

# 28 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Israeli team arrives for trials of rapid tests for COVID-19

#### Context:

An Israeli team led by a high ranking research and development (R&D) defence official have arrived in India.

**Details:**

- The multi-pronged mission is code-named “Operation Breathing Space”.
- The mission will be coordinated by Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and the Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Ministry of Health.

This topic has been covered in the [25th July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

## 2. China chairs meet with Afghan, Pak., Nepal Foreign Ministers

**Context:**

China convened a rare quadrilateral dialogue with the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan.

**Details:**

- At the meeting, China pledged to strengthen cooperation among the four nations in dealing with the [COVID-19](#) pandemic as well as boosting their economic recoveries, including through regional connectivity projects.
- Four proposals were outlined at the meet, including for the four countries to cooperate under China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
  - Extension of the [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#) to Afghanistan was proposed.
  - A proposal was made for taking forward, an economic corridor plan with Nepal, called the Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network.
- China has also offered its expertise in fighting COVID-19 and said vaccines that are being developed would be shared with the three countries.
- According to the statement by Beijing, the four countries pledged their support to the ongoing peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan.

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. ‘PM-CARES funds cannot go to NDRF’

**Context:**

Government’s response to a bunch of petitions calling for the transfer of funds from PM-CARES to the NDRF to help fight the pandemic.

**Details:**

- The Government has maintained in the Supreme Court that the PM-CARES Fund is a public charitable trust to which anyone can contribute.
- It also asserted that it is a misconception that contributions received by a public trust like PM-CARES can be transferred to a statutory fund like the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

This topic has been covered in the [10th July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

## 1. Centre to proceed with divestment of 23 PSUs: FM

### Context:

The Finance Minister has said that the government is working on completing the stake sale process of about 23 public sector companies whose divestment had already been cleared by the Cabinet.

### Divestment:

- Disinvestment means the sale or liquidation of assets of Central and state public sector enterprises, projects, or other fixed assets by the government.
- Divestment can be:
  - Minority Divestment: where the government retains a majority stake in the company, thus ensuring management control (<51%).
  - Majority Divestment: where, post divestment, the government holds a minority stake in the company.
  - Complete Privatisation: it is a form of majority divestment where 100% of the control is passed on to the buyer.

### Strategic Divestment:

- It is the transfer of the ownership and control of a public sector entity to some other (private) entity.
- Strategic sale implies a kind of privatization, unlike simple divestment.

### Why is Divestment done?

- To reduce the fiscal burden on the exchequer.
- To raise money for meeting specific needs.
- To bridge the revenue shortfall from other regular sources.
- To introduce, competition and market discipline.
- To diversify the ownership of PSU in order to enhance the efficiency of individual enterprise.

### Details:

- As part of the [Aatmanirbhar Bharat](#) package, the government had announced opening up of all sectors for private participation.
- For the 2020-21 fiscal, the Union Government has set a disinvestment target of ₹2.10 lakh crore.
- The Finance Ministry has asserted that "Strategic disinvestment has been guided by the basic economic principle that the government should not be in the business to engage itself in manufacturing/producing goods and services in sectors where competitive markets have come of age, and economic potential of such entities may be better discovered in the hands of the strategic investors due to various factors, e.g. infusion of capital, technology up-gradation and efficient management practices,".
- In disposing of five entities -- HPCL, REC, NPCC, HSCC and DCIL -- in the last two years, the government did not make profitability a criterion.

## 2. Plans afoot to boost drug, medical devices production, says Minister

**Context:**

Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers has outlined plans to boost local manufacturing in bulk drugs and medical device industries.

**Details:**

- India has a robust \$40 billion pharmaceutical sector.
- It is seen as a reliable supplier of generic drugs.

**Concerns:**

- According to the Minister, the pandemic has exposed weaknesses in global supply chains and posed a threat to the health security of the country.
- India's active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) imports stand at around \$3.5 billion per year.
  - India is reliant on China for about 70% of API.
- India imports about 86% of the materials used to make medical devices.

**Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient:**

- All drugs are made up of two core components namely Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API), which is the central ingredient, and excipients.
- APIs are also called bulk drugs. Some of them are very critical as they are used in the production of essential medicines.
- APIs are often cheaper to import than to make.

**Way forward:**

- Efforts are being taken to reduce India's reliance on imports, particularly from China.
- The plans include setting up research and manufacturing sites across the country to develop drugs and medical devices.
- Parks are being established, based on plug and play model with prior regulatory approvals, state of the art infrastructure, excellent connectivity, affordable land, competitive utility charges, and a strong R&D ecosystem.
  - These would begin operations in about 2 or 3 years.
- The government must consider the industry executives' call and provide subsidies to boost local manufacturing.

**Category: DEFENCE****1.5 Rafales make home run from France****Context:**

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is scheduled to induct the first batch of five Rafale fighter jets from France at the Air Force Station.

**Details:**

- These five include three single-seater and two twin-seater aircraft.

- They would be inducted into the Golden Arrows squadron of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

### Significance:

- It is a powerful symbol of the strategic partnership between India and France.
- The introduction of Meteor Beyond Visual Range air-to-air missile is widely recognised as a game-changer in air combat with a range of over 150 km.
- The SCALP long-range stand-off attack air-to-ground missile and the MICA multi-mission [air-to-air missiles](#) into the IAF's inventory will give the force an edge in the neighbourhood.
  - The Storm Shadow/SCALP is a long-range, air-launched, stand-off attack missile. It is capable of engaging the targets precisely in any weather conditions during day and night.
  - MICA is the multi-mission air-to-air missile system for the Rafale. It has a high level of tactical flexibility in order to meet Beyond Visual Range (BVR) multi-target/multi-shoot.

Read more about this topic covered in [21st July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

### Note:

- In addition to these, with the ongoing border tensions, the IAF has decided to procure HAMMER (Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range) medium-range air-to-ground missiles for the Rafales.
  - It has a range of 60-70 km.
  - The HAMMER missile lends India the capability to destroy bunkers, hardened shelters and other targets in all other terrains including the mountainous locations such as Eastern Ladakh.
  - A single Rafale fighter jet can carry up to 6 HAMMER missiles to hit multiple targets simultaneously.

## Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### 1. Conservationists elated as tiger numbers up

#### Context:

The number of Tigers is on the rise in Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR).

#### Details:

- According to the tiger census carried out by the Wildlife Institute of India and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (2018) and released on July 29, 2019, Andhra Pradesh has 48 adult tigers and Telangana 26, in comparison with 68 (2014), 72 (2010) and 95 (2006).
- Of the 3,980 tigers left in the world, India, with 2,226, accounts for 75%.
- Tiger is at the top of the food pyramid and is vital to maintain the ecosystem.

#### Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR):

- It is the largest Tiger Reserve in India.
- It was notified in the year 1978 and came under the protection of Project Tiger in 1983.
- The reserve spreads over five districts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- The multipurpose reservoirs, Srisailem and Nagarjunasagar, are located in the reserve.
- The area consists mostly of the Nallamala Hills.

- The Krishna river cuts its basin almost 200 m (660 ft) deep over a distance of 130 km (81 mi) through the reserve.

## Category: SECURITY

### 1. India bans 47 more Chinese mobile apps

#### Context:

- A month after banning 59 Chinese mobile applications, the Union Government has banned 47 more.
- These apps are believed to be the clones of the ones that have already been banned.

The issue has been covered in the [30th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

## Category: NUTRITION

### 1. The majority cannot afford a balanced diet

#### Context:

- The **State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI 2020) report** released by the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) in partnership with other United Nations organisations.

#### Details:

#### Methodology of the study:

- The study defined three types of diets.
  - **Basic energy sufficient diet:** This takes into consideration only the basic calorie requirements of a person and the required calorie intake is met by consuming only the cheapest starchy cereal available. 2,329 Kcal for a healthy young woman of 30 years is taken as the standard reference.
  - **Nutrient adequate diet:** This involves meeting the required calorie norms and also the stipulated requirement of **23 macro- and micro-nutrients**. This diet includes the least-cost items from different food groups.
  - **Healthy diet:** This type of diet, apart from meeting the calorie norm and the macro- and micro-nutrient norm, also allows for the **consumption of a diverse diet**, from several food groups.
    - The Indian recommendation for a healthy diet includes consumption of items from six groups: starchy staples, protein-rich food (legumes, meat and eggs), dairy, vegetables, fruits, and fats.

#### Observations for South Asia:



- The **energy-sufficient diet is affordable to a poor person.**
  - A poor person is defined as having an income of \$1.9 a day.
- The nutrient-adequate diet would require a person with income just above the poverty line to spend his/her entire daily expenditure on food (ignoring other essential needs such as fuel, transport, rent, medicines). Even in such a scenario he/she would not be able to afford the nutrient-adequate diet.
- The **healthy diet is totally unaffordable for those with incomes at even twice the poverty line.**
- The SOFI Report estimates that 18% of South Asians cannot afford the nutrient-adequate diet and 58% of South Asians cannot afford the healthy diet.

#### **Concerns:**

- The analysis of the “cost and affordability of healthy diets around the world” in the SOFI 2020 report has revealed some concerns for India.
  - The **Indian poverty line is lower than the international poverty line used in the SOFI Report.** It corresponds to roughly \$1 a day at international PPP prices. This implies that the **poor in India cannot even afford a nutrient-adequate diet and even those with incomes of twice the international poverty line cannot afford a healthy diet.** This indicates that a large majority of Indians cannot afford a balanced diet.
  - The **pandemic and the consequent lockdowns would have only worsened the situation.** The number of people who cannot afford a healthy diet will have risen as employment and incomes collapsed for the majority of workers in the informal sector.
  - The **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana**, which offers an additional 5 kg of wheat or rice and 1 kg of gram or lentils a month free of cost to all households with ration cards, though is indispensable during this crisis, is still utterly inadequate to address the challenge of malnutrition.

#### **Way forward:**

- This new analysis proves that the problem of poor nutrition in India is mainly the unaffordability of good diets, and not the lack of information on nutrition or tastes or cultural preferences as previously believed. Hence to reduce malnutrition and food insecurity, **India will have to address the problem of affordability of healthy diets.**
- This could involve a **higher allotment of foodgrains to the needy keeping in mind the nutritional requirements.**

### **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

#### **1. Modern tools, age-old wisdom**

##### **Context:**

- India - Sri Lanka ties.

##### **Details:**

##### **Noticeable aspects of the relationship:**

##### *Buddhism:*

- **Religious, cultural and social affinities** of the two nations have been a noticeable aspect of the relationship.
- The **advent of Buddhism in Sri Lanka** during the time of Emperor Ashoka has been a major aspect of the cultural link between India and Sri Lanka.
- There has been a continuous movement of Buddhist monks between India and Sri Lanka.
- The many Buddhist sites in India and the Hindu places of worship in Sri Lanka have attracted people from both countries.

#### *Economic:*

- The ancient capital city of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka had housed an international community which included traders from India.
- Colonialism by the European powers reshaped the Sri Lankan economy. **Labour from south India was brought to Sri Lanka to work in plantations.**
- Currently, **India is a major trading partner of Sri Lanka** and is one of the major export destinations for Sri Lankan products. Sri Lanka continues to remain a major tourist attraction among Indian tourists. Sri Lanka also receives a substantial amount of foreign investment from India.

#### *Proximity:*

- Being the closest country to each other, distance or connectivity has never been an issue for the bilateral relationship.
- There has always been a **free exchange of ideas, trade and intellectual discourse between the two nations.**

#### **Significance of the relationship:**

- **Sri Lanka's strategic location** makes it an important player in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This would have an impact on not only the economic dimension but also on the security aspect of both countries.
- The **socio-economic development of Sri Lanka has remained linked to India** given the proximity of India to Sri Lanka.
- India being the closest nation can and has always been the first responder to any urgent needs of Sri Lanka. India being the major naval power in the region played an important role in humanitarian and disaster response post the Indian Ocean Tsunami which devastated Sri Lanka.
- Unlike the Chinese model of capital led investment, India has always emphasized on people owned development in Sri Lanka. This would offer Sri Lanka a sustainable development model as against the debt trap diplomacy of China.
- India can help Sri Lanka with the peaceful settlement of its **Tamil issue.**
- Sri Lanka which has been witness to terrorist attacks recently can gain from **India's counter-terrorism capability and intelligence networks in the region.**

#### **Concerns:**

- The **asymmetry** in terms of geographic size, population, military and economic power has had an adverse impact on the relationship with political parties in Sri Lanka using this to accuse India of Big Brotherly behaviour.
- The Tamil issue in Sri Lanka has been a challenging aspect of the bilateral relationship.
- Recently, Sri Lanka seems to be tilting towards the Chinese. The **growing Chinese influence in Sri Lanka** seems to be coming at the cost of India - Sri Lanka relations.

#### **Way forward:**



### Common values and interests:

- Partnerships with other countries must be sought by each country keeping in mind the **non-alliance foreign policies** of the countries. Both countries must seek to harmonise strategic and other interests in line with common values and interests.

### Deepening economic relations:

- There is scope for deepening economic relations between the two countries with Indian capital expertise making use of Sri Lankan resources and location to **build business hubs and modern value chains in the region.**
- The partnerships across the economic and social spectrum can **promote people-to-people bonhomie.**

## Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### 1. In reverse gear

This issue has been discussed previously under:

[CNA dated July 26, 2020](#)

## F. Prelims Facts

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Tidbits

### 1. 'Targeted infra push can reignite economy'

#### What's in News?

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has called for a targeted infrastructure push to help give impetus to the economy.

- The RBI Governor has identified five sectors i.e, infrastructure, farm, renewables, information & communication technology (ICT)-start-ups and value supply chains as capable of bolstering the economy.
- He pointed out that harnessing the potential in these could propel India to a leadership position in the league of nations.

### 2. GST cess falls 42% short in FY20

#### What's in News?

The Centre made up a 42% shortfall in Goods and Services Tax compensation cess collection in 2019-20 by using balance of cess from previous years, plus a transfer from the Consolidated Fund of India.

- The final instalment of GST compensation for the year has been released to the States. This completes the delayed compensation payments for the financial year.
- GST revenue fell 41% in the first quarter of 2020-21, indicating that the shortfall in cess collections and likely delays in payments to States is likely to continue in the current financial year.

**Note:**

The GST regime, introduced in 2017, promised that the Centre would pay States full revenue compensation for the first five years, calculated using 2015-16 as the base year, assuming a 14% annual growth rate in a State's revenue.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to the "Strait of Hormuz":**

1. It lies between Iran and Qatar.
2. It links the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.
3. It contains the islands of Qeshm and Hengam.

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

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Strait of Hormuz is a strategic strait that links the Persian Gulf (west) with the Gulf of Oman.
- It lies between Iran and Oman.
- It contains the islands of Qeshm (Qishm), Hormuz, and Hengam (Henjam).

**Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Nagarjunasagar Srisaïlam Tiger Reserve:**

1. It is the largest Tiger Reserve in India.
2. It spans across five districts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
3. River Krishna flows through the reserve.

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

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

All the statements are correct.

**Q3. Which of the following is the nodal agency for divestment in India?**

- a. Department of Revenue
- b. Department of Financial Services
- c. Department of Investment and Public Asset Management
- d. Department of Economic Affairs

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

The Department of Disinvestment was one of the Departments under the Ministry of Finance. It was renamed as the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) in 2016. DIPAM has been made the nodal agency for disinvestment.

**Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to World Migration Report:**

1. It is published by the International Labour Organisation.
2. It is released annually since the year 2000.

**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: d**

**Explanation:**

- World Migration Report is the flagship publication series of the [International Organization for Migration](#).
- The World Migration Report presents data and information on human migration together with the analysis of complex and emerging migration issues.
- It is released biennially.
- The World Migration Report was first published by IOM in the year 2000 with the aim of promoting 'a better understanding of the main migratory movements that are occurring across the globe'.

1. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI 2020) report observes that the unaffordability of good diets is a major contributor to nutritional insecurity in India. Suggest suitable measures to address this challenge. (10 marks, 150 words) (GS Paper 2/Nutrition)
2. Analyze the significance of and challenges to the India - Sri Lanka bilateral relationship. Suggest measures to strengthen this relationship further. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS paper 2/International Relations)

