

24 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

SOCIAL ISSUES

- [1. Women officers can now get permanent commission in Army](#)
- [2. Locals mark 6 places for settling Bru refugees](#)

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- [1. U.K., EU rule out quick post-Brexit deal](#)
- [2. 'Pak. failed to give access to Jadhav'](#)

C. GS 3 Related

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- [1. China launches ambitious Mars mission](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

- [1. Conservation, preservation key to Lonar lake development: HC](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- [1. Escalating tensions](#)
- [2. Calibrated balance](#)

F. Prelims Facts

- [1. LS, Assembly bypolls put off](#)
- [2. Credit platform for MSMEs takes shape](#)

G. Tidbits

- [1. Protect financial sector health: Rajan](#)
- [2. India and Israel to work on rapid test](#)
- [3. New GST e-invoice plan from Oct. 1](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Women officers can now get permanent commission in Army

Context:

Formal Government Sanction Letter has been issued by the Ministry of Defence for grant of Permanent Commission (PC) to women officers in the Army.

Details:

- The Supreme Court in February 2020 had given a verdict that directed the government that women officers be granted PC and command postings in all services other than combat.

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

2. Locals mark 6 places for settling Bru refugees

Context:

Six places have been proposed by the non-Brus of Tripura for settling the displaced Brus from Mizoram.

Details:

- Limits have also been placed for the number of families to be accommodated in two subdivisions that have borne the brunt of the 23-year-old refugee crisis.
 - There are 7 relief camps among which the Bru families are distributed in these two subdivisions.

Concerns:

- Non-Bru groups have been maintaining that the Brus were difficult to coexist with.
- The onus was put on the state government by the Bru leaders, to honour a quadripartite agreement in January 2020 for resettling more than 6,500 families in suitable areas.
- The areas proposed by the Joint Movement Committee (comprising Bengali, Mizo and other indigenous communities of the subdivisions of North Tripura district) and those sought by the Bru organisations do not match.

Read more about the Bru Refugee Crisis covered in the [17th January 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. U.K., EU rule out quick post-Brexit deal

Context:

Britain and the [European Union](#) wound up their latest round of post-Brexit trade negotiations.

Details:

- Both the sides ruled out a quick deal but voiced hope for agreement in the coming months.
- The UK formally left the EU on 31 January 2020 and immediately entered into an 11-month transition period.
 - During this period, the UK will continue to follow all of the EU's rules and its trading relationship will remain the same.
- However, it is no longer part of the EU's political institutions - so there are no longer any British Member of the European Parliament (MEPs) in the European Parliament.
- The transition gives both sides some time to decide the terms of the future UK-EU relationship.

- The UK will leave the single market and customs union at the end of the transition.
- A free trade agreement will allow UK goods to move around the EU without extra charges and keep other barriers (like checks) to a minimum.
- If an agreement cannot be reached by 31 December, then tariffs (taxes) and full border checks will be applied to UK goods travelling to the EU.

Way forward:

- A deal has to be reached and be ratified by all 27 EU member states and the UK Parliament.
- Failure to do so would see ties reduced to minimum standards set by the [World Trade Organization](#), leading to high tariffs and serious disruptions to business.

2. 'Pak. failed to give access to Jadhav'

Context:

India has accused Pakistan of stalling the process of providing legal assistance to death row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav.

This topic has been covered in 17th July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. China launches ambitious Mars mission

Context:

China launched the Tianwen-1 Mars rover mission.

Tianwen-1:

- It is China's first fully home-grown Mars mission.
- It was launched atop Long March-5 carrier rocket.
- It consists of an orbiter and a lander/rover duo, a combination of craft that had never before been launched together towards Mars.

Details:

- It is especially striking given that it's China's first attempt at a full-on Mars mission.
- China did launch a Mars orbiter called Yinghuo-1 in 2011, but the spacecraft accompanied Russia's Phobos-Grunt mission. However, the launch failed, leaving the probes trapped in Earth orbit.
- Tianwen-1 is expected to arrive at the Red Planet in February 2021.
- The lander/rover pair will touch down on the Martian surface two to three months later somewhere within Utopia Planitia.
 - Utopia Planitia is a large plain in Mars' Northern Hemisphere.
 - NASA's Viking 2 lander landed there in 1976.

- The solar-powered rover will then spend about 90 Martian days (called sols, and slightly longer than Earth Days), studying its surroundings in detail.
- The orbiter will eventually settle into a polar elliptical orbit.
- The lander apparently will not do any substantive science work, serving as a delivery system for the rover.

Objectives of Tianwen-1:

1. To map the morphology and geological structure.
2. To investigate the surface soil characteristics and water-ice distribution.
3. To analyze the surface material composition.
4. To measure the ionosphere and the characteristics of the Martian climate and environment at the surface.
5. To perceive the physical fields (electromagnetic, gravitational) and internal structure of Mars.

Note:

- Landing on Mars is notoriously difficult. Only the U.S. has successfully landed a spacecraft on Martian soil, doing it eight times since 1976.
- Recently, a UAE orbiter blasted off on a rocket from Japan. And the U.S. is aiming to launch Perseverance, its most sophisticated Mars rover ever.

This topic has been covered in **21st July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis**. [Click here](#) to read.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Conservation, preservation key to Lonar lake development: HC

Context:

The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court has said the development of Lonar lake also includes conservation and preservation of the water body.

Details:

- The Lonar lake was recently in the news as its water turned pink, raising concerns.

This issue has been covered in **23rd July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis**.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Escalating tensions

Context:

- U.S. administration's decision to close China's consulate in Houston.

Background:

- A **tariff war** between the two countries started in 2018. The increased tariffs on Chinese goods by the U.S. received retaliation from the Chinese in equal measure.
- The U.S. has labelled **China a Currency Manipulator**.
- The U.S. has expressed concerns about Huawei, the Chinese technology giant and its role in the 5G technology dissemination. The U.S. has been asking its allies in the western world to **boycott Huawei**.
- The U.S.-China tensions are no longer only about trade and technology. What started as a trade war has snowballed into a larger **geopolitical contest between the two countries**.
- The **U.S. passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act** as a token of support to the Hong Kong protestors. China considers this move of the U.S. as interference in its internal matters and has strongly criticized this move.
- China has repeatedly **blamed the U.S. of not respecting the One China policy** given the U.S.'s outreach to Taiwan.
- The U.S. has announced visa restrictions on Chinese students, imposed sanctions on Chinese officials over a Hong Kong security law and is reportedly considering a sweeping travel ban on the members of China's ruling Communist Party.
- China recently expelled some American journalists.
- [China's activities in the South China Sea](#) have been repeatedly condemned by the U.S. and the U.S. has recently dispatched its aircraft carriers to the region.

Details:

- The order asking China to close its consulate in Houston marks an **escalation in the steadily deteriorating ties between the U.S. and China**. This is the first time a Chinese mission is being closed in the U.S. since the normalisation of diplomatic relations in 1979.
- The U.S. administration has accused the Houston consulate and other Chinese diplomatic missions in the U.S. of **economic espionage, visa fraud and attempted theft of scientific research**.
- China has denied these allegations.

Concerns:

Increasing Anti-China sentiments in the U.S.:

- As against the popular notion that it is only the current U.S. administration that has been taking a hard stance against China, there is growing consensus in the U.S. that a hostile China, resorting to large-scale espionage, poses a serious threat to the U.S.-dominated international order.
- The U.S. Congress has been supportive of the President's confrontational policy towards China.
- This is what makes the crisis dangerous in the long term.

China's response:

- **China has retaliated against every hostile move by the U.S.**
- The U.S.-China crisis is unfolding at a time when China is also acting more assertively in its dealings with other countries in its neighbourhood.
- This approach seems to indicate a message from China that it is ready for a long game of escalation.

New cold war situation:

- The U.S. policies and China's retaliation has done serious damage to bilateral relations that cannot be reversed easily. If the deterioration in relations is not arrested immediately, the U.S. and China **risk a total breakdown in diplomatic relations**.
- The escalation in tensions between the world's two most powerful nations has been unprecedented and something the world hasn't seen since the hostile competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Implications for others:

- The deterioration in U.S.-China ties is bad news for the whole world.
- Given the fact that the U.S. and China are the two largest economies of the world, a breakdown in ties between the two countries could have **adverse implications for the global economy**.

2. Calibrated balance

Context:

- India's **foreign policy** approach.

Details:

New form of non-alignment:

- The External Affairs Minister has emphasized that India has never been part of an alliance system, nor will it ever be. This statement comes at a time when India- U.S. relations have been on the upswing.
- While complete non-alignment worked for India during the Cold War era between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the fact that India and China share a land boundary would always be a factor in a new cold war between the U.S. and China. India would inadvertently be pulled into the new cold war.
- Given the current multipolarity in the world, India would need to take a definite stand on issues thus requiring a **new approach to the non-alignment policy**. This would involve India not rejecting non-alignment in its entirety, but at the same time taking stands on issues without compromising on its independence.

India's approach:

- The assertion of India's strategic independence and resistance to joining any alliance comes as a timely reminder amid speculation that tensions with China will push India into a stronger alliance with the U.S.
 - Despite multiple calls for India and the U.S. to jointly "counter" China, **India has rightly chosen not to raise its tensions with China in any forum other than bilateral talks with China**.
- A notable aspect of foreign policy has been **India's outreach to Russia** during the India-China tensions.
 - The Indian Defence Minister had recently visited Russia. The External Affairs Minister had participated in the Russia-India-China trilateral.
- India has also been seeking to **build coalitions with "middle powers"**, such as the European Union and Japan.

Conclusion:

- Non-alignment as a policy must be rethought, but India must be wary of alliance systems. India has thus far taken a carefully calibrated approach to the evolving situation in global affairs and should continue to do so.

F. Prelims Facts

1. LS, Assembly bypolls put off

What's in News?

Byelections to a [Lok Sabha](#) seat in Bihar and seven Assembly seats in Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala have been deferred by the Election Commission of India “due to some extraordinary circumstances peculiar to these constituencies”.

Bypolls:

- By-elections, also known as bypolls are conducted to fill in the elected offices that have become vacant between general elections.
- In most cases, bypolls are conducted after the incumbent dies or resigns.
- They can also be conducted when the incumbent becomes ineligible to continue in office.

2. Credit platform for MSMEs takes shape

What's in News?

A nationwide pilot of the newly-developed credit protocol infrastructure – OCEN is all set to start.

Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN):

- The credit protocol infrastructure is known as Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN).
- Indian Software Products Industry Round Table (iSPIRT) has developed the platform.
- It will mediate the interactions between loan service providers (usually fintechs and mainstream lenders) including all large banks and NBFCs.
- These will involve multiple banks and thousands of MSMEs.
- Meanwhile, private equity and venture capital players, angel investors, high net worth individuals and others also could be part of this exercise as investors.
- With this, credit is expected to become more accessible for a large number of entrepreneurs and small businesses in India.
- It is believed that this would lead to the democratisation of credit.

G. Tidbits

1. Protect financial sector health: Rajan

What's in News?

Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan's comments on the financial sector's health, at DBS Asian Insights Conference on 'The Economies of a Pandemic'.

- Rajan noted that in a scenario where companies would have to operate at 50-75% of their capacity owing to the pandemic situation, they would end up accumulating a lot of debt with significantly over-leveraged firms likely facing the bankruptcy process.
- He opined that emerging economies like Brazil and India would see a lot of damages uncover as the economy opens up more fully.
- The former RBI Governor has said that the government ought to carefully consider the cost that the financial sector could bear as a result and still remain sound.
- He suggested that the governments should sensibly think about the cost that the financial sector could bear to ensure that they were adequately capitalised, and if not, try to make sure that they had the capacity to infuse capital into the sector.

2. India and Israel to work on rapid test

What's in News?

A special flight from Israel is expected to arrive in India with a team of high-ranking Israeli Defence Ministry research and development team.

- They would develop rapid testing for COVID-19 in under 30 seconds along with their Indian counterparts.

The technologies to be tested in India include:

- An AI-based online voice test analyses recording of a human voice and aims to identify changes using Terra-Hertz (THZ) waves.
- Isothermal testing that allows detection of the virus in a saliva sample with the help of a chemical reaction and produces a result within 30 minutes.
- Testing using Polyamino acids that detects virus proteins in a saliva sample in a few minutes.

3. New GST e-invoice plan from Oct. 1

- According to an official statement, the government will notify a new GST e-invoice scheme under which businesses with a turnover of ₹500 crores and above will generate all invoices on a centralised government portal starting October 1, 2020.
- Earlier, the turnover threshold for businesses was set at ₹100 crores.

GST e-invoice scheme:

- GST e-invoice is the introduction of the digital invoice for goods and services provided by the business firm generated at the government GST portal.
- It is a system in which B2B invoices are authenticated electronically by GSTN for further use on the common GST portal.
- All invoice information will be transferred from this portal to both the GST portal and e-way bill portal in real-time.
- Therefore, it will eliminate the need for manual data entry while filing ANX-1/GST returns as well as generation of part-A of the e-way bills, as the information is passed directly by the IRP to GST portal.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. In which of the following state/s is the Bru Tribe recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) :

1. Tripura
2. Assam
3. Manipur
4. Mizoram

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Brus, also referred to as the Reangs, are spread across the north-eastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram.
- However, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) only in Tripura.
- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, that are less developed among the tribal groups.
- In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- **There are 75 PVTGs. The criteria followed for determination of PVTGs are:**
 - A pre-agriculture level of technology;
 - A stagnant or declining population;
 - Extremely low literacy; and
 - A subsistence level of economy.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to the European Union (EU) :

1. It is an economic and political union of 27 countries where all the members use the Euro as their official currency.
2. It came into force after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty.
3. Switzerland is a member of the European Union.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- It is an economic and political union of 27 countries. 8 EU members (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden) do not use the euro.
- It came into force after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty.
- Switzerland is not a member of the European Union. However, it has signed a number of treaties with the European Union. Switzerland is one of the largest trading partners of the EU.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Tianwen-1:

1. It is China's first fully home-grown Mars mission.
2. It is China's first Mars orbiter.
3. It consists of an orbiter and a solar-powered rover.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Tianwen-1 is China's first fully home-grown Mars mission.
- It consists of an orbiter and a lander/rover duo, a combination of craft that had never before been launched together towards Mars.
- China had attempted the launch of a Mars orbiter called Yinghuo-1 in 2011. The spacecraft accompanied Russia's Phobos-Grunt mission. However, the launch failed, leaving the probes trapped in Earth orbit.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to General Financial Rules (GFRs):

1. They are a compilation of rules and orders of the Government of India to be followed while dealing with matters involving public finances.
2. They were first issued in 1947 and have not been modified ever since.
3. They are issued by the Department of Financial Services under the Finance Ministry.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- General Financial Rules (GFRs) are a set of rules that deals with matters concerning public finances.
- They were first issued in 1947, and later were modified in 1963, 2005 and the latest in 2017.
- They are issued by the Department of Expenditure under the Finance Ministry.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Amid speculation that tensions with China will push India into a stronger alliance with the U.S, India has done well to adopt a new form of non-alignment policy. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS paper 2/International Relations)
2. The steadily deteriorating ties between the U.S. and China will have implications for other countries too. Analyze. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS paper 2/International Relations)

