

13 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Mizoram quake zone caught between two geological faults

Context:

A geologist assigned to make a preliminary study on the frequent tremors in Mizoram has said that Mizoram's zone of scary earthquakes is caught between two subterranean faults.

Background:

- Mizoram experienced at least eight moderate earthquakes between June 21 and July 9, 2020. The tremors ranged from 4.2 to 5.5 on the Richter scale.

- The epicentre of most of these quakes was beneath Champhai district bordering Myanmar, including the last one of magnitude 4.3 and about 10 kilometres deep.
- A few were beneath the adjoining Saitual and Serchhip districts.

Details:

- According to the geologist, earthquakes have happened and will happen in that part of Mizoram because it is caught between two geological faults i.e, the Churachandpur Mao Fault and the Mat Fault.
- The Churachandpur Mao Fault is named after two places in Manipur and runs north-south into Myanmar along the border of Champhai.
- The Mat Fault runs northwest-southeast across Mizoram, beneath the river Mat near Serchhip.
- There are several shallower transverse or minor faults in between these two major faults that are deeper.
- People there have nothing to worry about if their magnitude does not measure above 5 on the Richter scale.

Faults:

- Faults are discontinuities or cracks that are the result of differential motion within the earth's crust.
- It is a fracture or zone of fractures between two blocks of rock.
- Faults allow the blocks to move relative to each other. This movement may occur rapidly, in the form of an earthquake.
- Vertical or lateral slippage of the crust along the faults causes an earthquake.



B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Disabled are entitled to same benefits of SC/ST quota: SC

Context:

According to the recent decision of the [Supreme Court](#), persons with disabilities are entitled to the same benefits of SC/ST quota.

Supreme Court Judgement:

- The Supreme Court, in a significant decision, confirmed that persons with disabilities are also socially backward and entitled to the same benefits of relaxation as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates in public employment and education.

- A three-judge Bench led by Justice Rohinton Nariman upheld a 2012 judgment of the Delhi High Court in *Anamol Bhandari (minor) through his father/Natural Guardian v. Delhi Technological University*.
 - “In Anamol Bhandari, the High Court has correctly held that people suffering from disabilities are also socially backward, and are therefore, at the very least, entitled to the same benefits as given to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates,” the Supreme Court held in the judgment.

Category: HEALTH

1. Experts question basis of COVID-19 drug

Context:

Biocon Ltd's **psoriasis drug, Itolizumab**, re-purposed for **COVID-19** and headlined as a breakthrough drug for treating the moderately sick and the severely ill, appears to have been tested on too few patients to reliably conclude on its benefits.

Issue:

- To test the drug's efficacy at preventing deaths or improving health outcomes, the company recruited 30 patients across four hospitals.

Details:

- Biocon announced that it had received the Drug Controller General's approval to use the drug for emergency use in cases where the infection caused a cytokine storm.
 - Cytokine storm is an uncontrolled attempt by the immune system to neutralise the virus that often ended up damaging the lungs and other organs and even death.
 - When the cytokines that raise immune activity become too abundant, the immune system may not be able to stop itself.
 - It implies that the levels of released cytokines are injurious to host cells.
- According to the company officials, that nobody on the drug died was significant proof of its success.
- They asserted that, given that the drug had been in use since 2013 and tested on at least 500 for psoriasis, its safety was not in doubt.
- The evaluation also rests on Itolizumab being added to the “best standard of care”. In general, this consisted of hydroxychloroquine, ritonavir (antivirals), oxygen therapy, antibiotics, heparin [to avoid clotting] and methylprednisarone [a corticosteroid].

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China, Iran close to reaching trade and military partnership

Context:

Iran and China have quietly drafted a sweeping economic and security partnership that would clear the way for billions of dollars of Chinese investments in energy and other sectors.

Details:

- The partnership would vastly expand Chinese presence in banking, telecommunications, ports, railways and dozens of other projects.
- In exchange, China would receive a regular and heavily discounted supply of Iranian oil over the next 25 years.
- The proposed agreement also describes deepening military cooperation, potentially giving China a foothold in a region that has been a strategic preoccupation of the United States for decades.
- It calls for joint training and exercises, joint research and weapons development and intelligence sharing — all to fight “the lopsided battle with terrorism, drug and human trafficking and cross-border crimes.”

Issues:

- The partnership undercuts U.S. efforts to isolate the Tehran government because of its nuclear and military ambitions.
- It represents a major blow to the Trump administration’s aggressive policy toward Iran since abandoning the nuclear deal reached in 2015 (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action).
 - Renewed U.S. sanctions, including the threat to cut off access to the international banking system for any company that does business in Iran, have succeeded in suffocating the Iranian economy by scaring away badly needed foreign trade and investment.
 - But Tehran’s desperation has pushed it into the arms of China, which has the technology and appetite for oil that Iran needs.
 - Iran has been one of the world’s largest oil producers, but its exports, Tehran’s largest source of revenue, have plunged since the Trump administration began imposing sanctions in 2018; China gets about 75% of its oil from abroad and is the world’s largest importer, at more than 10 million barrels a day in 2019.
- It would create new and potentially dangerous flashpoints in the deteriorating relationship between China and the U.S.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY**1. Punjab farmers find a better way to grow paddy****Context:**

The Punjab government relaxed sowing schedules for the current year, and many farmers chose Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR) technique instead of traditional transplanting.

Benefits of Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR) technique:

- According to the farmers and agricultural experts, large scale use of DSR technique to plant paddy could solve the staggering problem of stubble burning.
- Saves labour costs involved in sowing and transplant.
- Less water consumption for irrigation.
- Most importantly, it results in very little post-harvest stubble.
 - Stubble burning is a key cause of air pollution across the northern region.
- The DSR crop gets mature 7-10 days faster than with transplantation.

- A short window of 20-25 days is the key reason for stubble burning.

Category: SECURITY

1. NATGRID gets access to data from 14,000 police stations

Context:

The National Intelligence Grid has signed an MoU with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to access the centralised online database on FIRs and stolen vehicles.

NATGRID:

- First conceptualised in 2009, NATGRID seeks to become the one-stop destination for security and intelligence agencies to access databases related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details of a suspect on a “secured platform”.
- The data will be procured by NATGRID from 21 organisations such as telecom, tax records, bank, immigration, etc.
- NATGRID will act as a link between intelligence and investigation agencies.
- The project aims to go live by December 31, 2020.

This topic has been covered in the 20th November 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

Details:

- The MoU will give NATGRID access to the [Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems](#) database, a platform that links around 14,000 police stations.
- At present, security agencies directly contact an airline or a telephone company if they are on a suspect’s trail. The data is shared through international servers. The NATGRID will ensure that such information is shared through a secure platform.
- Once NATGRID is operational, all agencies will have to route their requests through the secured platform. However, the State police will not be part of NATGRID and they could directly contact the airlines or railways for information.

Issues:

- On the concern raised of the MoU that it would infringe on the federal system of the Constitution, an official said that since the NCRB under the Union government is only a repository and the data pertaining to FIRs of a particular police station are a State subject, it does not violate any legal provisions as FIRs are shared with all the police stations.
- Earlier the Civil Aviation Ministry and airline companies had raised concerns in providing information to yet another agency — NATGRID.
- The airlines contended that they already provide information to the Bureau of Immigration and the Customs authorities. The deliberations with the airlines are still on.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**1. The sum and substance of the EU's China dilemma****Context:**

- The article analyzes the evolving nature of EU-China relations.

Background:**Europe-China partnership:**

- Europe and China have been major partners for a generation.
- **Europe championed China's case for [World Trade Organization \(WTO\)](#) membership** and China supported the 'European Project'.
- **China is also critical for European prosperity.**
 - Between 1995 and 2012, Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, enhanced its industrial value by 37%, the largest chunk of which came from **supply chains in China**.

Details:**Relation in the aftermath of the pandemic:**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has strained EU-China relations.
 - China's early handling of COVID-19 has received worldwide criticism including from European countries that have had to bear the brunt of the pandemic.
 - The pandemic has also triggered **calls for diversifying European businesses away from an overreliance on any single market**.
- Despite the strains in the relationship, there have been efforts made to sustain the relation.
 - The European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has reiterated China's status as a key global player and expressed the EU's intention to engage with China to achieve objectives, based on mutual interests and values.
 - There have been also statements issued by European leaders that they will not choose sides between the United States and China. This seems to indicate that the EU will not follow the U.S. in 'de-coupling' or join an 'against-China' camp.
 - The European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, which recently released its Business Confidence Survey 2020, notes that **European companies still regard China as the biggest potential market**. European companies hope that China's administration will use this pandemic to make fundamental reforms in the economy opening up further economic opportunities.
- Though the above developments seem to indicate that there is unlikely to be any change in the Europe-China relationship after the novel coronavirus pandemic, the article argues that such a presumption requires closer examination.

Political and security dimensions:

- In March 2019, the **EU Commission published “A Strategic Outlook”**, describing **China as, simultaneously, a cooperative partner, an economic competitor and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance**.
- Lately, the political and security dimensions have taken precedence over the economic dimension that had been the primary determinant of China-EU ties for nearly two decades.
- The balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China seems to be shifting as China’s economic power and political influence has grown with unprecedented scale and speed, and in ways that threaten European and global security.
 - China has made efforts to cultivate separate **European sub-constituencies like the 16+1 Format with the Central and Eastern European States** and has also made efforts to cultivate relations with the Nordic and the Southern European nations separate from the EU platform.
 - The PLA Navy has conducted joint exercises with Russia in the Baltic Sea in 2017.
 - China has been blamed for carrying out information operations in European countries.
 - China has made **targeted acquisitions of key high-technology companies such as Kuka in Germany or key ports like Piraeus in Greece**.
 - China’s economic and financial practices backed by strategic motives have threatened European unity.
 - China’s aggressive actions in the South China Sea, on the Line of Actual Control with India, and in Hong Kong, among others, have also gained European eyeballs, even though China remains critical to European economic health.
- The “Strategic Outlook” document of the EU recommended that the EU should shift towards a more realistic, assertive and multifaceted approach to China.
- China also views the EU as increasingly antagonistic to Chinese views.

EU’s dilemma:

- A major dilemma for the EU with respect to its relations with China is the fact that Europe’s relations with China are simultaneously one of the most strategically important and one of the most challenging that Europe has to deal with.
- Europe will have to **balance economic co-dependency and co-prosperity with China’s strategic global intentions and efforts** to seek military supremacy and its bearing on European security.
- Though China is critical to European economic health, the evolving political and security dimensions seem set to alter the existing relation.

India-EU relation:

- The current circumstances provide an **opportune time for India-EU relations**. The opportunity for India and the EU to build a **partnership that is both economic and strategic** is there for the taking in a post-COVID-19 strategic scenario.
 - Political conditions are favourable especially after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the [EU](#).
 - The Europeans recognise India’s role in helping provide peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. They see great potential in working together on technologies and issues of the future.
 - The deteriorating relationship between China and the U.S. is causing many new investors to look for alternative investment spaces.

Challenges:

- India is not the only economic alternative for Europe in the aftermath of COVID-19. There are countries competing to attract foreign investment.
- The **Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement** between India and the EU is still under negotiations.

Way forward:

- India and the EU can consider a **new investment agreement** to promote and facilitate investment in India.
- India should be ready to **join high-technology collaboration** with western countries including in 5G and artificial intelligence.
- The **negotiations on the Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement will need accommodative stand from both sides.**

For related information, refer to:

[CNA dated Jan 19, 2020](#)

Category: ECONOMY

1. Sure power

Context:

- Inauguration of the 750 MW photovoltaic project at Rewa, in Madhya Pradesh.

For more information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated July 11, 2020](#)

Significance of solar power for India:

- The current administration's resolve to tap solar energy to substantially power the economy and everyday life is to be welcomed because it could help chart a **green deal** for the future.
 - The green deal envisages that **future growth and employment should align itself to environmental and sustainability objectives**, particularly in energy production, away from polluting energy sources.
- The increasing share of solar energy in India's power output could **reduce air pollution** in India and avoid the premature deaths attributed to air pollution.
- Increased adoption of solar energy is inevitable to **meet India's commitments under the Paris climate deal.**
- There is the case for greater reliance on solar power, even as a **path for self-reliant industrialisation.**

Concerns:

- India's installed base of this green power source is about 35 gigawatts (GW), and its projected addition of capacity until 2024 is estimated to be of the order of 50 GW. Viewed against the **stated goal of installing 100 GW of solar power by 2022**, there could be a sharp deficit in solar power.
- There is a **lack of a domestic solar manufacturing sector** that can deliver increasing volumes of quality photovoltaic cells, modules and associated equipment.
- Experts have raised concerns over the **lack of appropriate official policies** to meet the high ambitions set for the solar energy sector.
- The low domestic cell manufacturing capacity at 3.1 GW/year (for 2019) has resulted in **heavy reliance on China** for solar energy-related equipment.

Way forward:

Strategic status:

- India should consider making **solar energy a strategic sector**, giving it as much importance as defence. This would ensure appropriate policy measures for the growth of this critical sector.

Appropriate policy measures:

- There is a need for **integrated policies for the sector** fully supported by States.
- India's solar strategy should look at **tapping the best available technology and resources globally and providing impetus to domestic manufacturing**.
- The government should introduce measures to aid competitive domestic manufacturing. The industry must get help to set up facilities and avail **low-cost financing** and be able to invest in intellectual property.

Chinese model:

- The Chinese have been able to register a steady rise from insignificant manufacturing capability in the 1990s, to virtual dominance in the solar energy sector.
- The solar energy sector was able to register notable growth through active government support in identifying and acquiring top technologies globally, importing **critical raw materials such as polysilicon**, acquiring solar manufacturers abroad, and investing in third countries with ready capability. The domestic market was treated with great importance even while promoting exports.

Innovation:

- A forward-looking programme should also look at emerging trends in deploying solar innovatively. These include **newer technologies** such as aesthetic photovoltaic window and roof tiles for buildings, multi-role urban structures, and greater use of residential and commercial buildings to deploy more panels.
- This would open up new avenues for growth in the sector, which would facilitate employment and growth opportunities in India.

Global leadership:

- As the architect of the [International Solar Alliance](#), India needs to show leadership to advance the manufacture and absorption of solar photovoltaic infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Hardly smart about urban health care

Smart Cities Mission:

- The '**Smart Cities Mission**' sought to make 100 selected cities "smart", primarily through an "**Area-Based Development**" model under which a portion of the city would be upgraded by retrofitting or redevelopment.
- The '[Smart Cities Mission](#)' involves the **creation of Special Purpose Vehicles** for the implementation of the projects under the mission.

Public health:

- Public health is an essential local government function in India's constitutional scheme. As per the **12th Schedule of the Constitution, introduced by the 74th Amendment**, "public health" is one of the 18 functions that are to be devolved to the municipalities.

2. Nurturing citizens in social studies

Fundamental duty:

- Fundamental Duties are dealt with in **Article 51A of the Indian Constitution**.
- Some of the major duties mentioned in the Indian Constitution are:
 - To value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.
 - To develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry and reform.
- Read more on [Fundamental Duties](#) at the linked article.

61st Constitutional Amendment:

- India's system of democratic governance is based on the Constitution that prescribes universal adult suffrage with the minimum voting age now being 18, after the **61st Amendment of 1988**.
 - The Sixty-first Amendment of the Constitution of India, officially known as The Constitution (Sixty-first Amendment) Act, 1988, lowered the voting age of elections to the Lok Sabha and to the Legislative Assemblies of States from **21 years to 18 years**.
- Read more about this amendment on [This Day in History dated Dec 20](#).

G. Tidbits

1. Amid deluge, Assam farmer stands out with flood-resistant paddy

- The new variety of paddy sown in 2019 has inspired a majority of cultivators in Golaghat district, Assam to shift over from traditional ones.
- Farmers in the flood-prone areas of Assam have been harvesting the water-resistant Swarna Sub1, developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Manila-based International Rice Research Institute, since 2009.
 - The water-resistant Swarna Sub1, developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Manila-based International Rice Research Institute, since 2009
 - The Sub in its name means submergence.
- According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority, floods in 2020 have affected crops, mainly paddy. The switchover to the flood-tolerant paddy could prove to be beneficial for the farmers in flood-prone areas.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Fundamental Duties:

- The concept of Fundamental Duties has been borrowed from the Irish Constitution.
- Fundamental Duties were added to the Indian Constitution on the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee.

3. While the 42nd Amendment added 8 Fundamental Duties to the Indian Constitution, the rest were added through the 86th Amendment.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

The concept of Fundamental Duties has been borrowed from the Russian Constitution. The 42nd Amendment added 10 fundamental duties. The 11th was added by the 86th Amendment.

Q2. Which of the following chillies have been granted the GI Tag in India?

- 1. Bydagi Chilli
- 2. Guntur Sannam Chilli
- 3. Mizo Chilli
- 4. Bhiwapur Chilli

Options:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

All four chilli varieties from India have been granted GI tag status.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to faults:

- 1. Faults are discontinuities or cracks that are the result of differential motion within the earth's crust.
- 2. While a downthrown block between two normal faults is called graben, upthrown block between two normal faults is called horst.

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

Both statements are correct.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to NATGRID project:

1. It is an integrated intelligence grid connecting databases of core security agencies of the Government of India.
2. The office of NATGRID is attached to the Ministry of Defence.
3. The intelligence gathering mechanism relates to immigration, banking, individual taxpayers, air and train travels.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) is an integrated intelligence grid connecting databases of core security agencies of the Government of India. The intelligence gathering mechanism relates to immigration, banking, individual taxpayers, air and train travels. The office of NATGRID is attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The present circumstances provide an opportune time for India and the EU to build a partnership that is both economic and strategic. Comment. Evaluate the challenges for strengthening the India-EU relationship. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. In the light of India's commitment to tap solar energy, analyze the significance of solar energy to India. Also examine the concerns associated with the sector in the Indian context and suggest suitable remedial measures. (15 marks, 250 words)

