

17 Jun 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India says Chinese troops tried to change status quo](#)

Issue:

- Twenty Indian personnel, including a Colonel, were killed in violent clashes with Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.
- The clashes came amid a de-escalation process in the Galwan area after a month long stand-off between troops at several points along the LAC in Ladakh and Sikkim.

Details:



- At least five points in Ladakh including the Galwan Valley patrolling points, Hot springs area and Pangong Tso (lake) have been identified as flash points.
- India's demands had included a return to status quo ante, and the retreat of Chinese troops occupying Indian patrol areas, along with tents, vehicles and equipment.
- Accusing the Chinese troops of "attempting to unilaterally change the status quo in the Galwan valley, the Ministry of External Affairs said the casualties could have been avoided had agreements made by military commanders over the past week been followed by the Chinese side.

This topic has been covered in 14th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

2. India expects to sail through UN Security Council vote

Context:

Elections for five non-permanent seats of the [UN Security Council](#) for 2021-22 will be held on 17th June 2020.

Details:

- India expects to sail through the 193-member United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) votes.
- India is standing unopposed as the nominee for the Asia-Pacific seat and needs two-thirds of UNGA members, or 129 votes, to be confirmed.
- In its own campaign brochure, India had highlighted its commitment to multilateralism, demand for transparency in mandates for UN peacekeeping missions, push for the Indian-led Comprehensive Convention for International Terrorism (CCIT) and joint efforts for UN reform and the expansion of the UNSC.

This topic has been covered in detail in 6th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

Category: HEALTH**1. Cheap drug shows results in COVID patients: study****Context:**

Low-cost, anti-inflammatory steroid, Dexamethasone, has emerged as the possible life-saving drug to help cure Coronavirus patients.

Details:

- Indian doctors have said the dexamethasone is an inexpensive steroid that retails for less than ₹10 for 10 ml and is made by several Indian manufacturers.
- Scientists administering the WHO-administered RECOVERY trial (the largest global clinical trial that is checking the ability of several repurposed drugs to treat [COVID-19](#)) reported that dexamethasone reduced deaths by one-third in ventilated patients and by one-fifth in other patients receiving oxygen only.
- However, there was no benefit among those patients who did not require respiratory support.
- It is a cheaper option than tocilizumab.
 - Tocilizumab is also being tested as part of the RECOVERY trial and is an injectible.
- Dexamethasone and tocilizumab are not antivirals but work to modulate the immune response of the body when confronted by a viral infection such as COVID-19.

Note:

The Indian Council for Medical Research has revised the protocol for clinical management of COVID-19 and allowed the use of remdesivir, tocilizumab and convalescent plasma therapy (CPT) on certain groups of patients.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Lonar lake: HC seeks report on colour change

Context:

The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court has sought reports on the environmental impact assessment of Lonar lake from the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) and the Geological Survey of India.

Issue:

Recently, the water in the Lonar lake in the Buldhana district of Maharashtra was found to be turning reddish/pink.

Details:

- A Division Bench was hearing a petition raising concerns over the lake water which has turned pink in colour.
- NASA expert Dr. Shawn Wright said that there is a glass formation over the surface of the bed rock of the Lonar crater, which is a basalt rock. This is a new feature not found anywhere else on the Earth but is found only on the beds of craters existing on moon.
 - The expert team from NEERI and also the Geological Survey of India (GSI) would examine the findings regarding glass formation on the surface of the crater lake.
- The forest department also informed the Bench that since the area is an eco-sensitive zone, the construction of Lonar-Kinhi road would be a problem, as there is a large quantity of a unique material called ejecta blanket, which contains a substance as is found on the moon.
- Therefore, the court has prohibited construction of the Lonar-Kinhi Road until further orders.

Lonar Lake:

- Lonar Lake, also known as Lonar crater, is a notified National Geo-heritage Monument.
 - Geo-heritage refers to the geological features which are inherently or culturally significant offering insight to earth's evolution or history to earth science or that can be utilized for education.
- Lonar Lake was created by an asteroid collision with earth impact during the Pleistocene Epoch.
- It is one of the four known, hyper-velocity, impact craters in basaltic rock anywhere on Earth. The other three basaltic impact structures are in southern Brazil.
- The water in the lake is both saline and alkaline.

2. With 334 species, Guwahati redefining concept of urban jungle

Context:

According to a Guwahati-based wildlife expert, Guwahati redefines the term “urban jungle” with 334 and counting free-ranging faunal species living in the green spaces within concrete structures.

Details:

- In Guwahati, Assam's principal city and the largest in the northeast, assorted creatures, both big and small (Chinese pangolin, Nepal cricket frog, Bengal monitor lizard, Assamese cat snake, Eurasian moorhen, Asian elephant, Terai cricket frog, Ganges river dolphin, etc.) along with 326 other species of fauna recorded so far, share space with an estimated one million humans.

- The city and its outskirts have 18 hills, eight reserve forests, two wildlife sanctuaries and a Ramsar site (Deepor Beel) besides the Brahmaputra flowing past its northern edge.
 - This stretch of the river has Gangetic River Dolphins, which has the status of 'city animal'.
- Over the years, 26 species of amphibians, 56 reptiles, 36 mammals and 216 birds have been recorded.
- Also, there are more than 1,100 captive wild animals belonging to 107 species, of which 52 are highly protected under the [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act of 1972](#).
- But, the wildlife specialists are worried that Guwahati has been following the global trend, which projects the urban area on earth to triple before 2030.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Govt. banks disburse ₹16,031 crore to MSMEs

Context:

The Finance Ministry said that the public sector banks have disbursed ₹16,031.39 crore till June 12, 2020, under the ₹3-lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for the MSME sector.

Details:

- The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme is the biggest fiscal component of the ₹20-lakh crore [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#) package announced by the Finance Minister.
- Under the scheme, 100% guarantee coverage will be provided by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC) for an additional funding of up to ₹3 lakh crore to eligible MSMEs and interested Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) borrowers in the form of a guaranteed emergency credit line (GECL) facility.
- For this purpose, a corpus of ₹41,600 crore was provided by the government, spread over the current and next three financial years.

Read more about [Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Nepal ties and the Benaras to Bengaluru spectrum

Context:

- The author, Manjeev S. Puri, a former Ambassador of India to Nepal, analyzes the **changing dynamics of the India- Nepal relations** and argues for a changed perspective for the relation.

Changes in Nepal:

- There has been a drastic **change in Nepali society with globalisation** which has had an impact on the bilateral relation between India and Nepal.

Education:

- Unlike in the past when for a large number of Nepalis, India was the preferred destination for education, currently Nepal has much higher exposure to globalisation.
- The outward movement of students, along with the growth of institutions of higher learning at home, has meant that most young people in Nepal, including emerging contemporary leaders in politics, business or academics, have not studied in India. This lack of common collegiate roots removes a natural bond of previous generations that had provided for better understanding and even empathy.

Economy:

- Nepal has continued its long-standing efforts to spread Nepal's options beyond India.
- Unlike in the past which was marked by a noticeable dependency on India, multilateral development banks are by far the biggest lenders and players in Nepal's development efforts.
- There has been an increasing presence of companies from other countries as well.

Large scale migration:

- After democracy was restored in 1990, passports were more liberally issued, and Nepalis began looking for work opportunities globally, beyond just India. **West Asia and South-East Asia specifically became major destinations for labour migration.**
- Security uncertainties with the Maoist insurgency at home also propelled the trend of migration. Students and skilled personnel began moving to Europe, the United States, Australia, Thailand and even to Japan and South Korea.
- **As of 2019, nearly a fifth of Nepal's population, from all parts of the country, was reportedly overseas.** At an estimated \$8 billion, global remittances account for nearly 30% of Nepal's nominal GDP, making it one of the most remittance-dependent countries in the world.

China angle:

- For Nepal, being a landlocked country, geography is no longer a challenge given the fact that the **Chinese have opened up a route through the Himalayas.**
- The Chinese have considerable **influence over Nepal's economy, as well as politics.**
- Leftist ideology has had a marked influence on Nepali polity.

Deteriorating ties:

- There has been a perceptible **rise in nationalism in Nepal which has mainly taken an anti-India sentiment.** Politicians have been using it for political mileage, and it is deeply ingrained in the bureaucracy, academia and the media.
- The recent step of the Nepali government to amend the constitution claiming disputed territory has added a new dimension to the deteriorating ties.

For more information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated June 14, 2020](#)

A link despite diversification:

- Despite Nepal's efforts to diversify its options globally, its linkages with India remain robust.

- Nepal's trade with India has grown in absolute terms and continues to **account for more than two-thirds of Nepal's external trade** of around \$12 billion annually. This clearly reflects the advantages of geography, both physical and societal.
- India continues to be the **largest aggregate investor in Nepal**. The massive projects of Arun-III 900 MW hydro-electric project, 5,000 MW Pancheshwar hydroelectric project stand testament to India's presence in Nepal.
- The **peg with the Indian Rupee** provides unique stability to the Nepali Rupee.
- The relationship with India, with open borders and Nepalis being allowed to live and work freely, provides Nepal a unique advantage and an economic cushion.

Way forward:

- India should focus on **developing its border areas with Nepal, with better roads and amenities**. This would have economic plusses for both sides and keep ties strong at the people's level. It would also be an image makeover for India given the rising anti-India sentiments.
- There is a need for a **change in attitude towards the bilateral relation**. This approach must be mindful of the realities of a changing India and a changing Nepal.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. In defence of MPLADS

Context:

- The **suspension of the MPLADS scheme for 2020-21 and 2021-22** in the wake of the pandemic.

For information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated April 7, 2020](#)

Details:

- The government's decision to suspend MPLADS funds for two years has evoked mixed reactions.

Arguments against MPLADS scheme:

For information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated May 5, 2020](#)

Arguments in favour of MPLADS scheme:

Developmental aspirations:

- The responsibility of an MP does not end with the supervision of administration and legislation. He/she has to find solutions to the grievances of the electorate of his constituency and promote their developmental aspirations.
- The scheme helped engage the MPs and **helped cater to the aspirations of local people**.
- An MP knows the developmental and welfare issues of his constituency better than anyone else. The Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) has enabled MPs to **play a**

leadership role in the developmental process of his constituency and sort out its day-to-day problems.

Wrong notions:

- The author argues that the notion that the very nature of the MPLADS scheme gives space for corruption is wrong and claims the lack of empirical data to back such claims.
- The role of an MP in the MPLADS ends with selecting micro development projects for his constituency. Implementation of these projects is done by district-level officers under the vigilant eye of the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- Furthermore, the Scheme undergoes an impartial and meticulous auditing. The second instalment of funds is released only when the first instalment is fully utilised with no audit objections. This procedure leaves no place for corruption.

Measure against pork barrel policy:

- The **pork barrel policy** of State and Union Governments often leads to **skewed development and regional imbalance**.
 - Often, the ruling party channels public money to particular constituencies based on political considerations, at the expense of broader public interests and other constituencies.
- The constituencies of the elected opposition legislators fall victim to pork barrel politics. MPLADS scheme has been an antidote to this kind of favouritism. The MPLADS Scheme provided opposition MPs a chance to cater to the developmental needs of their constituency. The suspension of the Scheme has snatched away this limited opportunity.

Aspirations of the marginalised:

- Of the **MPLADS corpus**, **15% has been earmarked for the development of Scheduled Castes and 7.5% for the Scheduled Tribes**. Around Rs. 20 lakh of the MPLADS fund per annum have been allotted for the welfare of **differently-abled people**. Suspension of the MPLADS undermines the developmental aspirations of these marginalised segments.

Category: ECONOMY

1. For better conditions of work

Context:

- Migrant crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:

- Many migrant workers have been returning to their villages from India's cities and many wish to stay back in their villages. They no longer yearn to go back to their work in the cities.

MGNREGA:

- MGNREGA has been offered as a way of alleviating migrant workers' distress but this is not only a short term but also vulnerable **wage-earning occupation**. Sites cannot be opened during the monsoon

season. Also, at any given area, there may not be enough sites to engage many people in regular employment.

Details:

- The author argues for certain steps to be taken to help the migrant workers to fulfil their desire of staying at home.

Decentralized production:

- The administration should consider building **new kinds of economic structures in India**, like a **pyramid of group economic activity** going from the rural areas through collective marketing to fill the demand from the cities. This will lead to a dispersed production model.
- This type of model envisages **dispersed production from home-based or small-unit based** production entities which supply products to markets, whether local markets or capital city markets or export markets.
- What has been lacking so far in this dispersed production model is lack of concern for the fair treatment of the workers. Successful **unionisation of workers** can protect them from exploitation.

Forming cooperative societies:

- The migrants and **MGNREGA** workers can form cooperative societies.
- These cooperative societies, if they expand and form hubs, could start developing their services or products that can be sold with **better terms and conditions**.
 - The **AMUL project** is a good example of the cooperative model.
- Government agencies can be mandated to help build cooperative societies. The existing cooperative banks can help such societies to arrange the requisite finances. National institutions can offer the necessary institutional support to enable such cooperative societies.
 - NGOs and cooperative federations, agencies such as the National Cooperative Union of India can play a facilitative role.

Conclusion:

- The crisis brought out by the pandemic also provides an opportunity to **rebuild economic production** through appropriate institutional arrangements.
- Such arrangements must provide an optimal **solution to the workers as well as contribute to the GDP**. It will also rebuild an India where **cities are not congested** and where the **standard of living in rural areas will improve**.

F. Prelims Facts

1. India pledges support to Nepal temple

What's in News?

India has pledged to construct a ₹2.33 crore sanitation facility at the Pashupatinath temple complex to improve the infrastructure in the holy shrine for pilgrims.

- The project would be constructed under the **Nepal-Bharat Maitri: Development Partnership** as a high impact community development scheme by India.

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Indian Embassy, Nepal's Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration and the Kathmandu Metropolitan City for the construction of the facility at the Pashupatinath temple.
- India's assistance for the infrastructure development at the Pashupatinath Temple complex comes amid a raging border row between the two countries.

Read more about the issue, covered in [14th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Pashupatinath Temple:

- Pashupatinath temple complex is a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- It is dedicated to Lord Shiva (also known as Lord Pashupatinath, Nepal's national deity).
- It is located on the banks of River Bagmati.
- It was built in the 5th century and later renovated by Malla kings.

G. Tidbits

1. District-wise data of COVID hospitals to be put online

What's in News?

The Health Ministry has appointed a nodal officer to collect district-wise details and make it available online.

- A nodal officer has been appointed to compile, collate and consolidate the information sought and make it available online within 15 days of the receipt of the CIC order, according to an order issued by the Ministry's RTI Cell.
- This comes in response to a [Central Information Commission \(CIC\)](#) order, after the Ministry failed to provide the information to a Right to Information applicant.

2. 'Decentralisation behind three-capital concept'

- Andhra Pradesh Governor asserted that decentralisation of administration is the key principle based on which legislation is in process to have three capitals.
- Addressing the Legislature to mark the beginning of the Budget session of the State Assembly, the Governor said that under the three-capital concept, Amaravati would be the Legislative capital, Visakhapatnam the Executive capital and Kurnool the Judicial capital.

Read more about [Multiple state capitals and governance](#).

3. Climate report predicts hotter, rainier days

What's in News?

India's first ever national forecast on the impact of global warming on the subcontinent in the coming century, expects annual rainfall to increase, along with more severe cyclones and paradoxically, more droughts.

- These projections, based on a climate forecasting model developed at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, will be part of the next report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), expected to be ready in 2022.
- The frequencies of future warm days and warm nights are projected to increase by 55% and 70%, respectively, relative to the reference period of 1976-2005.
- Summer heat waves over India are projected to be three to four times higher by the end of the 21st century.
- According to the report, the projected rapid changes in India's climate will place increasing stress on the country's natural ecosystems, agricultural output, and fresh water resources.
- The report states that, from 1986 to 2015, the hottest day and coldest night have warmed 0.63°C and 0.4°C, respectively. By the end of the 21st century, the report says, these temperatures are projected to rise by approximately 4.7°C and 5.5°C, respectively, relative to the corresponding temperatures in 1976-2005.
 - This is under a hypothetical scenario where no steps are taken to curb global greenhouse gas emissions.

4. Israeli Army is raiding Ramallah: PA

What's in News?

According to a Palestinian official, the Israeli Army raided Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

- It is the first such incursion since the Palestinian Authority (PA) cut security coordination with Israel.
- The PA is headquartered in Ramallah and the city is nominally under full Palestinian control, but the Israeli army has carried out numerous raids there.

5. U.S. top court ruling backs LGBT workers

What's in News?

The U.S. Supreme Court delivered a landmark victory for the gay and transgender communities as it ruled that employers cannot discriminate against workers because of their sexual orientation.

- The court ruled by six votes to three that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlaws discrimination against employees because of a person's sex, also covers sexual orientation and transgender status.

6. N. Korea blows up liaison office with South

What's in News?

North Korea has blown up an inter-Korean liaison office on its side of the border.

- The liaison office was set up less than two years ago in September 2018.
 - Officials from both sides were stationed at the office during subsequent months.
 - However, inter-Korean relations soured following the collapse of the Hanoi summit between Mr. Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump in February 2019.

- Analysts say North Korea may be seeking to manufacture a crisis to increase pressure on South Korea while nuclear negotiations with Washington are at a standstill.
 - Also, the North Korean state media quoted the military as saying it had been studying an action plan to re-enter zones that had been demilitarised under the 2018 inter-Korean pact and turn the front line into a fortress.
 - Recently, North Korea announced it was severing all official communication links with South Korea.
- South Korea's Defence Ministry called for North Korea to abide by the 2018 agreement, under which both sides vowed to cease all hostile acts and dismantled a number of structures along the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone between the countries.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Lonar Lake:

1. It is a volcanic crater.
2. It is a National Geo-heritage Monument.
3. Lonar Lake and surrounding regions are declared as a wetland of ecological importance under the Ramsar Convention.

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Lonar Lake was created by an asteroid collision with earth impact during the Pleistocene Epoch. It is not a volcanic crater.
- It is a notified National Geo-heritage Monument.
- Lonar Lake and surrounding regions are **proposed to be declared as a wetland of ecological importance under the Ramsar Convention.**
- The oval-shaped Lonar Lake is a part of the 383-hectare Lonar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Gangetic River Dolphins:

1. They are blind and catch their prey using ultrasonic sound waves.
2. They are categorised as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.
3. It is the National Aquatic Animal of India.
4. It is the official animal of Guwahati.

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

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

Answer: d

Details:

- Gangetic River Dolphins are blind and catch their prey using ultrasonic sound waves.
- They are categorised as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.
- It is the National Aquatic Animal of India.
- Assam's Guwahati became the first city in the country to have its own city animal with the district administration declaring Gangetic River Dolphins as the official animal of Guwahati.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Once in every two years, the UN General Assembly elects five non-permanent members of the Security Council.
2. The non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected by a two-thirds majority.
3. A retiring member of the UNSC is not eligible for immediate re-election.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Security Council consists of five permanent members (China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) and 10 non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for a term of two years.
- The General Assembly elects each year, five non-permanent members of the Security Council.
- The non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected by a two-thirds majority.
- A retiring member is not eligible for immediate re-election. The election is held by secret ballot and there are no nominations.

Q4. Deepor Beel is located in:

- a. Arunachal Pradesh
- b. Gujarat
- c. Assam
- d. Sikkim

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Deepor Beel is located to the south-west of Guwahati city, in Assam.
- It is a permanent freshwater lake.
- It is also a wetland under the Ramsar Convention which had listed the lake as a Ramsar Site in November 2002.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. A dispersed production model and the formation of cooperatives and worker unions can, apart from helping address the many challenges faced by the migrant workers, also result in other significant advantages to India. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. In the light of the suspension of the MPLADS scheme for 2020-21 and 2021-22, discuss the arguments both in favour of and against the continuation of this scheme. (15 marks, 250 words)