

02 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. [Convalescent plasma for those not responding to steroids: govt.](#)

Context:

As per an advisory issued by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (Biological Division), Convalescent plasma may be considered for [COVID-19](#) patients with moderate symptoms whose condition is not improving (oxygen requirement is progressively increasing) despite the use of steroids.

Convalescent Plasma therapy has been covered in 11th April 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

2. Bombay HC allows minor rape victim to terminate pregnancy

Context:

The Bombay High Court has allowed a 17-year-old rape victim to terminate her 25-week pregnancy, though a medical report had advised her against it.

Details:

- At the time of filing of the petition, the girl was 23 weeks pregnant and was barred from seeking termination of pregnancy as she had crossed the 20-week ceiling under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.
- She needed a nod from the court to go ahead with the termination.

Read more about the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971 and Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 covered in [31st January 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

3. China downplays fears over swine flu

Context:

China played down the threat of a new swine flu strain with pandemic potential that researchers discovered in pigs, saying the study is not representative.

Details:

- It is called G4 EA H1N1.
- The new strain found in China, according to the study, had all the essential hallmarks to infect humans and raised fears over another potential pandemic.
- The G4 virus mentioned in the relevant report is a subtype of the H1N1 virus which caused a flu pandemic in 2009.

Read more about [Swine Flu H1N1](#).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. Centre designates 9 individuals as terrorists

Context:

The Union Home Ministry designated nine more individuals as “terrorists” under the amended Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

- The nine persons declared terrorists are linked to separatist Khalistani groups that seek to establish a separate country for the Sikhs.

Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA):

- UAPA, enacted in 1967, was amended in 2004, 2008 and 2013.
- The 2004 amendment was to ban organisations for terrorist activities, under which 34 outfits, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad, were banned.
- The UAPA, as amended in August 2019, gives the Home Ministry the power to designate individuals as terrorists.
- Earlier, in September 2019, the four individuals to be first designated as terrorists were Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar, Lashkar-e-Taiba’s Hafiz Saeed, his deputy Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, and underworld don Dawood Ibrahim, who planned and executed the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts.

Concerns:

The Opposition parties had raised concerns in Parliament that the law could be misused against political opponents and civil society activists.

For an in-depth understanding of UAPA, watch the video lecture below:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/gS3VsUpkSM>

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**1. Ministry reconstitutes Central Zoo Authority****Context:**

The Environment Ministry has reconstituted the Central Zoo Authority (CZA).

Details:

- The CZA would now include an expert from the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, and a molecular biologist.

Central Zoo Authority (CZA):

- CZA is a statutory body chaired by the Environment Minister.
- It is tasked with regulating zoos across the country.
- Every zoo in the country must obtain recognition from CZA for its operation.
- The authority lays down guidelines and prescribes rules under which animals may be transferred among zoos nationally and internationally.

Structure of CZA:

- Apart from the chairman, it consists of 10 members and a member-secretary.
- Almost all of them are officials in the Environment Ministry and non-government experts are those who are wildlife conservationists or retired forest officers.

Category: ECONOMY

1. More 'private trains' soon on tracks

Context:

The Railways kick-started the process to allow private players to operate certain trains on its network by inviting Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the operation of passenger train services on over 100 routes with 150 modern trains.

Details:

- This is the first initiative for private investment in running passenger trains over the Railways network, and will attract investments of about ₹30,000 crore.
 - The Delhi-Lucknow Tejas is the first train that is not operated by the Indian Railways, as Railways geared up to allow private train operators.
- The majority of trains will be manufactured in India and the private entity will be responsible for financing, procuring, operation and maintenance of the trains, which will be designed for a maximum speed of 160 kmph.
- The concession period for the project will be 35 years, and the private entity will pay to Indian Railways fixed haulage charges, energy charges as per actual consumption, and a share in gross revenue determined through a transparent bidding process.

Objectives of the initiative:

- To introduce modern technology rolling stock with reduced maintenance.
- Reduce transit time.
- Boost job creation.
- Provide enhanced safety.
- Provide world-class travel experience to passengers.
- Reduce demand supply deficit in the passenger transportation sector.

2. SBI unit to set up SPV for aiding NBFCs on liquidity

Context:

According to RBI, State Bank of India's SBICAP unit would set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to assist NBFCs and HFCs to improve their liquidity following the Centre's approval of a Special Liquidity Scheme (SLS) for the purpose.

Background - Special Liquidity Scheme (SLS) :

- Under the 20-lakh crore rupees economic relief package titled [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#), the Prime Minister had announced the Special Liquidity Scheme of 30,000 crore rupees to buy investment-grade debt paper from both primary and secondary markets.
- Such paper would be fully guaranteed by the government.
- The special liquidity scheme is expected to break the low confidence cycle in the market for lending to the NBFCs, housing finance companies and microfinance institutions.
- It will help these low rated finance companies to raise debt.
- It was announced to ward off any potential systemic risks to the financial sector.

Details:

- The RBI also issued guidelines specifying the norms that would make non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs) eligible to avail funds under SLS.
 - NBFCs and HFCs looking to avail the funds should not have net non-performing assets of more than 6% as on March 31, 2019, and should have made a net profit in at least one of the last two preceding financial years.
 - The Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio/[Capital Adequacy Ratio](#) of NBFCs/HFCs must not be below the regulatory minimum, i.e., 15% and 12%, respectively, as on March 31, 2019,
 - They should not have been reported under the SMA-1 or SMA-2 category by any bank for their borrowings during one year prior to August 1, 2018; and should be rated investment grade by a SEBI-registered rating agency.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Police reform and the crucial judicial actor

Context:

- Police violence in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu.

Details:

- The fatal violence by the police is a reminder of the **problem of police violence** and how little reform has happened in the domain of policing.

Judicial measures taken:

- The Supreme Court of India through its various judgments has been working towards police reforms in India.
- In cases such as **Joginder Kumar v. State of UP and D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal**, important guidelines were passed to try and secure two rights in the context of any state action — **a right to life and a right to know**. Through the guidelines, the Court sought to curb the power of arrest, as well as ensure that an accused person is made aware of the grounds of the arrest.
 - These judicial guidelines were given **statutory backing through the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2008**.
- The Supreme Court, in the **Prakash Singh v. Union of India** case, pushed through new legislation for governing police forces to be passed by States across India. A key component of the new legislation was a robust setup for accountability that contemplated **a grievance redress mechanism**.
- Judicial concern with police violence is also witnessed in the **judicial support for scientific investigations**. The support for techniques such as narcoanalysis, ensuring video recording of investigations, passing orders for installing closed-circuit television cameras inside police stations, is based on the possibility of police employing physical force to obtain evidence. Through technology, the hope is to **gradually delegitimise and dismantle a set of archaic practices reliant upon the use of force as a means to extract evidence**.

Concerns:

Custodial deaths:

- Despite several existing guidelines and laws, there are reports suggesting that across India there are **as many as five custodial deaths a day**.
- This may point towards a **culture of impunity** among the state actors.

Lack of implementation:

- Constitutional courts have tried to change the reality of police brutality for well over two decades. The judiciary's approach of simply passing directions and guidelines has not been very effective.
- Despite criminal laws being struck down as unconstitutional, they continue to be enforced in various parts of the country by local police.

Systemic failure:

- The practice of remanding accused persons to further custody (both the police and judicial), has become the norm instead of being an exception.
- The **overworked magistrate, struggling with an ever-increasing number of cases**, is very often in a rush to get done with the "remand case", rather than treat an arrested person with the care and consideration that he/she deserves and is entitled to.

Lack of police reforms:

- The issue of police reform ranks very low in the scheme of things for governments. There is **continued institutional apathy towards the issue of police reform**. There was inordinate delay in implementing guidelines issued through the Prakash Singh case and still, several States remain in contempt of the Supreme Court's judgment.

Way forward:

Better implementation:

- Rather than limiting itself to passing more guidelines, constitutional courts must seriously contend with the concrete cases that come their way and take a hard stand.
- **Passing compensation claims or ensuring timely prosecutions** in such cases could help break the sense of impunity. The Courts could also consider sanctions at a larger scale and impose monetary penalties at the district level, to drive home the message that the erring actions of one officer must be seen as a failure of the force itself.

Strengthening the magistrate:

- The constitutional courts could reorient their guidelines to try and change the practices of magistrates, over whom they exercise powers of superintendence.
- **The ordinary magistrate is the judicial actor wielding real power to realise a substantial change in police practices.**
 - It is the local magistrate before whom all arrested and detained persons must be produced within 24 hours, and thus becomes the point of first contact for a citizen with the constitutional rule of law.

2. How not to tame the digital dragon

Context:

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) directing a ban on 59 smartphone applications.

Details:

- There has been an argument that the ban was necessary due to China's aggression along the border and due to **specific threats to India's cybersecurity**.
- **Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000** permits the blocking of information that falls within specific grounds and this power can be invoked when it is necessary and expedient.

Concerns:

- The author argues that the move of the central government, though aimed at China, also has an impact on Indian citizens given that this web censorship has impacted many users.
- The author claims that beyond the geopolitical and economic impact, the move also raises concerning **questions regarding its legality and the measure's impact on democratic norms**.

Lack of transparency:

- There has been a lack of transparency in website blocking.
- The recommendations by the Ministry of Home Affairs have been the reason for the current ban. The grounds for the ban have not been clearly stated.
- **The legal order stating the ban has not yet been published or been made publicly available.** Disclosure of this order is necessary because the nature of the action of blocking impacts the right not only of the owners of these smartphone applications, but the **public's fundamental right to receive information** also.
- The imperative for disclosure becomes clearer on a joint reading of the **Shreya Singhal and Anuradha Bhasin judgments of the Supreme Court**.
 - In the **Shreya Singhal case**, while examining the constitutionality of Section 66A, the Supreme Court, upholding the blocking powers of the government, reasoned that the writ remedies

would always be available to an aggrieved person. Hence, to approach a High Court in a writ, the petitioner would require the **availability of the legal order**.

- In the **Anuradha Bhasin judgment**, the **need for public disclosure prior to placing any restriction on Internet access** (of any scope or nature) has been expressly directed by the Supreme Court.

Non-adherence to procedure:

- The ban has been **imposed without any form of pre-decisional hearing**. Such a process would have required a show-cause notice to be served, offering the aggrieved party a detailed opportunity to defend itself; this would have been followed by a detailed legal order.

Way forward:

- **Privacy and data protection concerns** must be legitimately addressed through **appropriate legislation** at the earliest.
- There is a need to commence an exploration into whether investments and operational control pose cybersecurity concerns or intersect with sectors of foundational and emerging technologies. This may be done through **legislation and creation of an institutional process** like the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.
- The government should act within the bounds of law.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Reforming India's digital policy

Context:

- The author analyzes the impending reform measures under consideration in the digital services sector in India.

Background:

Pandemic crisis:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in drastic drops in economic growth rates globally and the competition for foreign investment is intensifying, spurred on by national campaigns to shift supply chains.
- **Foreign direct investment (FDI) is falling**. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in its latest World Investment Report, has projected that FDI to developing Asian economies could drop by as much as 45%.

Details:

- One sector that is expected to buck the recessionary trend is digital services.
- Even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, **investments in digital services continue to flow at record levels globally**, outpacing investment in nearly every other sector.

Significance of digital services:

- The recent experience during the pandemic has made it clear that digital services have become critical to every 21st century economy. **Digital services are filling gaps left by the traditional modes of commerce during the global crisis.**
- Digital services enable access to and delivery of a wide array of products across multiple sectors, from healthcare to retail distribution to financial services.
- India is an ideal destination for increased FDI flows in the digital services sector given its **huge and increasingly digitised population** and the **potential for innovative start-ups**

Reforms in India:

- Currently, there are three pending reform measures under consideration that are likely to affect India's growth trajectory in digital services for years to come — **the Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB), the e-commerce policy, and the Information Technology Act Amendments.**
- The policy would have to delicately balance the following aspects:
 - Protecting the domestic market for domestic companies while encouraging FDI into India.
 - Prioritising government access to data while promoting data privacy.
 - It should promote innovation through increased competition and create an environment that is friendly towards start-ups.

India-US relation:

- The India-US bilateral relationship is an important factor in realising the potential for greater trade and investment in digital services.
- India and the U.S. are yet to conclude negotiations on a bilateral trade agreement that could address some digital services issues, and the U.S. just initiated a “**Section 301**” review of whether digital services taxes in 10 countries constitute “unfair” trade measures, including **India's equalisation levy.**

Conclusion:

- Indian government policies will be key determinants to attract new investment, foster Indian innovation, and expand its exporting prowess and cement India's position as a global leader in information technology.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Two more species added to India's list of butterflies

What's in News?

Lepidopterists in Arunachal Pradesh have added two species to India's expanding list of butterflies. India now has 1,327 species, up from 1,318 in 2015.

1. **Striped Hairstreak:** was first recorded by Japanese entomologists in the Hainan province of China. It was located in Vijaynagar bordering Myanmar.
2. **Elusive Prince:** has a Vietnamese connection and was thought to be the more familiar Black Prince found in the Eastern Himalayas. It was located on the periphery of the Namdapha National Park.

The recording of the two butterflies follows the rediscovery of the Assam Keelback, a non-venomous snake from the Gelling area of Arunachal Pradesh after 129 years.

2. Special Protection Group (SPG)

- The Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Home Affairs, in November 2019 and has been passed in both houses of the Parliament.
- The Bill amends the Special Protection Group Act, 1988.
 - The Act provides for the constitution and regulation of the Special Protection Group (SPG) to provide security to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers, and their immediate family members.

To know more about Special Protection Group, read [Security: Status Symbol or Protection: RSTV – Big Picture](#).

3. Hunter Report: Protests in Country

- The Legislative Council of the Government of India constituted the **Hunter Commission to examine the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919**.
- The investigating committee was **led by Lord William Hunter**.
- In its report, the majority of the members concluded that General Dyer firing at the mob was justified and they only reprimanded General Dyer for not following appropriate procedures before the firing. Martial law declared in Punjab was justified.
- A minority report was submitted by the Indian members of the Commission who questioned the need for martial law at that time.
- There were **widespread protests against the findings of the Hunter Committee**.

G. Tidbits

1. Foodgrain scheme meets less than 15% of target

According to data provided by the Food Ministry, the scheme to provide free rations to eight crore migrants under the Aatmanirbhar package reached less than 15% of its target beneficiaries.

- The scheme was announced by the Finance Minister to support migrant workers without ration cards, but the Centre had left it to the States to identify such people.
- Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Telangana had 0% distribution, and seven States had less than 1%.
- Overall, foodgrains were distributed to only 15% of the estimated eight crore beneficiaries in May 2020.
- Prime Minister announced the extension till November, of the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), originally meant to provide additional free foodgrains and pulses to all ration card-holders from April to May.
- However, the Aatmanirbhar food package, which was meant to provide free foodgrains to migrants and those without ration cards, in May and June, was not extended.

This topic has been covered in the 1st July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

2. Modi quits Chinese social media site

What's in News?

Prime Minister Modi initiated the process of exiting Weibo following the Union government's decision to ban 59 Chinese apps. [Read more on June 30, 2020 CNA.](#)

- This marks a sudden end to Mr. Modi's "Weibo diplomacy" that was launched with fanfare in 2015 as a means to directly communicate with the people of China before his first visit there as Prime Minister.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. "Striped Hairstreak" and "Elusive Prince" recently seen in news are:

- a. Species of butterflies spotted in the Western Ghats.
- b. Species of butterflies spotted in Arunachal Pradesh.
- c. Species of non-venomous snakes identified in Arunachal Pradesh.
- d. Species of venomous spiders identified in Arunachal Pradesh.

Answer: b

Explanation:

Lepidopterists in Arunachal Pradesh have added two species to India's expanding list of butterflies.

1. **Striped Hairstreak:** was first recorded by Japanese entomologists in the Hainan province of China. It was located in Vijaynagar bordering Myanmar.
2. **Elusive Prince:** has a Vietnamese connection and was thought to be the more familiar Black Prince found in the Eastern Himalayas. It was located on the periphery of the Namdapha National Park.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Central Zoo Authority:

1. It is a statutory body chaired by the Environment Minister.
2. It regulates the exchange of animals of the endangered category listed under Schedule - I and II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 among zoos.
3. The exchange of animals between an Indian and a foreign zoo is also approved by the Authority.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

All the statements are correct.

Q3. Birbal Nath committee recommendations are associated with which of the following?

- a. Formation of Special Protection Group (SPG).
- b. Allowing private train operators in Indian Railways.
- c. Establishment of Central Zoo Authority.
- d. Launch of Special Liquidity Scheme to help low rated finance companies to raise debt.

Answer: a

Explanation:

SPG was formed in 1985 after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as an executive body on the recommendation of the Birbal Nath committee. The SPG Act was enacted by Parliament in 1988.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Namdapha National Park:

1. Situated in Arunachal Pradesh, it is also a tiger reserve.
2. It is located between the Patkai range and the Dapha Bum range of Mishmi Hills.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Namdapha National Park is located in the Changlang district of the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It was declared a tiger reserve and national park in 1983.
- It is located between the Patkai range and the Dapha Bum range of Mishmi Hills.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In the light of the recent incident of police violence in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, examine the associated concerns with respect to police violence and suggest suitable corrective measures in this direction. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. The impending reform measures under consideration in the digital services sector in India will have to delicately balance the often contradictory objectives. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)

