

05 Jun 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India-Australia meet strengthens ties](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Tablighi activity now a specific visa violation](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ENVIRONMENT

1. [Disasters displace lakhs: study](#)

ECONOMY

1. [‘What relief is ultimately granted if interest accrues?’](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

ENVIRONMENT

1. [Killing Gajah: On the killing of an elephant in Kerala](#)
2. [Oil spill in Russia’s Arctic region](#)

DEFENCE

1. [Swiss cheese and defence reforms](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [A chill in U.S.-China relations](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [Vande Bharat Mission set to break evacuation record](#)
2. [Centre launches internship scheme for 25,000 graduates](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [Small drop in joblessness in 2018-19: PLFS](#)
2. [HC allows unmarried woman to terminate 23-week pregnancy](#)
3. [Bring PM CARES Fund under RTI, says plea](#)
4. [Bad loans to rise sharply, PSBs stare at 6th year of loss: ICRA](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India-Australia meet strengthens ties

Context:

- India-Australia held a bilateral virtual summit.
- It is the first time that the Indian Prime Minister held a “Bilateral Virtual Summit”.
- The virtual summit signifies the strengthening of ties with Australia and its upward trajectory.

Details:

- India and Australia raised their relationship to a “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” after the virtual summit.
- They concluded nine agreements including a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA).
 - MLSA will allow both militaries the reciprocal use of bases, humanitarian and disaster relief cooperation, port exercises, and passage exercises.
- They issued a joint declaration on a “Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.”
- Other agreements announced included a framework arrangement on cyber technology, an MoU on mining and processing critical and strategic minerals including Australian rare earth metals used for electronics, governance, vocational training and water management.
- The two countries agreed to increase the frequency of meetings between the two Prime Ministers.
- They also took the “2+2” format of bilateral meetings to the level of Foreign and Defence Ministers, who will meet to discuss strategic issues at least every two years.
- Both sides agreed to continue to deepen and broaden defence cooperation by enhancing the scope and complexity of their military exercises and engagement activities to develop new ways to address shared security challenges.
- The statement issued after the summit said, “Both India and Australia share a vision of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region to support the freedom of navigation, overflight and peaceful and cooperative use of the seas by adherence of all nations to international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([UNCLOS](#)) and peaceful resolution of disputes rather than through unilateral or coercive actions”.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**1. Tablighi activity now a specific visa violation****Context:**

The Union Home Ministry has included indulging in Tablighi activities as a specific visa violation that will attract a fine of \$500.

Details:

- Home Ministry has added a new category—“restriction on engaging in Tabligh activities” in the “general policy guidelines relating to Indian visa”.
- The guidelines provide details of 24 categories of visas and the various conditions under which they could be granted online or by missions abroad.

Amended Guidelines:

- As per the amended guidelines,
 - Foreign nationals granted any type of visa and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cardholders shall not be permitted to engage themselves in Tabligh work.
 - There will be no restriction in visiting religious places and attending normal religious activities like attending religious discourses.

- However, preaching religious ideologies, making speeches in religious places, distribution of audio or visual display/pamphlets pertaining to religious ideologies, spreading conversion, etc. will not be allowed.
- The \$500 fine is also for other violations such as overstay of more than two years, visiting protected areas and cases involving both overstay and visa violations.

Note:

- The MHA had blacklisted 960 foreigners who participated in the Tablighi Jamaat event in March at Nizamuddin markaz (centre) in Delhi in March 2020.
- So far, a total of 2,600 Tablighi foreigners have been blacklisted from entering India for 10 years under "Category A" of the Visa Manual 2018.
- The Jamaat congregation, part of regular Tabligh activity, was attended by people from Nepal, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Algeria, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.
- A foreigner who is blacklisted cannot get a visa from any of the missions to come to India.
- Home Ministry is the nodal agency that gives permission to any foreigner to participate in any international event.
- Any conference/event application is routed through an Indian mission abroad and without the Home Ministry's permission, the event cannot happen and participants are not issued visas.

Tablighi Jamaat:

- The Tablighi Jamaat (Society of Preachers) focusses on 'purifying' the Muslim faith.
- It was founded by a Deobandi Islamic scholar at Mewat, Uttar Pradesh, in 1926.
- It has a presence in 150 countries.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Disasters displace lakhs: study

Context:

- State of India's Environment 2020: in Figures report has been released.

State of India's Environment 2020: in Figures report:

- It is the annual statement on the state of affairs in environment and development sectors.
- The report is published by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).
- CSE also publishes the environment magazine Down to Earth.
- The report covers forests, wildlife, agriculture, rural development, water and sanitation and climate change related aspects.

Details:

- India had one in five of all internal displacements caused by disasters across the world in 2019, mostly caused by floods, cyclones and drought, according to the report.

- There were more than 50 lakh internal displacements in India last year, the highest in the world.
 - This refers to the number of movements, not people, as individuals can be displaced several times.
- The compilation also offers a snapshot of data on forests, water, waste, air, land, wildlife and other natural resources.
- It notes that there were 747 more tigers in 2018 than in 2014. However, the net area meant for tiger conservation shrunk by 179 sq.km.
- Forest cover has shrunk in 38% of districts.
- 5 out of 21 river basins are now in a state of absolute water scarcity.

What caused displacements?

- Flooding caused by the southwest monsoon led to 26 lakh displacements, while Cyclone Fani alone led to 18 lakh displacements, followed by cyclones Vayu and Bulbul.
- Drought conditions in 19 States led to another 63,000 displacements.
- Apart from such forced migrations, many move for work. In 2011, over 1.7 crore new migrants had moved for employment purposes, mostly from rural to urban areas.

Category: ECONOMY

1. 'What relief is ultimately granted if interest accrues?'

Context:

The Supreme Court, in a virtual court hearing, reacted to RBI regulatory package, asking what relief had ultimately been granted if loan interest continued to accrue for the moratorium period.

Details:

- The three judge bench said there were two issues in the case:
 - One, whether interest should be charged at all during the moratorium period.
 - Two, whether there should be an accrual of interest to be paid by the borrower in bulk or at a monthly basis after the lifting of the embargo.
- The hearing came a day after the RBI filed an affidavit in court saying it did not consider it prudent or appropriate to go for a forced waiver of interest, risking the financial viability of the banks it ([RBI](#)) was mandated to regulate, and putting the interests of the depositors in jeopardy.
- In its affidavit, the RBI was responding to a petition challenging the charging of interest on loans during the moratorium period.
- The RBI said its regulatory package introduced amid the lockdown was "in its essence in the nature of a moratorium deferment and cannot be construed to be a waiver".

This topic has been covered in [4th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

<https://byjus.com>

1. Killing Gajah: On the killing of an elephant in Kerala

Context

- Death of a pregnant elephant in Kerala after she ate a pineapple laden with firecrackers.

Sequence of events

- The wild elephant had allegedly wandered out of the Silent Valley National Park (SVNP) in Palakkad, in search of food.
- When the animal allegedly bit into the fruit stuffed with firecrackers, she was grievously injured eventually leading to her death.

Food Bombs

- It is considered to be a traditional hunting practice.
- These food bombs are mainly placed to hunt and kill wild boars, and in the process these bombs claim lives of other wild animals and even livestock.
- They are prepared by using locally available gun powder and gelatin sticks which are used to make firecrackers.
 - They are wrapped in animal parts like intestines and in fruits to attract the wild boars with its strong smell.
 - Wild animals, like leopards and jackal, try to feast on these and meet a tragic end.
- When the animals chew the balls filled with explosive, it blasts in the mouth causing a painful death to the animals.

Man-Animal Conflict

- This is a horrifying reminder of the rising conflicts between humans and animals. This is expected to grow as humans are entering areas meant for wildlife for commercial activities further diminishing their habitat.
- This raises questions of development at the cost of environment, with little to mitigate the larger issue of lost ranges and blocked corridors for these wandering elephants.
- Shrinking ranges and feeding grounds for elephants cause serious worry, because the animals look for soft landscapes adjoining forests such as coffee, tea and cardamom estates, and in the absence of these, wander into food-rich farms falling in their movement pathways.

Way forward

- We are at conflict with wildlife; we have to find a way to co-exist, as animals too have a right to live. Consideration for wildlife while planning infrastructural projects and financial allocations for mitigation measures are needed to address the issue.
- A sensible course open to conservation-minded governments is to end all intrusion into the 5% of protected habitats in India, and draw up better **compensation schemes for farmers who lose crops to animals**.
- A culture shift to protect, rather than prospect, would genuinely enrich people and save biodiversity.

2. Oil spill in Russia's Arctic region

Context

- Russia's President Vladimir Putin has declared a state of emergency after 20,000 tonnes of diesel oil leaked into the **Ambarnaya River** within the Arctic Circle.
- The spill happened when a fuel tank at a power plant near the Siberian city of Norilsk collapsed.

Ambarnaya River

- It is a river in Siberia which flows in a northerly direction into Lake Pyasino.
- It is heavily polluted by the mining industry of Norilsk.

How did the leak happen?

- The thermoelectric power plant at Norilsk is built on permafrost, which has weakened over the years owing to climate change.
- This caused the pillars that supported the plant's fuel tank to sink, leading to a loss of containment.

Oil Spill

- The contamination of seawater due to an oil pour, as a result of an accident, human error, or natural calamity, is termed as an oil spill.

Impact

- The spill has contaminated a 350 sq km (135 sq mile) area.
- Environmentalists have said the river would be difficult to clean, given its shallow waters and remote location, as well as the magnitude of the spill.
- An environmental oversight agency of the Russian government pegged the overall damage at "several dozen, perhaps hundreds of billions of rubles".
- Aquatic species affected with this spill usually migrate.

Measures taken

- **Boom obstacles** were placed in the river, but they were unable to contain the oil because of shallow waters.
 - Booms are temporary floating barriers used to contain marine spills, protect the environment, and assist in recovery.
 - A boom includes a containment partition that floats on and extends above the water's surface, and a "skirt" or "curtain" that sinks into the



water.

- The state of emergency declared would bring in extra forces and federal resources for the clean-up efforts.

How is oil spill controlled in general?

- **Skimmers:** Once the oil is bounded by oil booms, it can be extracted or skimmed easily with the help of skimmers or oil scoops. These skimmers are fitted onto boats to remove the floating oil or greasy contaminants.
- **Sorbents:** Materials that can absorb liquids are termed as sorbents. The use of sorbents is a natural process of oil clean-up. The most common types of sorbents are peat moss, vermiculite (straw), and hay.
- **In situ burning** is the process of burning spilled oil where it is on the ocean. Any burn operation includes careful air monitoring to ensure smoke or residue resulting from the burn do not adversely impact people or wildlife.
- **Dispersion:** Chemical dispersion is achieved by applying chemicals designed to remove oil from the water surface by breaking the oil into small droplets.

Challenges

- Oil spill becomes challenging when it comes to extreme climate zones such as the Arctic. It becomes **difficult to remove the oil from ice and collect it.**
- Cold temperatures, poor visibility, remoteness, and lack of required infrastructure and challenges in communication are a few issues involved for spill response in the Arctic region.

Category: DEFENCE

1. Swiss cheese and defence reforms

Swiss Cheese Model

- The Swiss cheese model of accident causation is a model used in risk analysis and risk management, associated with accident investigation in an organisation or a system.
 - It includes aviation safety, engineering, healthcare, emergency service organizations, and as the principle behind layered security, as used in computer security and defense in depth.
- It likens human systems to multiple slices of Swiss cheese, stacked side by side, in which the risk of a threat becoming a reality is mitigated by the differing layers and types of defenses which are "layered" behind each other.
- Therefore, in theory, lapses and weaknesses in one defense do not allow a risk to materialize, since other defenses also exist, to prevent a single point of failure.

Security Flaws

- The Swiss Cheese Model of accident causation illustrates that, although many layers of defense lie between hazards and accidents, there are flaws in each layer that, if aligned, can allow the accident to occur.

Three slices in defence set-up

In the Indian defence set-up, the three slices are:

- One, the policymaking apparatus comprising the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** and the Ministry of Defence (MoD);

- Two, the defence research and development (R&D) establishment and domestic manufacturing industry; and
- Three, the three services.

When the MoD alone existed, the holes in the three slices were aligned to different degrees resulting in four major wars since independence and hence, the system required an overhaul.

Defence today is not only about number of soldiers, it is also about technology. The advent of smart munitions, computer processing, networking capabilities and the skyrocketing cost of equipment brought in the concept of parallel warfare. This requires:

- Synergized and coordinated application of tools of national power.
- Joint operations of military to achieve economic and political gains.
- The setting up of the **DMA** and the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to achieve synergy are the most fundamental changes;
 - Further modifications and tweaking is imperative, but that **transformation has to be based on clinical analysis, without any external, emotional, political or rhetorical pressure.**

Access to the right equipment

- India has adversaries on its borders. The issue of terrorist infiltration has not stopped in Jammu and Kashmir.
- China is flexing its muscles in Ladakh and the China-Pakistan nexus can only be expected to get stronger.
- Such a security environment demands that capability accretion of the three services proceed unhindered.
- To elaborate,
 - the Indian Air Force at a minimum requires 300 fighters to bolster its squadron strength;
 - the Army needs guns of all types;
 - The Navy wants ships, helicopters, etc.

Issues with arms procurement

- The requirements are worth billions of dollars but with **COVID-19-induced cuts in defence spending, and their diversion to the social sector**, getting all of them in the present environment is doubtful.
- Then comes the Govt. policy of self-reliance which aims at buying indigenous equipment, but for that, in-house R&D and manufacturing entities have to be ready to supply, which they are not capable of presently.
 - Hindustan Aeronautics Limited can, at best, produce just eight Tejas fighters per year presently;
 - The **Army** has had to import rifles due to the failure of [DRDO](#) to produce them;
 - The **Navy** has earnest hopes that the hull designs that its internal R&D makes get the vital innards for going to war.

So, the Swiss cheese slice representing **indigenous R&D and a manufacturing supply chain** that ensures quality war-fighting equipment, at the right time and in required quantities, is still some years away. Wars cannot be fought and won on well-meaning policy intentions; wars are won when war fighters have access to the right equipment to prosecute them.

Creating theatre commands

- The Govt. also plans to create theatre commands.
 - A theatre command is a military structure wherein all the assets of the army, air force and navy in a particular theatre of war are under the operational control of a three-star general. Currently, existing commands are of the army, navy and air force.
- This move brings changes to DMA and MoD. It modifies the very foundation of our war-fighting structure of the services. The CDS has set a deadline to bring this into action.
- But examples show this could be tough to achieve.
 - The Chinese announced their 'theaterisation' concept in 2015; it is still a work in progress.
 - The U.S. had a bruising debate for decades before the Goldwater-Nichols Act came into force in 1986.
- New relationships take time to smooth out, and in the arena of defence policymaking, which is where the DMA and MoD lie, the element of time has a value of its own: any ramming through, just to meet a publicly declared timeline, **could result in creating a not-so-optimal war-fighting organisation to our detriment.**

Conclusion

- The political, civil and military leadership must have their feet firmly on ground; impractical timelines and pressures of public pronouncements must not be the drivers in such a fundamental overhaul of our defence apparatus.
- To paraphrase Deng Xiaoping, we should shun publicity and build on our capability first.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A chill in U.S.-China relations

Context

- Deterioration of the USA - China relationship.

Details

The USA, under the Trump administration, has issued a couple of statements and action plans which is a clear indication that the competition between the U.S. and China is likely to sharpen in the post-COVID world.

- The Trump administration said it would **revoke Hong Kong's special trade status** under U.S. law.
- The administration also passed an order **limiting the entry of certain Chinese graduate students** and researchers who may have ties to the People's Liberation Army.
- The U.S. President has also ordered financial regulators to closely **examine Chinese firms listed in U.S. stock markets**, and warned those that do not comply with U.S. laws could be delisted.
- The U.S. government has decided to **bar passenger planes from China** from June 16.
- A **trade war** which President Donald Trump launched in 2018 is yet to be resolved fully.
- Trump and other officials in the administration have been attacking China over its **handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

These retaliatory moves indicate that the world's largest and second-largest economies have entered into a new cold war.

Is it same as the USA- Soviet Union?

- There are similarities between the current crisis and the Cold War.
 - The political elites of both China and the U.S., like the Soviet Union and the U.S. back then, see each other as their main rivals.
 - One can also see this antagonism moving from the political elite to the popular perception — the targeting of ethnic Chinese professionals and others in the U.S. and of American individuals or entities in China is a case in point.
- But there are key differences as well. Proxy conflicts between the U.S. and China are not seen as one witnessed during the Cold War between USA and Soviet Union. The world is also not bipolar any more.
 - There are third parties such as the EU, Russia, India and Japan. These parties increasingly have a choice whether or not to align with either power as they see fit and on a case by case basis.
 - This leads to a very different kind of international order than during the Cold War.
- Ties between China and the U.S. are still not as bad as they were between the Soviet Union and the U.S.
 - Beijing and Washington are still economically and financially entangled.
- Today, from trade and technology to the pandemic and Hong Kong, the battle lines have been drawn — China, which the Pentagon called “a revisionist power” in 2018, is the main rival of Washington, a position which the Soviet Union held during the Cold War.
- The possibility of a **military confrontation is very low**. But the era of cooperation, peaceful trade and pragmatism that had defined U.S.-China partnership since President Richard Nixon’s reset in the 1970s seems to have made way for an aggressive leadership contest and deepening mutual mistrust.

How the US- China relationship evolved?

- President Jimmy Carter terminated diplomatic relations with Taiwan in order to normalise relations with China in 1978;
- President George H.W. Bush washed away the sins of Tiananmen in 1989 for momentary geopolitical gain;
- Bill Clinton, who as a presidential candidate had criticised Bush for indulging the Chinese, proceeded as President to usher the country into the [World Trade Organization](#) at the expense of American business.
- All American administrations since the 1960s have been complicit in China’s rise in the unrealised hope that it will become a ‘responsible stakeholder’ under Pax Americana.

But every Chinese leader from Chairman Mao to President Xi Jinping has been clear-eyed that the U.S. represents an **existential threat to the continued supremacy of the communist regime**.

- Mao put it best, when he told high-ranking leaders in 1959, that the “U.S. is attempting to carry out its aggression and expansion with a much more deceptive tactic... In other words, it wants to keep its order and change our system.”
- The collapse of the Soviet Union only reinforced this view and strengthened China’s resolve to resist by creating its own parallel universe.

China’s indirect confrontation with USA

China is building:

- An **alternate trading system** (the [Belt and Road Initiative](#));
- A multilateral banking system under its control (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, New Development Bank);

- Its own Global Positioning System (BeiDou);
- Digital payment platforms (WeChat Pay and Alipay);
- A world-class digital network (Huawei 5G); cutting-edge technological processes in sunrise industries; and a modern military force.

It is doing this under the noses of the Americans and some of it with the financial and technological resources of the West.

What was believed to be a peaceful rise is inherently a clash with USA. Its military expansion in the South China Sea and direct hostility with allies of USA means China is turning hegemonic. This is a challenge to American power, influence and interests.

How has US responded?

- U.S. is already at war with China, says a few officials from the Trump administration.
- But a few have also cautioned that this should not escalate into cold war as USA is still entangled to China's supply chains.

Significance of Hong Kong to the west

- It is the last bastion for Western capitalism in the East, but more importantly, the torch-bearer of Western democratic ideals.
- Think of it as a sort of Statue of Liberty; it holds aloft the torch of freedom and democracy for all those who pass through Hong Kong en route to China.
- The new law passed by China is an assault on the very idea of democracy and liberty. Hong Kong now is caged under the authoritative regime of Communist China.

Conclusion

- Will this form the ideological underpinning for the birth of a new Cold War? That will depend on who wins in Washington in November 2020.
- Post-election, temperatures could decrease, but a deep-rooted antipathy towards China has gripped the popular and political imagination in the U.S. Therefore, tensions will not go away.

China's 'Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy'

- It is a new approach inside China and reinforces a presumed transition of Chinese diplomacy from conservative, passive, and low-key to assertive, proactive, and high-profile.
- Wolf Warrior and Wolf Warrior II are Chinese action blockbusters that highlight agents of Chinese special operation forces. They have boosted national pride and patriotism among Chinese viewers.
- 'Wolf-warrior diplomacy', named after these movies, describes offensives by Chinese diplomats to defend China's national interests, often in confrontational ways.
- Many Chinese believe the Western media portrayal of China is highly biased, often with ideological and racist tinges. Wolf-warrior diplomacy is part of the Chinese government's endeavour to "tell the China story."

Examples

- China's foreign ministry spokespersons Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian have taken to Twitter to hit back against external criticisms of China's handling of the coronavirus outbreak and the poor quality of exported Chinese medical equipment.

- Zhao said in a tweet that “if someone claims that China’s exports are toxic, then stop wearing China-made masks and protective gowns.”

Why is China resorting to “wolf-warrior diplomacy?”

- Since 2010, when China’s GDP overtook Japan’s as the world’s second largest, the Chinese have become more confident and China’s foreign policy has become more assertive.
- President Xi Jinping has advocated “a fighting spirit” on several occasions, whether speaking to soldiers or party officials.
 - This has apparently raised the morale of Chinese officials and diplomats, and encouraged a more assertive style.
- “Wolf-warrior diplomacy” is evidenced not only in combative words but also aggressive actions.
 - For example, a Chinese coastguard ship allegedly sank a Vietnamese fishing trawler near the Paracel Islands. When Vietnam protested, the Chinese foreign ministry responded by saying that Vietnam’s claims to the area are “illegal.”

F. Prelims Facts

1. Vande Bharat Mission set to break evacuation record

What’s in News?

A total of 3,48,565 citizens have registered till now with the Indian diplomatic missions across the world for repatriation under the Vande Bharat Mission.

- Registered Indians have been brought back by a mix of non-scheduled commercial flights, ships and cross-border bus services from Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan.
- The registered number of evacuees under the Vande Bharat Mission has officially crossed the previous record held by the 1990 airlift of Indians from Kuwait after the invasion of the country by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.

Vande Bharat Mission:

- The repatriation operation covers only those who register to return under “compelling grounds”.
- The third phase of the Mission which is to begin on 11th June 2020 will evacuate citizens from 31 countries (including the US, Canada, Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Kenya, Seychelles, Mauritius) in 337 commercial flights.

Read more about [**Vande Bharat Mission**](#).

2. Centre launches internship scheme for 25,000 graduates

What’s in News?

- The Centre has launched a scheme to provide internship opportunities with smart cities and urban local bodies for 25,000 fresh graduates, mostly from technical courses.

- TULIP (The Urban Learning Internship Programme) portal was also launched.

Details:

- It is a welcome move at a time of soaring unemployment and few prospects for new entrants into the labour force.
- However, there is no guarantee that these interns will get paid any stipend.
- The scheme is a five-year joint venture between MoHUA and the All India Council for Technical Education.
- City administrations can register available opportunities on the portal, ranging from positions in urban planning or water supply and waste management to slum improvement and digital governance.
- Applicants must be Indian citizens who have completed their final year of college within the last 18 months. Internship durations can range from eight weeks to one year.
- The programme does not have any budget of its own, but the 100 smart cities and 4,400 urban local bodies can use the administrative expenses allocated by the Centre to pay stipends or perks, if they wish to. They are also free to develop their own selection procedures.

Read more about TULIP – Urban Learning Internship Program covered in [4th June 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

G. Tidbits

1. Small drop in joblessness in 2018-19: PLFS

What's in News?

The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) has been released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Key findings:

- India's unemployment rate improved from the 45-year high of 6.1% in 2017-18 to 5.8% in 2018-19.
- The labour force participation rate also improved marginally, from 36.9% in 2017-18 to 37.5% in 2018-19.
- Women's unemployment fell from 5.7% to 5.2%, while male unemployment only fell from 6.2% to 6%.
- Rural unemployment fell from 5.3% to 5%.
- Urban unemployment was still at a high of 7.7% in 2018-19, a marginal drop from 7.8% in 2017-18.

Note:

The labour force is defined as people who are working, or seeking work or available for work.

Read more about Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) covered in [4th June 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

2. HC allows unmarried woman to terminate 23-week pregnancy

What's in News?

The Bombay High Court has allowed a 23-year-old unmarried woman to terminate her 23-week pregnancy.

- A medical board of qualified doctors to give an opinion under the MTP Act on whether undergoing the procedure posed any health risks to the woman said that the continuation of pregnancy would lead to grave injury to her mental health and hence is advisable to terminate the pregnancy.

Note:

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971, permits termination of pregnancy up to 20 weeks, beyond which the courts have to decide.

Read more about **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020** covered in [30th January 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

3. Bring PM CARES Fund under RTI, says plea

What's in News?

A public interest litigation ([PIL](#)) petition has been moved before the Delhi High Court seeking greater transparency in the PM CARES Fund by bringing it under the ambit of the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

- The petition cited recent newspaper reports of the PM CARES Fund refusing to divulge information sought under the RTI Act by claiming that the fund is **not a 'public authority'** within the ambit of Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, 2005.

Read more about [PM CARES Fund](#) and [Right To Information Act](#).

4. Bad loans to rise sharply, PSBs stare at 6th year of loss: ICRA

What's in News?

In a report, the credit rating agency ICRA has said that, with debt servicing capacity of borrowers coming under strain as the country enters a period of possible economic recession, bad loans of Indian banks are expected to rise sharply this fiscal, which could lead to a yet another year of loss for public sector banks (PSBs).

Details:

- The agency said uncertainty on the asset quality of banks remains high with almost 30-40% of the loan book across various banks under the repayment moratorium.
- It added that credit provisions will continue to exceed operating profits for PSBs during FY21, translating to the sixth consecutive year of loss.

- PSBs will need estimated capital infusion of ₹45,000 crore to ₹82,500 crore against an earlier estimated ₹10,000 crore to ₹20,000 crore even under a scenario of low credit growth of 3-4% for FY21, ICRA said.
- The Centre had expected PSBs to raise capital from the markets and hence possibly did not budget for any capital infusion for FY21.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to River Ambarnaya:

1. It is a river in Siberia, within the Arctic Circle.
2. It flows in a northerly direction into Lake Pyasino.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- River Ambarnaya is a river in Siberia.
- The river lies within the Arctic Circle.
- It flows in a northerly direction into Lake Pyasino.
- It is heavily polluted by the mining industry of Norilsk.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to PM CARES Fund:

1. PM CARES Fund is barred from accepting donations and contributions from individuals and organizations based in foreign countries.
2. It is a Public Authority under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.
3. The fund gets annual budgetary support in addition to voluntary contributions from individuals or organizations.

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

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3
- d. None of the above

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Under the PM CARES Fund, a separate account for receiving the donations from the foreign countries has been opened. This enables PM CARES Fund to accept donations and contributions from

individuals and organizations based in foreign countries. Foreign donations in the PM CARES Fund would also get exemption under the FCRA.

- The fund does not get any budgetary support and consists entirely of voluntary contributions from individuals or organizations.
- It is not a Public Authority under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) :

1. CDS as a single-point military adviser to the government was suggested by the Kargil Review Committee in 1999.
2. CDS has the direct command of tri-service organizations.
3. Both Defence Acquisition Council and Defence Planning Committee are chaired by the CDS.

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

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. None of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Chief of Defence Staff is the single-point military adviser to the government as suggested by the Kargil Review Committee in 1999.
- CDS oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services.
- CDS will be member of Defence Acquisition Council chaired by Raksha Mantri and Defence Planning Committee chaired by National Security Advisor.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Silent Valley National Park:

1. It is located in the Nilgiri Hills, at the heart of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
2. River Periyar flows through the national park.
3. It has a large population of lion-tailed macaques.

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

Silent Valley National Park is located in the Nilgiri Hills, at the heart of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. River Kunthi flows through the National Park. It has a large population of lion-tailed macaques.

1. Developmental projects have increased pressure on resources in and around wildlife areas bringing animals within human range, which has increased man-animal conflicts. Discuss the key policy reforms that need to be introduced to help in conflict mitigation. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
2. War of words and escalating tensions between USA and China bring to light a new era of cold war. How will it impact their relationship bilaterally and what are the international ramifications? (15 Marks, 250 Words)