

22 Jun 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Secrecy of ballot is key to free and fair elections: SC

Context:

- Supreme Court judgment on rule of secrecy of ballot.

Background:

The case details:

- During the voting of a no-confidence motion in the zila panchayat of the Panchayat Adhyaksha in Uttar Pradesh in 2018, it was found that some of the panchayat members had violated the **rule of secrecy of ballot**. The Panchayat members had either displayed the ballot papers or by their conduct revealed the manner in which they had voted.
- This was challenged in the **Allahabad High Court**, which had annulled the vote of no confidence. This judgment of the Allahabad High Court was challenged in the [Supreme Court](#).

Details:

- The Supreme Court has ordered a re-vote of the motion within the next two months to be conducted by the **secret ballot system**. It ordered the Allahabad District Judge or his nominee to act as the presiding officer.
- The Supreme Court referred to Section 28(8) of the Uttar Pradesh Kshettra Panchayat and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961. This provision states that a motion of no confidence shall be put to vote in the prescribed manner by secret ballot.
- **Section 94 of the [Representation of the People Act](#)** also upholds the privilege of the voter to maintain confidentiality about her choice of vote.

Important observations:

- In its judgment, the Supreme Court has made some important observations.

Free and fair elections:

- The Court noted that even a remote or distinct possibility that a voter can be forced to disclose for whom she has voted would act as a positive constraint and a check on the freedom to exercise of franchise.
- The Court held that the **choice of a voter should be free** and the secret ballot system in a democracy ensures it. It held the secrecy of ballot as the **cornerstone of free and fair elections** and the principle of secrecy of ballots as an important postulate of constitutional democracy.

Voters' privilege:

- The Supreme Court judgment notes that a **voter can also voluntarily waive the privilege of non-disclosure**. The privilege of secrecy ends when the voter decides to waive the privilege and instead volunteers to disclose as to whom she had voted. No one can prevent a voter from doing so. Nor can a complaint be entertained on this disclosure.

2. MP questions Punjab govt.'s move on fixed term for IAS officers

Context:

- Concerns expressed by a Rajya Sabha MP against the Punjab government's move on fixed terms for [IAS officers](#).

Background:

Punjab government's proposal:

- The Punjab State government has proposed the setting up of a board to **ensure a fixed term at a post to IAS officers**.

- The State government proposes a fixed **two-year tenure** to an IAS officer at a posting. Any decision to cut short the term will be examined by the board.

Concerns:

- This move has been questioned based on the argument that a fixed tenure would make the **IAS officers less answerable and accountable to legislators**.
- The [Rajya Sabha](#) MP has argued that the move of assuring IAS officers of fixed tenure of postings and other immunities under the umbrella of the civil services board has tilted the scale decisively against the elected representatives.
- The Rajya Sabha MP further argues that this move renders the Ministers and MLAs helpless in raking up neglected issues of public importance and timely planning and execution of development works.

Counter-arguments:

- A fixed tenure for the bureaucracy could help **insulate the bureaucracy from political pulls and pressures** and help restrict arbitrary transfers and postings by the elected representatives.
- Arbitrary transfer is also a major bugbear of the bureaucracy, with politicians wielding it as a weapon against inconvenient officials.
- **The Supreme Court has also previously ordered setting minimum tenure for bureaucrats.**

Conclusion:

- **A healthy working relationship between Ministers, MPs, MLAs and civil servants is critical for good governance** and there is a need for the balancing of the rights of both the elected representatives and the bureaucracy.

3. Additional funds sought for Jal Jeevan Mission

Context:

- Jal Shakti Ministry's proposal regarding [Jal Jeevan Mission](#).

Background:

- **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)** envisages **providing drinking water tap connections to every rural household by 2024**. Only 18% of households are currently covered.
- Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) envisages supply of **55 litres of water per person per day** to every rural household through **Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC)** by 2024.
- JJM focuses on **integrated demand and supply-side management of water at the local level**.

Resource constraints:

- In a presentation made to the [15th Finance Commission](#), the Jal Shakti Ministry has shown that there had been a 45% shortfall in financing the JJM by both the Centre and the States in its first year of 2019-20 owing to the **post- COVID-19 resource constraints** both at Centre and States.

Details:

- Faced with a financing shortfall for the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), the Jal Shakti Ministry is pitching for **additional funding** of Rs. 82,000 crore from the 15th Finance Commission for the project.
 - This additional funding would help meet the need for capital intensive projects in water scarce areas, and areas where the water has been contaminated by arsenic or flouride, or has high-salinity levels.
- The Ministry also proposed **more direct control of the flow of the Commission's funds to panchayats for water and sanitation**.
 - In its interim report for 2020-21, the Commission had allocated Rs. 30,375 crore as tied grants to rural local bodies for drinking water and sanitation in order to ensure additional funds to the local bodies over and above the funds allocated under the **Centrally sponsored schemes, Swachh Bharat and Jal Jeevan missions**.
 - The Jal Shakti Ministry has complained that given the lack of identification of projects by the panchayats, lack of criteria and indicators to assess the performance of panchayati raj institutions and the lack of pressure on gram panchayats to dovetail FC grants with JJM, there has been **inefficient usage of available funds**.
 - The Ministry has proposed that the money be placed with the Jal Shakti Ministry instead, which would in turn release it to the panchayats, to ensure that they follow the **JJM's five-year village action plans**.

Counter arguments:

- The proposal by the Ministry amounts to a kind of **centralisation of powers and finances** which would be a regression from the 14th Finance Commission's move to empower panchayati raj institutions.
- Though there are issues at the panchayat level, with some having huge unused funds, there must be other ways to deal with such governance issues rather than going back to centralization of power.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. 'For minor tactical gains on the ground, China has strategically lost India'

Context:

- Views expressed by Gautam Bambawale, former Indian Ambassador to China on the **evolving situation along the LAC**.

Details:

- Gautam Bambawale has stated that the June 15 clash at Galwan Valley, which claimed 20 Indian soldiers has caused **irreparable damage to the border architecture**, carefully built by India and China to maintain peace.

Inflection point in relations:

- Unlike previously, where despite the instances of border skirmishes along the LAC, relationship between India and China continued in some sense, the current situation would act as an **inflection point in the broader bilateral relation** because of the following reasons.
- The Chinese have fundamentally violated all previous agreements.
 - In **1993, India and China signed the Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreement (BPTA)**, and there have been many agreements following that which have put in place certain tenets,

certain operating procedures, which were aimed at maintaining peace and tranquillity on the border. These procedures have not been adhered to by the Chinese.

- The Chinese have been trying to unilaterally define the LAC.
 - The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has moved their ground position towards what they believe is their LAC and have built embankments, gun placements, observation towers. And by doing so, they have tried to unilaterally define the LAC. This amounts to a **major change in the status quo**.
- Human lives have been lost on both sides during the current stand-off.
 - Both India and China agree that there are differences in the opinion of where the line of actual control (LAC) lies and the importance of ensuring peace and tranquillity along the LAC. The June 15 clash at Galwan Valley, claimed 20 Indian soldiers making it the **worst violence since 1967 along the LAC**.

India's options:

- To address the immediate needs on the ground, India has to have a **very strong military posture while maintaining some room for talks and negotiations**.
- India's bottom line has to be **restoration of the status quo ante**.
- India must also make a **fundamental reassessment of its China policy**.
 - Since 1988, the model has been to separate differences on LAC from other areas such as trade. Though a complete break in relations might not be advisable it cannot be business as usual. Normal trade and investment can continue. Chinese firms must be kept out of the 5G trials and roll-out in India.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Police claim inroads into Maoist stronghold of Swabhiman Anchal

Context:

- Two pronged strategy against [left wing extremism](#) in Odisha.

Background:

- **Swabhiman Anchal**, formerly known as Cut-off area, in **Malkangiri district** has been a Maoist stronghold.
- The area which was covered by water from three sides and inhospitable terrain by another had long been a stronghold of naxalites. The **Maoists from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh** used to slip into Swabhiman Anchal to take refuge. The State police would avoid venturing into the area.

Details:

Security aspect:

- The Odisha police has been **strengthening security infrastructure** in the area.
 - A **police station** has been set up in the area to provide service to the people of five gram panchayats of the region.

- The establishment of **Company Operating Base (COB)** in the region has plugged the security vacuum in the area.

Development aspect:

- The strengthened security aspect will help **facilitate uninterrupted developmental activities** in the area.
- Development activities have picked up due to strengthening of the security network in the area. **Roads are being constructed.** After the construction of roads, auto-rickshaws and other mode of public transport have started plying.
- These roads have not only helped in improving public transport but have also encouraged other **development activities.** Trucks and tractors are reaching interior places now. Heavy duty machines can also be taken into remote pockets. Ambulances have been able to cater to emergency medical needs.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. India's continuing two-front conundrum

Context:

- The author analyzes the **threat of two-front war for India** and examines the past precedents for India.

Background:

- Whenever India has forgotten that it has **two geopolitical antagonists** and let its guard down, it has paid dearly for it. Conversely, whenever India has accounted for the prospect of a possible threat from both quarters, it has done well. The two obvious examples are the 1962 and 1971 wars.

1962 war:

- In the India-China interactions leading up to the **1962 China-India war**, India had demonstrated friendliness without reciprocity and firmness without force.
- In 1962, India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon had both believed that the threat to India's security came principally from Pakistan. Despite deteriorating India-China relations in the late-1950s, **neither Nehru nor Krishna Menon had contemplated a war between the two countries. And there were no moves to prepare for such a scenario.**
- Despite warnings from top military officers regarding the under preparedness of the Indian army, no steps were taken to strengthen it.
- Even despite the deterioration of ties before the 1962 war, there was this immutable belief in the top leadership that Pakistan was the threat, not China.
- India's complacency and misjudgment in 1962 were not for want of warning signs from China. Indian leaders had apparently convinced themselves that the Chinese would not attack.

- On October 20, 1962, the People's Liberation Army struck simultaneously, all along the India-China frontier, a move which highlighted the long preparation for the attack. The Chinese had overwhelmed the ill-prepared Indian forces.

1971 war:

- **In 1971**, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took account of a possible Chinese move in support of Pakistan. India, therefore, took out an insurance policy in the form of the **Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics**.

Details:

Current situation:

- There has been an obsession concerning the threat from Pakistan, together with a degree of complacency vis-à-vis China, in part because the recent **stand-offs in Depsang, Chumar, and Doklam** were defused.
- The interactions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at Wuhan and Mamallapuram further blind-sided those involved in foreign and security policy planning in New Delhi regarding the current move by the Chinese.

China's strategic objectives:

- India seems to have failed to fully comprehend **China's fundamental strategic objectives regarding India**. These strategic goals include:
 - To drive home the point that India is not in the same league as China through localised assaults across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) when India tries to assume a position of equality.
 - Warning India not to actively oppose **Chinese designs to dominate the Indo-Pacific region** by aligning with the U.S. and its allies — Japan and Australia.
 - To **keep India preoccupied with problems in its immediate neighbourhood** so that it cannot act as an alternative pole of power to China in the broader Asian region.
 - Supporting Pakistan economically and militarily, including the sharing of nuclear weapons designs, to neutralise India's conventional power superiority vis-à-vis that country.
- China's aim, as in 1962, is not primarily to acquire territory, but the real aim seems to force on India a **political settlement which will involve India re-orienting its policies to suit the pattern of Chinese global policies**.

Conclusion:

Preparing for a two-front war:

- The mistake in 1962 is instructive today — an **obsession about Pakistan and a degree of complacency about China**. Although circumstances are different today from those in 1962, India continues to face the two-front conundrum.
- China is undoubtedly India's principal long-term adversary.
- India has to plan to **cover all contingencies and remain alive to a "two-front" war**.

Well planned policies:

- India must assess its options in a balanced way. While remaining clear-eyed about Chinese intentions, India needs a long-term vision, executed with patience and perseverance.

- An **understanding of the Chinese objectives** is essential to fashioning a realistic Indian response to China's aggressive policies in Ladakh and elsewhere along the LAC.
- India's main strategic goal should be the adoption of carefully calculated policies that **neutralise China's diplomatic and military clout in the Asia-Pacific region** without making India appear as a surrogate for other powers and **without sacrificing India's autonomy of decision-making in foreign policy**.

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Fighting a double pandemic

Context:

- There has been a rising tide of **gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic**.

Details:

- As economies, institutions and social welfare sectors continue to buckle under the strain of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic crisis, there is a dangerous escalation in the risk millions face from **domestic and gender-based violence**.
- There has been a surge in numbers of emergency calls to helplines, dramatic increase in Internet searches for support for those affected by domestic violence, and higher numbers of domestic homicides.

Concerns:

- The pandemic crisis has led to an alarming escalation of violence in the home, with women bearing the brunt of the frustration and anger. Women and girls are being abused and isolated.
- A recent study has indicated that around 86% of women who experience domestic violence do not seek help in India. Among the victims who sought help, only very few reached out to relevant authorities like the police, doctors, lawyers or social service organizations. This points towards **gross under-reporting**.
- Children living in violent homes not only witness violence but may themselves suffer abuse. **Violence in the home is one of the most pervasive human rights challenges of our time**.
- There is also a **strong economic case for addressing gender-based violence** given the significant economic costs if we fail to act. Research from the Commonwealth project, 'The Economic Cost of Violence against Women and Girls' shows that gender-based violence leads to estimated costs of 4.625% of GDP.

Specific challenges during the pandemic:

- Women often tend to be at a disadvantage during crises.
 - In West Africa, 60% of total deaths in the 2014 **Ebola virus** outbreak were women. Following the Canterbury earthquake in New Zealand, there was a 53% rise in domestic violence.
- Gender roles and harmful practices including customs such as early and forced marriage **limit women's access to health services**.
- Women make up 70% of workers in the health and social care sectors. This makes them vulnerable to COVID infection.

- During the present COVID-19 pandemic, **mass school closures** are tending to entrench learning gaps between girls and boys, and putting many more girls at risk of sexual exploitation, early pregnancy and early or forced marriage.
- The lockdown has also meant that **children are unable to report abuse to a trusted teacher**.
- And with restrictions on home visits by police and health workers, violence shelters being converted into health facilities, and courts being forced to close, many victims may find themselves trapped and feeling abandoned.

Way forward:

Policy measures:

- Mitigating the devastating impacts of this hidden pandemic of domestic violence requires strong and concerted action.
- There is a need to ensure that **women are at the centre of post-COVID-19 recovery planning**. There is the proposal for a **UN Declaration on Women and COVID-19** which needs to be supported and passed at the earliest.

Health systems link:

- An important priority must be the provision of **basic health care to all individuals and communities free of charge at the point of delivery**. All evidence points to a clear link between weak health systems and vulnerabilities to domestic violence.
- Urgent action needs to be taken to ensure that during this COVID-19 pandemic, **victims of abuse are able to access the health care they need, including mental health services**.

Financial independence:

- The post COVID-19 strategies must include dedicated funding and support for micro, small and medium sized businesses and the informal sector which is predominantly led by women — many of whom need the **assurance of financial independence** to escape from dangerous domestic situations.

Support mechanism:

- There is a need to implement policy responses and interventions to **safeguard victims and those at risk**.
- Governments must provide additional resourcing and funding to organisations supporting victims, so they can upscale operations and continue providing services in a safe manner.
- Useful innovations such as **virtual hearings and legal advice** would allow survivors' access to justice.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated 21 April, 2020](#)

[CNA dated 9 April, 2020](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. Even Golden Langurs suffer forced abortion, infanticide

- **Gee's golden langur** (*Trachypithecus geei*), also known as, simply the golden langur, is an **Old World monkey** found in a small region of **western Assam** and in the neighbouring foothills of the **Black Mountains of Bhutan**. It is one of the most endangered primate species of India and is listed as endangered under the IUCN classification.
- It is endemic to the **semi-evergreen and mixed-deciduous forests** straddling India and Bhutan.

Concerns:

- Their habitat in Assam has been **encroached upon and fragmented** drastically in the last 30 years owing to selective logging. This limits their food sources.
- Obstructions such as wires, and gaps in the forest due to felling, have increased the **threat of inbreeding among golden langurs**.

G. Tidbits

1. Quake rocks Northeast

- The Regional Seismic Centre has stated that a medium intensity earthquake has rocked Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur and the other northeastern States.
- The 5.1 magnitude quake was tracked at a depth of 35 km from the earth's surface at a place near Aizawl in Mizoram, an official at the Regional Seismic Centre here said.

2. Armed forces 'given free hand' to respond to situation at LAC

- The armed forces are said to have been given a free hand to assess the situation on the ground along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and take appropriate action as required in case of any escalation from the other side.
- The armed forces have gone on full alert along the LAC following the clash.
 - The IAF has forward deployed its front-line fighters, including Su-30 MKIs and Mig-29 UPG, and its latest acquisition, the **AH-64E Apache heavy attack helicopter** meant to neutralise armoured formations has been deployed in Leh. The **CH-47 Chinook heavy lift helicopters**, too, have been deployed in this region.
 - The Army has moved additional units for acclimatisation to prepare for high-altitude operations. Use of **firearms on the LAC is strictly regulated as per the border agreements of 1993, 1996 and 2005**. Following the Galwan incident, the Army has revised its Rules of Engagement (RoE) for its ground commanders on the LAC.
 - The Navy has also stepped up its operational alert and is **closely monitoring Chinese movements in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**. The Indian Navy has over the years increased its engagement and interoperability with countries in the region, including Australia, Japan and the U.S., and has also signed maritime cooperation agreements and logistics support agreements. The Navy has deployed at least one ship at all **critical choke points in the IOR, including the Malacca Strait**, at all times as part of its Mission Based Deployment.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

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

1. Jal Jeevan Mission envisages providing drinking water tap connections to every rural household by 2024.
2. Jal Jeevan Mission envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household.
3. Jal Jeevan Mission focuses on both demand and supply-side management of water at the local level.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option d

Explanation:

- Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) envisages providing drinking water tap connections to every rural household by 2024. Only 18% of households are currently covered.
- Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024.
- JJM focuses on integrated demand and supply-side management of water at the local level.

Q2. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to Gee's golden langur?

1. It is endemic to Assam and Bhutan.
2. It is classified as endangered under the IUCN classification.
3. Chakrashila is India's first wildlife sanctuary with golden langur as the primary species.

Options:

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

Answer:

Option a

Explanation:

- Gee's golden langur (*Trachypithecus geei*), also known as, simply the golden langur, is an Old World monkey found in a small region of western Assam and in the neighbouring foothills of the Black Mountains of Bhutan. It is one of the most endangered primate species of India and is listed as endangered under the IUCN classification.
- It is endemic to the semi-evergreen and mixed-deciduous forests straddling India and Bhutan.
- Chakrashila is India's first wildlife sanctuary with golden langur as the primary species. As a part of MGNREGA, around 27.24 lakh trees will be planted in Assam to sustain the colonies of the Golden Langurs in Bongaigaon district.

Q3. Which of the following pair/s is/are correctly matched?

1. CH-47 Chinook: Heavy lift helicopters
2. AH-64 Apache: Attack helicopter
3. MH-60 Romeo: Anti submarine warfare helicopters

Options:

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

Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

- The Boeing CH-47 Chinook is an American twin-engined, tandem rotor, heavy-lift helicopter. The CH-47 is among the heaviest lifting Western helicopters.
- The Boeing AH-64 Apache is an American twin-turboshaft attack helicopter.
- The MH-60R is also referred to as 'Romeo'. The helicopter is equipped for a range of missions including anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), search-and-rescue (SAR), naval gunfire support (NGFS), surveillance, communications relay, logistics support and personnel transfer and vertical replenishment (VERTREP). The helicopter operates from frigates, destroyers, cruisers, amphibious ships and aircraft carriers.

Q4. The SAMADHAN doctrine is directed at

- a. Indian Ocean domain awareness
- b. Left wing extremism
- c. North East insurgency
- d. Developmental work in Jammu and Kashmir

Answer:

Option b

Explanation:

- The SAMADHAN doctrine is proposed for the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) problem. It encompasses the entire strategy of government from short-term policy to long-term policy formulated at different levels. SAMADHAN stands for-
 - S- Smart Leadership,
 - A- Aggressive Strategy,
 - M- Motivation and Training,
 - A- Actionable Intelligence,
 - D- Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and KRAs (Key Result Areas),
 - H- Harnessing Technology,
 - A- Action plan for each Theatre,
 - N- No access to Financing.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In the light of the increasing trend of gender based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, discuss the specific challenges victims face during the pandemic crisis and suggest suitable policy measures to mitigate such challenges. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. China's current aim may not be primarily to acquire territory, but to force on India a political settlement which will involve India re-orienting its policies to suit the pattern of Chinese global policies. Comment in the light of the evolving situation along the LAC. Discuss what should be India's response to such Chinese objectives. (15 marks, 250 words)