

15 Jun 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. In the pandemic, the disabled remain an invisible minority

Context:

- Challenges faced by the disabled during the pandemic.

Challenges:

- The pandemic has various implications for people with disabilities.

Lack of employment opportunities:

- According to a report by the **National Centre for the Promotion of Employment for Disabled Persons (NCPEDP)**, over 73% of people with disabilities surveyed faced serious difficulties in employment opportunities due to the lockdown.

Medical needs:

- People with disabilities have **pre-existing medical conditions** like MRSA [an infection], or have compromised spinal cords, which make them more susceptible to virus infection.
- The **inaccessibility to healthcare** because of the lockdown imposes a great challenge on the differently-abled owing to their medical conditions.
- There is lack of accessibility in the quarantine centres for the differently-abled people.

Negligence:

- The challenges faced by the differently-abled people point to a larger problem of **invisibilisation of the struggles of persons with disability**. People with disability have no representation in Parliament, hence, nobody cares to ensure the policies made for the differently-abled are intersectional in nature.
- Policies being framed seem to be **oblivious to the needs of the specially-abled individuals**.
 - The increasing insistence on online education seems to be ignorant of the special needs of children with visual disorders or hearing disorders. There seems to be a lack of inclusiveness of people with disabilities in online education.
 - Social distancing is not possible for those with disabilities. The concept of social distancing is redundant for differently-abled people who need assistance for their daily activities.

Class divide:

- A large class divide has become increasingly visible in the lockdown.
- **Individuals with disability and their families are at a greater risk of poor health and quality of life outcomes** because either their social status is affected by their disabilities or their disabilities are made worse by the inaccessibility that comes with social status.
- Lower income levels have been consistently correlated with poor health and inferior quality of life.

Way forward:

Immediate action:

- The government needs to step in with **enhanced support** for this vulnerable class of people. This could involve enhanced assistance for the differently-abled. Medical needs of this section should receive special attention. Policies being framed during the pandemic need to take into consideration the special needs.

Long term policy changes:

- There is a need for an **interlinking of policymakers** with disability as the focus. This could be done through the creation of Joint Secretary-level positions for disability affairs in the Health, Home and Information and Broadcasting Ministries.
- These officers would connect the department and concerned ministries; ensuring disability is not overlooked during policy formulation.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated April 13, 2020.](#)

[CNA dated May 3, 2020](#)

1. SC to extend virtual court system amid COVID-19 fears

Context:

- A committee of [Supreme Court](#) judges has decided to continue the **virtual court system** and not revert to the physical hearings, given the **rise in COVID-19 cases**.

Details:

- The SC has been hearing urgent cases through video-conference. The court had named this mechanism the 'virtual court system'.
- The Supreme Court Advocates-on Record Association, the Supreme Court Bar Association and the Bar Council of India have been making representations to the SC calling for resumption of physical hearings at the earliest.
- They have argued that a majority of the lawyers cannot effectively present their arguments at virtual hearings.

For related information, refer to:

[CNA dated May 11, 2020](#)

[CNA dated April 28, 2020](#)

C. GS 3 Related

Category: **ECONOMY**

1. MSMEs wait for work as demand slumps post lockdown

Context:

- Challenges faced by the MSMEs during the pandemic.

Concerns:

Slump in demand:

- Despite the resumption of production in MSMEs, there is little business. **Demand has slumped by large margins.**

Unemployment:

- A large number of people employed in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises have lost their jobs due to slump in demand post lockdown.
- Apart from the direct employees who have lost jobs, people indirectly dependent on the functioning of the MSMEs have also lost livelihood opportunities.

Long recovery time:

- Given the increasing number of COVID cases and the surrounding uncertainty, it seems possible that it may take months before the ground situation improves. This could deal a severe financial blow to the MSMEs whose financial condition is already fragile.

Government efforts:

- Despite the governmental efforts, there have been concerns raised about the “inadequate” efforts of the government for small businesses. Benefits, even if announced, have not reached many.

For related information, refer to:

[CNA dated May 17, 2020](#)

Way forward:

- Government should support the MSMEs until the situation comes back to normal.
- The government can **help create demand** by allowing big companies to work and lift all restrictions.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. India looks to deploy Naval Liaisons

Context:

- India’s decision to post Navy Liaison Officers with regional monitoring groups.

Background:

- India joined the **Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)** as Observer in March 2020.
 - The IOC is a regional forum in the **Southwest Indian Ocean**, comprising five nations — Comoros, France (Reunion), Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. China and the European Union (EU) have been Observers in the IOC since 2016 and 2017, respectively.

For more information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated Mar 7, 2020](#)

Details:

- India is looking to post Navy Liaison Officers at the **Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar**, functioning under the aegis of the IOC and also at the **European maritime surveillance initiative in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH)** for improved Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).
 - The headquarters of the EMASOH is based at the French naval base in Abu Dhabi.

Significance:

- The aim of the EMASOH is to **monitor maritime activity and guarantee freedom of navigation** in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Given that a large volume of India's trade happens through this region, this will benefit India.
- This move will help improve the linkages of the **Navy's Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram** with other IFCs and enable it to become the repository for all maritime data in the IOR.
 - The Indian Navy set up the IFC-IOR in December 2018 to track maritime movements in the region.

For more information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated April 22, 2020](#)

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. The need for an anti-discrimination law

Context:

- In the backdrop of the ongoing **anti-racism protests in the U.S.**, the author analyzes the challenges in India.

Details:

Scenario in India:

- The author argues that even after more than 70 years of independence, Indian society remains rife with **structural discrimination and prejudice**.
- The inequality problem in India is only exacerbated by historically ingrained forms of discrimination, along the lines of **caste, class, gender, and religion** among other things.
- These prejudices, which pervade every aspect of life, from access to basic goods, to education and employment, are sometimes manifest. But, on other occasions, the discrimination is indirect and even unintended.
- Both direct and indirect forms of discrimination go against **India's constitutional vision of equality**.

Concerns:

Discrimination in the private realm:

- While there are ample provisions to avoid discrimination by the state, entry barriers to goods such as housing, schools and employment tend to function in the **realm of private contracts** where there is the possibility of inequality in treatment.

- Civil liberties are just as capable of being threatened by acts of private individuals as they are by the state.
- For example, when a person refuses to lease his/her property to another based on the customer's faith, such a refusal would run directly counter to the guarantee of equality.

Counter-arguments against equality:

- **Article 15(2)** stipulates that citizens shall not on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth be denied access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment. The above provision intends to place restrictions on any economic activity that sought to exclude specific groups.
- Despite constitutional provisions against inequality in the realm of private contracts, it has been observed that when case of discrimination is brought before the judiciary, the party that discriminates claims that he/she possesses a liberty to do so, that he must be free to act according to his own sense of conscience. The argument often put forward is the **rights of persons to associate with others**, often to the exclusion of certain groups.
 - The Supreme Court, in 2005, in **Zoroastrian Cooperative Housing Society vs District Registrar Co-operative Societies (Urban) and Others**, had ruled in favour of a by-law of a Parsi housing society that prohibited the sale of property to non-Parsis. The Court held that the right to forbid such a sale was intrinsic in the Parsis' fundamental right to associate with each other.

Lack of legislation:

- India is unique among democracies in that a constitutional **right to equality** is not supported by comprehensive legislation.
 - In South Africa, for example, a constitutional guarantee is augmented by an all-encompassing law which prohibits unfair discrimination not only by the government but also by private organisations and individuals.

Conclusion:

- Discrimination can take different forms. There is a need to **acknowledge** this and take corrective action.
- There is a need for a **suitable law that can address the culture of discrimination**.
- Though a statute only will not help resolve our systemic biases, it can be a step forward in addressing the deeply engrained prejudices and discrimination in our society.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. No longer special

Context:

- **India and Nepal bilateral relations** witnessing a downslide.

Details:

- The Nepal government's decision to pass the constitutional amendment ratifying a change in its maps that include Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura, territories that India controls, marks a decidedly **new phase in India-Nepal ties**.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated 14 June 2020](#)

Concerns:

Lack of diplomatic manoeuvring:

- A major factor causing the rift in relationship seems to be the lack of diplomatic manoeuvring between the countries.
- While India contends that it was willing to discuss matters, Nepal has argued that India was never serious about negotiations.
- The speed with which the constitutional amendment was passed has left little space for diplomacy now.

China angle:

- Nepal pursuing the amendment at exactly the same time as the **India-China border stand-off** bolsters the belief in India that Nepal might be acting at China's behest.
- The involvement of China in this issue would make it more complex.

Way forward:

- There is a need to **quickly reverse the recent setback to ties**. There is a need for concrete actions at the highest level to manage the deterioration of ties.
- It is necessary the **two nations resolve their issues through dialogue**.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Malabar gliding frog spotted at Pullad

- The **Malabar gliding frog** has been spotted in Kerala.
- Malabar gliding frog (*Rhacophorus malabaricus*) is a rare amphibian that can glide in the air up to 10-12 m.
- The frog is **endemic to the rain forests of the Western Ghats**.

G. Tidbits

1. 'Deforestation leading to many diseases'

- The High Court of Manipur has **linked deforestation to diseases**, including COVID-19, and ordered the State authorities to restore the forest cover for avoiding the threat of animal-borne diseases.

- The court referred to several books and articles by naturalist Charles Darwin, Nobel laureate and biologist Sir Peter Medawar, journalist Jim Robbins, and Carl Bergstrom of the University of Washington, an authority on pandemic and infectious diseases.

2. ICMR study plots mid-November peak

- A study, conducted by researchers from an Operations Research Group constituted by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, has noted that the lockdown shifted the peak stage of **COVID-19 in India** by an estimated 34 days to 76 days and helped bring down the number of infections by between 69% and 97%, allowing time to shore up resources and health infrastructure.
- The **peak stage of COVID-19 may now arrive around mid-November** when a paucity of isolation and ICU beds and ventilators can arise.
- With sustained measures to increase the infrastructure and the varying pace of the epidemic in different regions, the impact of the unmet need can be reduced.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?

1. Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR): Gurugram
2. Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC): Madagascar
3. European maritime surveillance initiative in the Strait of Hormuz: Abu Dhabi

Options:

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

Answer:

Option d

Explanation:

- The Indian Navy set up the Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram in December 2018 to track maritime movements in the Indian Ocean region.
- The Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar, functions under the aegis of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).
- The European maritime surveillance initiative in the Strait of Hormuz is headquartered at the French naval base in Abu Dhabi.

Q2. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) :

1. It is an intergovernmental organisation headquartered in Mauritius.
2. India, along with China, is an observer member of IOC.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

- Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is an intergovernmental regional forum in the Southwest Indian Ocean, comprising five nations — Comoros, France (Reunion), Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles.
- It is headquartered in Mauritius.
- India has been recently granted observer status in the Indian Ocean Commission.

Q3. Which of the following cities lies on a longitude closest to Bangalore?

- a. Hyderabad
- b. Nagpur
- c. Bhopal
- d. Thiruvananthapuram

Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

- Bangalore (77.59 deg E longitude) and Bhopal (77.41 deg E longitude)

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

1. The Non-Cooperation Movement arose in the backdrop of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the controversy surrounding the Rowlatt Act.
2. Post the Chauri Chaura incident in February 1922, Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

- The Non-Cooperation Movement was launched in 1920 by Mahatma Gandhi with the aim of self-governance and obtaining full independence following the Rowlatt Act of 1919, and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 13 April 1919.
- Rowlatt Act was a legislation passed by the Imperial Legislative Council, the legislature of British India. The acts allowed certain political cases to be tried without juries and permitted internment of suspects without trial.
- Post the Chauri Chaura incident in February 1922, Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Analyze how Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) of the Indian Ocean region is of critical importance to India. Discuss the steps being taken by India in this regard. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. Discuss the constitutional provisions dealing with the aspect of equality in India. Evaluate the effectiveness of these provisions in addressing the challenge of inequality in India. (10 marks, 150 words)