

10 May 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Row over new link road to Kailash Mansarovar](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ECONOMY

1. [Enable longer work hours: CII to Centre](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Sal forest tortoise habitat stretches over unprotected areas](#)
2. [Green norms must be discussed: Cong.](#)

INTERNAL SECURITY

1. [Police get a guide to detect fake news](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [How different is the PM CARES Fund from the PM's National Relief Fund?](#)
2. [How can inter-State workers be protected?](#)

F. Tidbits

1. [ICMR, Bharat Biotech tie up for Indian COVID-19 vaccine](#)
2. [Narco-terrorist with links to Pakistan groups arrested](#)

G. Prelims Facts

1. [Using NFHS for population surveillance for coronavirus](#)
2. [Study finds 'heat wave-like' conditions in cars](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Row over new link road to Kailash Mansarovar

Context:

- Inauguration of the **new link road from India to China** to shorten the travel time for pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar.
 - The link road starts from Dharchula in Uttarakhand and runs 80 km to the **Lipulekh pass** and has been built by the Border Roads Organisation.

Details:

- Inauguration of the new link road has run into **diplomatic trouble** as Nepal has strongly objected to India's move.

Nepal's contention:

- Nepal has claimed that the '**Link Road**' connecting to **Lipulekh** passes through **Nepali territory**.
- Nepal claims that India's move marks a **breach of the agreement** reached between the Indian Prime Minister and Nepal PM in 2014 which sought to work out the outstanding **boundary issues on Kalapani (where Lipulekh lies) and Susta**.
 - An understanding was reached between India and Nepal that a solution to boundary issues between the two countries would be sought through negotiation.

India's response:

- The Ministry of External Affairs of India has clarified that the link road passing through **Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district** lies completely within the territory of India.
- India has also clarified that the new link road **follows the pre-existing route** used by the pilgrims of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.
- India has stated that the boundary delineation exercise with Nepal is ongoing, and that India is committed to **resolving outstanding boundary issues through diplomatic dialogue** and in the spirit of our **close and friendly bilateral relations with Nepal**.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Enable longer work hours: CII to Centre

Context:

- The **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** has put forth several recommendations at a meeting between CII representatives and the Labour and Employment Minister.

Details:

Addressing labour shortage:

- The government must issue guidelines directing **direct workers to rejoin duty** and has suggested that those failing to report for work must be made liable for action under the **Employment Standing Order Act** and the **Industrial Dispute Act**.
- The CII has suggested that migrant workers residing in shelter homes or available locally near the industrial belts must be mapped and must be deployed to the nearest factories.

Ensuring job retention:

- The industry body has sought **removal of labour advisories issued under the Disaster Management Act** that prohibits employers from any wage reduction, layoff and retrenchment of workers and has recommended that the **provisions of layoff under the Industrial Dispute Act** be extended to commercial establishments as a job retention measure for workers having no work.
 - For the period of layoff, such workers shall remain on rolls and will get reduced wages along with statutory benefits such as ESIC and PF.
- To encourage organisations to retain the job offers and promote fresh employment, the Government can consider **restarting [Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana](#)**.

Ensuring ease of business:

- **Labour codes** should be further reviewed to enable greater ease of doing business and encourage entrepreneurship.

Ensuring profitability of enterprises:

- The States need to put the **revision of minimum wages on hold for at least one year** and the **normal working hours of employees across sectors must be increased** by allowing four hours overtime per day, with proportionate pay for overtime work.
- The **[Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana](#)** ought to be extended to include more establishments under its ambit. The income support from the government would enable the industries to employ labourers at reduced wages.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Sal forest tortoise habitat stretches over unprotected areas

Context:

- A study by ecologists from the **Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun**.

Details:

Sal forest tortoise:

Habitat:

- Also known as the **elongated tortoise** (*Indotestudo elongata*), the Sal forest tortoise is widely distributed over **eastern and northern India and Southeast Asia**.

Threat:

- Sal forest tortoise is heavily **hunted for food**. It is collected both for local use, such as decorative masks, and **international wildlife trade**.
- Around 29% of the predicted distribution of the species falls within **high occurrence fire zones** or areas where there is management burning.
 - Sal forest tortoise in northeast India is exposed to the risk of jhum fire. Apart from the **direct fatalities due to the forest fires**, the fires also **open up habitats**, which increase the chance of people finding the tortoise easily.

- Forest fires also **decrease soil moisture levels** which may disturb forest floor ecosystem affecting the predominantly ground based animals.

Conservation status:

- Sal forest tortoise has been recently assessed as **critically endangered**.
- According to the IUCN, **the population of the species may have fallen by about 80% in the last three generations** (90 years). Once widely distributed the Sal tortoise is now no longer common over its habitat.

Concerns:

Threatened status:

- **23 of the 29 species of freshwater turtle and tortoise species** found in India come under the **threatened category in the IUCN red list** and are under severe existential threat due to human activities.

Faulty demarcation of protected areas:

- The study by Wildlife Institute of India found that the areas designated as protected areas have only a small overlap with the actual habitat of the Sal forest tortoise.
 - **Over 90% of the potential distribution of the Sal forest tortoise falls outside the current protected area network.** In northeast India, the representation of the species in protected areas is least.
 - There is little to **no connectivity** among most of the protected areas where the species is present.
- **Protected areas are designated in a largely mammal-centric way.** Many reptiles and amphibians which are equally threatened live outside protected areas where exploitation risk is more.

Way forward:

Monitoring needed:

- Given the fact that tortoises are equally threatened as the tigers, there is the need for regular monitoring of the species.
- Given the scarce information available on Sal forest tortoise, enhanced monitoring will help increase the understanding of the species and aid conservation efforts.

Focused efforts:

- In summer Sal forest tortoises select moist patches such as dry stream beds. Such areas should be protected from the spread of forest fire.

Transboundary collaboration:

- Given that the species is found even in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, transboundary collaboration may aid the conservation efforts.

Additional information:

- Transboundary conservation reserves for tigers:

- **Manas** for the Indo-Bhutan region
 - **Sundarban** for the India-Bangladesh region.
- The **critically endangered brackish water turtle (Batagur baska)** is distributed in India and Bangladesh.

2. Green norms must be discussed: Cong.

Context:

- The Environment Ministry has extended the deadline for receiving public comments on the **draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020**.

Details:

- The EIA Notification 2020 is to **replace and supersede the 2006 notification**.
- The new EIA Notification proposes fundamental changes in the environmental regulatory regime in India.

For more information refer: [CNA 13th march 2020](#)

Concerns:

- There are some concerns regarding the **new clauses in the draft notification**.
 - Concept of **post facto clearance**. This provision could lead to extensive damage to the ecology before it is evaluated.
 - A provision in the new notification states that violations could only be reported by the project developer himself and/or government authorities. **Citizens or the civil society cannot report any violations**.
 - The **construction sector accounts for a large proportion of the green house gas emissions**. New construction projects up to 1,50,000 sq.m do not need detailed scrutiny by an expert committee or EIA. This marks an increase from the earlier limit of 20,000 sq.m. This new provision would result in a large proportion of construction projects being out of the scope of EIA.
- Some sections have questioned the urgency in passing a critical notification.

Way forward:

- The notification should be **discussed in the Parliamentary standing committee** and the Environment Minister should have an **extensive consultation with environmental groups**.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Police get a guide to detect fake news

Context:

- The **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD)**, a think-tank under the Union Home Ministry has published guidelines to aid law enforcement agencies to identify fake news and videos.

Background:

- **Digital news has led to increased incidence of fake news or yellow journalism.**
 - Fake news is published with the intent to damage an agency, entity or a person and gain financially or politically and it often uses sensationalist, dishonest or outright fabricated headlines to increase readership.
- Photos, audio recordings, and videos can be edited easily to mislead the recipient.
- In the wake of the pandemic, fake news and videos have **spread panic, increased hatred and communal violence.**
- Miscreants have used fake URLs to mislead people who wanted to donate to [PM-CARES fund](#).

Details:

Spotting fake news:

- The guideline mentions several **indicative signs** that officials must look for to identify possible fake news.
 - The officers should read beyond “outrageous” headlines designed to attract clicks and read the whole article. A possible case of fake news could be **when headlines, visuals or captions do not support the content** or when genuine contents or sources are impersonated with false or made-up sources.
 - A **search on the author of the article** would also enable insights into the veracity of the news.
 - The investigating officer must stay alert to **clues such as language** since such websites and links usually have spelling mistakes.

Cross-checking:

- The officials should **refer to trusted news sources** to verify whether the story is being reported elsewhere. When a **story is reported in multiple places, it is more likely to be true.**
- The manual also gives an indicative list of websites that could be accessed for fact-checking.
- The guidelines ask police and other investigating agencies to use **open domain tools** for collecting more information on fake videos.
 - Given the fact that because the open domain tools and websites are hosted on foreign servers/cloud systems, BPRD has cautioned that the Investigating officer may consider the case sensitivity before resorting to these tools since there is the **risk of data leakage** that may influence or mislead an investigation.

Conclusion:

- The extensive spread of fake news has the potential to **gravely impact individuals, as well as the society at large and hence fake news detection in cyberspace**, is an important issue for the law enforcement agencies.
- The step-by-step procedure laid in the guidelines will assist Law enforcement agencies in spotting and investigating fake news in a systematic manner. It will also help in the effective **prosecution of offenders** involved in such mischievous acts.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

1. How different is the PM CARES Fund from the PM's National Relief Fund?

Context:

- Setting up of the **Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund**, or the PM CARES Fund.

Background:

- The PM CARES Fund was set up to **tackle distress situations** such as that posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **The Prime Minister chairs the fund** in his official capacity and can nominate three eminent persons in relevant fields to the Board of Trustees. The Ministers of Defence, Home Affairs and Finance are ex-officio Trustees of the Fund.

Details:

Contribution guidelines:

- The fund **receives voluntary contributions from individuals and organisations** and **does not get any budgetary support**.
- **Donations have been made tax-exempt** and can be counted against a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) obligations.
- Contributions to PM CARES fund are **exempt from the [Foreign Contribution \(Regulation\) Act 2010](#)**, and accept foreign contributions.

Donations collected:

- In a short frame of time, PM CARES has received a large number of donations.
 - By the first week of its inception, news reports suggested that publicly declared donations added up to at least ₹6,500 crores.

Concerns:

Duplication of efforts:

- India already has a **fund with similar objectives in the form of the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)**.
 - **PMNRF was set up in January 1948**, originally to accept public contributions for the assistance of Partition refugees but lately, it has also been used to **provide immediate relief to the families of those killed in natural calamities and the victims of major accidents and riots** and support medical expenses for acid attack victims and others.
 - The Prime Minister has sole discretion for fund disbursal from PMNRF.
 - A joint secretary in the **PMO administers the fund** on an honorary basis.
 - As of December 2019, the PMNRF had an unspent balance of 3,800 crore rupees in its corpus.

Concerns with respect to contribution:

- Some of the public and private sector employees, who have donated a day's salary to the fund, claim that it was **done without their permission or knowledge**.
- Protests have been raised against companies such as Reliance which have made major donations to PM CARES even while cutting salaries of their own employees.
- Allowing uncapped corporate donations to the fund to count as CSR expenditure goes **against previous guidelines which state that CSR should not be used to fund government schemes**.
 - Such a provision is not available under PMNRF.
- There is also the **provision for unlimited tax-free contributions from major corporates**. This provision is liable for misuse.

Lack of transparency:

- Even though independent auditors will be auditing the fund, it is still **not clear whether the fund comes under the ambit of the RTI Act or the oversight of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India**.
- The Centre has neither stated the exact amount of money collected in the PM CARES Fund, nor has laid down clear guidelines on the usage of the collected funds.
- There is very **less information** available regarding the names of donors, the expenditure of the fund so far, or names of beneficiaries.

For more information on this issue refer: [CNA 31st March 2020](#)

2. How can inter-State workers be protected?

Context:

- Inter-state migrant labour issue.

Background:

Migrant labour issue:

- The **nationwide lockdown has caused immense distress to migrant workers** around the country.
- Many of the migrant labourers have been seen trying to walk home to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha from their places of work in Rajasthan, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat etc.
- There is growing concern over the **welfare of the migrant labourers** and the lack of legal protection for their rights.

For more information refer: [CNA 31st March 2020](#)

Labour law reforms:

- The current administration with the intention to **consolidate and reform labour law**, has introduced the **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019**.
- The proposed code seeks to **merge 13 labour laws into a single piece of legislation**. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, is one of them.

Details:

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen act, 1979:

- The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 **regulates the employment, conditions of service and working conditions of inter-State migrants.**

Applicability:

- It is applicable to every establishment that employs five or more migrant workmen from other States; or if it had employed five or more such workmen on any day in the preceding 12 months.
- It is **also applicable to contractors** who employed a similar number of inter-State workmen.

Provisions:

- The act **envisages a system of registration** wherein the principal employer is prohibited from employing inter-State workmen without a certificate of registration from the relevant authority.
- Every contractor who recruits workmen from one State for deployment in another State **should obtain a licence.**

Significance:

- The 1979 act has been an important step towards **ensuring labour welfare** for migrant labourers.
 - The provision for registration creates **a system of accountability** on the part of employers. It also helps the government keep track of the number of workers employed and provides a legal basis for regulating their conditions of service.
 - As part of the licensing process, **contractors are bound by certain conditions.** These include remuneration payable, hours of work, fixation of wages and other essential amenities in respect of the inter-State migrant workmen.
 - As per the act the **wage rates, holidays, hours of work and other conditions of service** of an inter-State migrant workman shall be the same as those extended to other workmen in the same establishment, if the nature of their work is similar. In no case, shall the wages be lower than what is prescribed under the **Minimum Wages Act.**

Concerns:

Lack of implementation of 1979 act:

- The lack of serious implementation of the 1979 act has led to the **rights of migrant labourers being ignored and they being exploited.**

Concerns regarding consolidation of labour laws:

- The attempt to consolidate laws relating to occupational safety, health and working conditions may lead to the **repealing of many separate laws** concerning various kinds of workers and labourers.
 - The proposed law seeks to repeal 13 Acts such as the Factories Act, Mines Act, Dock Workers' Act, the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, and other enactments relating to those working in plantations, construction, cinema, beedi and cigarette manufacture, motor transport, and the media.
- There are concerns that **specific safeguards given to migrant workers may be lost** as a result of this consolidation.

Provisions with respect to migrant workers:

- Though the **Code contains provisions similar to the 1979 Act** regarding registration of establishments, licensing of contractors and the inclusion of terms and conditions on hours of work,

wages and amenities and like the 1979 Act envisages the payment of a displacement allowance and a journey allowance to inter-State migrant workers, there are still some concerns.

- Under the proposed occupational safety, health and working conditions code bill, inter-State migrant workers have been **included under the definition of 'contract labour'**.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee recommendations to have a **separate chapter for migrant workers** and have **special provisions** for them to ensure their safety and health **have not been included**.

Way forward:

- The unprecedented distress and misery faced by migrant workers due to the current lockdown indicate the **vulnerability of this section** and it would be better to have a separate enactment dedicated to the welfare of migrant labourers.

For more information on this issue refer: [CNA 22nd April 2020](#)

F. Tidbits

1. ICMR, Bharat Biotech tie up for Indian COVID-19 vaccine

- The **Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR)** has announced a research collaboration with Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Ltd (BBIL) to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The ICMR has transferred the virus strain isolated at the **National Institute of Virology, Pune (an ICMR institute)** to BBIL.
- The **vaccine would be fully indigenous to India**.
- This would be BBIL's third stated initiative in developing a COVID-19 vaccine.

2. Narco-terrorist with links to Pakistan groups arrested

- In a joint operation, the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\)](#) and the Punjab and Haryana police have arrested an alleged **narco-terrorist**, at Sirsa in Haryana.
- The NIA investigation has revealed that Pakistan-based terrorist organisations are using **narcotic trade to generate funds for terror activities in India**. The proceeds of narcotic trade are transferred to Kashmir Valley through couriers and Hawala channel for terrorist purposes.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Using NFHS for population surveillance for coronavirus

- Currently, governments worldwide have been **testing for COVID-19 in high-risk individuals only**. However, there have been concerns that such an approach does not give an accurate number of those affected, making it impossible to understand the true prevalence in a population.
- A comment recently published in Lancet Global Health proposes the **use of the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) framework to ascertain the prevalence of COVID-19**.
- The scientific and logistical infrastructure of India's [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS\)](#) can be leveraged to conduct **random sample-based population surveillance** to track coronavirus.

- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a **large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India**. All National Family Health Surveys have been conducted under the **stewardship of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, with the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, serving as the nodal agency.
- It **releases national, State and district level data** on population and household health profile.
- The layering of COVID-19-focused data-collection efforts onto the NFHS infrastructure would keep operational costs low.

2. Study finds 'heat wave-like' conditions in cars

- There has been a **perceptible global warming trend**.
 - 2019 was the seventh warmest year for India, since record-keeping commenced in 1901. The annual mean surface air temperature, averaged over India, was $+0.36^{\circ}\text{C}$ above average.
 - The average is defined as the mean temperature from 1980-2010.
 - **The highest warming observed over India was during 2016** when the recorded temperature was 0.71°C above the mean. Similarly 2018 and 2017 have also been warmer, than the average temperature.
 - According to the World Meteorological Organisation, the **rise in global mean surface temperature during 2019 (January to October) was $+1.10^{\circ}\text{C}$** .

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

1. The Sal forest tortoise is widely distributed over eastern and northern India and Southeast Asia.
2. Sal forest tortoise has been recently assessed as critically endangered.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Sal forest tortoise has been recently assessed as critically endangered.
- According to the IUCN the population of the species may have fallen by about 80% in the last three generations (90 years). Once widely distributed the Sal tortoise is now no longer common over its habitat.
- Being widely distributed does not mean that it cannot be threatened.

Q2. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)?

1. EIA comes under the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. EIA is compulsory for all industrial projects.

3. The environmental clearance for development projects based on EIA is given only by the Central government.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- EIA comes under Notification on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of developmental projects 1994 under the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- EIA is only mandatory for 30 categories of projects. There are several projects that are exempted from EIA.
- Environment Impact Assessment Notification of 2006 has decentralized the environmental clearance projects by categorizing the developmental projects into two categories, i.e., Category A (national level appraisal) and Category B (state level appraisal).
 - Category A projects require mandatory environmental clearance.
 - Category B projects undergo screening process and are classified into two types.
 - Category B, projects (Mandatorily requires EIA).
 - Category B2 projects (Do not require EIA).

Q3. The places Kalapani and Susta are often in news with respect to which of the following countries?

- a. Bangladesh
- b. Bhutan
- c. Nepal
- d. Myanmar

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The boundary issue with respect to the two places- Kalapani and Susta is between India and Nepal.

Q4. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

- 1. 2016 is the warmest year on record for Earth.
- 2. Apart from the earth's warming trend, the global temperatures in 2016 were majorly influenced by strong El Nino conditions that prevailed at the beginning of 2016.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- NOAA and NASA analyses both indicate that 2016 was the hottest year on record globally.
- The global temperatures in 2016 were majorly influenced by strong El Niño conditions that prevailed at the beginning of the year.
- Earth's warming trend continued in 2019, making it the second-hottest year in NOAA's 140-year climate record just behind 2016.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) process in the Indian context. Also discuss the concerns associated with it. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. In the light of the new guidelines issued by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) with respect to fake news and videos, discuss the threat posed by Fake news and videos and analyze the steps needed to address this grave challenge. (10 marks, 150 words)