

25 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India, Sri Lanka seek to reset ties in the time of polls and pandemic](#)

Context:

According to experts, amidst the pandemic and time for polls in Sri Lanka, both India and China have diverse avenues to deepen.

Recent Developments:

- Despite having watched the [India-China stand-off](#) at Galwan Valley closely because two of its closest partners were on either side of the tension, Sri Lanka did not comment on the development.

- Subsequently, the controversy around the East Container Terminal (ECT) in Colombo came to the surface. **Read More about the issue covered in [3rd July 2020 CNA](#).**
- Around the same time, India was holding close and constructive discussions with Sri Lanka, on Colombo's pending request for a debt totalling \$960 million freeze, and for swapping currency under bilateral and SAARC arrangements.
- The Reserve Bank of India has agreed to a \$400 million currency swap facility for Sri Lanka till November 2022.
 - The Central Bank of Sri Lanka had sought swap facility to strengthen its foreign exchange reserves.
 - Sri Lanka owes \$960 million to India.

Way forward – In strengthening India - Sri Lanka ties:

- The close but complex bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka have both history and baggage.
- India's attitude and relationship with her immediate neighbours depend on their appreciation of India's regional security concerns; they would serve as buffer states in the event of an extra-regional threat and not proxies of the outside powers. Sri Lanka must not forget this guidance in dealing with India.
- Examples of Singapore-Malaysia and New Zealand-Australia indicate that a smaller country's economic success is tied to having a strong or at least stable relationship with its larger neighbour.
- The bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka will always be an important cornerstone of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia.
- Both India and Sri Lanka should focus on increasing the volume and quality of people-to-people links, without assuming they will naturally result from geographical proximity.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Nearly 28 lakh people affected by Assam floods, toll rises to 93

Context:

Floods have devastated Assam, inundating the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR), putting the lives of several endangered species under threat, besides affecting about 28 lakh people.

Issues:

- Large swathes of East Siang and other districts along the flow of river Siang in Arunachal Pradesh have also been affected.
 - Siang is one of the three rivers that form the Brahmaputra in Assam downstream.
- Goalpara continued to be the worst-affected district.
 - River Brahmaputra takes a sharp turn at Goalpara village, causing maximum red alerts and flooding in that area.

Role of floods in Kaziranga's ecosystem:

- Assam is traditionally flood-prone. KNPTR, sandwiched between the Brahmaputra river and the Karbi Anglong Hills, is no exception.
- Floods are considered necessary for Kaziranga as it is a riverine ecosystem.

- The entire area of Kaziranga, formed by alluvial deposits from the Brahmaputra and its tributaries is centred around the river.
- The regenerative nature of floods helps replenish Kaziranga's water bodies and maintain its landscape, a mix of wetlands, grasslands and semi-evergreen deciduous forests.
- It helps get rid of unwanted plants, such as water hyacinth, which collect in huge masses in the landscape.
- Animals adapt naturally to floods but when the waters hit a certain level, they gravitate towards safer, higher ground in the Karbi Anglong hills.

Way forward:

- Over the years, artificial highlands (111 in the nineties, 33 in 2016-17) have been built inside the park for wild animals to take refuge in during floods.
- Emphasis is needed to secure animal corridors and ensuring a safe passage to the Karbi hills.
- In April 2019, the Supreme Court banned all types of mining and related activities along the park's southern boundary and in the entire catchment area of the rivers that originate in the Karbi Anglong hill ranges and flow into Kaziranga, as well as new construction activities in private lands on nine animal corridors.

Category: DEFENCE

1. India invites Israeli defence companies to strengthen ties

Context:

India has invited greater participation from Israeli defence companies under the new liberalised foreign direct investment (FDI) regime in defence manufacturing.

Details:

- In May 2020, the government increased the limit for FDI in defence through the automatic route from 49% to 74%. [Read more.](#)
- Indian Armed Forces are undertaking a series of emergency defence purchases, including from Israel, amid ongoing tensions with China. [Read more.](#)
 - The decision has been taken by the Army to order another batch of 12 launchers and around 250 missiles of Spike Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) and additional Heron Undermanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), among others, from Israel through the emergency procurement route.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Banks' gross NPAs may climb to as much as 14.7% by March: RBI

Context:

Reserve Bank of India's observation on gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs).

Details:

- RBI has observed that the GNPA ratio of SCBs may escalate to 14.7% under a very severely stressed scenario, which assumes hypothetically that GDP would suffer a contraction of 8.9% in 2020-21.
- Earlier in its Financial Stability Report, RBI had predicted that the GNPA ratio of all SCBs may increase to 12.5% by March 2021.
- On the assessment of systemic risk, the RBI said in its report that the Indian financial system remained stable, notwithstanding the significant downside risks to economic prospects.

Read more about [Non-Performing Assets](#).

Gross Non-Performing Assets:

- Gross NPA is the summation of all loan assets that are classified as NPA as per RBI guidelines.
- Gross NPA consists of Substandard Assets, Doubtful Assets and Loss Assets.

Net Non-Performing Asset:

- For precautions and to meet unforeseen losses, banks are required to make provisions as per RBI guidelines. RBI issues guidelines on Income Recognition, Asset Classification and Provisioning.
- From the gross NPA, provisions provided are netted to arrive at Net NPA.
- Net non-performing assets = Gross NPAs – Provisions.

Impact of High NPAs on Banks:

- NPA is an important financial component that is considered while analyzing a bank. It indicates the asset quality of banks.
- Banks with high NPAs have lesser funds to advance because of the higher provisioning that they have to provide.
- Lesser lending would mean lesser interest income, impacting the profitability of the banks.
- Banks would have to face difficulty maintaining [capital adequacy ratio](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: DEFENCE

1. Arms and the women

Background

[CNA dated July 24, 2020: Women officers can now get permanent commission in Army](#)

Significance

- It breaks gender stereotyping and provides equal opportunities for women in the Army.
- This was a long-fought battle. It will go a long way in ending a prejudice associated with the Army.

- The Army is often seen as the preserve of men, but enough women have fought heroic battles to bust that myth, from [Rani of Jhansi](#) in the past to Squadron Leader Minty Agarwal of the Indian Air Force, who in 2019 “was part of the team that guided Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman during the Balakot airstrike carried out by the IAF”.
- Today mindsets have changed, young men are more used to seeing women as peers and occupying leading public roles.
 - A woman commanding them in combat would not blow their mind, as it might have older generations of army men.

Way forward

- So far, women make up only 3.89% of the Indian army, 6.7% of the navy and 13.2% of the air force, excluding the various medical services, which indicates there are less women in the armed forces. Gradually the number has to be increased.
- The physical and mental standards for the role must be uniform and gender-neutral, and women and men free to compete for them. A change in the mindset and gender sensitization is the need of the hour.
- Countries like the United States and Israel had allowed women to play a key role in active combat. But in India, the Supreme Court had to forcefully nudge the government to make women’s role in the Army more inclusive.
- A gender barrier may have fallen, but the war against inequity is far from over.

Category: POLITY

1. Judicial indiscipline: On Rajasthan political crisis

Staying away from political thickets

Background

- Congress Chief Whip had submitted a petition to the Speaker in the Rajasthan Assembly listing reasons that could be considered as grounds for disqualifying MLAs in reference to rebel Congress leader Sachin Pilot and 18 dissident Congress MLAs.
- The reasons ranged from missing out Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meetings, conspiring to topple the elected government in Rajasthan, to hostile conduct and remaining inaccessible.

Context

- The Rajasthan High Court ordered status quo to be maintained on the disqualification notices issued by Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi to the rebel Congress MLAs.
- The court order has essentially put the disqualification procedure on hold.

Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court heard Rajasthan Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi’s petition challenging the Rajasthan High Court order barring Joshi from conducting disqualification proceedings against Sachin Pilot and 18 other rebel Congress MLAs, and deferred the case. It will be heard on 27th July.
- We will have an elaborate analysis of this issue post the hearing.

Anti-Defection Law

F. Prelims Facts

1. Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque in Istanbul

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan led the first Muslim prayers attended by thousands in Hagia Sophia since the controversial reconversion of the iconic Istanbul cathedral into a mosque.

- Hagia Sophia is the former Greek Orthodox Christian patriarchal cathedral, later an Ottoman imperial mosque and then a museum located in Istanbul, Turkey.
- It was built in 537 AD during the reign of Justinian I, the Eastern Roman emperor.
- The Byzantine architecture monument is famous for its large dome.
- In 1453, when Constantinople fell to Ottoman forces, it was turned into a mosque.
- In 1934, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, converted the mosque into a museum in an attempt to make the country more secular.
- The Council of State, the highest administrative court, unanimously cancelled a 1934 decision by modern Turkey's founder to turn it into a museum, saying it was registered as a mosque in its property deeds. Mr. Erdogan then swiftly ordered the building to reopen for Muslim worship.
- It is a [UNESCO](#) World Heritage Site.

G. Tidbits

1. China asks U.S. to shut Chengdu consulate

- China has ordered the U.S. consulate in the South-western city of Chengdu to close.
- The order comes in retaliation after Washington ordered Beijing to close its diplomatic mission in Houston.
- The U.S. has an embassy in Beijing as well as five consulates in mainland China, plus one in Hong Kong.
- The Chengdu consulate, established in 1985, covers the troublesome region of Tibet and has been at the centre of past controversy.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque:

1. It is an example of Byzantine architecture.
2. It was built as the Christian cathedral of Constantinople.
3. It was converted into a mosque by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Hagia Sophia is the former Greek Orthodox Christian patriarchal cathedral, later an Ottoman imperial mosque and then a museum located in Istanbul, Turkey.
- It was built in 537 AD during the reign of Justinian I, the Eastern Roman emperor.
- The Byzantine architecture monument is famous for its large dome.
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- In 1934, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, converted the mosque into a museum in an attempt to make the country more secular.
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Q2. Which among the following treaties established the modern border between Turkey and Greece?

- a. Treaty of Lausanne
- b. Treaty of Alexandropol
- c. Treaty of Sèvres
- d. Treaty of Ankara

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

Treaty of Lausanne ended the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies and established the modern border between Turkey and Greece.

Q3. Which of the following are correctly matched?

1. Kuchipudi – Tamil Nadu
2. Sattriya – Arunachal Pradesh
3. Kathakali – Kerala
4. Odisha – Odissi

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

Kuchipudi is a classical dance form from Andhra Pradesh and Sattriya from Assam.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) :

1. It is a constitutional body established in 1993.
2. President appoints the Chairman and members of NHRC on the recommendation of a high-powered committee headed by Prime Minister.
3. It has the powers of a Civil Court.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- NHRC of India is an independent statutory body established on 12 October 1993 as per the provisions of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
- President appoints the Chairman and members of NHRC on the recommendation of a high-powered committee headed by Prime Minister.
- It has the powers of a Civil Court.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The Government might have sanctioned permanent commission for women officers in the Army, but it must achieve gender equality by establishing professional standards and adhering to them without any bias. Analyze. (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS Paper 3, Defence)
2. The anti-defection law has proved to be ineffective and needs a major overhaul. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS Paper 2, Polity)

