

22 Apr 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. The 'nowhere people' of COVID-19 need better legal safeguards

Context:

The migrant workers' plight during the lockdown has exposed the inadequacies of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979.

Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979:

- Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 (ISMW Act) was drawn up after repealing the Orissa Dadan Labour Act, 1975.
- The ISMW Act defines inter-State migrant workman as any person who is recruited by or through a contractor.

Concerns:

- The definition of a migrant as per the ISMW Act keeps away any migrant workman out of the ambit if he is not brought in through a licensed contractor.
 - It is common knowledge that most of the migrant workmen are not routed through licensed contractors.
 - This small catch, in the definition, has been sufficient to exclude bulk of the migrant workmen from getting any benefit out of the Act.
- Furthermore, the Act is only applicable to any establishment in which five or more inter-State migrant workmen are employed.
 - In reality, only a minuscule proportion of migrant workmen are placed under such establishments these days.
 - So, if the establishment doesn't come under the purview of the Act, its migrant employees, numbering less than five, cease to be migrants, legally, even though they may actually be one.

Details:

- The Unorganised Workers' Social Security (UWSS) Act, 2008 was enacted to provide for social security and welfare of unorganised workers.
 - The Act defines unorganised workers as home-based worker, self-employed worker or wage worker in the unorganised sector.
- The Government of India has, in the recent past, introduced a host of social security schemes.
 - [Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana](#) is meant to ensure old age protection for unorganised workers.
 - [Atal Pension Yojana](#) has been launched under the National Pension System.
 - Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana is a life insurance scheme.
 - Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana is an accident insurance scheme.
 - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana aims at providing health cover.
 - The UWSS Act itself has two very vitally useful features, viz., (a) Registration of unorganised workers, and (b) Portable smart I-card with a Unique Worker's Identification Number.
- The coverage of these useful provisions and schemes, however, is still sub-optimal thereby making the need for legal safeguards and welfare measures for migrants has become pressing and urgent.

Way forward:

The following suggestions may require urgent consideration:

- Repealing of the ISMW Act, 1979 forthwith and replacing it with a new act, or alternatively, enlarging the scope of the UWSS Act to include legal entitlements, to define the migrant workman as a subset, to provide for contingencies of livelihood loss and to make the Act legally enforceable.
- Universalisation of registration and issuance of Aadhaar-based UWIN (Unique Worker's Identification No.) would serve multiple objectives.
- Schemes like MNREGA, PDS and Ujjwala need to be made portable.
 - Geofencing of different benefits can be done so that a migrant workman can choose location-wise benefits for himself and his family from a matrix available.

- A comprehensive database must be created, of the migrant workers' source and destination, demography, employment patterns and skill sets.
 - It would help in skill development and providing for social security benefits.
 - It would also be useful in planning for mass transit of migrant labour, and preparing for any contingency plan in abnormal situations.

Conclusion:

- Issues related to migrant workmen have complex Centre-State and inter-State dimensions.
- The Inter-State Council, set up under Article 263 of the Constitution, may be a more appropriate forum to effectively and comprehensively deal with larger issues related to migrant workmen.
- It's time to initiate a legal platform that means business to the migrant workmen, and replace the antiquated law of 1979 that seems to have outlived its utility.
- The entitlements and benefits for the migrant workers have an unquestionable economic, legal and moral basis.
- There is a need for the policymakers to ensure a better legal framework which doesn't leave the migrant workers high and dry yet again during tough situations.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. Drug for sepsis to be tested for COVID-19

Context:

- In a race for cure, existing drugs are being used in trials to fight [COVID-19](#).
- Sepsivac - a drug jointly developed by the Ahmedabad-based Cadilla Pharmaceuticals and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), will be tested in 50 COVID-19 patients at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi and Bhopal, and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh.

Details:

- Sepsivac was originally developed for treating sepsis by a class of pathogens called gram negative bacteria.
 - Gram negative bacteria are known to cause life-threatening infections.
 - Given the similarities in the immune-system response in critically ill COVID-19 patients, it is theorised, the therapy could stimulate a benign response.
- A large quantity of cytokines - chemicals signalling the presence of an infection are produced in the early stages of the body's response against an infection to stimulate the production of antibodies.
- However, cytokines also cause inflammation of organs and can be counter-productive in protecting the body.
- Keeping them in check is the goal of the so called immuno-modulators, or medicines like Sepsivac.
- The drug uses the Mycobacterium w (formally known as mycobacterium indicus pranii) as it produces a different immune-system response.

Advantages:

- The advantage is that there is a readymade product that can be put into trials. It has already got an approval for phase-3 [large trials] and can be scaled up if needed.
- Previous randomised trials in sepsis patients showed 11% absolute reduction and 55.5% relative reduction in mortality.
- It is claimed that Sepsivac reduces the days on ventilator, in ICU and hospitals and incidence of secondary infection.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. 'Pakistan removes names from terrorism watch list'

Context:

According to a U.S.-based start-up that automates watchlist compliance, Pakistan has quietly removed around 1,800 terrorists from its watch list ahead of a new round of assessments by the [Financial Action Task Force \(FATF\)](#).

Details:

- The so-called proscribed persons list, which is maintained by Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), is intended in part to help financial institutions avoid doing business with or processing transactions of suspected terrorists.
- The list in 2018 contained about 7,600 names. It has been reduced to under 3,800 in the past 18 months, including that of the 2008 Mumbai attack mastermind and LeT operations commander Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, according to a New York-based regulatory technology company.
- Pakistan is working to implement an action plan that has been mutually agreed to with the Paris-based FATF, part of which involves demonstrating effective implementation of targeted financial sanctions.
- It is possible that these removals are part of Pakistan's action plan to implement the FATF recommendations.
- Currently, Pakistan is placed in the FATF Grey List. The FATF will evaluate Pakistan's progress in June 2020.

2. Beijing names disputed islands

Context:

- China has defended its naming of 80 islands and other geographical features in the South China Sea.

Concerns:

- This move by China is likely to anger neighbours as the country asserts its territorial claims.

Details:

- A joint announcement of the names came from the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Civil Affairs, a day after China established new administrative districts for the contested Spratly and Paracel island chains.

- The notice listed the Chinese names and coordinates of 80 islands, reefs, seamounts, shoals and ridges, 55 of them submerged in water.
- Vietnam claimed the move “seriously violated” its territorial sovereignty.

Read more about the [South China Sea Dispute](#).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Why are oil prices in negative terrain?

Context:

- Prices of West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the American benchmark for crude oil, fell to less than zero on 20th April 2020 trade.
- The price of a barrel of WTI fell to minus \$37.63 a barrel. What this means is that sellers have to pay buyers to get rid of their crude.
- This is unprecedented in the oil market, even accounting for its notoriety for being volatile.

Why did prices fall like this?

- WTI oil is traded as futures contracts in the NYMEX (New York Mercantile Exchange) where traders buy and sell monthly futures.
 - The sellers of such futures will have to deliver a barrel of crude oil at the contracted price in the contracted month just as buyers will have to take delivery at the contracted date.
 - As with all trading in commodities, there's a huge speculative participation in oil futures trading too.
 - So speculators buy and sell contracts with no intention of taking delivery (in the case of buyers) or offering delivery (in the case of sellers) of the physical oil, on the contracted date.
 - These speculators have to unwind their positions on the contract expiry date. If they fail to do so, they will have to take physical delivery of the crude oil on the contracted date.
 - **The term Unwind Position refers to when a trader systematically closes out a trade.**
- Speculators who did not want to take delivery in May proceeded to unwind their positions, leading to the massive fall in prices.
 - It could be that these were financial speculators who never take physical delivery and hence closed their contracts.
 - Or, these could also be delivery-based traders backing out as the bottom has fallen off demand for oil.
- The bottomline is that prices fell as demand for oil is falling and the world, especially America, is running out of storage space.

May WTI futures prices went negative but June futures prices are still at \$20.43 a barrel. Why?

- Traders expect demand to recover by June as lockdowns are lifted across the world and economic activity resumes.
- Traders also expect that storage space may be created as existing inventory is drawn down.
- America is also talking of adding to their strategic storage by taking advantage of the low prices. This could create demand for oil.
- Finally, contract expiry for June contracts has given speculators more time to speculate.

What are contango trades in the oil market?

- Contango trades happen when traders anticipate a surge or rise in demand and value the commodity higher for the future.
- For instance, while May oil futures are negative and June is at \$20.43 a barrel, November futures for the same grade of oil have ended at a hefty \$31.66 a barrel.

Can the traders buy cheap oil now and store them for release in future when demand and prices rise?

- The traders are resorting to such a practice now.
- Such a practice became famous during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 when a trader took massive positions at cheap prices ahead of the invasion and sold them when prices rose after the invasion.
- Oil was stored in tankers floating on the sea and unloaded at considerably higher prices. Traders are doing the same now.
- Year-long hiring contracts for VLCC (very large crude carriers) that can store up to 2 million barrels of oil are soaring through the roof.
 - According to a report in the Wall Street Journal, VLCC hiring charges for year-long contracts are now at \$72,500 a day, compared to \$30,500 a day, a year ago.

The prices of Brent grade are still at \$20.58 a barrel for May futures. What's the reason for the difference?

- Brent oil has traditionally quoted higher than WTI with the difference being about \$6-7 a barrel between the two.
- Brent is a superior grade produced in the North Sea off the British coast and is the accepted benchmark for this part of the world.
 - The market that it serves is considerably larger than that of the United States and demand is, therefore, higher.
- Transporting oil from the U.S. to Asia is not economical thus limiting the scope for the WTI grade.
- Refineries in Europe are configured for Brent rather than WTI.
- Prices of Brent are therefore, always higher than that of WTI.
- Importantly, unlike WTI futures on NYMEX, Brent futures traded in London can be settled by cash when the contract expires. In other words, a trader who has bought oil for May delivery is not forced to take physical delivery of the oil but can settle the contract in cash.
 - This difference between WTI and Brent has ensured that Brent futures will not crash like that of WTI.

How is India benefiting from this price crash?

- The **oil import bill will fall sharply** this fiscal year, giving tremendous relief to the government on the external account front.
 - With merchandise exports from India badly hit due to the lockdown in the West, foreign exchange earnings are under pressure. With oil prices falling and foreign exchange outgo reducing, the pressure on the current account balance is off.
 - In fact, India may be looking at a positive balance in the current account if global economic recovery is quick and the exports recover.
- India is quietly **building up its strategic reserves**, taking advantage of the cheap prices.
 - India has a capacity to hold over 39 million barrels of oil at its strategic reserves in Visakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur, near Udupi.
 - These are underground salt caverns converted and built to store crude oil.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Humans to blame for pandemic

Context:

It is found that the coronavirus outbreak certainly comes from the animal world. However, it is said that humans are to be blamed for the pandemic.

Concerns:

- “The emergence of zoonotic diseases is often associated with environmental changes or ecological disturbances, such as agricultural intensification and human settlement, or encroachments into forests and other habitats,” says a UNEP report.
 - According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), 60% of human infectious diseases originate from animals.
 - This figure climbs to 75% for “emerging” diseases such as Ebola, [HIV](#), avian flu, Zika, or SARS, another type of coronavirus. The list goes on.
- It is human activity that enabled the virus to jump to people, and specialists are warning that if nothing changes, many other pandemics of this nature will follow.
- A key area of concern is deforestation to make way for agriculture and intensive livestock farming.
- In terms of endangered wildlife, a study by American researchers shows that those who share the most viruses with humans are precisely populations declining due to exploitation and loss of habitat.

Note:

- The name given to diseases transmitted from animals to humans is zoonoses, based on the Greek words for “animal” and “sickness”.
- Tuberculosis, rabies, toxoplasmosis, malaria, are all zoonoses. Read more on [zoonotic diseases](#) at the linked article.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Putting the SAGAR vision to the test

Context:

- India has been recently granted **observer status in the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)**.

Background:

Indian Ocean Commission:

- The Indian Ocean Commission is an **intergovernmental organisation founded in 1982**. It is headquartered in Ebene, Mauritius.
- It comprises of five small-island states in the Western Indian Ocean: the **Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion** (a French department), and **Seychelles**.
- Over the years, the IOC has emerged as an active and trusted regional actor, working in and for the **Western Indian Ocean** and implementing a range of projects.

Details:

Maritime security in Indian Ocean:

- Despite the high-level counter-piracy presence of naval forces from the EU, the Combined Maritime Forces, and Independent Forces in the Indian Ocean region, **maritime crime is still prevalent in the region**.
- The counter-piracy response off the coast of Somalia delivered unprecedented regional and international cooperation in the domain of maritime security. However, it resulted in **multiple players, the duplication of actions, and regional dependence on international navies**.
- The countries in the region still face issues in policing and patrolling their often enormous [Exclusive Economic Zones \(EEZs\)](#).

IOC efforts:

Regional Maritime security architecture:

- The IOC has demonstrated leadership in the maritime security domain and has made impressive progress in the **design and implementation of a regional maritime security architecture in the Western Indian Ocean**.
- In 2012, the IOC, in collaboration with other regional organisations, launched **the MASE Programme to promote Maritime Security in Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean**.
- Under MASE, the IOC has established a mechanism for **surveillance and control of the Western Indian Ocean** with two regional centres.
 - The Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC), based in Madagascar, and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC), based in Seychelles.
 - The system is designed to **deepen maritime domain awareness** by monitoring maritime activities and promoting information sharing and exchange. Based on the information available there would be joint or jointly **coordinated interventions at sea**.
- The multilateral maritime security architecture has produced a **sub-regional view** of maritime security problems and has resulted in local ownership of actions towards workable and sustainable solutions to improve maritime control and surveillance.

Promoting collaboration in the region:

- The IOC has wielded a disproportionate degree of convening power.
- In 2018 and 2019, serving as the Chair of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), the IOC held ministerial meetings on maritime security in the Western Indian Ocean, drawing state representations from the region plus major powers such as India, the EU, the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and Russia.
- These meetings resulted in formal declarations, **facilitated convergence** around common, sub-region-specific definitions of maritime security threats and the legal way of dealing with them.

Mutually beneficial association:

- Following a request from India, the IOC granted observer status to India at the Commission's 34th Council of Ministers.
- The involvement of India in IOC can be a mutually beneficial relationship for the IOC member nations and India.

India's interests:

Maritime security:

- As a **major stakeholder in the Indian Ocean with maritime security high on the agenda**, India has been pursuing its interests and tackling maritime security challenges in the region.
- Maritime security is a prominent feature of India's relations with Indian Ocean littoral states.
- India could use the **information available through the Regional Maritime Information Fusion centre** to increase its maritime awareness in the region and can supplement the capacity of India's own Information Fusion Centre.
- The maritime security architecture being propounded by the IOC presents workable and sustainable solutions to improve maritime control and surveillance. The regional coordination and local successes at curbing maritime threats will have **broader security dividends for the Indian Ocean space**.
- The regional maritime security architecture with support from naval powers like India can deliver an urgently needed **deterrent against unabating maritime crime at sea**.

Regional diplomacy:

- India has, till recently, limited itself to bilateral cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. The observer status in IOC offers an **opportunity for India to engage constructively with the member nations of IOC**.
- The membership would allow India to **strengthen its relations and influence in the strategic Indian Ocean region**.

IOC's interests:

- The IOC requires **support from regional actors like India**. Nearly all littoral states in the Western Indian Ocean need assistance in developing their maritime domain awareness and in **building capacity to patrol their EEZs**.
- With its observer status, India could extend its expertise to the region, **supplement the RMIFC through India's extensive satellite system** and establish links with its own Information Fusion Centre.

Way forward:

India's approach:

- India has repeatedly stated its strategic vision for the Indian Ocean based on **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) approach**.
- India's SAGAR vision is intended to be **more consultative, democratic and equitable** in dealing with smaller but equally significant countries in the region.
- SAGAR seeks to differentiate India's leadership from the modus operandi of other regionally active major powers focussing on creating spheres of influence in the region. This will help reassure littoral states as India's maritime influence grows.

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. A change in migrant policy

Context:

- Internal migration in India.

Details:

- Seasonal migration is an important issue of our time and the COVID-19 crisis has brought the issue of migration to the centre stage of public discourse due to the following reasons:

High number of migrants:

- The numbers of internal migrants are high.
 - The **number of internal migrants in India was 450 million as per the most recent 2011 census**. This marks an increase of 45% over the 309 million recorded in 2001. This far exceeds the population growth rate of 18% across 2001-2011. Internal migrants as a percentage of population increased from 30% in 2001 to 37% in 2011.
- **About 12% of internal migration in India is inter-state.**
 - The **source states** for these migrants are the states with relatively low economic and social development. The four states, **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh** accounted for 50% of India's total inter-state migrants.
 - The **destination states** are the relatively developed states. **Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, Kerala** house a large number of the country's inter-state migrants.
- Bihar with a population of about 123 million has an estimated 10 million migrants, with 3 million of them being inter-State migrants. It also involves a substantial number of seasonal migrants.
- Ensuring the return of such a large number of migrants during a crisis can be a logistical improbability.

Public health:

- In the case of epidemics, the **exodus of seasonal migrants** creates apprehensions about the spread of the disease and runs **counterproductive to the very purpose of a lockdown**.

Impact on destination centres:

- **India's economy, particularly of the growth centres, depends on the services of migrant workers.** Sectors such as construction, garment manufacturing, mining, and agriculture would come to a standstill without them.
- One of the biggest challenges after the lockdown is lifted will be to bring back the migrants to restart these sectors.

Impact on source states:

- The return of migrants to their home states leads to an **economic shock in the source States**.
- Given the lack of compensatory sources of livelihood in these source states, the poor States may find it difficult to sustain themselves without the remittances. This will not only cause **demand side setbacks** but also impact nutrition, health, education and the well-being of the older population.

Vulnerability of the migrants:

Subsistence living:

- Most of the migrant labourers are **dependent on daily wages**. Working from home or getting paid leave is not an option for such labourers.
- A substantial proportion of these internal migrants involve the seasonal migrants who move in search of jobs during the lean activity period in their home states.
- The low wages they earn for their work and also the family's dependency on the daily income **does not allow these daily-wage earners to stay at a destination without work**.

Lifestyle:

- The **harsh working and living conditions** of migrants defy the very idea of decent work and general security that these migrants come seeking. **Lack of sanitation, hygiene, safe drinking water, health services, social security measures, and affordable housing** have resulted in a low quality of life.
 - A considerable number of workers live within the manufacturing units or at work sites. Any lockdown results in loss of their accommodation too.
 - Slums and slum-like colonies are breeding grounds of ailments and communicable diseases.
 - The **cramped living and working spaces** do not allow the people living in these areas to practise social distancing.

Limitations of the relief package:

- The 1.70 lakh crore relief package announced by the Central government comes as a welcome relief. However, despite the government's good intentions, the package **may not benefit seasonal migrants**.
 - Those migrants who are unable to return home and are not ration cardholders in the cities where they are stationed will not benefit from additional free foodgrains under the PDS.
 - They cannot avail of increased [MGNREGA](#) wages until they go back home.
 - As many seasonal migrants are landless or marginal farmers, they will not benefit from the grant to landholders.
- The seasonal migrant workforce may remain largely deprived of the benefits under the present package at their destination places.

Way forward:

- The state could work out a strategy of **addressing immediate distress conditions** and simultaneously initiating **long-term measures to bring structural changes in the policy towards migrants** and the informal sector.
- The aim should not focus on limiting migration but should focus on **limiting push migration and encouraging pull migration**.
 - Pull factors attract migrants to an area (area of destination) like, employment and higher educational opportunities, higher wages and better working conditions and facilities.
 - The push factors are poverty, lack of work opportunities, unemployment and underdevelopment, poor economic conditions, lack of opportunities, exhaustion of natural resources and natural calamities, scarcity of cultivated land, inequitable land distribution, low agricultural productivity, etc.
- The government policy measures should also focus towards **the social inclusion of internal migrants** in India.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Futures shock

Context:

- Steep fall in crude oil prices.

Details:

Historic fall in prices:

- Recently, May **futures for the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) U.S. crude** has plunged below zero and **Brent crude futures** has also witnessed a steep decline.
 - A negative price implies that a seller would have to pay the buyer to hold the oil to be supplied.

Causes:

- The unprecedented plunge in the particular futures contract could be partly as a technical anomaly given the way **future contracts** work.
- However, there has also been a constant and steep fall in the oil prices.
 - The price war between the key producers Saudi Arabia and Russia saw them ramp up output which has caused **a supply glut**.
 - The demand has continued to contract on account of the COVID-19 outbreak. The **lockdown has destroyed demand** on an unprecedented scale. The [International Energy Agency](#) has observed that the confinement measures instituted worldwide have resulted in a dramatic decline in transportation activity which is a major demand sector for oil.
- The **storage facility for crude on land or offshore in super tankers are nearing capacity** or becoming prohibitively expensive.

Indian scenario:

Positives:

- India has been using the sharp fall in both crude prices to accelerate the **build-up of its strategic reserve**.
- The sliding oil prices would help significantly reduce India's energy import bill and hence **contain current account deficit**.

Challenges:

- The protracted demand drought for oil would end up **hurting the government's tax revenues** severely, especially at a time when it badly needs financial resources in its fight against COVID-19.
- The low oil prices would damage the economies of producer countries including those in West Asia. This, apart from **hurting inward remittances** for India, could also lead to a **reverse migration to India**.

Way forward:

- Oil producers will have to consider considerably **curtailing output**.
- After the lockdown, the Central Government of India ought to consider using the low prices opportunity to cut retail fuel prices sharply by foregoing some excise revenue for a while in order to incentivize momentum into the wider economy.

For more information on this issue refer to:

[RSTV Big Picture: Oil Price War & Implications](#)

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Assam begins releasing ‘foreigners’ to decongest six detention centres

What’s in News?

The Border wing of the Assam police have begun releasing “declared foreigners” who completed two years, to decongest six detention centres for preventing the spread of the COVID-19 infection.

- The Gauhati High Court had ordered the Border Wing for the conditional release of the declared foreigners (DFs), according to the order of the [Supreme Court](#).
 - This wing deals with detection, detention and deportation of people found to be non-citizens.
 - The apex court had modified its May 10, 2019 order to reduce the detention period of the DFs from three to two years and release them with two sureties of ₹5,000 each instead of ₹1 lakh each.
 - Other conditions, such as recording the biometrics of the iris and fingerprints and periodic reporting by the released DF at the nearest police station, were unchanged.

Read more about [National Register of Citizens](#).

2. AIIMS deploys robots in COVID-19 ward

- The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi has deployed robots at its advanced COVID-19 ward to help promote physical distancing between health workers and infected patients.
- The institute is using two AI robots — Milagrow Floor Robot iMap 9.0 and Milagrow Humanoid ELF — in collaboration with consumer robotics brand Milagrow.
- Milagrow Humanoid ELF enables doctors to monitor and interact with COVID-19 patients remotely thereby significantly reducing transmission risk.

3. Child abuse complaints rise during lockdown

- The Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has said that ChildLine has been seeing an increase in the number of complaints pertaining to child marriage since the lockdown began.
 - It is found that the number of child marriage cases were abnormally high.
- They also are receiving a large number of calls pertaining to medical and educational support.
- The cases of physical abuse against children are on the rise as families are frustrated with the lockdown and venting their anger on children.
- The helpline has also received calls related to online abuse.

4. Denied alcohol, many take to 'arishtams'

- Ayurveda pharmacy stores across the State of Kerala have of late found a surge in demand for arishtams and asavams, which have alcohol content up to 10%.
 - 'arishtams' and 'asavams' have self-generated alcohol.
- Staff in some Ayurveda pharmacy stores in Kozhikode claimed that the sale of such medicines had gone up by around 30% after the enforcement of the lockdown.
- According to rules, individuals cannot store 'arishtams' and 'asavams' beyond a certain limit. As excessive consumption may affect the body parts.

5. Martyr status for officials who died of virus: CM

- Odisha Chief Minister has announced that martyr status would be accorded to all health personnel and other support services who lost their lives fighting COVID-19.
- They would be given a State funeral with honours.
- The State, in convergence with the Government of India initiative, will ensure that ₹50 lakh is given to all health personnel [private and public] and members of other support services who lose their lives in the fight against COVID-19.

6. COVID India Seva launched

- The Union Health Minister has launched the 'COVID India Seva', an interactive platform to establish a direct channel of communication during the pandemic.

This topic has been covered in 21st April 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

7. UN: global hunger could double due to COVID-19

- The number of people facing acute food insecurity could nearly double in 2020 to 265 million due to the economic fallout of COVID-19, the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) has said.
- The impact of lost tourism revenues, falling remittances and travel and other restrictions linked to the coronavirus pandemic are expected to leave some 130 million people acutely hungry this year, adding to around 135 million already in that category.
- "COVID-19 is potentially catastrophic for millions who are already hanging by a thread," said the chief economist and director of research, assessment and monitoring at the World Food Programme (WFP).
- It is said that it is critical to act quickly in order to prevent people already living hand-to-mouth, such as food vendors in Kenya, from selling their assets as it could take them years to become self-reliant again.

8. SEBI eases norms on IPO, rights issues

What's in News?

The [Securities and Exchange Board of India \(SEBI\)](#) has relaxed certain regulatory requirements related to rights issues and initial public offers (IPOs) to make it easier for companies to raise funds at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has made the secondary markets increasingly volatile.

Details:

- SEBI has said that any listed entity with a market capitalisation of at least ₹100 crore can use the fast track route for rights issue.
 - Earlier, the base limit was set at ₹250 crore for such offerings.
- Any company that has been listed for 18 months can raise funds through fast track rights issue.
 - The earlier eligibility was set at three years.
- The minimum subscription requirement to make the issue successful has been lowered from the earlier 90% of the offer size to 75% of the issuance.
- Issuers have been allowed to amend the issue size by up to 50%, up from the current 20% — without the requirement of filing a fresh draft offer document.
- SEBI has also extended the validity of its observations issued on draft documents by six months for issuers whose observations have expired or will expire between March 1 and September 30.
 - SEBI issues final observations on IPO draft documents after which the company has one year to launch the public issue.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Indian Ocean Commission (IOC):

1. It is an intergovernmental organisation headquartered in Seychelles.
2. India has recently been accepted as a member of IOC.
3. China and Pakistan are observers of IOC.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is an intergovernmental organisation headquartered in Mauritius. The IOC is composed of five African Indian Ocean nations: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles. India has been recently granted observer status in the Indian Ocean Commission. The Commission has four other observers — China, EU, Malta and International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF).

Q2. Which of the following are Zoonotic diseases?

1. Ebola
2. Rabies
3. Toxoplasmosis
4. Malaria

Choose the correct option:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The name given to diseases transmitted from animals to humans is zoonoses/zoonotic diseases, based on the Greek words for “animal” and “sickness”.
- Ebola, rabies, toxoplasmosis, malaria are all zoonoses.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to South China Sea:

- 1. It is an arm of the Western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia.
- 2. It is to the west of the Philippines and east of Vietnam.
- 3. It is to the south of the island of Borneo.

Which of the above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- South China Sea is an arm of the Western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia.
- It is south of China, east & south of Vietnam, west of the Philippines and north of the island of Borneo.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) :

- 1. FATF is an international organization developed to combat terrorism and money laundering.
- 2. FATF also deals with issues related to low tax jurisdiction or tax competition.
- 3. It was established by a Group of Seven (G-7) Summit in Paris.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was established by a Group of Seven (G-7) Summit in Paris in 1989. FATF is an international organization developed to combat terrorism and money laundering. It does not address the issues related to low tax jurisdiction or tax competition. The FATF mandate focuses only on the fight against laundering of proceeds of crimes and the financing of terrorism.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The granting of the observer status to India in the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is a welcome move which offers ample opportunities for a mutually beneficial relationship between the IOC member nations and India. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. Discuss the major aspects and concerns of the migrant crisis in India brought to light during the COVID-19 pandemic. Suggest suitable policy measures to address these concerns. (15 marks, 250 words)