

21 May 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

GEOGRAPHY

1. [Amphan batters West Bengal, Odisha](#)

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Nepal's new map claims territories of India](#)
2. [China accuses India of trespass, LAC heats up](#)
3. ['Border disputes a reminder of the threat posed by China'](#)
4. [Abbas says Israel's annexation plan has derailed Oslo accord](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [New scheme for Chhattisgarh farmers](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Locusts cross Thar desert to invade 16 districts in Rajasthan](#)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Russian team at Kudankulam to address problems in generator](#)

ECONOMY

1. [Cabinet okays NBFC liquidity plan](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

DEFENCE

1. [Grasping the defence self-reliance nettle](#)

ECONOMY

1. [Working safely: On workplaces during the pandemic](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [May Fourth Movement](#)
2. [National School of Drama](#)
3. [Sukhoi-30 MKI](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [Tsai sworn in as President of Taiwan](#)
2. [Israel and Iran take their battle online](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Amphan batters West Bengal, Odisha

Context:

Cyclone Amphan made landfall between Digha in West Bengal and Hatiya Island in Bangladesh.

This topic has been covered in 20th May 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**1. Nepal's new map claims territories of India****Context:**

Kathmandu has unveiled a new political map that claims Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh of Uttarakhand as part of its sovereign territory.

Details:

- Both India and Nepal claim Kalapani as an integral part of their territory - India as part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district and Nepal as part of Dharchula district.
- India recently inaugurated a road section in Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand.
 - Nepal expressed regret after the Defence Minister inaugurated the link road and objected to the road as Lipulekh, through which the link passes, is considered by Nepal as part of its own territory.
- The Lipulekh pass is a far western point near Kalapani, a disputed border area between Nepal and India.
- Nepali diplomatic sources maintain that the region of Kalapani and the contiguous areas to the east of the river Kali and Susta on the Uttar Pradesh-Bihar border are the only parts of the nearly 1,800-km boundary that remain unresolved. The area of Susta near Gorakhpur can also be noted in the new map.
- Kathmandu says India has encroached upon this area and wants New Delhi to evacuate its population from the location.

Kalapani Dispute:

- Kalapani is a 372 sq km area at the China-Nepal-India tri-junction.
- The source of river Mahakali is at the heart of the dispute between the countries.
- The 1816 Treaty of Sugauli, signed between British India and Nepal, defined river Mahakali as the western border of Nepal. River Mahakali has several tributaries, all of which merge at Kalapani.
- India claims that the river begins in Kalapani as this is where all its tributaries merge. But Nepal claims that it begins from Lipu Lekh Pass, the origin of most of its tributaries.
- Nepal has laid claim to all areas east of the Lipu Gad — the rivulet that joins the river Kali on its border, a tri-junction with India and China.

Politics of Kalapani:

- The origin of the dispute goes back to the early 19th century; politically it emerged as a contentious issue between India and Nepal after the two countries signed the Treaty of Mahakali in 1996.
- The two countries had formed the Joint Technical Boundary Committee in 1981 to resolve the dispute. Though the committee managed to resolve a large part of the dispute, they failed to reach a final settlement.
- Eventually, the issue was referred to the foreign secretaries of the two countries and they have been trying to find a resolution to the dispute.

- Strategically, Lipulekh pass in Kalapani serves as an important vantage point for India to keep an eye on Chinese movements.
- Since 1962, Kalapani has been manned by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

India's Reaction:

- India has reacted to the latest development saying that this unilateral act is not based on historical facts and evidence. It is contrary to the bilateral understanding to resolve the outstanding boundary issues through diplomatic dialogue and such artificial enlargement of territorial claims will not be accepted by India.

2. China accuses India of trespass, LAC heats up

Context:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing has released a statement referring to the recent skirmish in Sikkim, claiming that the Indian Army crossed the line across the western section of the Sino-Indian border and the Sikkim section to enter Chinese territory.

Details:

- The statement marks an escalation in the current tensions at the LAC, threatening to bring what India has thus far maintained were “actions by both armies on the ground” into a diplomatic face-off between the countries, the most serious such event since the Doklam face-off in 2017.
- Sikkim's Naku La pass is one of four areas that has seen aggressive action between the troops in 2020. Similar skirmishes had been reported along a stretch in eastern Ladakh at the Pangong Tso lake, Demchok and the Galwan river nalah. Both sides had rushed more personnel to the area.

This issue has been covered in 20th May 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

3. 'Border disputes a reminder of the threat posed by China'

Context:

- The U.S.'s top diplomat for South and Central Asia, Alice Wells, called the recent tensions between India and China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) a reminder of the threat posed by China.
- Her comments come at a time when the U.S.-China relationship, already strained due to trade disputes, has further deteriorated over U.S. accusations of China's mismanagement of the coronavirus pandemic.

Details:

- She said that the flare-ups on the border are a reminder that Chinese aggression is not always just rhetorical. Whether it's on the South China Sea or whether it's along the border with India, provocations and disturbing behaviour by China continue and this raises questions about how China seeks to use its growing power.
- She asserted that China's behaviour was causing other nations to group together to reinforce the post Second World War economic order.

- She cited ASEAN, the trilateral partnership between India, the U.S. and Japan as well as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue with these countries and Australia.
- The U.S. has been pushing back against China on other fronts as well.
 - China's global infrastructure projects under the [Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\)](#) are a case in point.

4. Abbas says Israel's annexation plan has derailed Oslo accord

Context:

Raising the stakes over Israel's drive to annex land the Palestinians have long claimed, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority declared it free of its commitments under the Oslo peace process, including security understandings that have protected Israelis and preserved the Authority's political hold over the occupied West Bank.

Details:

- The Oslo accords and other agreements in the 1990s created the Palestinian Authority and govern its political, economic and security relations with Israel.
- "The Palestinian Liberation Organization and the State of Palestine are no longer committed to all signed agreements and understandings with the Israeli government and the American government, including the security commitments," Abbas said.
 - He said Israel would now have to "uphold responsibilities before the international community as the occupying power."
 - Abbas said his move was a response to the new Israeli government's push to annex large portions of the West Bank.
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to annex the Jordan Valley and Jewish settlements in the West Bank in line with President Donald Trump's Middle East plan, which overwhelmingly favours Israel and was rejected by the Palestinians.
- Netanyahu formed a new Israeli government in May 2020 with his chief rival, Benny Gantz, following three elections and more than a year of gridlock.
- The coalition agreement allows Netanyahu to present an annexation proposal to the government as soon as July 1, 2020.
- Israel captured the West Bank, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in the 1967 war.
- The Palestinians want all three territories for their future state, but the Trump plan would leave them with scattered clusters of enclaves surrounded by Israel.
- Most of the international community is opposed to annexation, which many fear would make it impossible to create a viable Palestinian state.
- The two-state solution is still widely seen as the only way of resolving the decades-long conflict.
- The Palestinian Authority governs and provides basic services to populated areas of the occupied West Bank. Dismantling it would risk chaos and leave tens of thousands of civil servants unemployed.
- But by referring to the "state of Palestine," Abbas appeared to leave room for it to continue in its present form under a different, and contested, name.
- Abbas has always been opposed to violence, meaning Palestinian security forces would likely continue to act against any armed groups, even without formal coordination with Israel.

Oslo Accords:

- The Oslo Accords are a set of agreements between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

- The first Oslo Accord was signed in Washington, D.C., in 1993 and the second Oslo Accord was signed in Taba, Egypt, in 1995.
- The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement was signed in Washington in 1995, subsequent to the Oslo Accords. The Oslo Accords marked the start of the Oslo process, a peace process aimed at achieving a peace treaty between Israel and Palestine.
- The Oslo Accords created a Palestinian Authority tasked with limited self-governance of parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The agreement set out the scope of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza. It even acknowledged the PLO as Israel's partner in permanent-status negotiations and other questions.
- The most important questions are related to the borders of Israel and Palestine, Israeli settlements, the status of Jerusalem, Israel's military presence in and control over remaining territories after Israel's recognition of Palestinian autonomy, and the Palestinian right of return. The Oslo Accords, however, did not create a Palestinian state.
- The Oslo Accords are based on the 1978 Camp David Accords.

Read more about West Bank Settlements in [20th November 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. New scheme for Chhattisgarh farmers

Context:

The Chhattisgarh State Government has announced the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyaya Yojana on the 19th death anniversary of the former Prime Minister.

Details:

- Farmers in Chhattisgarh would get up to ₹13,000 an acre a year under a new income support programme.
- In the first instalment, ₹1,500 crore would be distributed among 18 lakh farmers (more than 80% of them small and marginal).
- The scheme would cover rice, maize and sugarcane farmers to begin with, and would expand to other crops later.
- Rice and maize farmers would get ₹10,000 an acre, while sugarcane farmers would get ₹13,000. The money would be distributed in four instalments.

Significance:

- It is believed that the additional income to farmers would increase rural demand and also act as a stimulus for the State's economy.
- It is announced in order to encourage farmers to produce more crops and help them get the right price.
- The scheme is expected to help the farmers through the agricultural cycle and help with extension activities.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Locusts cross Thar desert to invade 16 districts in Rajasthan

Context:

The invasion of locusts had started from the India-Pakistan border in April 2020 and have now crossed the Thar desert and affected 16 of the 33 districts in Rajasthan, taking advantage of favourable wind conditions with the onset of summer.

Details:

- It is believed that the locust swarms have travelled far in search of food because of lack of vegetation in the agricultural fields after the Rabi crop harvest.
- The locust swarms have reached Sikar, Bundi, Bhilwara, Pratapgarh and Chittorgarh districts, situated far away from the desert. These are the areas where the tropical grasshoppers had not reached in 2019 during its invasion which took place after a gap of 26 years, and damaged crops across 6.70 lakh hectares in 12 districts. The loss caused by the invasion was pegged at ₹1,000 crore.

Locust menace:

- Locusts are a group of short-horned grasshoppers that multiply in numbers as they migrate long distances in destructive swarms (up to 150 km in one day).
- Four species of locusts are found in India: Desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*), Migratory locust (*Locusta migratoria*), Bombay Locust (*Nomadacris succincta*) and Tree locust (*Anacridium* sp.).
- The desert locust is regarded as the most destructive pest in India, as well as, internationally.
- The U.N. [Food and Agriculture Organisation](#) had recently warned that locusts were breeding in large numbers in Sudan and Eritrea on Africa's Red Sea Coast as well as in Iran.
- The grasshoppers emerged in January 2019 from eastern Africa and travelled through Saudi Arabia and Iran to enter Pakistan, where they invaded the cotton-producing belt of Sindh.
- The adult locusts then flew in to the Indian side of Thar desert, damaging the crops in western Rajasthan and northern Gujarat.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Russian team at Kudankulam to address problems in generator

Context:

A seven-member Russian technocrat team reached the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) site to inspect the unusual vibrations in the generator section of the second reactor that has temporarily hampered the operation of the reactor at its maximum power generation capacity of 1,000 MWe.

Details:

- The Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) is operating 2 x 1,000 MWe VVER reactors at Kudankulam with Russian assistance.
- The first reactor has been generating power since July 2013 even as the construction of the third and fourth reactors is under way at a cost of ₹39,747 crore.
- Excavation work for the construction of the fifth and sixth reactors is progressing ahead of schedule and the 'first pouring of concrete' for these last two reactors, to be built on an outlay of ₹50,000 crore, is likely to happen any time as decided by the NPCIL, the project proponent.

- The issue is that while the first reactor that attained criticality in July 2013 is generating 1,000 MWe power, the quantum of power being supplied by the second reactor cannot be elevated to its maximum capacity — though this reactor too generated in the past 1,000 MWe electricity — owing to some unusual vibrations noticed in the generator section.
- To address these technical glitches, the KKNPP sought the help of the Russians tasked with creating the nuclear park at Kudankulam with six reactors for the NPCIL.

Kudankulam Nuclear Plant was in news for ostensible cyber-attack on the Power Plant, read more about it. [Click here.](#)

Category: ECONOMY

1. Cabinet okays NBFC liquidity plan

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved a ₹30,000-crore special liquidity scheme for non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies aimed at improving the cash position of these entities.

Details:

- The government said that a special purpose vehicle (SPV) would be set up by a public sector bank to manage a Stressed Asset Fund (SAF) whose special securities would be guaranteed by the Government of India and purchased by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) only.
 - The SPV would issue securities as per requirement subject to the total amount of securities outstanding not exceeding ₹30,000 crore to be extended by the amount required as per the need.
- The proceeds of sale of such securities would be used by the SPV to acquire short-term debt of NBFCs/HFCs.
- The scheme will be administered by the Department of Financial Services.

Criticisms:

- The co-chairman, FIDC, the industry body of NBFCs, termed the scheme a non-starter due to the short tenure of the funds.
- The funds will be made available for a tenure of up to three months while a majority of the lending done is for a tenure of 2-3 years.
- It is said that, in order to prevent any asset-liability mismatch, the expectation was for a tenure of three years.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: DEFENCE

1. Grasping the defence self-reliance nettle

Context

- Finance Minister had recently announced a slew of reforms in the defence sector to address long-standing strategic and national security concerns.

Key Stats

- India, in the last one decade, had the dubious record of being the world's largest arms importer, accounting for about 12% of global arms imports.
- Saudi Arabia jumped to first place in 2018 and 2019, but India still takes over 9% of global imports.

Concerns

- This external dependence for weapons, spares and, in some cases, even ammunition creates vulnerabilities during military crises.
- There are a range of platforms and subsystems, developed in India and qualified in trials, some of which face hurdles to their induction by our armed forces because of foreign competition.
 - These include missile systems such as Akash and Nag, the Light Combat Aircraft and the Light Combat Helicopter, artillery guns, radars, electronic warfare systems and armoured vehicles.
- COVID-19 has, once again, focused minds on the impact of supply chain disruptions on both civil and defence sectors.

To find a solution to this ageing problem, we have the new Draft Defence Procurement Procedures (DPP) 2020 and a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) tasked with promoting indigenous equipment in the armed forces.

Draft Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2020

- It aims at increasing indigenous manufacturing and reducing timelines for procurement of defence equipment by removing procedural bottlenecks.

Changes to be introduced

1. Indigenization

- In a bid to enhance self-reliance in defence production, the government would notify a list of weapons systems for sourcing entirely from Indian manufacturers.
- The list will be expanded and widened as and when the capabilities of Indian manufacturers enhance.
- There would be a separate Budget provision for domestic capital procurement.
- The government has promised a time-bound defence procurement process, overhauling trial and testing procedures and establishing a professional project management unit.

2. Indigenization of imported spare parts would also be given priority.

- It is also imperative that when we import weapons systems, we should plan for the ammunitions and spares for them to be eventually manufactured in India so that we are not driven to seek urgent replenishments from abroad during crises.
- The same goes for repair, maintenance and overhaul facilities and, at the next level, the upgrade of weapons platforms.

3. Corporatizing the Ordnance Factory Board.

- Ordnance factories have been the backbone of indigenous supplies to our armed forces.
 - The principal products of the OFB include tanks and armoured vehicles, artillery guns, small arms and weapons of several types and ammunition.
 - It also produces troop comfort equipment like uniforms, tents and boots.
- Their structure, work culture and product range now need to be responsive to technology and quality demands of modern armed forces. Corporatisation, including public listing of some units, ensures a more efficient interface of the manufacturer with the designer and end user.

4. FDI impact

- The **FDI** limit in defence manufacturing under automatic route will be raised from 49% to 74%.
- It would open the door to more joint ventures of foreign and Indian companies for defence manufacturing in India.
- It will also sustain a beehive of domestic industrial activity in the research, design and manufacture of systems and sub-systems.
- Indian companies, which have long been sub-contractors to prominent defence manufacturers abroad, would now get the opportunity to directly contribute to Indian defence manufacturing.

5. Coexistence

- The government has rightly clarified that self-reliance would not be sudden and hasty but gradual.
- The thrust for indigenous research and development will coexist with the import of cutting-edge military technologies to avoid near-term defence vulnerabilities.

Challenges

- The decision to corporatize the OFB would require managing numerous other issues, the most pressing of them being to assuage the anxiety of its workforce, including officers.
 - The Board's overall financial management could also pose an immediate challenge which, in turn, could become tangled in legal wrangling.
- Further, an increase in the FDI cap to 74 per cent through the automatic route meets a longstanding demand by overseas companies and investors.
 - But how attractive or financially remunerative would it be for them to invest in India's military-industrial complex would depend on the fine print and conditions predicated to this liberalisation.
- The decision to notify and continuously update the list of weapons/platforms whose import would be prohibited seems equally restrictive and limiting.
 - In keeping with the procurement policy since 2016, there is no way the MoD can import material that is locally available or alternately can be indigenously manufactured.
 - It is unclear what additional purpose would be served by banning the import of these items. If anything, it will make it procedurally more complex to import any such item, should its induction become operationally necessary.
- Other reforms announced by the Finance Minister include the establishment of a Project Management Unit (PMU) to ensure timely completion of the procurement process, facilitating quicker decision-

making, formulation of realistic General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQRs) and overhauling the Trial and Testing procedures.

- It may be recalled that the former Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar had once publicly declared that some of the military's QRs appeared to be out of 'Marvel comic books', as the technologies and capabilities they specified were 'absurd and unrealistic'.
- The April 2012 Defence Parliamentary Committee had also revealed that as many as 41 of the Indian Army's tenders were scrapped because of the restrictive QRs.

Way forward

- The armed forces should give industry a clear picture of future requirements, so that the industries can build a long-term integrated perspective plan.
- DPP 2020 should incorporate guidelines to promote forward-looking strategic partnerships between Indian and foreign companies, with a view to achieving indigenisation over a period of time for even sophisticated platforms.
- To give private industry a level playing field for developing defence technologies, conflicts of interest, created by the role of our Defence Research and Development Organisation ([DRDO](#)) as the government's sole adviser, developer and evaluator of technologies have to be addressed.

Conclusion

- Investment, Indian or foreign, will be viable only if the door to defence exports is opened, with a transparent policy.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Working safely: On workplaces during the pandemic

Context

- India has entered the fourth phase of its lockdown, which will continue till May 31.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued guidelines on preventive measures that need to be followed in workplaces to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Basic preventive measures

These measures need to be followed by employees and visitors at all times.

- Physical distancing of at least one metre to be followed at all times.
- Use of face covers/masks to be mandatory.
- Practice frequent hand washing and use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed. This involves the strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/sneezing with a tissue/handkerchief/flexed elbow and disposing of used tissues properly.
- Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting any illness at the earliest.

Preventive measures for offices

- Employees who feel ill or are suffering from flu-like illness are advised to not attend office and seek medical advice from local health authorities.

- Further, “Any staff requesting home quarantine based on the containment zone activities in their residential areas should be permitted to work from home.”

What happens when someone in the office tests positive?

In case one or a few persons who share a room or a closed space are found to be suffering from symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, the following measures are recommended:

- Place the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others at the workplace. Provide a mask/face cover till such time he/she is examined by a doctor.
- Report to concerned central/state health authorities.
- A risk assessment will be undertaken by the designated public health authority (district RRT/treating physician) and accordingly further advice shall be made regarding the management of a case, his/her contacts and need for disinfection.
- The suspect case if reporting very mild/mild symptoms on an assessment by the health authorities would be placed under home isolation, subject to the fulfilment of certain criteria.
 - Suspect case, if assessed by health authorities as moderate to severe, he/she will follow guidelines released by the Ministry on the appropriate management of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- The rapid response team of the concerned district shall be requisitioned and will undertake the listing of contacts.
- The necessary actions for contact tracing and disinfection of workplace will start once the report of the patient is received as positive. The report will be expedited for this purpose.

Closure of workplace

- If there are one or two cases reported, the disinfection procedure will be limited to places/areas visited by the patient in the past 48 hrs.
 - There is no need to close the entire office building/halt work in other areas of the office and work can be resumed after disinfection as per laid down protocol.
- However, if there is a larger outbreak, the entire building will have to be closed for 48 hours after thorough disinfection. All the staff will work from home, till the building is adequately disinfected and is declared fit for re-occupation.

Working from home as a viable alternative

The National Directives for COVID-19 Management said the practice of work from home should be followed to the extent possible and staggered work hours should be adopted in respect of all offices and other establishments.

1. Institutional Challenges

- Most organisations do not have well documented policies and guidelines to support extended work from home arrangements at scale.
- An employer has to compute the wage of an employee based on the days and hours of work and maintain statutory registers as evidence.
 - Overtime work hours have different slabs and statutory payment requirements. In a remote work arrangement, organisations will need to manage these records such that they are admissible by the Labour Department.

2. Measuring Productivity

- Employees working for the company might not have adequate power back up and reliable high-speed internet.
- Most of them confuse work from home with a facility to lounge around.
- There are not enough tools available to measure their availability and engagement from the remote work location.

Conclusion

- There may still be occasion to resort to intermittent lockdowns if opening up leads to mounting cases.
- A prudent course would be to navigate the present with a minimalist approach, as the quest for a medical breakthrough makes progress.

F. Prelims Facts

1. May Fourth Movement

- It is an intellectual revolution and sociopolitical reform movement that occurred in China on May 4th in 1919.
- On that day, more than 3,000 students from 13 colleges in Beijing held a mass demonstration against the decision of the Versailles Peace Conference, which drew up the treaty officially ending World War I, to transfer the former German concessions in Shandong province to Japan.
 - Students poured into the public spaces of Beijing and other cities, directing their rage against not only the Western powers and Japan, but against their own government, which had proven ineffective in resisting Western imperialism.
- The movement was directed toward national independence, emancipation of the individual, and rebuilding society and culture.

2. National School of Drama

- The National School of Drama is a premier theatre institute established by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1959. It imparts training and propagates dramatics in the country.
- It became an independent school in 1975.
- It is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
- Bharatiya Natya Sangh (BNS) with assistance from UNESCO had established the 'Asian Theatre Institute' (ATI) in New Delhi in 1958. ATI was overtaken by the Sangeet Natak Akademi and merged with NSD in 1959.

3. Sukhoi-30 MKI

- The Sukhoi Su-30MKI is a twinjet multirole air superiority fighter developed by Russia's Sukhoi and built under licence by India's Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- A variant of the Sukhoi Su-30, it is a heavy, all-weather, long-range fighter.
- Development of the variant started after India signed a deal with Russia in 2000 to manufacture 140 Su-30 fighter jets.
- The first Russian-made Su-30MKI variant was accepted into the Indian Air Force in 2002, while the first indigenously assembled Su-30MKI entered service with the IAF in 2004.

- The IAF has nearly 260 Su-30MKIs in inventory as of January 2020.
- The Su-30MKI is expected to form the backbone of the Indian Air Force's fighter fleet in 2020 and beyond.

In January 2020, a squadron of fourth-generation fighter jets Sukhoi-30 MKI were equipped with the BrahMos missile, and was inducted in the Southern Air Command, Thanjavur.

- Sukhoi 30 jets have been modified to carry [BrahMos](#) air-to-surface missiles giving them the capacity to conduct long-range precision strikes.
- It was for the first time in the world that such a heavyweight missile was integrated on a fighter aircraft.
- The induction will help India to maintain its air and maritime dominance in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

G. Tidbits

1. Tsai sworn in as President of Taiwan

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen has been sworn in for a second term.

- At Ms. Tsai's last inauguration in 2016, India had, at the last minute, decided against sending two MPs to attend the event, concerned about the possible fallout on ties with China.
- India was represented at the ceremony by the acting director general of the India Taipei Association.
- India does not have a formal mission in Taipei as it is among 179 of the 194 member states of the United Nations that do not maintain diplomatic ties.
- In her speech, Ms. Tsai called for Taiwan and China to have dialogue, but ruled out any likelihood of a "one country, two systems" framework that China has proposed, along the lines of its administration over Hong Kong, which returned to China in 1997.

2. Israel and Iran take their battle online

What's in News?

According to high-ranking intelligence officials and experts in West Asia, Israel was behind a cyberattack that disrupted operations at a major port in Iran.

- The attack on the computer systems at the Shahid Rajaee port in the strategically important Strait of Hormuz was limited in scope, creating traffic jams of delivery trucks and some delays in shipments but causing no substantial or lasting damage.
- Israel and Iran have recently been engaged in an exchange of attempted and successful cyberattacks, and the purpose of Israel's relatively small-scale effort at the port, according to intelligence officials, was to send a message to Tehran to not target Israeli infrastructure.
- The hacking of the port's computers came in direct response to a failed Iranian cyberattack on an Israeli water facility.
- The incident that prompted the Israeli attack on the port happened, when a pump at a municipal water system in the Sharon region of central Israel stopped working. The facility's computer system resumed pump operation in a short time but also recorded the occurrence as an exceptional event. The attack and its quality were described by an intelligence official as "miserable."

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. 'Kunduz', frequently seen in the news, is in which country?

- a. Israel
- b. Iran
- c. Afghanistan
- d. Kyrgyzstan

Answer: c

Explanation:

Kunduz is a strategic city in northern Afghanistan, which serves as the capital of Kunduz Province.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to "Horn of Africa":

- 1. Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia form the Horn of Africa.
- 2. It lies along the southern side of the Red Sea.
- 3. Horn of Africa extends into the Gulf of Aden, Somali Sea.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

All the statements are correct.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to River Luni:

- 1. River Luni originates in the Pushkar valley of the Aravalli Range.
- 2. The Dantiwada dam and Sipu dam are built on the Luni River.
- 3. Jojari is its only right-bank tributary.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

River Luni is a major river in the Thar Desert. It is a west flowing river. It originates in the Pushkar valley of the Aravalli Range. Jojari is its only right-bank tributary while its left bank has 10 tributaries. The main tributaries of Luni are the Jawai, Sukri, Guhiya, Bandi and Jojari rivers. The Dantiwada dam and Sipu dam are built on the Luni River.

Q4. Consider the following pairs:

1. Durand Line: Afghanistan – India
2. Radcliffe Line: Afghanistan – Pakistan
3. Line of Control: India – Pakistan
4. Line of Actual Control: India – China

Which of the given pairs are correctly matched?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Durand Line is an international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- The Radcliffe Line was the boundary demarcation line between the Indian and Pakistani portions of the Punjab and Bengal provinces of British India.
- Line of Control refers to the military control line between the Indian and Pakistani controlled parts of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a demarcation line that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the key initiatives and measures taken by the Government to make India self-reliant in the defence sector. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
2. Strict implementation of guidelines with greater flexibility, adaptability and resilience will be key to the next-generation workforce. Elaborate. (10 Marks, 150 Words)