

# 24 May 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### 1. **China suggests shift in BRI approach amid debt concerns**

**Context:**

- Economic impact of [COVID-19](#) pandemic.

**Background:**

### China's grants and loans:

- A report notes that **China's grants and loans totalled \$354.4 billion between 2000 and 2014**, of which 23% were grants while the rest were commercial loans at market or close-to-market rates.
- The **world's debt to China grew 10 times between 2000 and 2017**, with developing countries owing \$380 billion to China.

### COVID-19 crisis:

- Recently, China has faced calls from countries in Asia and Africa to delay or **waive debt repayments** because of the economic challenges induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Details:

- China has hinted at a shift in how it will pursue its signature **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** amid growing concerns about debt repayments from partner countries.
  - China has stated that it will **focus on quality** in the joint pursuit of the BRI.
  - Instead of offering write-offs, China proposes to offer tailored plans including **rescheduling or increasing funding** to help related projects resume operation and return profits.
  - China has offered **adding grants** to help bring projects back to life, conducting **debt-to-equity swaps**, or hiring Chinese firms to assist operation of the projects.

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. Dengue, JE strike as Assam battles COVID-19

#### Context:

- Assam has witnessed a series of viral diseases and pest attacks.

#### Details:

#### Human health:

- Assam has witnessed a spike in COVID-19 cases with the arrival of migrant workers, students and others from elsewhere in the country.
- The state has also been witness to the outbreak of viral diseases caused by mosquito bites like **dengue, acute encephalitis syndrome and Japanese encephalitis**.
  - These are diseases associated with the **pre-monsoon and monsoon seasons**.

#### Flooding:

- Heavy rainfall in the northern parts of the State has seen two rivers – Jia-Bharali and Puthimari – flowing above the danger mark.
- Two districts of Assam have been affected by floods and the **state is vulnerable to flooding** in the coming months given the onset of monsoon.
- The state would have to face the challenge of adhering to COVID-19 protocols while dealing with the flood-affected people, who might have to be evacuated to relief camps.

#### Farm sector:

- The farm sector has been hit hard with floods and cases of **African swine fever** (ASF) in pigs across 10 districts.
  - The African swine fever has so far claimed more than 17,000 pigs across 10 districts in Assam. There is the challenge to prevent the spread of ASF to domestic pigs in flood-prone areas.
- The state had also borne the impact of **fall armyworm attack** in some districts.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Extend loans without fear of 3Cs: FM

##### Context:

- Financial crisis due to the COVID-19 impact.

##### Background:

##### Credit guarantee:

- As part of the Rs. 20.97 lakh crore economic package, the government has announced the **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)** worth Rs. 3 lakh crore for the MSME sector.

##### Fear of 3C's:

- It has often been alleged that genuine bonafide decisions in the banking sector are being impacted because of the worry of undue harassment by 3Cs — Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), [Central Vigilance Commission \(CVC\)](#) and Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

##### Details:

- The Finance Minister has called on the banks to extend loans automatically to eligible borrowers without 'fear of 3Cs — CBI, CVC and CAG'.
- The government has argued that the banks should not be scared to extend loans as **100% guarantee is being given by the government**.
- In case of default, the individual bank or official will not be hauled up.

##### Way forward:

- Everybody eligible for **additional term loan and additional working capital** should be given loans from the bank.
- The government has also emphasised that loans should be sanctioned in a **simple manner** and if possible, **digitally** to avoid any physical contact.
- The government hopes that this step will ensure that liquidity would start flowing from banks without any new collateral.

### Category: AGRICULTURE

## 1. More area under cotton crop this season

### Context:

- **Kharif season sowing** in Punjab and Haryana.

### Details:

- Farmers in Punjab and Haryana have sown more cotton this Kharif season as against last year on account of a possible **labour shortage** owing to migrant labour movement. The farmers are apprehensive about the return of the migrant labour by June-July.
- **Cotton is a less labour-intensive crop than paddy.**
- The state governments of Punjab and Haryana have also discouraged farmers from growing rice given the **high water requirements for rice**. The government has been promoting **diversification of crops** in the light of declining groundwater levels in the state.

### Additional information:

- In Punjab and Haryana, **Bt cotton** is sown in over 95% of the total area under cotton cultivation, the remaining 5% usually has indigenous cotton varieties.

## Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

## 1. Details of 2.90 crore job seekers on dark net

### Context:

- Data leak detected by the Cyber security firm, Cyble.

### Details:

- Personal details of about 2.90 crore Indian job seekers have been found dumped on the **dark net**, raising concerns among cyber crime agencies and experts in India over a **massive data breach**.

### Concerns:

#### **Sensitive information:**

- This breach includes sensitive information such as names, addresses, email, contact numbers, home address, qualification, work experience, etc. of job seekers.
- Such personal information could aid cybercriminals to conduct various nefarious activities such as **identity thefts, scams, and corporate espionage**.

#### **Leak from job sites:**

- Though the exact source of the leak is not yet detected, the leak appears to have occurred from a resume aggregator service. This is a concern given the high popularity of such sites among the job seeking populace.

## E. Editorials

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. What explains the India-China border flare-up?

##### **Context:**

- Rising tensions on the India-China border.

##### **Background:**

- Border skirmishes have been reported in at least four different locations along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.
  - Pangong lake in Ladakh, Naku La in Sikkim, the Galwan valley in Ladakh and in Demchok.

##### **Causes of the stand-off:**

##### **Non-delineated borders:**

- The **Line of Actual Control (LAC) has never been demarcated.**
- **Differing perceptions of the border**, particularly acute in certain spots across the Western (Ladakh), Middle (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand), and Eastern (Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh) sectors of the India-China border lead to face-off and stand-off situations.
- Though the boundary in the Sikkim sector is broadly agreed upon, that too has not been delineated.

##### **India's moves to strengthen infrastructure:**

- China, along the LAC, has enjoyed an advantage in infrastructure as well as terrain that is more favourable to mobilisation of troops and resources.
- The broader context for the tensions appears to be a changing dynamic along the LAC, wherein **India seems to be catching up with China by improving its border infrastructure.**

##### **Increasing assertiveness of China:**

- The latest skirmishes at the Galwan Valley and Sikkim are somewhat unexpected as the contours of the LAC are broadly agreed to in these sectors.
- The Galwan Valley incident was triggered by China moving in troops and equipment to stop construction activity by India. India is claiming that the construction activity was well within India's side of the LAC.

##### **Boundary negotiations:**

- A **three-stage boundary negotiation** was proposed between India and China.
  - Agreement on political parameters and guiding principles
  - Evolving a framework to resolve the dispute
  - Delineating and demarcating of the boundary

- In 2005, the **agreement on political parameters and guiding principles was completed**. The current and most difficult stage involves agreeing to a framework to resolve the dispute in all sectors.
- The 22nd round of talks between the **Special Representatives** was held in Delhi in December 2019.
  - Both sides noted that an early settlement of the boundary question serves the fundamental interests of both countries and resolved to intensify their efforts to achieve a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution.

### **Concerns:**

#### **Failed negotiations:**

- India has long proposed an exercise to clarify differing perceptions of the LAC to prevent border stand-offs. India has argued that such an exercise could help both countries understand the claims of the other, paving the way to regulate activities in contested areas until a final settlement of the boundary dispute is arrived at.
- Maps were exchanged in the Middle Sector, but the exercise fell through in the Western Sector where divergence is the greatest. China has since rejected this exercise, viewing it as adding another complication to the on-going boundary negotiations.

#### **Prospects of a settlement:**

- The prospects of a settlement appear bleak given the fact that there are **major differences in the Western and Eastern sectors**.
- India claims around 38,000 sq km in Aksai Chin. While in the east, China claims as much as 90,000 sq km, extending all across Arunachal Pradesh. One particular sticking point is China's claims to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Neither side will be willing to part with territory already held by them.

#### **Strategic move by China:**

- The broader issue appears to be a fundamental difference in how the two countries view the boundary question.
- China appears to view an **unsettled border as holding some leverage with India**, one of the many pressure points it could use to keep India off-guard. The **unrealistic claims of China** to Tawang indicate this tendency.
- Given this **strategic calculus of using border disputes** by China, the stalemate over boundary delineation will likely endure.

#### **Way forward:**

- **Protocols agreed to in 2005 and 2013**, detailing the rules of engagement to prevent border incidents, must be adhered to.
- There is a need to follow the principles agreed to in the previous agreements between the two countries which call for "**mutual and equal security**" in border negotiations.
- The most realistic solution will involve only **minor adjustments along the LAC**.

**For more information on this issue, refer to:**

[CNA dated 22 May, 2020](#)

## **2. Why are India and Nepal fighting over Kalapani?**



**Context:**

- The boundary dispute between India and Nepal.

**For information on the dispute:**

[Also read CNA dated 23rd May, 2020](#)

**Details:**

- **Kalapani** is a region located in the easternmost corner of **Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district**.
- The region shares a border on the north with the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and Nepal in the east and south.
- **The area is in India's control but is claimed by Nepal.**
- Kalapani is the largest territorial dispute between Nepal and India, consisting of at least 37,000 hectares of land in the High Himalayas.

**Differing perception of the Sugauli Treaty provisions:**

- The **Treaty of Sugauli** was signed between the **Gurkha rulers of Kathmandu and the East India Company** after the Gurkha War/Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16).
- According to the treaty, Nepal would give up its claims on the regions of Kumaon-Garhwal in the west and Sikkim in the east.
  - According to **Article 5**, the King of Nepal gave up his claims over the region west of the **river Kali** originating in the High Himalayas.
  - According to the treaty, the British rulers recognised Nepal's right to the region that fell to the east of the river Kali.
- The dispute is mainly because of the **varying interpretation of the origin of the river**.
  - Nepal claims that the source of the river is in the mountains near **Limpiyadhura**. India, on the other hand, claims that the border begins at Kalapani, which India says is where the river begins.

**Significance of Lipulekh pass:**

- **Kalapani is connected to Tibet through the Lipulekh pass**, which has been used for centuries by Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims and tourists on their way to **Kailash Mansarovar**.
- The Himalayas have several passes that connect the Gangetic region with the Tibetan plateau but **Lipulekh is strategically located** as it is nearest to the National Capital Region and can be of particular concern in case of an armed conflict with China.
  - The importance of Himalayan passes with the Tibetan plateau was amply highlighted in the **1962 war**. The military defeat clearly demonstrated that weakly guarded passes were a major vulnerability of Indian military preparedness against China.

**Concerns:**

**Lack of efforts at resolution:**

- Nepal's call for a resolution of the issue has been overlooked. There have been **no serious efforts to negotiate the border dispute**.

**Lack of consultation:**

- India and China were in clear violation of Nepal's concerns during the **2015 Lipulekh agreement between India and China**, which renewed India's Mansarovar pilgrimage connection. Neither side consulted Nepal or sought its opinion before the agreement.

#### Hardening stance:

- Recently, **Nepal had published a revised official map** incorporating the territory from the Limpiyadhura source of the Kali to Kalapani and Lipulekh pass as its territory. The Nepali Cabinet has registered a constitution amendment motion to **grant constitutional status to the map**.
- Such a move makes any future solution on the Kalapani issue nearly impossible as a constitutional guarantee will make Kathmandu's position inflexible.

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. Tension along LAC continues with China

- The Chinese troops remain in areas along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in eastern Ladakh that are patrolled by India.
- Situation remains tense at **Pangong Tso, Galwan Nalah and Demchok**.
- The Chinese presence is a concern as they are present close to the 255 km **Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSDBO) road**, a vital link for the Indian military.

### 2. New plant species found in Western Ghats

- A team of scientists of the **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** have reported the discovery of three new plant species in the evergreen forest of the southern end of the **Western Ghats** in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- The three species are **Eugenia sphaerocarpa** of the Myrtaceae or Rose apple family, **Goniothalamus sericeus** of the Annonaceae family of custard apple and **Memecylon nervosum** of the Melastomataceae family.
- The fruits of Eugenia species are known for their palatability and hence are edible fruits.

### 3. Heatwave conditions prevail in Odisha

- The Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre has issued **yellow warning for heatwave conditions** advising people in the interior pockets to avoid heat exposure.
  - Maximum temperatures have risen over interior Odisha while no large change is observed over coastal Odisha.
- A Heat Wave is a **period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature** that occurs during the summer season in India. Heat Waves typically occur **between March and June**, and in some rare cases even extend till July.
- Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becoming increasingly frequent globally due to climate change.

## G. Tidbits



## 1. Latin America is the new epicentre: WHO

- The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has declared **South America as the new epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- **Brazil**, with 3,30,000 cases and 21,000 deaths, emerges as the worst-hit country in the region.
  - Unlike in Europe and the United States, where the elderly were the hardest-hit, a significant number of deaths in Brazil have been younger people, who are often driven by poverty to work despite the threat of infection.
- **Peru** has also witnessed an intense outbreak.

## 2. 'Dual advantage to benefit India in 2020, post-COVID'

- The post-COVID phase will witness the **reshaping of global manufacturing** as companies will optimise their value chains and look to diversify both their sources of demand and supply.
- In this context, India has the opportunity to leverage its position via its unique '**dual-advantage' position** — as a globally **preferred manufacturing destination** via [Make In India](#) and, simultaneously, a **fast-growing, ready market** for a variety of goods and services.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Arrange the following cities from east to west:

1. Beijing
2. Xian
3. Urumqi
4. Kuala Lumpur
5. Hanoi

Options:

- a. 1, 2, 5, 4, 3
- b. 1, 5, 2, 3, 4
- c. 1, 2, 5, 3, 4
- d. 1, 4, 5, 2, 3

Answer:

Option a

Explanation:

- The cities arranged from east to west: Beijing, Xian, Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur and Urumqi.

Q2. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

1. Acute Encephalitis Syndrome is always a viral infection.
2. Japanese Encephalitis has no available vaccine.

**Options:**

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

**Answer:****Option d****Explanation:**

- Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) is a serious public health problem in India. It involves inflammation of the brain.
- Viruses are the main causative agents in AES cases, although other sources such as bacteria, fungus, parasites, spirochetes, chemicals, toxins and non-infectious agents have also been reported over the past few decades.
- Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV) is the major cause of AES in India (ranging from 5%-35%).
- Vaccine against Japanese encephalitis (JE) has been under Universal Immunization Program in the 181 endemic districts of India.

**Q3. Arrange the following places from North to south.**

1. Pangong Tso
2. Galwan Nalah
3. Demchok

**Options:**

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

**Answer:****Option c****Explanation:**

- The places arranged from north to south:
  - Galwan Nalah
  - Pangong Tso
  - Demchok

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

1. Brazil shares its borders with 6 other countries.
2. Brazil is the largest country in South America both area-wise and population-wise.

**Options:**

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

**Answer:**

**Option b**

**Explanation:**

- Brazil borders 10 other countries and is the largest country in South America both area-wise and population-wise.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In the light of the recent border skirmishes between India and China, analyze the causative factors for the border stand-offs. Evaluate the ongoing boundary negotiations and the prospect of a resolution of the border dispute. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. The deteriorating ties between India and Nepal despite the close linguistic, marital, religious and cultural ties between the two countries are a cause of concern for India's neighbourhood first policy. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)