

14 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

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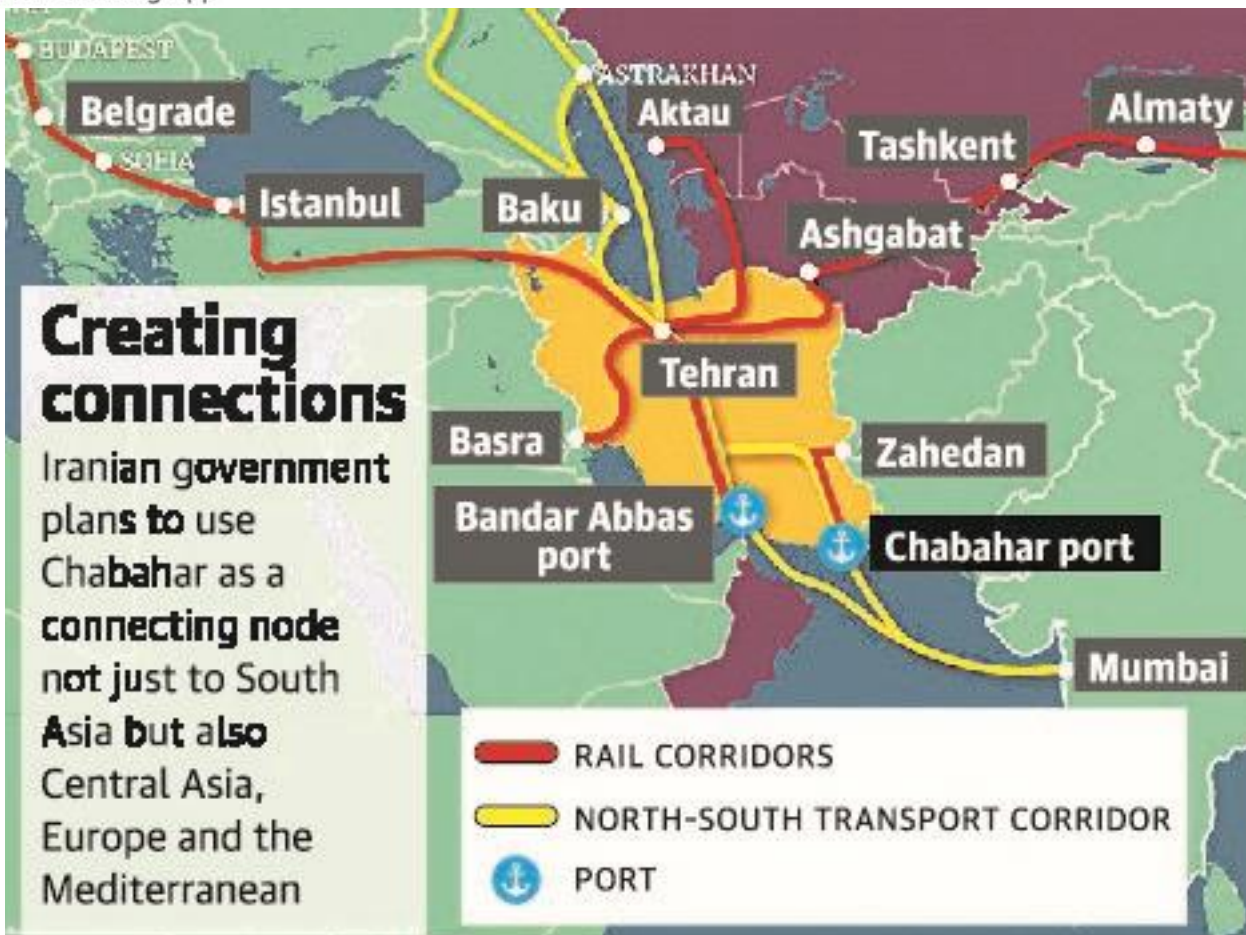
B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Iran drops India from Chabahar rail project, cites funding delay](#)

Context:

The Iranian Government has decided to proceed with the construction of the Chabahar rail project on its own, citing delays from the Indian side in funding and starting the project.



Details:

- Iranian Railways will proceed without India’s assistance, using approximately \$400 million from the Iranian National Development Fund.
- The unexpected development comes four years after the two sides had reached an agreement to construct the 628 km rail line along the Iran-Afghanistan border from Chabahar port to Zahedan.
 - In 2016, India and Iran inked 12 agreements including one for India’s state-owned Indian Railways Construction Ltd (IRCON) to build the railway line as part of a transit corridor to Afghanistan.
 - The line, which as per the plan will eventually reach Zaranj in Afghanistan, is supposed to be completed by March 2022.
- The project was meant to be part of India’s commitment to the trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan to build an alternate trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Why was there a delay?

- Despite several site visits by IRCON engineers, and preparations by Iranian railways, India never began the work, ostensibly due to worries that these could attract U.S. sanctions.
- The U.S. had provided a sanctions waiver for the Chabahar port and the rail line to Zahedan, but it has been difficult to find equipment suppliers and partners due to worries they could be targeted by the U.S.

Concerns:

- Iran's decision to cancel India's participation in the project, coming in the backdrop of a fast-moving strategic deal with China, is a matter of concern for India.

- The development comes as China finalises a massive 25-year, \$400 billion strategic partnership deal with Iran.
- Also, Iran had proposed a tie-up between the Chinese-run Pakistani port at Gwadar and Chabahar in 2019.
- Iran has offered interests to China in the Bandar-e-Jask port 350km away from Chabahar, as well as in the Chabahar duty-free zone.
- Each of those possibilities should be watched closely by India as the Iran-China deal could impinge on India's strategic ties with Iran and the use of Chabahar port.

Chabahar Port:

The Chabahar port is located in the Sistan-Baluchestan province on Iran's south-eastern coast.

Read more about the strategic importance of the development of Chabahar Port to India covered in the [8th July 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. Iran, China set to clinch 25-year deal

Context:

Iran and China are close to finalising a 25-year Strategic Partnership deal worth \$400 billion.

Details:

- The Comprehensive Plan for Cooperation between Iran and China is being finalised by officials in Tehran and Beijing.
- According to the plan, the cooperation will extend from investments in infrastructure, manufacturing and upgrading energy and transport facilities, to refurbishing ports, refineries and other installations, and will commit Iranian oil and gas supplies to China during that period.

This topic has been covered in the [13th July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#). [Click here](#) to read.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. SC gives ex-royals right to manage deity's property

Context:

The Supreme Court has held that the erstwhile Travancore royal family is the "human ministrant" or the shebait (manager) of the properties belonging to Sree Padmanabha, the chief deity of Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple in Kerala.

Background:

- The recent judgement is over a dispute of over a decade on whether the temple and its considerable assets should devolve to the Kerala Government following the death of the Travancore ruler Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma in July 1991.

- Arguments were raised on whether the 26th Constitutional Amendment, which put an end to privy purses enjoyed by erstwhile rulers, would nudge the temple and properties into the hands of the State.
- The Kerala High Court, in 2011, directed the State to take over the temple and exhibit its treasures for public viewing in a museum.

Privy Purse:

- The privy purse was a payment made to the ruling families of erstwhile princely states as a part of their agreement to integrate with India in 1947.
- The 26th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1971 brought an end to this privilege of princely states.

Supreme Court Judgement:

- The recent judgement was given by a division bench comprising of Justices U.U. Lalit and Indu Malhotra.
- Justice Lalit, categorically held that the death of a ruler does not affect the royal family's shebaitship of the temple.
- "Shebaitship was always in the royal family and the Ruler represented the unbroken line of shebait," the judgment said.
- According to the judgement, shebaitship does not lapse in favour of the State by the principle of escheat (reversion of property to the State).

Details:

- The court defined 'shebait' as the "custodian of the idol, its earthly spokesman, its authorised representative entitled to deal with all its temporal affairs and to manage its property".
 - The court traced how the shebaitship descended from King Marthanda Varma.
 - King Marthanda Varma rebuilt the temple and installed a new idol after a fire destroyed the temple in 1686.
 - It referred to how the King surrendered his kingdom in January 1750 and assumed the role of 'Padmanabhadasa' after realising "the futility of battles as a means to an end and the conscious feeling that the Travancore he created was built on a foundation of sacrifice of the liver and limbs of countless numbers who fell due to him and for him."
- Accepting the royals' submission that the temple is a public temple, the court issued a slew of directions for its transparent administration in the future.
- It directed the setting up of an administrative committee, with the Thiruvananthapuram district judge as its chairperson. The panel would take care of the daily administration of the temple.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Nod for Karnataka-T.N. economic corridor

Context:

The Expert Appraisal Committee of the Environment Ministry has recommended the grant of Environmental Clearance for the development of an economic corridor between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Details:

- The Satellite Town Ring Road (STRR) - greenfield highway is part of the Bharatmala Pariyojana and will be implemented by the [National Highways Authority of India](#).
- The project will start in Dabaspeta in Karnataka and end near Devarapalli village on the Tamil Nadu-Karnataka border.

Benefits:

- The new road would provide better, fast, safe and smooth connectivity for commuters between the two States as well as in the region.
- Accident rates are also expected to be under control due to enhanced road safety measures.
- Development of the proposed project road will boost local agriculture and enable farmers to realise better value for their products as well as attract more investment to that region.

Bharatmala Pariyojana:

- The Government of India launched “Bharatmala Pariyojana”, an umbrella program for the highways sector that focuses on optimizing the efficiency of road traffic movement across the country by bridging critical infrastructure gaps.

Read more about [Bharatmala Pariyojana](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Enabling people to govern themselves

Context:

- The author Arun Maira, a former member of the Planning Commission, argues for a more decentralized form of governance model in India.

Background:

- Human civilisation has witnessed the evolution of institutions to manage public affairs. The evolution was to enable human societies to produce better outcomes for their citizens.
 - The institutions of parliamentary democracy which were non-existent 400 years ago have become the dominant form of government the world over.
 - Institutions of global governance, such as the [United Nations](#) and the World Trade Organization, which did not exist even 100 years ago, have a critical role to play in global governance.
- The author argues that the existing institutional structure which has been put through a stress test by the current global health and economic crises has failed to live up to the expectations. The **pandemic has brought to light the existing flaws in current governance institutions.**

- Breakdowns in subsystems during the pandemic such as health care, logistics, business, finance, and administration had to be managed at the same time. The complexity of handling so many subsystems at the same time has overwhelmed governance.
- Solutions for one subsystem have backfired on other subsystems.
 - Enforcement of lockdowns to make it easier to manage the health crisis has led to economic distress simultaneously.
 - The diversion of resources to focus on the threat posed by COVID-19 has increased vulnerabilities due to death from other diseases, and even from malnutrition in many parts of India.
- There seems to be a **mismatch in the design of governance institutions at all levels with the challenges they are required to manage.**
- The author argues that the government must devolve power to citizens in villages and towns in India for them to govern their own affairs.

Arguments in favour of decentralization:

Associated studies:

- Eminent personalities like Gandhiji and his economic adviser J.C. Kumarappa, E.F. Schumacher and Elinor Ostrom (the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in Economics, in 2009) have emphasized the **effectiveness of local governance systems** through their studies. These **studies offer scientific explanations** for why local systems solutions are the best, if not the only way to solve complex systemic problems.

Constitutional requirement:

- In 1992, India amended its constitution with the intent to strengthen grassroots-level democracy by decentralising governance and empowering local administrative bodies. The objective was to create local institutions that were democratic, autonomous, financially strong, and capable of formulating and implementing plans for their respective areas and providing decentralised administration to the people.
- **The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment of the Indian Constitution gives recognition and protection to local governments.**
- The passing of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments made it mandatory for each state to constitute rural and urban local governments.

Interconnectedness of issues:

- The global challenges listed in the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** of the United Nations, are **systemic challenges that are interconnected with each other.**
- Environmental, economic, and social issues cannot be separated from each other and solved by experts in silos or by agencies focused only on their own problems. The knowledge of all the involved aspects must be combined to come up with the most suitable solutions apt for local conditions which would not be possible in a centralized form of government.
- In fact, a good solution to one can create more problems for others, as government responses to the novel coronavirus pandemic have revealed. This would require constant monitoring. A **decentralized form of government allows for better monitoring.**

Suitability to local conditions:

- Though global collaboration aids the development of human society, the solutions being propounded for human society must fit the specific conditions of each country and of each locality within countries too. **Solutions must be local.**

- A major aspect of the decentralized form of government is the awareness of the administration of the ground realities which would be in a better position to formulate policies aligned with the actual local conditions as compared to that in a centralized form of government. This ensures **better policy formulation** which can be more effective.

Participatory governance:

- Decentralisation helps make governance more participatory in nature.
- It is based on the notion that **people need to have a say in decisions that affect their lives**. The centralized form of governance or top-down approach to governance resembles a paternalist government taking care of its wards.
- Apart from policy formulation, policy implementation is also equally important for which the participation of the people is critical. For the local people to support the implementation of solutions, they must believe the solution is the right one for them, and not a solution thrust upon them by outside experts. Therefore, they must be active contributors of knowledge for, and active participants in, the creation of the solutions, which is possible only in a decentralized form of governance.

Inclusivity:

- Decentralisation helps make governance more inclusive.
 - The evolution of **community-based public health and the self-help group movements** helps ensure the development of the most vulnerable and downtrodden sections of society.
 - The availability of resources at the local levels will **ensure availability and accessibility** to even the poor sections.
 - The 73rd and 74th amendment of the Indian Constitution, providing for reservation for the SC/ST and women in the administration, has helped ensure their participation in governance which will have a bearing on the policies relevant to these sections.

Emerging evidence:

- Emerging evidence from states in India such as Kerala, and some countries such as Vietnam and Taiwan, show that they have been able to perform better than others during the ongoing pandemic.
- A hypothesis is that those **states and countries in which local governance was stronger have done much better than others**. This needs to be evaluated further by social and political scientists looking for insights into design principles for good governance systems that can solve basic problems being faced by human society.

Conclusion:

- In the memorable phrase of President Abraham Lincoln, **democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people**. While a government instituted through elections based on universal adult franchise and working for the welfare of the people qualifies as government being of the people and for the people, it still does not effectively represent a government by the people. Governance of the people must be not only for the people. It must be by the people too.
- **The government has to support and enable people to govern themselves**, to fully realise the vision of 'government of the people, for the people, by the people'. An important role for the government is to **'enable governance'**.
- The author argues that a local system of governance is the only way humanity will be able to meet the new ecological and humanitarian challenges looming over it in the 21st century.

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Gains from rains

Context:

- Monsoon rains in India.

Background:

- The monsoon sets in India in the month of June and that process can sometimes be delayed by as much as a week.
- One branch of the monsoon winds starts its journey northwards from Kerala and the other wing, called the Bay of Bengal branch, enters India from the southeast. Both branches eventually converge in the north and usually, this merging and strengthening of the monsoon currents over the mainland take at least until July 15.

Details:

- This year, two significant aspects mark the monsoon season in India:
 - **The monsoon set in at a textbook date of June 1.** This was despite the concerns that [Cyclone Amphan](#) that had ravaged West Bengal would delay the monsoon's entry into India from the Andaman Sea. **For more information on this topic, refer to [CNA dated May 31, 2020](#).**
 - **The monsoon has set a record pace at which it covered the country.** The monsoon covered the entire country by June 25 as against the normal date of 15 July.

For more information on this topic, refer to:

[CNA dated June 27, 2020](#)

- The net result of the above developments was that **India witnessed more rainy days in June and a fairly even distribution across the country.**
 - As per the most recent data available from the [India Meteorological Department \(IMD\)](#), rainfall during the season has been 14% more than what is usual for this period.
 - Except for northwest India, which is staring at a 3% deficit, the rainfall in east, south and central India has posted surpluses of 13%-20%.

Significance:

- A steady, well-spread monsoon spells good news for farmers and the economy.
 - Given the fact that a large portion of Indian agriculture is still dependent on rainfall for irrigation needs, a good rainfall would encourage higher sowing in the Kharif season and higher production.
 - A good produce could entail higher disposable income in the hands of the rural people and hence provide an impetus to the whole Indian economy.

Concerns:

- While good rains in June signal farmers to prepare the soil and sow Kharif crop, the most important months are **July and August. These two months account for two-thirds of the monsoon rain while the month of June only accounts for about 17% of the monsoon rainfall spanning June-September.** Below-normal rainfall in the coming months would be bad for India.

- The coming months would also be the time the **monsoon goes into 'break' conditions**. Prolonged breaks, or an absence of rainfall, can even lead to drought.
- The current figures consider the average for the whole country. The forecast of 'normal rains' obscure the possibility of heavy rains or severe droughts in districts or over larger areas.

Steps to be taken:

- **Short and medium-range forecasts for both the national level and the regional level** need to be strengthened and effectively communicated to the people.

For related information, refer to:

[CNA dated June 3, 2020](#)

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Aircraft carriers to get Indian jets by 2032

What's in News?

The Navy is expected to start receiving new twin-engine aircraft carrier-based fighter aircraft being developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation ([DRDO](#)) by 2032 and it will be a replacement for the Russian MiG-29K carrier jets in service.

- The Navy is expected to get the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL)-built twin-engine carrier aircraft by 2032.
- It will replace the MiG-29Ks in service which are scheduled to start going out by 2034.
- The Navy currently operates Russian-origin carrier INS Vikramaditya and expects to have the first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-I) Vikrant operational by 2022.

2. Afghan goods to arrive by Wagah border

What's in News?

Pakistan will allow Afghanistan to send goods to India via the Wagah border.

- The decision is a part of Islamabad's commitment under the Pakistan-Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement.
- It is expected to boost Afghanistan's exports to India.

Wagah border:

- Wagah is a village situated on the Grand Trunk Road between Amritsar of India and Lahore in Pakistan.
- The Wagah border is known as the Attari border on the Indian side.

3. Will invest \$10 billion in India, says Google chief

What's in News?

Technology giant Google will invest \$10 billion (₹75,000 crore) in India over the next five to seven years with a focus on digitising the economy and building India-first products and services.

- It would be done through a mix of equity investments, partnerships and operational, infrastructure and ecosystem investments.
- According to its CEO, this is a reflection of Google's confidence in the future of India and its digital economy.
- Investments will focus on four areas key to digitisation:
 - Enabling affordable access and information for every Indian in their own language,
 - Building products and services that are deeply relevant to India's unique needs,
 - Empowering businesses on their digital transformation journey,
 - Leveraging technology and AI for social good in areas such as health, education and agriculture.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. INS Vikrant is an Indigenous Aircraft Carrier.
2. INS Vikramaditya was bought from Russia.
3. The Indian Navy currently operates one aircraft carrier only.

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- India bought INS Vikramaditya from Russia. It is a former USSR carrier vessel and entered into service with the Indian Navy in 2013.
- INS Vikrant is an Indigenous Aircraft Carrier under construction by Cochin Shipyard in Kochi, Kerala for the Indian Navy. It is the first aircraft carrier to be built in India.
- The Indian Navy currently operates one aircraft carrier only – INS Vikramaditya.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act:

1. The Seventh Schedule was inserted in the Constitution of India by the 73rd Amendment.
2. Constitutional status was accorded to Panchayati Raj Institutions through the 73rd Amendment Act.
3. It provided that one-third of the seats in all Panchayat councils, as well as one-third of the Pradhan (chairperson) positions, be reserved for women.
4. It fixed the minimum age for contesting in elections to Panchayat at 25 years.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Eleventh Schedule was inserted in the Constitution of India by the 73rd Amendment.
- Constitutional status was accorded to Panchayati Raj Institutions through the 73rd Amendment Act.
- It provided that one-third of the seats in all Panchayat councils, as well as one-third of the Pradhan (chairperson) positions be reserved for women.
- It fixed the minimum age for contesting in elections to Panchayat at 21 years.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Bandar-e-Jask port:

1. Bandar-e-Jask port lies to the west of Chabahar.
2. It is located in the Hormozgan province of Iran.

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:

1. RBI purchases G-Secs under its Open Market Operations to reduce excess liquidity in the system.
2. G-Secs are risk-free gilt-edged instruments.
3. G-Secs are issued by both the Central as well as the State Governments.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- A Government Security (G-Sec) is a tradable instrument issued by the Central Government or the State Governments.
- The purchase of government securities by the RBI under its Open Market Operations will infuse liquidity into the system.
- G-Secs practically carry no risk of default and, hence, are called risk-free gilt-edged instruments. Gilt-edged securities are high-grade investment bonds offered by governments and large corporations as a means of borrowing funds.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the arguments in favour of a decentralized form of governance. Also analyze what are the challenges in the implementation of such a governance model in the Indian context. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. Describe the mechanism of the monsoon rains in India with appropriate diagrams. Discuss the significance of a steady, well-spread monsoon rain for the agricultural sector and the Indian economy. (15 marks, 250 words)