

23 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Case of custodial death registered in A.P.

Context:

A Dalit youth allegedly died in police custody after he was picked up by the police for not wearing a mask in Chirala town in Andhra Pradesh.

Read more about Custodial Deaths covered on [16th February 2020](#) and [4th July 2020](#) CNA.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Salt-loving bacteria turned Lonar lake pink: report

What's in News?

According to a study, the colour of water in Lonar lake in Maharashtra turned pink due to a large presence of the salt-loving Haloarchaea microbes.

Haloarchaea:

- Haloarchaea or halophilic archaea is a bacteria culture, which produces pink pigment.
- It is found in water saturated with salt.

Details:

- Since Haloarchaea produces a pink pigment, it formed a pink colour mat on the water surface in the Lonar Lake.
- The report also concluded that the change in colour was not permanent.
- It said that when the water was allowed to stand still, the biomass settled down, concluding that it was the biomass of these microbes that turned the surface of the water red or pink.

This topic has been covered in [13th June 2020 CNA](#).

2. NGT questions Ministry, OIL on drilling in national park

Context:

The [National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#) has directed the Environment Ministry, Oil India Limited (OIL) and two other entities (Assam State Pollution Control Board and the Assam State Biodiversity Board) to explain how the proposed drilling of seven oil wells in Dibru-Saikhowa National Park was permitted.

Background:

Recently, there was a continuous flow out of gas in Baghjan gas well in Tinsukia district of Assam, following a blowout.

This topic has been covered in [18th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#). [Click here](#) to read.

Details:

- OIL India said that it had obtained permission for the seven wells in 2016 on the basis of the sophisticated ERD [extended reach drilling] technology.
- The Extended Reach Drilling Technology was extensively used to intersect hydrocarbon targets far from the surface or areas of the reservoir that otherwise were difficult to access.

- This technology enabled drilling of wells up to a depth of approximately 4 km from an existing well plinth without entering the protected area.
- According to OIL, drilling will take place at an average of more than 1.5 km outside the demarcated area of the national park where OIL already is carrying out hydrocarbon exploration since the last 15 years.

Extended Reach Drilling (ERD) technology

- The Extended Reach Drilling Technology is directional drilling beneath the earth.
- The technology aims to reach larger areas and longer distances.
- It enables exploration of hydrocarbon deposits horizontally.
- It is done to maximize productivity and drainage capability.

3. Punjab's law plays 'minimal role' in spiking Delhi's pollution: study

Context:

A study argues that Delhi's meteorology and the quantity of chaff burnt play a greater role in worsening air quality than the time chosen by farmers in Punjab to start crop burning.

Background:

- Crop burning is a traditional practice in Punjab and Haryana of razing fields off rice chaff to prepare it for winter sowing.
- It begins around October and peaks in November, coinciding with the withdrawal of southwest monsoon.

Details:

- Subsidies and assured procurement of rice have led to a rise in the rice acreage in these States.
- Coupled with increased farm mechanization, large quantities of rice stubble have increased over the years.
- However, it has been pointed out that a change in Punjab's water policy in 2009 that mandated farmers to delay sowing to late June (to discourage groundwater extraction), led to sowing being delayed by an average of 10 days compared to 2002-2008.
- This, consequently, delayed harvesting and rice chaff burning.
- As a result, the pollutants and the particulate matter from chaff, along with other sources of pollution in Delhi, which stuck in the lower atmosphere of the Indo-Gangetic plain, exacerbated winter pollution.

The study states that the role of legislation appears to be minimal, and indeed can sometimes decrease as well as increase air quality problems depending on the meteorological conditions of the time.

Conclusion:

- According to the study, ultimately, the halting of crop residue burning would greatly aid the newly established National Clean Air Programme [NCAP], which aims to reduce emissions from various sectors including agricultural residue burning.
- The NCAP proposes to reduce pollution by 20-30% in annual PM concentration by 2024.

Category: ECONOMY

1. 'E-commerce sites must state country of origin'

What's in News?

The Centre told the Delhi High Court that all e-commerce entities, including Amazon, Flipkart and Snapdeal, have to ensure the mandatory declaration of country of origin of imported products sold on their respective sites.

- The law relating to the issue has been enacted under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 and the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011.
- The enforcement of the provisions of the Act and Rules rests with the State and Union Territory governments.
 - Whenever violations are observed, action is taken by the legal metrology officials of the State/UT governments in accordance with the law.
- The Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020, under the Consumer Protection Act prescribes that the E-commerce portals would mandatorily have to mention the country of origin which is necessary for enabling the consumer to make an informed decision at the pre-purchase stage on its platform.

Concerns:

- E-commerce portals assert that the law does not mandate a disclosure of the country of origin/manufacture/assembly separately, in case of India-manufactured goods.
- They have argued that, in many cases, finished goods sourced from different countries are packed together or assembled in a third country, prior to their shipment to India. It could not be simply presumed that the Rules intended that the last country of export alone be declared as the "country of origin", unless the law was amended or clarified to expressly state so.

Read more about the E-commerce Rules covered in the [21st July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Set up a High Court for Puducherry

Context:

- The article argues the case for a separate High Court for Puducherry.

Background:

- **Puducherry was a former French colony.** Fifteen years after India gained independence; this small French colony was **liberated on August 16, 1962 and merged with India.**
- Initially, the **jurisdiction of the Madras High Court** was extended to it.

Details:

- Previously, there have been demands for a separate High Court or at least a Bench of the Madras High Court.
 - In 2017, the Puducherry legislature unanimously resolved to have its own High Court. In April 2017, the Pondicherry Bar Association passed a resolution seeking the establishment of the High Court.
 - The state administration has also previously stressed the need for a Bench of the Madras High Court at Puducherry on the lines of the one set up in Madurai.

Arguments in favour of a High Court at Puducherry:

Cost considerations:

- The Puducherry government spends large sums of money towards expenses of the large High Court. Puducherry with not much of a population is having to **share disproportionately high expenses with Tamil Nadu.**
- This amount can be reduced to less than a quarter of the amount spent with a much smaller High Court for Puducherry.
 - According to the Constitution, when a common High Court is established for more than one State, administrative expenses have to be paid only from the consolidated fund of the 'State' in which the principal seat of the High Court is situated.
 - According to the Constitution, **administrative expenses of a High Court at the Union Territory shall be drawn from the 'Consolidated Fund of India'.**

Speedy disposal of cases:

- **The judge to population ratio at Puducherry can be increased** if a separate High Court with four to five judges is established. This can ensure quick action on the pendency of cases.
 - In the **All India Judges Association and Others vs Union Of India (UoI) And Ors.**, the Supreme Court had observed the significance of **increasing the judge strength from the existing ratio of 10.5 or 13 per 10 lakh people to 50 judges for 10 lakh people.**
 - Similar observations were also mentioned in the Law Commission of India Report titled 'Arrears and Backlog: Creating Additional Judicial (wo) manpower', in 2014.
 - As of 2016, the ratio is only 12 judges for one million population.

Access to justice:

- Given the fact that people from Puducherry have to travel to Chennai for appeals at High Court, this leads to considerable expenses and time requirement. This reduces access to justice for the people.
- A High Court at Puducherry would help make access to justice easier for the people.

Aiding Statehood demand:

- A High Court for Puducherry will strengthen voices seeking Statehood.
 - The Constitution enabled the establishment of a legislature and Council of Ministers for certain Union Territories with the intent of providing them Statehood gradually. Out of the **seven Union Territories originally placed under Article 239A**, all except Puducherry were granted Statehood by 1989.

- Most Union Territories under 239A at least had Benches of High Courts when they attained Statehood. Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya had Benches of the Gauhati High Court before they got their own High Courts.

Constitutionally permissible:

- The provisions under the Indian Constitution permit Puducherry to have its own High Court under Article 241.
- **High Courts for Union territories are defined under Article 241 of the Constitution of India**, which states that Parliament may by law constitute a High Court for a Union territory or declare any court in any such territory to be a High Court for all or any of the purposes of this Constitution.

Check on the executive:

- The presence of the Constitutional Court in the capital city acts as a check on the executive and legislature.

Bench of the High Court v/s separate High Court:

- The popular notion that the establishment of a Bench of High Court is easier and economical as compared to setting up a separate High Court is not true. The article argues that even a bench of the Madras High Court as against a separate High Court at Puducherry is unfavourable based on the following arguments.
 - In case of a bench of the Madras High Court, Puducherry will still have to share the expenses of such a large High Court.
 - Judges might not prefer shuttling between Benches at Chennai, Puducherry and Madurai frequently.
 - There has always been a history of protests against the setting up of a regional bench of existing High Courts. The demand for a Bench of the High Court has always been met with stiff resistance from the Bar practising in the Court having jurisdiction.

Conclusion:

- The Puducherry Government could form a committee to prepare a comprehensive report and a draft Bill backing its proposal and forward it to the Central Government.
- The administration can highlight **the need to streamline expenses, the case volume and constitutional rights as arguments for a separate High Court.**

For related information, refer to:

[List of High Courts in India](#)

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Another front

Context:

- For the third time since early June 2020, **China has repeated its claim that Bhutan's eastern boundary was a "disputed" area.**

Background:

- China's claims were first made at a UNDP-led Global Environment Facility conference, when the Chinese representative tried to stop funding for the **Sakteng forest reserve in Bhutan's eastern district of Trashigang**, which abuts Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated July 6, 2020](#)

- Chinese claims in eastern Bhutan come as a surprise for several reasons.
 - The Trashigang area being claimed as disputed by the Chinese **does not share a boundary with China.**
 - Chinese officials have not raised the eastern boundary in **24 rounds of talks with Bhutan**, that began in 1984. Thus far, talks have been only about the Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys in Bhutan's north, and Doklam and other pasturelands to the west, that come up to the trijunction point with India.
- Recently China has referred to a **package solution** to its boundary dispute with Bhutan.
 - The "package solution" for the dispute **involves the swapping of the northern and western areas.** Under this territory swap, Bhutan would be given the disputed areas in its north in exchange for the disputed western areas, including Doklam.
 - Bhutan has previously rejected this package solution, given **India's concerns.**

For more information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated July 22, 2020](#)

Concerns:

For Bhutan

- For Bhutan, the Chinese claim may be seen as a pressure tactic and as an attempt to hurry the scheduling of the next meeting, or to gain leverage in the boundary talks.

For India:

- The Sakteng claim may be aimed at **driving a wedge between India and Bhutan.**
- By claiming Bhutan's eastern boundary, China is attempting to double down on **its claims over Arunachal Pradesh.**
- The repetition of its "package" offer is worrying as it implies that China is not giving up its push for the Doklam plateau, where it has consolidated its military infrastructure and would like to inch towards **India's Chumbi valley, a strategically sensitive location.**

Way forward:

- India and Bhutan must stay the course on their border claims, with the close cooperation and complete understanding they have shared for decades, in order to respond to the Chinese claims purposively.

Category: EDUCATION

1. Transforming higher education

Context:

- The article evaluates the condition of higher education in India and suggests possible reforms for the higher educational sector in India.

Background:

- The requirement for social distancing during the pandemic has led to educational institutes remaining closed despite the phased unlocking in India. There has been a sense of heightened anxiousness and urgency to find solutions to tide over the pandemic-induced crisis in the education sector.
- Much of the discourse on resuming higher education during the pandemic revolves around home-based learning.
- The article argues that apart from finding solutions to provide an **inclusive and affordable home-based education**, there is also the need to overhaul the educational system.

Details:

Ideal learning outcomes:

- There are three ideal learning outcomes of higher education.
 - Providing **knowledge in the relevant discipline** to the students.
 - The education imparted to the students will need to be supplemented with the **skills needed for their jobs/enterprises**.
 - The teaching-learning process is expected to mould their character in such a way that they would be able to play a constructive role in shaping the society and the world at large using the **values and ideals of a modern, progressive society**.

Concerns:

- Apart from a handful of institutions and a small number of extremely self-motivated students, **a vast majority of other students are unable to fulfil the ideal learning outcomes** as discussed earlier.
- There seems to be a **huge gulf between the curriculum taught in the colleges and actual job requirements**.
 - Although India is uniquely positioned in the world to benefit from its demographic dividend, this dividend can actually turn into a liability since those in the population bracket that are ready to join the workforce have practically no skills or knowledge that add to their **employability**.
- There seems to be disproportionate importance being bestowed on completion of the vast syllabus within a prescribed time. There is also the undue emphasis on examinations to evaluate students' knowledge.

Way forward:

- The article argues that as against in normal times when maintaining the status quo or implementing incremental and marginal reforms was sufficient, the pandemic has opened the doors for ushering in **massive, bold and transformational reforms**.
- The article suggests the following reforms in higher education.
 - Need to **completely re-evaluate the syllabus** every now and then to ensure that the syllabus is in line with the industrial requirements.

- There should be an **emphasis on substantive industrial internships** as part of the course work in colleges. This could help bridge the gulf between the university curriculum and actual job requirements.
- The evaluation of the learning outcomes of the students can be a mix of regular assignments, performance in the internship as rated both by the industry and the college, and a light, home-based proctored exam.
- The **syllabus should involve only a very basic outline of essential concepts**. The time saved in attending regular classes in the institutions can be compensated for by spending time on the **development of skills and prosocial attitudes and values**.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR) procedure

- It is a minimally invasive procedure to replace a narrowed aortic valve that fails to open properly which may be an option for those who can't have open-heart surgery.
- It is the replacement of the aortic valve of the heart through the blood vessels (as opposed to valve replacement by open heart surgery).
 - Usually, valve replacement requires an open heart procedure with a “sternotomy”, in which the chest is surgically separated (open) for the procedure.
 - The TAVR procedures can be done through very small openings that leave all the chest bones in place.
- In this procedure, generally, doctors insert a catheter in the patient's leg or chest and guide it to his/her heart.
- The replacement valve is delivered via one of several access methods:
 - In the upper leg,
 - Through the wall of the heart, beneath the collar bone,
 - Through a minimally invasive surgical incision into the aorta,
 - From a temporary hole in the aorta near the belly button through a vein in the upper leg, etc.

G. Tidbits

1. U.S. needs to 'go beyond' alliances, says Jaishankar

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has said that the U.S. needs to learn to work with a more multipolar world and go beyond alliances.
- The comments, made at the U.S. India Business Council's India Ideas Summit, echoed remarks he made earlier this week that India would never be part of an alliance. [Read more](#).
- Both India and the U.S. are currently grappling with a more assertive China and tensions in their bilateral relationships with China.
- He opined that India and the US have the ability, by working together to shape the world.
- He said that the two countries are working on maritime security, counter-terrorism, connectivity, climate change, the knowledge economy.

2. 'India, U.S. should work together to face China'

- Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said countries like India and the U.S. should work together to face the 'challenge' of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC).
- He pointed out that India was key to U.S. President Donald Trump's foreign policy.
- The Secretary listed examples of India and the U.S. working together including the Quad and the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following national parks are located in Assam?

1. Kaziranga National Park
2. Manas National park
3. Orang National Park
4. Dibru-Saikhowa National Park
5. Nameri National Park

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

Assam has five national parks—Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Nameri National Park, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and Orang National Park.

Q2. Bharni, Katchni, Tantrik, Godna, and Kohbar are distinctive styles of which of the following folk paintings?

- a. Madhubani Painting
- b. Warli Painting
- c. Kalamkari Painting
- d. Pattachitra Painting

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Madhubani painting has its origins in Maithili village of Bihar, characterized by line drawings filled in by bright colours and contrasts or patterns.
- Their various styles include Bharni, Katchni, Tantrik, Godna, and Kohbar, which would historically be painted only by women from the upper strata in the caste system, who would make them on mud walls on special occasions.

- The themes & designs widely painted are of Hindu deities such as Krishna, Rama, Siva, Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Sun and Moon, Tulasi plant, court scenes, wedding scenes, social happenings, etc. Floral, animal and bird motifs, geometrical designs are used to fill up all the gaps.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Fishing Cat:

1. It is the state animal of West Bengal.
2. It is classified as Endangered in the IUCN Red List.
3. Fishing Cats are nocturnal.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) is the state animal of West Bengal.
- It has been downlisted to “Vulnerable” from “Endangered” in the IUCN Red List species assessment.
- They are nocturnal and prey on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and scavenges on carcasses of larger animals apart from fish.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to “Haloarchaea”:

1. It is a bacteria culture, which produces pink pigment.
2. They are found in water saturated with salt.

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:

- Haloarchaea or halophilic archaea is a bacteria culture, which produces pink pigment.
- It is found in water saturated with salt.
- Haloarchaea requires salt concentrations in excess of 2 M (or about 10%) to grow, and optimal growth usually occurs at much higher concentrations, typically 20–25%.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the concerns associated with higher education in India and suggest possible reforms to address such challenges. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS paper 2/Education)
2. China's claims in eastern Bhutan are a cause of concern not just for Bhutan but also for India. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS paper 2/International Relations)

