

# 25 May 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Aggressive PLA flouts protocols

##### Context:

- Border standoff between Indian and Chinese soldiers along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

##### Background:

- Face-offs between Indian and Chinese troops do occur from time to time, and in recent years they have been more frequent as both sides have increased patrolling.

##### Details:

- Strategic experts have pointed out that the current standoff and incursions appear to be **different from the past border incidents** based on the following facts.

##### **Increased presence:**

- The **numbers of Chinese soldiers have increased** at confrontation sites, pointing to some amount of planning involved in the skirmishes.
- **More Chinese boats have been observed patrolling the Pangong Tso lake** and the PLA has dug in tents and trenches at the site pointing to the possibility of a long drawn stand-off.

##### **Aggressive approach:**

- Chinese troops have shown more aggression and **engaged in physical skirmishes**.

##### **Skirmishes in previously uncontested areas:**

- A major concern has been **incursions at multiple locations**, including those in “**previously uncontested**” areas.
- The Chinese have pushed into new areas like the **Galwan river valley**, where the LAC was not disputed.

##### **Protocols:**

- The Chinese troops have **disregarded previously agreed protocols**.

##### Analysis of the stand-off:

- The modified Chinese patterns seem to reflect a **strategic push by China** rather than a random border stand-off.

- The actions are seen as an attempt to push back Indian troops in Ladakh, where infrastructure has been improved considerably in the last decade.
- The Chinese actions may also be guided by concerns regarding the Indian UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The recent change in the status of J&K and the maps that have been issued may have worried Chinese interests.
- The **rising U.S.-China tensions** have placed China in a defensive position. The PLA's aggression may be a signal to indicate that the **growing Indo-U.S. strategic ties** do not diminish the risks India faces along the 3,488-km boundary with China.

For more information on this refer: [CNA 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#)

### Conclusion:

- Strategic experts have opined that as long as there are military and diplomatic parleys between the two countries, the situation will remain under control, but a prolonged confrontation will heighten the chances of an escalation.

For more information on this issue refer: [CNA 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020](#)

## 2. U.S. pushing relations to the brink of a new Cold War: China

### Context:

- Rising U.S. China tensions.

### Details:

- China's Foreign Minister has alleged that the United States is pushing relations with China to "the brink of a new Cold War".

### U.S. China Tensions:

- The **long-standing friction** between the two countries over **trade, human rights** and a range of other issues has **intensified since the virus outbreak**.
- The U.S. has led world **criticism of China's initial response to the pandemic**, which has caused more than 3,40,000 deaths and economic carnage worldwide. The U.S. has alleged that China covered up the emergence of the virus.
- Many governments including the U.S. and Australia have called for an **investigation into the exact origins of the virus**. The **WHO** has also called on China to invite the UN body to investigate the source of the novel Coronavirus.
- The introduction of a proposal in China to impose a **security law in Hong Kong** to suppress the semi-autonomous city's pro-democracy movement has drawn U.S. and world condemnation.

### China's arguments:

- China has claimed that it is **open to international scientific cooperation** to identify the source of the novel coronavirus, but has stressed that any investigation must be free of political interference and based on science and led by the World Health Organization.
- China has proposed that the “global response” to COVID-19 should only be assessed when the pandemic is over.
- On the issue of Hong Kong China has defended its moves as being **protective of its national security**.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

#### 1. Howrah’s botanical garden now a graveyard of 1,000 trees

##### Context:

- Damage caused by the **Cyclone Amphan**.

##### Details:

- The **Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden** is located in Howrah district, West Bengal.
- The garden was **set up in 1787**. Most of these trees were introduced to the garden by **British botanists** in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Commercial cultivation of mahogany and rubber began in India after the species were first introduced in this garden.
- The garden has over 13,000 trees of about 1,100 species.

##### Damage caused by the cyclone:

- The Cyclone Amphan has resulted in damage to nearly 1,000 trees, including some notable and rare species in the Botanical Garden.
- Among the rare trees that have fallen include the only full-grown kalpabriksha (*Adansonia digitata*) tree in the garden, the mad tree (*Pterygota alata* var. *irregularis*), the para rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*), the **Malabar chestnut** (*Pachira insignis*), the **Chir pine** (*Pinus roxburghii*), and several century-old **mahogany trees** (*Swietenia mahagoni*) in the garden’s famous Mahogany Avenue.

For more information on the Cyclone Amphan refer: [CNA 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#).

### Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

#### 1. Fresh leaks of personal details detected on dark web

##### Context:

- Data leak of sensitive information on the **dark web**.

##### Background:

- Even as cybercrime agencies and experts have been investigating the leak of millions of Indian job-seekers' personal details on the dark web, more similar instances have come to light.

For information on this issue refer: [Dark Net- CNA 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#)

### Details:

- The fresh leaks include nearly 2,000 Aadhaar cards and details of 18 million Indians, all available for free on the dark web.

### Modus Operandi:

- Of the approximately 2,000 Aadhaar cards, a large number of files appear to have originated from 2019, and several IDs were scanned from mobile cameras, and often transferred to other parties via WhatsApp.
- With respect to the leak of job-seekers' personal details on the dark web, cyber experts are verifying the possibility of the data leak as the result of an **unprotected Elastic search**
  - It is a tool that collects data from a wide range of locations on the Internet in accordance with the requirements of the person conducting the search, and allowing the user to analyse large troves of data in real time from all over the Internet.

### Concerns:

- It is likely that more IDs may have been compromised, and only a small share of it has been shared on the dark web.
- The leak of the Aadhar details and the associated **sensitive information** could be utilized by Cyber criminals for **identity theft**.

### Conclusion:

- State and Central cybercrime agencies have initiated their own investigations into the data leaks.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: AGRICULTURE

#### 1. Hardly the 1991 moment for agriculture

#### Context:

- Announcement of **reforms in agricultural marketing**, under the [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#) economic stimulus package.
  - The three proposed reforms regarding agricultural marketing are the reforms in the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (**APMC**) Act, the Essential Commodities Act, and on contract farming.

### Details:

#### **Arguments against APMC act:**

- The main argument against the APMC Act is that it **creates barriers to the entry and exit of traders** and makes the sale and purchase of agricultural produce compulsory for farmers as well as traders.
  - The general argument in favour of **reforms in the APMC act** is that it **will allow private investment in marketing infrastructure** as well as provide more choices to farmers, leading to **better prices received by farmers**.
- There have been instances of **collusion and corruption in the running of the APMC**
- There is the problem of **political interference in the functioning of the mandis**. These are more obvious in the case of large mandis specialising in commercial crops and fruits and vegetables, where production is regionally concentrated.
- Given the criticism regarding the functioning of the APMC act, as many as 17 State governments have amended the APMC Act to make it more liberal.

#### **APMC act variations across states:**

- The regulations and the functioning of mandis vary across States.
  - **Kerala does not have an APMC Act and Bihar repealed it in 2006.**
  - Maharashtra, West Bengal, Odisha, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh have **deregulated fruits and vegetable trade, allowed private markets**, introduced a unified trading licence and have introduced a single-point levy of market fee.
  - Tamil Nadu has already reformed its APMC with **no market fee**.
  - Several other states such as Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Rajasthan have also undertaken reforms.
- Many States have **introduced direct marketing of farm produce**, examples being the Uzhavar Sandhai (Tamil Nadu), the Rythu Bazaar (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), the Raitha Santhe (Karnataka), the Apni Mandi (Punjab) and the Krushak Bazaar (Odisha).

#### **The Author's analysis:**

- The author claims that APMC mandis are being vilified for all the ills plaguing marketing infrastructure and the low prices received by the farmers for their produce, even though they play an **important role in providing access to the market for farmers**.

#### **The Bihar example:**

- Bihar had repealed its APMC act in 2006.
- As against the expected benefits, the state witnessed no private investment in building market infrastructure.
- There is also no evidence that farmers have received better prices in private mandis outside the APMC.

- The repealing of the APMC Act has had some negative impacts:
  - The **state suffered a loss of revenue** due to the repeal of the APMC which led to the deterioration of existing infrastructure of the market yards in the State.
  - The state has witnessed the **proliferation of private unregulated markets** which charge a market fee from traders as well as farmers.
  - These private markets have substandard or no infrastructure for weighing, sorting, grading and storage.
- Even in other States where there is deregulation to allow private traders, there is hardly any positive impacts noted.

#### **Government's responsibility:**

- The author argues that the deregulation of the markets and the consequent withdrawal of the government from the mandis would amount to the government escaping the responsibility of creating marketing infrastructure for its farmers.
- Most of the **existing mandis require investment in upgradation of infrastructure**.

#### **Inaccurate assessment:**

- The author argues against the notion of the APMC act being the sole reason for the farmers not receiving remunerative prices for their produce.
- The fact that more than **80% of farmers, most of whom are small and marginal farmers do not sell their produce in the APMC mandis** stands testament to the author's argument.

#### **Lack of demand:**

- For a majority of farmers, **prices received for their produce is more a function of the demand for agricultural commodities** than access to markets.
- In the recent past, the terms of trade have moved against agriculture, with agricultural **commodity price inflation being in the negative zone**.
- In the light of inflation targeting, most agricultural commodities have seen a sharp decline in demand and consequently prices received by farmers.

#### **Way forward:**

- The author argues that no amount of marketing reforms will lead to higher price realisation for farmers if the underlying **macroeconomic conditions** are unfavourable to agriculture and farmers.
- The author suggests that the government should **increase fiscal spending to revive demand in the economy** which would help protect the farmers from the decline in commodity prices.
- This has become even more necessary after the sharp decline in incomes, job losses and decline in demand following the lockdown and expected contraction in economic activity for the year ahead.

For more information on this issue refer: [CNA 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#) & [CNA 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#)

**Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

## 1. Failing to perform as a constitutional court

### Context:

- COVID-19 pandemic and the migrant crisis.

For more information on this issue refer: [CNA 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020](#) & [CNA 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020](#)

### Background:

- India apart from the public health crisis caused by COVID-19 also faces the unique challenge of **migrant labourers' issue**.
- These migrant labourers have no work, no source of income, no access to basic necessities, and no testing facilities, no protective gear, and no means to reach home.

### Details:

- The author of the article, a former Chief Justice of Delhi and Madras High Courts argues that the institutions meant to look out for the **interests of the vulnerable sections** like the migrant labourers have failed.
- The author alleges that the Supreme Court has failed to satisfactorily acknowledge that the **fundamental rights of migrant labourers** have been violated, and ignored the plight of this section when they most needed protection.

### The author's arguments:

#### The Judiciary's duty:

- The duty performed by the arms of the state, even during an emergency, must always be bound by **constitutional propriety**, and respect fundamental rights and the **judiciary acts as a watchdog** in such situations.
- Despite overwhelming evidence pointing to the violation of the fundamental rights of citizens, especially those of vulnerable populations like migrant labourers, the SC has been refusing to admit petitions or has been adjourning the petitions asking the SC to intervene.
- By effectively not granting any relief, the Court is denying citizens of the most **fundamental right of access to justice**, ensured under the Constitution.
- The author alleges that the SC has failed to adequately perform as a **constitutional court**.

#### Incorrect arguments from the judiciary:

##### *Policy matter and non-judicial interference:*

- The SC has opined that the condition of migrant labourers is a **matter of policy** and thus, does not behave judicial interference. The Court has held that the government is the best judge of the situation.
- However, there are numerous judgments where SC has laid out matters of policy. In these cases, the Court formulated policies and asked the States to implement them.



- The Vishaka guidelines on sexual harassment in the workplace
- The right to food
- Environmental protection policies.

*Court ability to monitor the situation:*

- The court's argument that it cannot act on mere news reports to issue directives to the states does not hold ground as nothing prevents the Court from monitoring the situation itself directly, by directing bureaucrats to collect empirical data on the ground, as it has done before.

*Public Interest Litigations:*

- **Public Interest Litigations (PILs)** are a specific instrument designed to ensure the protection of the **rights of the poor, downtrodden and vulnerable**, and anyone can seek appropriate directions on their behalf. The concept of a PIL is to be **non-adversarial**, but the Court's treating of the PILs as adversarial matters against the government is worrisome.

*Role of High Courts:*

- The author praises the role being played by some High Courts in this issue. At least four High Courts (Karnataka, Madras, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat) have started questioning the states on the plight of the migrant labourers.

**Conclusion:**

- The author urges the **apex court to intervene and monitor the situation** to help alleviate the plight of the migrant labourers.

## F. Tidbits

### 1. Centre seeks efficacy of Ayurveda

- The Union Health Ministry has sought results of COVID-19 treatment using Ayurvedic medicines.
- Ayurveda is a traditional medicinal knowledge source from India and there is huge potential in it. Ayurveda's inherent strength is in **holistic healing and wellbeing**.
- The results from the dedicated COVID-19 health centre at the Chaudhary Brahm Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan (CBPACS), Najafgarh have been encouraging.
- The knowledge and experience of Ayurveda could prove beneficial to people all over the world in combating the battle against COVID-19.

### 2. Thermal scanner with AI at Kerala railway station

- A **thermal imaging scanner with Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and a door frame detector has been installed at the Thiruvananthapuram railway station to screen passengers and measure their body temperature.

- The facility will ensure social distancing, temperature screening using AI, alerts for high temperature, mask recognition through a **non-contact screening process**.

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. Jairam flays nod for projects in sensitive areas

- Names and location of some ecologically sensitive areas.
  - The Dibang Valley: Arunachal Pradesh.
  - Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve: Assam
  - Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary: Goa
  - Gir National Park: Gujarat

### 2. Royal Bengal Tiger found dead in Nallamalla forest

- **Nallamala Forest** is located in the Indian state of **Andhra Pradesh and Telangana** and is part of the **Eastern Ghats**.
- Nallamala Forest derives its name from the Nallamalas (also called the **Nallamalla Range**) which form a section of the Eastern Ghats. They run in a **nearly north-south alignment, parallel to the Coromandel Coast between the rivers, Krishna and Pennar**.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

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

1. Somalia shares its land borders with two countries.
2. Somalia is bound by the Gulf of Aden to the north.

**Options:**

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

**Answer:**

**Option b**

**Explanation:**

- Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa.
- It is bordered by Ethiopia to the west, the Gulf of Aden to the north, the Somali Sea to the east, and Kenya to the southwest. It also shares a land border with Djibouti in North-west.

**Q2. The Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve is located in which of the following states?**

**Options:**

- a. Assam
- b. West Bengal
- c. Meghalaya
- d. Manipur

**Answer:**

**Option a**

**Explanation:**

- Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Dibrugarh and Tinsukia Districts of Assam. This sanctuary is also a part of Dehing-Patkai Elephant Reserve.
- It is part of the Assam valley tropical wet evergreen forest. The Dehing Patkai forms the largest stretch of tropical lowland rainforests in India.
- The Dibru-Deomali Elephant Reserve is also in Assam.

**Q3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?**

1. The Nallamalla Hills are spread over the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
2. The Nallamalla hills run in a nearly north-south alignment, parallel to the Coromandel Coast between the rivers, Krishna and Pennar.

**Options:**

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

**Answer:**

**Option c**

**Explanation:**

- The Nallamalas (also called the Nallamalla Range) are a section of the Eastern Ghats spread over the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, in India.
- They run in a nearly north-south alignment, parallel to the Coromandel Coast for close to 430 km between the rivers, Krishna and Pennar.

- The Nallamalas are an extremely old system, the hills have extensively weathered and eroded over the years.
- The rocks of the Nallamala ranges belong to the Kadapa system.

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

1. The Jama Masjid in Delhi was built by the Mughal Emperor Akbar.
2. The Badshahi Masjid in Lahore was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan.

**Options:**

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

**Answer:**

**Option c**

**Explanation:**

- The Jama Masjid in Delhi was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan.
- The architecture and plan of Badshahi Masjid, which was built by Shah Jahan's son Aurangzeb in Lahore, is closely related to that of the Jama Masjid of Delhi.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the concerns with respect to the APMC act and evaluate the recently announced reforms for the APMC act under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. The COVID-19 crisis has brought to light the issue of the migrant labourers in India and the post-COVID phase will require drastic changes in the migration policies. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)