over the ruins of the Lal Kot which was built by the Tomars.
- Firoz Shah Tughlaq replaced the top storey which was damaged in a lightning and also added one more storey.
- The minar is a mixture of polygonal and circular shapes.
- It is largely built on red and buff stone with some use of marble in the upper storeys.
- Qutub Minar is a centrally-protected monument under the ASI, and a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- The Qutub Minar is surrounded by several great historical monuments and all of them together are referred to as "Qutb Complex". The complex includes: Iron Pillar of Delhi, Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, Alai Darwaza, the Tomb of Iltutmish, Alai Minar, Ala-ud-din's Madrasa and Tomb, the Tomb of Imam Zamin, Major Smith's Cupola and Sanderson's Sundial.

2. Ships on way to the Maldives, UAE

What's in News?

Navy begins evacuation operations to repatriate stranded Indian citizens in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Details:

- The Navy dispatched two ships - INS Jalashwa and INS Magar, to Male under Operation "Samudra Setu" to repatriate stranded Indian citizens.
- INS Shardul and INS Airavat had set sail to the UAE.
- The ships have been suitably provisioned for the evacuation and those evacuated would be provided basic amenities and medical facilities during the sea passage.

INS Jalashwa:

- INS Jalashwa is the second-largest combat warship in the Indian Navy after the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.
- Unlike regular warships, this ship has a flight deck for helicopter operations from which four medium helicopters can operate simultaneously.
- This deck can also be used to operate vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft like the Sea Harrier, in special circumstances.
- Since the ship is capable of embarking over 1000 troops, she is fully equipped with extensive medical facilities to ensure the health care of the embarked personnel.

Read more about INS Jalashwa covered in [5th May 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

INS Magar:

- NS Magar is the lead ship of Magar-class amphibious warfare vessels of the Indian Navy.
- She was built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, Kolkata.
- She was commissioned in 1987.
- She has participated in multifarious naval operations, from amphibious exercises, fleet deployments and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.
- The major operations undertaken by the ship include [Operation Pawan](#) (Indian Peace Keeping Force - IPKF operations in Sri Lanka), wherein she played a pivotal role in the movement of logistics supplies to the area of operations, to support the IPKF land forces.
- The most noteworthy operation was in the wake of the 2004 Tsunami.

INS Shardul:

- INS Shardul is the lead ship of the Shardul-class amphibious warfare vessels of the Indian Navy.
- She was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2007.
- On March 10, 2020, INS Shardul arrived at Port Antsiranana with relief material for Madagascar, after Cyclone Diane and floods.

INS Airavat:

- INS Airavat, commissioned in the Indian Navy in 2010, is one of the biggest and heaviest naval ships of the Indian Navy.
- It is capable of carrying 10 battle tanks, more than 500 troops, and 11 combat trucks.
- INS Airavat provides a comfortable platform to Sea King and Dhruv helicopters.
- It is also equipped with two indigenous rocket launchers to provide support in amphibious operations.
- The Indian Navy in January 2020 conducted “Operation Vanilla”, with INS Airavat delivering relief material such as food, clothing, medicines, and water to Madagascar devastated by a cyclone and the subsequent rainfall and landslide.

3. Pulitzer Prize

What's in News?

3 Indian photographers win the Pulitzer Prize.

- The Pulitzer Prize is an award for achievements in newspaper, magazine and online journalism, literature, and musical composition in the United States.

- It was established in 1917 by provisions in the will of American (Hungarian-born) Joseph Pulitzer who had made his fortune as a newspaper publisher.
- It is administered by Columbia University in New York City.
- Prizes are awarded yearly in twenty-one categories.
- In twenty of the categories, each winner receives a certificate and a US\$15,000 cash award.
- The winner in the public service category of the journalism competition is awarded a gold medal.

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Qutb Minar:

1. It is named after Qutub-ud-din-Aibak who laid the foundation of the monument.
2. It was completed by Firoz Shah Tughlaq.
3. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Qutub-ud-din-Aibak laid the foundation of the Qutb Minar in Delhi.
- It was named after a Sufi saint Khwaja Qutb-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki.
- Qutb Minar was completed by Aibak's successor and son-in-law Iltutmish.
- Firoz Shah Tughlaq replaced the top storey which was damaged in a lightning and also added one more storey.
- Qutub Minar is a centrally-protected monument under the ASI, and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Operation Samudra Setu: INS Sunayna
2. Operation Vanilla: INS Airavat
3. Operation Nistar: INS Jalashwa

Which of the given pairs are correctly matched?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Navy has dispatched two ships - INS Jalashwa and INS Magar, to Male under Operation “Samudra Setu” to repatriate stranded Indian citizens.
- The Indian Navy in January 2020 conducted “Operation Vanilla”, with INS Airavat delivering relief material such as food, clothing, medicines, and water to Madagascar devastated by a cyclone and the subsequent rainfall and landslide.
- Operation Nistar, in 2018, was the operation of the Indian Navy using INS Sunayna to evacuate Indian citizens from the Island of Socotra (part of Yemen) when they were stranded by Cyclone Mekenu.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. A geosynchronous orbit synchronizes with the rotation of the Earth at any inclination.
2. Geostationary orbit lies on the same plane as the equator.
3. Geosynchronous satellites are particularly useful for telecommunications and remote sensing applications.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- A geosynchronous orbit synchronizes with the rotation of the Earth at any inclination. More specifically, the time it takes for the Earth to rotate on its axis is 23 hours, 56 minutes and 4.09 seconds, which is the same as a satellite in a geosynchronous orbit. This makes geosynchronous satellites particularly useful for telecommunications and other remote sensing applications.
- While geosynchronous satellites can have any inclination, the key difference to geostationary orbit is the fact that they lie on the same plane as the equator.
- About 35,786 kilometres above the Earth’s surface, satellites are in geostationary orbit.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Milan is the bilateral military exercise conducted between India and Maldives.
2. Recently, Operation Sanjeevani was conducted by the Indian Navy, delivering essential medicines to Maldives.
3. India is the largest trade partner of Maldives.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- “Ekuverin” is the bilateral military exercise conducted between India and Maldives.
- The Indian Air Force recently delivered 6.2 million tonnes of essential medicines to Maldives under Operation Sanjeevani.
- India is the fourth largest trade partner of Maldives after the UAE, China and Singapore.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Given the many benefits of a virtual judiciary system, there is a need to adopt such a system at least in specific areas like tax and revenue related cases. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. The COVID-19 pandemic, by drastically affecting economies and lives, has challenged the very tenets of economics that have dominated public policy in the recent past and has necessitated the need for structural shifts and redesign of economies, businesses and lives. Comment. (15 marks, 250 words)