

27 Jun 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Monsoon has covered country at fastest pace since 2013: IMD

Context:

- Progress of the monsoon over the Indian subcontinent.

Background:

- In 2020, the **monsoon set in on its expected date of 1st June** and was briefly stalled due to the impact of **Cyclone Nisarga** that struck Maharashtra on 2nd June.

Details:

- The **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** has stated that the **southwest monsoon has covered the entire country at the fastest pace since 2013.**
- Considering onset and advance of the southwest monsoon over the country as a whole, there has been normal progress over south and east India, about a week delay in advance over northeast India and about **7-12 days early advance over central and northwest India.**
 - The **normal date for the monsoon to span the whole country is July 8.**
 - The early advance over central & northwest India was facilitated by formation of a low pressure area over Bay of Bengal and another cyclonic circulation over central India.
- The monsoon's advent into northwest India has not translated into significant rainfall in the region. The IMD says that most of the rainfall will be towards India's northeast.
 - Usually the **monsoon trough see-saws**, in that heavy rain in the north-east translates to little rain over the rest of the country and when rains wane over the Himalayan foothills and the east, it starts to pick up in the rest of the country.
- So far the **monsoon rainfall in June has been 21% more than what is normal for this time of the month.**

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Centre rolls out anti-drug plan in 272 vulnerable districts

Context:

- An annual **anti-drug action plan for 272 vulnerable districts** was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on the [International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking](#).

Details:

- The new action plan envisages a **change in the strategy against drugs**. So far, there has been a focus on institutions, but now there is a need to move the focus to working in the society at large because the problem is not at the institutional level but at the level of society.
- The **‘Nasha Mukht Bharat’, or drug-free India campaign** will focus not just on institutional support but also on **community outreach programmes** in the districts identified in coordination with the Narcotics Control Bureau.
 - While the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment would ramp up funding for institutions, it would also **launch campaigns in schools and colleges** to prevent drug abuse among youth.
 - It is important to **sensitise parents**, and **involve schools** in, prevention of drug abuse.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. ASEAN states warn of S. China Sea tensions

Context:

- Online summit of [Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\)](#).

Background:

- China has been pushing its presence in the **Exclusive Economic Zones** of other countries while claimant countries have been preoccupied in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.
- China has been stepping up its activity in the **disputed South China Sea** during the coronavirus pandemic.
 - Vietnam and the Philippines had raised protests with China in April 2020 after China unilaterally declared the creation of new administrative districts on islands in the South China Sea to which Vietnam and the Philippines also have competing claims.
 - In early April 2020, Vietnam claimed that one of its fishing boats was sunk by a Chinese maritime surveillance vessel.

Details:

- Leaders of Vietnam and the Philippines argued that **international institutions and international law** had been seriously challenged during the global crisis.

- Vietnam and the Philippines have warned of **growing insecurity and instability in Southeast Asia** and have called upon countries to refrain from escalating tensions and abide by responsibilities under international law.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Auto, pharma unready to wean off China

Context:

- Government moves to cut imports from China.

Background:

Bilateral trade:

- India imported about \$70.3 billion of goods from China in the fiscal year to March 2019, and exported just \$16.7 billion — its **widest trade deficit** with any country.

Self-reliance campaign:

- In the light of the increasing border tensions along the LAC, the Indian government has asked Indian firms to find ways to **cut imports from China and lessen India's dependence on Chinese supplies**.
 - The government is consulting with companies on tightening curbs on **1,173 non-essential products**. They include toys, plastics, steel items, electronics and specific auto components used in vehicle manufacturing.
 - There is also the plan to **raise trade barriers and import duties** on about 300 products from China, as part of a self-reliance campaign.
- In April 2020, India tightened rules for investments from neighbouring countries, including China, to prevent opportunistic takeovers after the pandemic.

Concerns:

- India relies on China for products such as electronic components and drug ingredients because currently it cannot make them or source them from elsewhere, as cheaply. Thus, any moves to **curb imports or make them costlier without developing alternatives will hurt local businesses**.

Automobile sector:

- Over a quarter of India's auto-part imports valued at around \$4.2 billion came from China in 2019.
- This includes **critical components like engine and transmission parts** which are hard to source from elsewhere immediately.

Pharmaceuticals sector:

- Chinese supplies have also been a key factor in India's booming drug industry, which exports cheap generic medicines.
- India gets about **70% of its supply of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) from China.**

Conclusion:

- Industry leaders have opined that since Indian industries depend heavily on Chinese supplies, India becoming more self-reliant will take time.
- To attract companies to produce locally, **business opportunities need to be competitive** and there is a **need to lower production costs** as compared to other countries.

2. 'Economy in deep trouble, to shrink 5%'

Context:

- S&P Global Ratings report.

Background:

- The pandemic caused a sudden stop in activity and to prevent a collapse, policymakers, helped by banks, have provided extraordinary financial support to firms and households.

Details:

- In its report titled '**Asia-Pacific losses near \$3 trillion as balance sheet recession looms,**' S&P projected the region's economy to shrink by 1.3% in 2020, but grow by 6.9% in 2021. This implies a loss nearing \$3 trillion in output over these two years.
- The report notes that Asia-Pacific has been comparatively successful in containing COVID-19 and has also responded with effective macroeconomic policies.

Indian economy:

- S&P Global Ratings has stated that the Indian economy is in deep trouble with **growth expected to contract by 5% in the current fiscal.**

Concerns:

Steep fall in growth rate:

- The report notes that the challenges brought forth by the pandemic along with the **underlying vulnerabilities, especially across the financial sector** in India may result in growth falling by 5% in the current fiscal year before rebounding in 2021.

Slower recovery:

- The report notes that the **economic recovery may be weighed down by indebted balance sheets.** The report argues that there is a looming threat of a '**balance sheet recession**' in which at least one important

sector of the economy — the government, firms, or households — tries to bolster its weak financial position by saving more, paying down debt and spending less.

- Banks may lend less than they normally would in a recovery.
- Private firms may prefer to stabilise debt rather than ramp up spending on new investments, even though demand is improving.
- This would mean **less investment, slower recovery**, and a permanent hit to the economy that will last even after a vaccine is found.

3. Focus on revival, not debt, says Finance panel

Context:

- Views expressed by **15th Finance Commission Chairman N. K. Singh** on economic recovery.

Background:

- In the light of the pandemic, there is acute pressure on the finances of both the Central and State governments given the **much lower growth number and revenue receipts**.
- The central government has increased its borrowings from the Reserve Bank and the State governments are also going to borrow more.
- The fiscal numbers for the current year look to be way out of what was targeted.

Details:

- 15th Finance Commission Chairman N. K. Singh has stated that the government need **not, at present, focus on fiscal consolidation and increased public debt**, but should rather concentrate on fast revival of the economy through **enhanced public expenditure**.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Hardship may push people into making drugs for a living: UNODC

Context:

- The **2020 World Drug Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**.

Details:

- Report analyzes the wide range of possible **consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on illegal drug production, supply and consumption**.
- The measures taken by governments to counter the pandemic inevitably had **double-edged consequences** on large-scale drug supply.

Positives:

- The **lockdown could hinder the production and sale of opiates** in major producing countries.

- The key months for the opium harvest in Afghanistan are March to June and given the fact that 2020's harvest took place during the pandemic would have led to major reduction in production and supply.
- Some countries, such as Italy, the Niger and countries in Central Asia, have experienced a sharp decrease in drug seizures, amid reports that **drug traffickers have diverted their attention to other illegal activities**, including cybercrime and trafficking in falsified medicines.
- Other countries, including Morocco and Iran, have reported **huge drug seizures**, indicating large-scale drug trafficking, while some have reported an increase in interdiction resulting from **increased controls**.

Concerns:

- The report expresses concern over the adverse impact of the economic hardship caused by the pandemic. This could lead to an **increase in the number of people resorting to illicit activities linked to drugs** to make a living.
 - The **2008 economic crisis** resulted in reductions in drug-related budgets of the governments and there was an overall increase in drug use, with a shift towards cheaper and more harmful drugs.

Conclusion:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on illegal drug production, supply and consumption and there have been reports on **change in strategy of the drug trafficking organisations**.
 - The recent uptick in heroin seizures in the Indian Ocean could be interpreted as an indication of an increase in the use of maritime routes for trafficking heroin to Europe along the '**southern route**'. This could indicate a change in the strategy of drug trafficking organisations as a result of the COVID-19 measures.
- **Appropriate corrections in government policies** are necessary to counter the threat posed by drug trafficking.

D. GS 4 Related

Category: ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND APTITUDE TERMINOLOGY

1. Facing disability hands-on

- **Perseverance-** Persistence in doing something despite difficulty or obstacles.
- Class 10 student Kaushik Acharya from Bantwal in Karnataka has become famous as the student who wrote his board exams with his toes.
- Born with the disability of not possessing hands, Kaushik mastered writing using his toes early. Mobility has not been a barrier for the boy. Who has also picked up carpentry from his father and is a good swimmer. He is good at dance and music too and is interested in drawing. He has mastered several yogasanas too.

E. Editorials

Category: EDUCATION

1. The pandemic imposes a steep learning curve

Context:

Across the world, education has been drastically affected by COVID-19 pandemic. **Most instruction has moved online. Higher education has either gone digital or has simply been put on hold.**

Issue:

- In the wake of the pandemic, **other countries have embraced online education with mixed enthusiasm.**
- At the same time, educationists and policymakers advise caution.
- **Online education has not lived up to its potential.**

India's Response:

- Given the **diversity in institutions of higher education**, the Indian education system has had a very **heterogeneous response to the pandemic.**
- The reactions also **reflect the contrast in rural versus urban infrastructure**, the **variable quality of staff**, and the **diverse types of subjects** that are taught.

Serious long term effects can be expected considering the scale of the social, political and economic changes that have been occurring these past several months.

Switch to online education :

- From a purely **pedagogic point of view**, it is clear that **technology will play a bigger role in education in the coming years.**
- However, for **courses that traditionally need a laboratory or practical component**, online classes **cannot offer an alternative.**
- Considering a **huge digital divide in the country**, **adoption or integration of technology in education** also **depends on the specific institution and its location.**

Challenges:

Impact on academic research:

- Beyond classroom lectures and courses, there has been a serious **impact on academic research in all disciplines.**
- There is **need for close personal interaction and discussion in research supervision.**
- It is not clear when and how doctoral research and supervision can resume.

- The related **economic crisis has consequences for funding**, both of research as well as for the maintenance of research infrastructure. These are very long-term effects.

Digital divide:

- Not all students have equal access to the Internet.
- Lack of the required combination of hardware and electrical connectivity at homes is more pronounced in rural areas and non-metro cities, and for lower income groups as well.

Online teaching:

- Most teachers in India view online instruction with caution.
- The shift online is in response to a crisis and was poorly planned.
- Online teaching is a separate didactic genre in itself — one that requires investment of time and resources that very few teachers could come up with, in a hurry.
- Many online classes are poorly executed video versions of regular classroom lectures. Across the board, teachers recognise this as unsatisfactory.

Opportunity for Change:

- This is a chance to **re-imagine higher education in India**. For long this has been elitist and exclusionary; education has been less about learning and more about acquiring degrees. Now, higher education system can be made **more inclusive**.
- **There is a positive aspect of even a partial move to online education:** making lectures available online in public and open websites **accelerates democratisation of knowledge and wide distribution of learning opportunities**.
- If going **online loses the human touch**, the advantage of becoming available to many more people who aspire to learn is worth the trade.

Way forward:

Massive Open Online Classrooms:

- Online higher education using **massive open online classrooms** (MOOCs) has been encouraged by the Ministry of Human Resource Development for some time now via the **National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL)** and **SWAYAM** platforms. (SWAYAM is a Hindi acronym for “Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds”.)
 - These are **presently used to augment classroom instruction** but if these can be taken for credit, it may **help address the question of access to quality education**.
- If this is to make a serious difference, both the quality and quantity of online courses need to be enhanced.

Revamping examinations:

- If giving proctored examinations in a socially distanced world is more difficult, what needs to **change is the idea of proctored examinations**.
- There are **simpler ways to validate pedagogy**, some of which can be found in our own traditions.
 - For instance, Gandhiji's "Nai Talim" put a high premium on **self study and experiential learning**.

Digital tools in teaching:

- With planning, **significant qualitative changes** can be brought about.
- Digital tools such as **artificial intelligence (AI)** — already used in teaching language — can be **adapted to deliver personalised instruction based on the learning needs for each student**.
- The use of **AI can improve learning outcomes**; in particular, this can be a boon for **teaching students who are differently-abled**.

Role of state:

- Pedagogic **material** must be **made available in national languages**; this will **extend access**, and can help **overcome staff shortages** that plague remote institutions.
- The state will have to bear much of the responsibility:
 - **To improve digital infrastructure.**
 - **To ensure that every needy student has access to a laptop or smartphone.**

Conclusion:

- The adoption of online education needs to be **done with sensitivity**.
- **Imagination and a commitment to decentralisation in education** is the need of the hour.
- In the future, **blended modes of education will be unavoidable**: online instruction where possible, and limited contact for laboratory instruction and individual mentoring.
- If this can lead to the **emergence of a new pedagogic paradigm, India would have made the sweetest use of this adversity**.

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Getting out of the 'guns, germs and steel' crisis

Context:

India faces a **"guns, germs and steel" crisis**, to borrow from the title of Jared Diamond's classic book on the evolution of societies and nations, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*.

- There are **Chinese "guns"** on the borders.
- There are **coronavirus "germs"** in our bodies.
- There are **"steel" makers and other businesses on the verge of bankruptcy**.
- Each of these would qualify as an **independent, large crisis by itself, warranting a specific resolution**.

1) Dealing with China:

- Standing up to a military threat by a superpower neighbour will pose an **inevitable drain on the finances of the government**.
- India's war against Pakistan in Kargil in May 1999 provides hints of the financial burden of a military threat.
 - India's **defence expenditure in the war year shot up by nearly 20%** from the previous year.
 - It also forced the then government to **increase India's defence budget** for the next financial year **to 2.7% of nominal GDP, the highest in decades**.
- China is a far mightier power than Pakistan.
- In the current stand-off, India is bound to assert its rights, which will necessitate higher expenditure.
 - **India's defence budget** has been whittled down to just **2% of GDP** for the financial year **2021**.
 - **China's defence budget** is nearly **four times larger**.
- In all likelihood, the Chinese conflict will stretch central government finances by an additional one to two percentage points of GDP, as India wards off the current threat and shores up its defence preparedness.

2) Health care:

- The health pandemic has exposed India's woefully inadequate health infrastructure.
- The **combined public health expenditure of States and the central government in India** is a mere **1.5% of GDP**, compared to **China's at 3%** and **America's at 9%**.
- With COVID-19 expected to linger on until a suitable vaccine is available at large, there is no option other than to **significantly ramp up India's health expenditure**.
- Many public health experts are of the opinion that the central government will need additional funds of the equivalent of at least one percentage point of GDP to continue the fight against COVID-19.

3) Economy:

- The national lockdown has thrown India's economy into utter disarray.
- India's economy has **four major drivers**:
 - **People's spending on consumption**
 - **Government spending**
 - **Investment**
 - **External trade**
- **Spending by people is the largest contributor to India's economic growth every year**. For every ₹100 in incremental GDP, ₹60 to ₹70 comes from people's consumption spending. The lockdown shut off people from spending for two full months, which will contract India's economy for the first time in nearly five decades, regardless of a strong agriculture performance.

- Even prior to COVID-19 when the global economy was robust, **India's trade levels had fallen from 55% of nominal GDP in 2014 to 40% in 2020**. Now, with the global economy in tatters, trade is not a viable alternative to offset the loss from consumption.
- Investment is also not a viable option at this stage since the **demand for goods and services has fallen dramatically**.

Way Forward:

Incremental Funds Needed:

- The only options are:
 1. **To put money in the hands of the needy to stimulate immediate consumption.**
 2. For the **government to embark on a massive spending spree** (similar to the “New Deal” – which was a series of programmes and projects instituted by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression of the 1930s.)
- The crisis will impose a total **financial burden** of an **additional eight percentage points of GDP on the central government exchequer**.

Where will the government get such a large sum of money from?

- The government needs to spend an additional eight percentage points of GDP while revenues will be lower by two percentage points of GDP, a combined gap of 10% of GDP.
 - The government had expected a nominal GDP growth of 10% this year. It is clear now that GDP will not grow but shrink.
 - A ‘V’ shaped economic recovery (characterized by a quick and sustained **recovery** in measures of **economic** performance after a sharp **economic** decline), is a mere illusion.
 - Revenues will likely fall short by two percentage points of GDP.
- Potential new sources of revenue such as a **wealth tax** or a **large capital gains tax** are ideas worth exploring for the medium term but **will not be of much immediate help**.
- The only option for the government to finance its needs is to borrow copiously, which will obviously push up debt to ominous levels.
- When government debt rises dramatically, there will be a fourth dimension to the “guns, germs and steel crisis”; a **“junk” crisis**.

The ‘junk rating’ risk:

- With rising debt levels, international ratings agencies will **likely downgrade India's investment rating to “junk”**, which will then trigger panic among foreign investors.
- India thus faces a tough **“Dasharatha” dilemma** — save the country's borders, citizens and economy or prevent a “junk” rating.

Printing money at will:

- Some economists argue that there is a magical third choice – **to print how much ever money the government needs to overcome these crises.**
 - Economic theory states that **if money is printed at will, it can lead to a massive spike in prices and inflation.**
 - This **theory has fallen flat in the past decade in developed nations such as America where the creation of phantom money has not led to inflation.**
 - Hence, the Reserve Bank of India can just create money at will and transfer them to government coffers electronically, is the argument.
- There are multiple problems with this argument but the most important one is that regardless of whether money is printed or borrowed from others, **it will still be counted as government debt and not escape a potential downgrade to a “junk” rating.**
- The U.S dollar, by virtue of being the world’s reserve currency, has an in-built protection against a currency crisis that can be triggered by at-will printing of money, that other developing nations such as India do not possess.

Conclusion:

- The nation is at the precipice of an extremely challenging moment in her history. How India emerges from this crisis will shape not just India’s destiny but the world’s.
- The government’s choices are either to be bold and embark on a rescue mission or do nothing and hope the situation resolves itself.
- The Chinese military threat calls for **immediate and strategic action by our defence and foreign affairs establishments.**
- The COVID-19 **health epidemic needs constant monitoring** by the Health Ministry and local administration.
- The **economic collapse** is an enormous challenge that **needs to be overcome with prudent policy.**
- The common thread across these is that its **resolution requires significant financial resources.**
- On balance, it seems that the best course of action is to borrow unabashedly to pull India out of the “guns, germs and steel” crisis and deal with the consequences of a potential “junk” nation label.

F. Tidbits

1. Lakhs hit as Assam flood fury continues

- Incessant heavy rain for almost a week has led to flooding in large areas across Assam. Eight rivers including the **Brahmaputra** have been flowing above the danger level, threatening to inundate more areas.
- Floods in Assam have **claimed human lives and displaced** more than 2.52 lakh people across 16 districts.
- **Standing crops** across 704 villages and more than 1.62 lakh livestock and fowls have been affected too.
- Heavy rain has caused **landslides** in Guwahati.

2. 'Noticeable thinning of Chinese troops along the LAC in Ladakh'

- As per a senior government official, Chinese troops have neither vacated nor removed any of the prefabricated or semi-permanent structures built since May, 2020 at the disputed sites along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.
- However, there have been reports of a noticeable thinning of presence of Chinese troops at some of the three friction points along the LAC.
 - The three areas are Galwan, Hot Springs and the Finger area near Pangong Tso (lake) in Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- China has fortified positions at **Depsang plains** in north Ladakh.
- Another official has claimed that the entire stretch along the LAC in Ladakh was seeing a worrisome hardening of Chinese positions, including the placement of 10 mechanised and armoured regiments and at least 15 positions of artillery guns.

3. 'Recovery from pandemic will be at terrible cost'

- **The Democracy in Europe Movement 2025, or DiEM25**, is a **pan-European political movement** launched in 2015 by former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis.
- The movement's main tendencies are **alter-globalisation, social ecology, ecofeminism, post-growth and post-capitalism** with an emphasis on implementation of a universal basic income.
- DiEM25 argues for creation of political organisations at a pan-European level and calls for a pan-European movement to confront the great economic, political and social crisis that Europe is going through.

G. Prelims Facts

1. SC to hear petitions of foreign nationals soon

- The Supreme Court has decided to hear the petitions by foreign nationals challenging the government orders that blacklisted 2,500 citizens from 35 countries for their alleged involvement in Tablighi Jamaat activities.
- The petition argues that the government orders by its very unilateral nature, infringes the **principle of natural justice, particularly 'audi alteram partem'** by blacklisting the said foreigners present in India without first granting an opportunity of being heard or notice of any form, and resultantly depriving the aggrieved foreign nationals of their right of locomotion and travelling back to the country of their citizenship.
 - Audi alteram partem is a Latin phrase meaning "listen to the other side", or "let the other side be heard as well". It is the principle that no person should be judged without a fair hearing in which each party is given the opportunity to respond to the evidence against them.
- The petitioners have argued that the en-masse blacklisting of foreigners without any opportunity to defend themselves is a blatant violation of **Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution**.

2. UN-75 declaration delayed

- Owing to objections from the U.S., the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Canada and India a commemorative declaration marking the **75th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter** was delayed as member states could not reach an agreement on phraseology.
- The objection was to the use of a phrase “shared vision of a common future”, associated with China. The phrase, “community with a shared future for mankind” is closely associated with the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) and especially Chinese President Xi Jinping as an articulation of the country’s vision for the world.
- The current impasse comes at a time when **China’s relationships with a number of democracies, including India, Australia and the U.S., are strained.**
- The ‘silence’ process of the UN involves a procedure by which a resolution passes if no formal objections are raised within a stipulated time.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following correctly explains DiEM25?

- a. It is a pan-European political movement aiming for creation of political organisations at a pan-European level.
- b. It is an intergovernmental disaster management initiative involving 25 developing countries.
- c. It is a global denuclearization movement aiming for a universal denuclearization agreement by 2025.
- d. It is an initiative of the WHO to help the developing and under developed countries in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Democracy in Europe Movement 2025, or DiEM25, is a pan-European political movement launched in 2015 by former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis.
- The movement’s main tendencies are alter-globalisation, social ecology, ecofeminism, post-growth and post-capitalism with an emphasis on implementation of a universal basic income.
- DiEM25 argues for creation of political organisations at a pan-European level and calls for a pan-European movement to confront the great economic, political and social crisis that Europe is going through.

Q2. Which of the following are the right bank tributaries of the Brahmaputra River?

1. Kameng
2. Lohit
3. Manas
4. Teesta
5. Dhansiri
6. Subansiri

Options:

- a. 1,2,4 and 6
- b. 1,2,3 and 5
- c. 3,4 and 5
- d. 1,3,4 and 6

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Tributaries of Brahmaputra River
 - Left bank tributaries: Dibang, Lohit, Dhansiri and Kolong
 - Right bank tributaries: Kameng, Manas, Beki, Raidak, Jaldhaka, Teesta and Subansiri.

Q3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

1. The United Nations was founded in 1945.
2. The United Nations is headquartered in New York City.
3. India is a founding member of the United Nations.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The United Nations (UN) is an intergovernmental organization that aims to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and achieve international cooperation. The

UN is headquartered on international territory in New York City, with its other main offices in Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna and The Hague.

- The UN was established after World War II with the aim of preventing future wars, succeeding the ineffective League of Nations. On 25 April 1945, 50 governments met in San Francisco for a conference and started drafting the UN Charter, which was adopted on 25 June 1945 and took effect on 24 October 1945, when the UN began operations.
- **India** is a **founding member** of the **United Nations**, signing the UN Charter, along with 50 other countries, on 26 June, 1945.

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

1. The Finance Commission is a constitutionally mandated body under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution.
2. The 15th Finance commission recommendations are for the period 2020-2025.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Finance Commissions are periodically constituted by the President of India under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution to define the financial relations between the central government of India and the individual state governments. The Finance Commission is a Constitutionally mandated body that is at the centre of fiscal federalism.
- The 15th Finance commission recommendations are valid for the period 2020-2025.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Pandemic presents an opportunity for India to accelerate the democratisation of knowledge and enable wide distribution of learning opportunities through online education. Critically examine. (15 Marks, 250 Words).
2. Examine the double-edged consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on illegal drug production, supply and consumption. (10 Marks, 150 Words).