

19 Jun 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- [1. India coasts to win in Security Council polls](#)
- [2. Nepal's new map now part of Constitution](#)
- [3. India to take part in meeting of RIC grouping](#)
- [4. U.S. Bill to sanction China over Uighur rights](#)
- [5. China passes draft Hong Kong security Bill](#)

HEALTH

- [1. Umifenovir to undergo clinical trial](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ECONOMY

- [1. ₹50,000 crore scheme for migrants'](#)
- [2. AGR demand from non-telco PSUs withdrawn, govt. tells SC](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- [1. Galwan: Postscript to a tragedy](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- [1. Mediation in the age of COVID-19](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

- [1. First the blowout, then the stake-out](#)

F. Prelims Facts

- [1. Supreme Court stays Puri Rath Yatra](#)
- [2. Kodumanal dig throws light on megalithic burial rituals](#)

G. Tidbits

- [1. Days after clash, China frees 10 soldiers](#)
- [2. Railways to terminate ₹471 cr. contract of Chinese firm](#)
- [3. Mobile lab to improve access to testing](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India coasts to win in Security Council polls

Context:

India scored a major diplomatic victory to enter the non-permanent category of the UN Security Council when elections were held for the five non-permanent members.

Details:

- India won 184 votes out of 192 valid votes cast.
- Previously, India has been elected as a non-permanent member of the Council 7 times, for the years 1950—1951, 1967—1968, 1972—1973, 1977—1978, 1984—1985, 1991—1992 and 2011—2012.
- Ireland, Mexico and Norway were also elected as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council.
- India's approach will be guided by "Five S's", as set out by the Prime Minister: Samman (Respect), Samvad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), and Shanti (Peace), and Samriddhi (Prosperity). India's overall objective during this tenure in the [UN Security Council](#) will be the achievement of N.O.R.M.S: a New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System.

Significance:

- India's term will begin from January 2021.
- The 2021-22 term will be critical for India which has been pushing efforts to reform the Security Council and seek a permanent membership of the Council.
- Support for India has been increasing with a number of countries advocating that the current UNSC does not represent the geo-political realities of the 21st century.

Read more on this topic covered in [6th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. Nepal's new map now part of Constitution

Context:

The Upper House of Nepal's Parliament has passed the Second Constitution Amendment Bill 2077 (Vikram era).

Details:

- The new map claims parts of Indian Territory in Pithoragarh district.
- The voting and the presidential assent have completed the legislative procedure of the Bill that was taken up by the Government of Nepal, after India inaugurated the [Darchula-Lipulekh link road](#).
 - Nepal immediately protested, saying the road violated the status quo of the region, which it described as unresolved.

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

3. India to take part in meeting of RIC grouping

Context:

The Ministry of External Affairs has confirmed that India will participate in the virtual meeting of the Russia-India-China (RIC) grouping.

Details:

- The Russian reiteration of support for dialogue between China and India came even though Moscow's Foreign Minister had said bilateral issues were usually not taken up at RIC.
- The situation in Afghanistan and regional connectivity projects such as the [International North South Transport Corridor](#) involving India, Russia and Iran are expected to figure in the agenda.

Significance:

- The Indian decision to go ahead with the ministerial level exchange has created an opening for de-escalation of tension along the Line of Actual Control with the Russian diplomatic sources indicating that they support constructive dialogue over the tension in eastern Ladakh. **Read more about the [India-China military standoff along the Line of Actual Control](#).**
- Russia can act as a bridge in the strained relations between India and China.
- It can act as a platform to discuss and address the areas of cooperation and understand mutual differences.

Russia-India-China trilateral grouping:

- During the 2019 G-20 Summit in Osaka, Russia, India, and China (RIC) held the latest iteration of a trilateral meeting between them.
- RIC as a strategic grouping first took shape in the late 1990s under the leadership of Yevgeny Primakov as a counterbalance to the Western alliance.
- Primakov, a Russian politician and diplomat who was also the Prime Minister of Russia from 1998 to 1999, is credited with the idea for RIC.
- The group was founded on the basis of “end[ing] its subservient foreign policy guided by the U.S.,” and “renewing old ties with India and fostering the newly discovered friendship with China.”
- But the idea of meeting at the leader's level on a more sustained basis has only surfaced over the past couple of years.

Importance of RIC:

- RIC brings together three largest Eurasian countries.
- It is a significant trilateral grouping as all three countries are nuclear powers.
- Russia and China are permanent members of the UN Security Council, India aspires to be one.
- In the period of geopolitical transition, it is an effort to renew and rebuild some of these old initiatives as a way to counter the U.S.-led world order.
- Here, Russia becomes the bridge between India and China, since it enjoys strong relations with both.
- RIC can complement India's continental ambitions and bring about more balance in its strategic autonomy.

4. U.S. Bill to sanction China over Uighur rights

Context:

U.S. President Donald Trump has signed legislation calling for sanctions over the repression of China's Uighurs.

Details:

- The Bill was intended to send China a strong message on human rights by mandating sanctions against those responsible for oppression of the Muslim minority.
- The UN estimates that more than a million Muslims have been detained in camps in the Xinjiang region.
 - The Uighur men are placed in concentration camps while the women are being used by the Han community.
 - The Han community reasons these actions as the basis of providing better integration among the community.
- China and the United States are already at loggerheads over a large number of issues from China's handling of the coronavirus pandemic to U.S. support for Chinese-claimed Taiwan.

China's reaction:

- China denies mistreatment and says the camps provide vocational training and are needed to fight extremism.
- China responded to the Bill with anger, saying it "vilified" the human rights situation in Xinjiang and was a malicious attack against China.
- It urged the US to stop its interfere in China's internal affairs.

Who are Uighurs?

- The Uighurs are a minority Turkic ethnic group originating from and culturally affiliated with the general region of Central and East Asia.
- The Uighurs are recognized as native to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.
- They are considered to be one of China's 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities.
- The Uighurs have traditionally inhabited a series of oases scattered across the Taklamakan Desert comprising the Tarim Basin, a territory which has historically been controlled by many civilizations including China, the Mongols, the Tibetans and the Turkic world.
- An estimated 80% of Xinjiang's Uyghurs still live in the Tarim Basin. The rest of Xinjiang's Uyghurs mostly live in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), which is located in the historical region of Dzungaria.

5. China passes draft Hong Kong security Bill

Context:

China's legislature has passed a draft of a National Security Bill for Hong Kong.

Details:

- The bill has been criticised as undermining the semi-autonomous region's legal and political institutions.
- It covers four categories of crimes.
- The law would make criminal any act of:
 - secession - breaking away from the country
 - subversion - undermining the power or authority of the central government
 - terrorism - using violence or intimidation against people
 - activities by foreign forces that interfere in Hong Kong
- China acted after the widespread and violent anti-government protests in the territory last year that Beijing saw as a dangerous campaign to split Hong Kong from the rest of China.

Concerns:

- Critics say it could severely limit free speech and opposition political activity.
- The U.S. has said that if the law is passed it will revoke some of the special privileges granted to Hong Kong after the former British colony was handed over to Chinese rule in 1997.
 - Beijing has denounced the move as interference in its sovereign affairs.

Also read the issues covered in [13th April 2019](#) and [23rd May 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

Category: HEALTH

1. Umifenovir to undergo clinical trial

Context:

The Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI), Lucknow, a constituent lab of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has received permission for carrying out Phase III trials for the use of Umifenovir against COVID-19.

Details:

- According to a release issued by the Central government, this drug has a good safety profile and acts by preventing entry of virus into human cells and also by priming the immune system.
- To evaluate its efficacy in Indian patients, CSIR-CDRI has taken up the clinical trial.
- All the raw materials for the drug are indigenously available, if the clinical trial is successful.

Umifenovir:

- Umifenovir, mainly used for the treatment of influenza, is available in China and Russia.
- It has a direct antiviral effect.
- Umifenovir impedes the viral attachment to cells and acts as a viral entry inhibitor and it exhibits modulatory effects on the immune system and induces interferon-production.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. '₹50,000 crore scheme for migrants'

Context:

The Finance Minister has announced that the Prime Minister will launch Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan to offer immediate employment opportunities to migrant workers who have returned to their villages because of the [COVID-19](#) lockdown.

Details:

- Central and State governments have very meticulously mapped the skill sets of the migrant workers who have returned in large numbers to the 116 districts in 6 States (Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan).
- The first priority of the campaign is to meet the immediate requirement of work for those who have gone back to their villages by providing them livelihood opportunities.

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan:

- This massive rural public works scheme has been launched to boost opportunities for livelihood in rural India.
- The districts will join this programme through the Common Service Centres and Krishi Vikas Kendras (KVKs).
- The campaign will be spread across 125 days and aims to work in mission mode to help migrant workers.
- It will involve intensified and focused implementation of 25 different types of work to provide jobs and create infrastructure in rural regions.
- Combined outlay of the programme would be Rs. 50,000 crore.
- Workers will be employed in rural housing, rural connectivity including the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, national highways, railway works, community sanitation complex, gram panchayats, anganwadis, water conservation, digging of wells, plantation and horticulture.
- The scheme will see coordination between 12 different Ministries/Departments.

2. AGR demand from non-telco PSUs withdrawn, govt. tells SC

Context:

The Union government has informed the Supreme Court that it had withdrawn 96% of its ₹4 lakh-crore demand in adjusted gross revenue (AGR) from non-telecom public sector undertakings (PSUs).

Background:

This issue has been covered in [25th October 2019](#) and [17th March 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

Details:

- The turnaround comes after the court pulled up the government for misusing its October 2019 judgment to get money from PSUs such as DMRC.
 - A Bench, led by Justice Arun Mishra, had made it clear its verdict was only limited to AGR dues owed by telecom companies and not PSUs that had nothing to do with the sector.
- Solicitor General informed the court that since these PSUs are not in the business of providing telecom services, we are withdrawing 96% of the ₹4 lakh-crore demand.
- Also, the court is considering the viability of the government's proposed 'formula' to stagger the repayment of the dues over a period of 20 years.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Galwan: Postscript to a tragedy

Context:

Twenty Indian personnel, including a Colonel, were killed in violent clashes with Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.

Details:

- It had been assumed all along that there would be a de-escalation of the confrontation between Indian and Chinese troops in the area after the Corps Commander-level talks between the two sides.
- The incident represents a watershed in India's relations with China and marks the end of a 45-year chapter which saw no armed confrontation involving loss of lives on the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- The period of bilateral relations that was inaugurated with former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in December 1988 also drew to a close in the darkness of that fateful night.
- Resuming business as usual with China after this seems unlikely given the manner in which the whole calculus of relations has been disturbed by the incident.

India- China relationship from 1959 to 2020:

- Nothing on this scale was witnessed even in the run-up to the conflict between the two countries in 1962.
- In October 1959, there was a face-off between Indian and Chinese troops at Kongka La.
 - Nine Indian soldiers were killed and three soldiers were detained then.
- It was after Kongka La that the national mood turned against the Chinese in full measure in an atmosphere already complicated by the revolt in Tibet and the granting of asylum to the Dalai Lama in March 1959. There was very little room for a reasoned, negotiated settlement being reached on the boundary question between the two countries after that juncture.
- The conflict in 1962 inflicted gaping wounds on the national soul and prestige from which India took time to recover.

Is India at a similar juncture today?

- India and China are in a very different place in their history as nations in 2020 as compared to 1959.
- They have grown immensely in strength and stature on the world stage.
- Their relations have substance and a diversity of content in a manner absent in the 1950s.
- To assume that India is on a steep descent from here towards a full-blown conflict with China may therefore be an oversimplification.
- Both countries must keep in check the statements that are mutually accusatory, with each country disclaiming responsibility for the tragic turn of events.

What's next?

- Bilateral relations in other areas will be under considerable strain. Soft landings cannot be expected.
- No leadership-level contact between the top leaders of the two countries can be anticipated in the near term.
- Indian businesses in China and Chinese business operations in India can expect the going to be tougher than before. The scenario on trade and investments could encounter similar obstacles.

- In areas that impinge on national security, as in the cyber field and in telecommunications, and in technologies that enable spying and surveillance (5G, for instance), stringent controls, exclusions and clampdowns can be expected in the treatment and the entry of Chinese companies in India.

Way forward:

Assessing choices carefully:

- Cool-headed thinking is the need of the hour.
- All this comes at a time when:
 - The COVID-19 crisis demands the full attention of the government.
 - The economy needs to recover from the stagnancy of the last few months.
 - The tensions with Pakistan persist.
 - A dispute over territory with Nepal in the Lipulekh/Kalapani area has been headlined.
- There is considerable turbulence generated by all this. A reincarnated battlefront with China cannot be blindly embraced. The implications of such a choice must be carefully assessed.

Effective strategic communication:

- Strong political direction, mature deliberation and coherence are keys to handling the situation.
- A comprehensive China strategy and its determination should devolve on those tasked with national security policy in the highest echelons of the Government of India under the direction of the Prime Minister. The responsibility of effective strategic communication too rests there.
- A clearer enunciation of the circumstances surrounding Chinese transgressions in Sikkim and Ladakh in the last few months would have been helpful in guiding the scattershot public debate. India must draw the right conclusions that can help the country in the future.
- Diplomatic channels must continue to be open and should not be fettered in any way because their smooth operability is vital in the current situation.

Clarification of the LAC:

- India should take the initiative to insist on a timely and early clarification of the LAC.
- Pockets of difference of alignment as perceived by each side have to be clearly identified and these areas demilitarised by both sides through joint agreement pending a settlement of the boundary.
- At the same time, India must stand resolute and firm in the defence of territory in all four sectors of the border.
- Contacts between the two militaries — joint exercises and exchanges of visits of senior Commanders — should be scaled down for the foreseeable future.

Taking the long view:

- India's leverage and balancing power within the Indo-Pacific and the world beyond stems from its strong democratic credentials, the dynamism of its economy, its leading role in multilateral institutions, and the strategic advantage of its maritime geography — an asset possessed by few other nations, and which must be deployed much more effectively to counterbalance the Chinese ingress into this oceanic space that surrounds us.
- The events in Galwan Valley should be a wake-up call to many of India's Asian friends and partners enabling a high-resolution envisioning of Chinese aggressiveness.

Realign strategic partnerships:

- This is also an opportunity for India to align its interests much more strongly and unequivocally with the U.S. as a principal strategic partner.

- India should also infuse more energy into its relations with Japan, Australia, and the ASEAN.
- The time has also come for India to reconsider its stand on joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Conclusion:

- Good neighbourhood relations are crucial for national stability and well-being.
- If India is to disengage from economic involvement with China, and build the capacities and capabilities it needs in manufacturing, and in supply chains networks closer home, it cannot be a prisoner of the short term.
- It is time for India to boldly take the long view in this area as also on its South Asia policy.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Mediation in the age of COVID-19

Context:

- In the prevailing conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, deprived of their natural setting of the courtroom, judges and lawyers have fallen back to talk of virtual courts, so that the bare essential is achieved — the judge being able to hear the particular lawyer.
- All other features of the courtroom are avoided, and thus an essentially public setting is converted to a closed door one.
- The editorial talks about “mediation” as a tool for dispute resolution in the age of COVID-19 pandemic.

What is mediation?

- Mediation is an informal, but structured settlement procedure. It is a form of alternative dispute resolution, resolving disputes between two or more parties.
- A mediator is employed to facilitate and assist parties in reaching an amicable dispute settlement.
- The role of the mediator is to assist the parties in reaching a negotiated agreement.
- Unlike an arbitrator, the mediator is not a decision-maker.

Details:

- Conventional litigation and arbitration are vintage, spanning hundreds of years and generations of judges and lawyers.
- As a process, structured mediation is relatively new, with an existence of barely two to three decades in India, and just a few more worldwide.
- Legislation has given it the legal structure and safeguards, and provided the assurance that the courts will implement mediation agreements.
- India’s judges have been enthusiastic embracers of this process.
- Online mediation will enable the mediator and the parties to assemble together, each on their computer screens perhaps hundreds of miles away.
- Discussion can be guided, giving parties and lawyers the opportunity to put forth their views.

Advantages of mediation:

- Mediation is becoming increasingly popular as people begin to observe the benefits of settling outside of court.
- Mediation saves resources and time for all parties involved as well as the judicial system.
- Parties do not have to undergo adjournments and multiple visits to the mediation centre.
- It is the polar opposite of the court process. It tries to achieve consensus between parties to come to an amicable agreement, rather than the win-lose verdict of the adversarial system.
- It focuses on uncovering interests, and eliciting suggestions from the parties themselves for practical solutions to end the dispute.
- At its core is confidential discussion between mediator and parties, and between mediator and individual parties.
- As much as the essential attribute of the formal justice system is the open courtroom hearing, mediation's essence is closed door communication with its guarantee of confidentiality.
- Eliminating complete contact that is possible only in face-to-face meetings, will certainly be of benefit in cases where emotions run high and face-to-face confrontation may increase the conflict.
 - That happens often in matrimonial cases, and in family business disputes, where tempers and emotions arising from frayed domestic situations and settings can edge out sensible business logic.
- In the present context, mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism has an inherent flexibility and adaptability.

Concerns:

Online mediation has a host of advantages, but also bears some cautioning.

- Confidentiality can be compromised since hearings could be recorded.
- Technical glitches and interruptions in the internet services could hinder the effectiveness of the mediation process.
- There are concerns that online communication will exclude the underprivileged, those who cannot afford access to Internet or do not have the capacity or assistance to use it. Such exclusion will be tantamount to denial of access to justice.

Way forward:

- Service providers have to be vigilant, and strict rules must be laid out to penalise participants for breach.
- Technical glitches have to be minimised, and Internet services must gear up for providing screen clarity and uninterrupted feed.
- If the State and its Courts are going to allow and encourage online mediation to resolve disputes, weaker parties must be assisted and enabled to avail of this facility.

Conclusion:

As the entire world is meandering in the dark to find out what the new normal is going to consist of, we may well discover that a good part of the world of dispute resolution has been flipped, and that COVID-19 is the harbinger of change taking online consensual resolution to a higher level. Mediation, however, is an idea whose time has come and is rapidly gaining ground. Perhaps, this cloud (mediation) too has a silver lining.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. First the blowout, then the stake-out

The editorial talks about the blowout at an Oil India natural gas well at Baghjan in Tinsukia district of Assam.

This topic has been covered in [18th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

F. Prelims Facts

1. Supreme Court stays Puri Rath Yatra

What's in News?

The Supreme Court has stayed the annual Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri.

Rath Yatra:

- Rath Yatra is a Hindu festival associated with Lord Jagannath held at Puri in Odisha.
- The festival commemorates Jagannath's annual visit to Gundicha Temple via Mausi Maa Temple near Balagandi Chaka, Puri.

This topic has been covered in [5th May 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. Kodumanal dig throws light on megalithic burial rituals

What's in News?

The burial site has been unearthed at Kodumanal village in Erode district, Tamil Nadu.

- The Kodumanal excavation of 10 pots and bowls, instead of the usual three or four pots, placed outside three-chambered burial cists and inside the cairn-circle, has thrown light on burial rituals and the concept of afterlife in megalithic culture.
- The rectangular chambered cists, each two metres long and six metres wide, are made of stone slabs, and the entire grave is surrounded by boulders that form the circle.
- Believing that the deceased person will get a new life after death, pots and bowls filled with grains were placed outside the chambers.
- Previous excavations have revealed that multi-ethnic groups lived in the village, located about 500 metres away from the Noyyal river.
- Earlier excavations also revealed that the site served as a trade-cum-industrial centre from 5th century BCE to 1st century BCE.
- Findings unearthed so far include an animal skull, possibly of a wolf or a dog; precious stones like beryl, carnelian, quartz, jasper, beads, gold pieces and needles; copper smelting units; the mud walls of a workshop; potteries; and Tamil Brahmi script.

G. Tidbits

1. Days after clash, China frees 10 soldiers

What's in News?

Three days after clashes in the Galwan Valley of Ladakh, the Chinese have released 10 Indian Army personnel, including a Lieutenant Colonel and three Majors, from their custody.

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said the Indian troops, who were outnumbered and attacked by the Chinese side, carried arms.
- As per the long-standing practice (1996 & 2005 agreements) army does not to use firearms during faceoffs.
 - Article VI of the 1996 agreement between India and China on “Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) in the military field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China border areas” says, “Neither side shall open fire, cause bio-degradation, use hazardous chemicals, conduct blast operations or hunt with guns or explosives within two kilometres from the line of actual control. This prohibition shall not apply to routine firing activities in small arms firing ranges.”

2. Railways to terminate ₹471 cr. contract of Chinese firm

What's in News?

Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd. (DFCCIL), a special purpose vehicle under the Railway Ministry, has decided to terminate a ₹471-crore signalling contract given to a Chinese firm.

- While the decision follows the violent clash between Indian and Chinese soldiers along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, the Railways said the contract was being terminated due to poor progress.
- The move also comes a day after the Department of Telecom decided to ask the two state-run telcos — BSNL and MTNL — not to use gear by Chinese firms in its 4G upgrade.

3. Mobile lab to improve access to testing

What's in News?

Union Health Minister has launched the country's first mobile I-Lab (Infectious disease diagnostic lab) for last mile COVID-19 testing access.

This topic has been covered in 18th June 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Largest reserves of coal in the world is found in India.
2. India is the second largest producer of coal.
3. India is the second largest importer of coal.

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

- a. 1 only

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Largest reserves of coal in the world is found in the U.S.
- India is the second largest producer of coal.
- India is the second largest importer of coal.

Q2. "Rule of Law Index" is released by:

- a. International Court of Justice
- b. World Justice Project
- c. International Criminal Court
- d. European Court of Justice

Answer: b

Explanation:

- World Justice Project (WJP) releases Rule of Law Index.
- The Rule of Law Index is a quantitative assessment tool by the World Justice Project (WJP) designed to offer a detailed and comprehensive picture of the extent to which countries adhere to the rule of law in practice.
- The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to advance the rule of law worldwide.
- It engages advocates from across the globe and from diverse interests and disciplines to advance the rule of law.
- The Index measures countries' rule of law performance across eight factors:
 1. Constraints on Government Powers,
 2. Absence of Corruption,
 3. Open Government,
 4. Fundamental Rights,
 5. Order and Security,
 6. Regulatory Enforcement,
 7. Civil Justice, and
 8. Criminal Justice.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. References of Megalithic culture can be found in ancient Tamil Sangam literature.
2. Majority of megalithic sites are found in Peninsular India.
3. A Menhir is a burial monument, or tomb, of the megalithic age.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Megalithic culture finds several references in ancient Tamil Sangam literature.
- Megaliths are spread across the Indian subcontinent.
- The majority of megalithic sites are found in Peninsular India, concentrated in the states of Maharashtra (mainly in Vidarbha), Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- A menhir is a burial monument, or tomb, of the megalithic age.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC):

1. It is a multi-modal transportation established in 2015.
2. The corridor connects Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran.
3. Russia, India and Iran are the founding member states of INSTC.
4. Syria, Oman and Azerbaijan are the members of INSTC.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a multi-modal transportation **established in 2000** for the purpose of promoting transportation cooperation among the Member States.
- This corridor connects Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran, and is then connected to Saint Petersburg and North Europe via Russia.
- Russia, India and Iran are the founding member states of INSTC.
- Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Turkey, Syria and Ukraine are the other members.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Has the COVID-19 pandemic given an opportunity for Mediation to emerge as an effective dispute resolution tool in India? What are the challenges? (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. What are the powers of a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council? Discuss India's role as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in establishing global order. (15 Marks, 250 Words).

