

29 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- [1. Invoke NSA in abduction, murder case, says Yogi](#)
- [2. Centre unable to pay States' GST dues: official](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- [1. Working with India to make clean power accessible: U.K. Minister](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

- [1. At 2,967 tigers, India's capacity at peak](#)
- [2. Baghjan blowout: panel faults OIL on safety](#)

DEFENCE

- [1. 'Notification on 74% FDI in defence soon'](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- [1. RIC, a triangle that is still important](#)
- [2. The South Asian migrant crisis](#)

F. Prelims Facts

- [1. States leverage digital resources as pandemic keeps schools shut](#)

G. Tidbits

- [1. 'COVID-19 will lead to rise in child wasting'](#)
- [2. 3 bn animals affected by Australia bushfires: WWF](#)
- [3. China halts HK extradition pacts with Canada, Australia and U.K.](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Invoke NSA in abduction, murder case, says Yogi

Context:

The chief minister of Uttar Pradesh has asked officials to consider evoking the National Security Act against a person involved in murder and making a ransom call for ₹20 lakh to his family.

National Security Act (NSA):

- NSA is a preventive detention law. The NSA empowers the Centre or a State government to detain a person to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to national security.
- The government can also detain a person to prevent him from disrupting public order or for the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community.

Read more about the National Security Act, covered in the [17th February 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. Centre unable to pay States' GST dues: official

Context:

Finance Secretary has informed the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance that the government is in no position to pay the GST share of States as per the current revenue sharing formula.

Details:

- The Finance Ministry recently said that the Centre had released the final instalment of ₹13,806 crore of GST compensation for the financial year 2019-20.

Read more about this topic covered in [28th July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Way forward:

- In its stimulus package, in May 2020, the Centre enhanced States' power to borrow, but only part of that was completely unconditional, and a large chunk was contingent on States undertaking specified reforms. These reforms may be long-pursued ideals, but whether this is the right time for prioritising them has been questioned.
- Considering the extent of economic damage as well as the States' fiscal positions, there is an urgent need to finalise the way forward for paying States the compensation.
- With any further delay in arriving at a plan, the Centre-State ties could turn more fractious, especially in the GST Council where things have usually evolved with consensus so far.
- One of the ideas on the table is to raise loans against future GST cess accruals in order to recompense States.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Working with India to make clean power accessible: U.K. Minister

Context:

U.K. Minister of State (Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth) was on a virtual visit to India.

India - UK partnership:

- The U.K. had recently contributed analysis and market simulations for India's Real-Time Power Market which was launched on June 1 2020, to get more renewables on the national grid at more competitive rates.

- It has been announced that the U.K. would strengthen its collaboration, in areas such as increased use of renewable energy by Indian Railways to help it become a net-zero carbon emitter by 2030.
- Britain is also working with Indian partners on a clean energy transition.
 - UKRI research partnerships would help develop the next generation of solar buildings and through the Newton–Bhabha Fund, Catapult innovation centres are partnering institutions in Bangalore to develop electric mobility and air pollution solutions.
- UK is working together with India through the [MGNREGA](#) to build climate-resilient livelihoods.
 - This focused on drought-proofing, flood defences and river structures for aquifer replenishment.
 - The Infrastructure for Climate Resilient Growth (ICRG) has invested in climate-resilient livelihood strategies in Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Bihar.
 - Also, India's Ministry of Earth Sciences was collaborating to harness land, sea and atmospheric data to aid monsoon forecasting.
- The Green Growth Equity Fund's (GGEF) first investment in India had gone to Ayana Renewable Power, with a target of 6 GW in 5 years.
 - It aims to leverage private sector investment from the City of London to invest in Green Infrastructure Projects in India.
 - The Fund has also invested in e-mobility and integrated waste management.
- India is demonstrating leadership with the [International Solar Alliance](#) and the U.K. is working with it and other countries to mobilise more than \$1 trillion of investments in solar energy by 2030.
- Separately, the U.K. is supporting a £40 million programme for technology advancement and market development of electric cooking, using solar and other energy sources.
 - This programme, in operation in 15 ISA member-countries, is now establishing itself in India.
- The minister opined that India has a lot of expertise on solar energy and the UK on wind energy and that the relationship with India is a pivotal one.

Note:

- The United Kingdom holds the Presidency of the next UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, that is planned for 2020.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. At 2,967 tigers, India's capacity at peak

Context:

- Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change released an updated report on India's Tiger Survey from 2018.
- Released ahead of the International Tiger Day that is observed every year on 29 July, the report assesses the status of tigers in terms of spatial occupancy and density of individual populations across India.

Details:

- India hosts 70% of the world's tigers.
- The Tiger Survey 2018 had put India's tiger population at 2,367 — unchanged from the government's estimate last year.

- With the increasing tiger population, India is a global exemplar in tiger conservation.
- According to the report on the condition of all 50 tiger reserves, Madhya Pradesh has the maximum number of tigers followed by Karnataka.

Concerns:

- At 2,967, experts say, India may slowly be approaching its peak carrying capacity of tigers.
- The study reveals that nearly a third of India's tigers are living outside tiger reserves and nearly 17 of the 50 reserves are approaching the peak of their capacity at sustaining their populations.

Source and Sinks:

- The reserves, by definition, are a source and suitable for nourishing a growing tiger population because of prey availability and territory.
- When reserves get too crowded, tigers venture out further from sources and form "sinks".
- Much of wildlife population dynamics is about understanding this source-sink relationship.
- Generally, there's a 60-40 split in tigers from source-sink, but this varies.

Way forward:

- For the first time, there is an attempt to segregate how many tigers are largely present within the reserves and how many flitted in and out and were dependent on the core reserve for sustenance. This was to guide conservation policy.
- With many Tiger Reserves approaching the maximum capacity, the focus should be on developing under-utilised reserves and not over-nourish those that have a good population.
- The Ministry is also working on a programme in which efforts would be made to provide water and fodder to animals in the forest itself to deal with the challenge of human-animal conflict which is causing deaths of animals.

Note:

- India counts its tigers once in four years with forest officials and scientists trekking across half a million square kilometres looking for evidence of the elusive feline. The recent one was released in 2019.
- The status report recently released today is based on surveys conducted since 2006.
- There are currently 13 tiger range countries — India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Read more about [Global Tiger Day](#).

2. Baghjan blowout: panel faults OIL on safety

Context:

A committee that was formed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has noted that there was a mismatch between planning and execution by Oil India Limited (OIL), leading to a well blowout in eastern Assam's Baghjan.

This topic has been covered in [23rd July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Category: DEFENCE

1. 'Notification on 74% FDI in defence soon'

Context:

The government is soon going to come out with a notification on 74% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in defence.

Details:

- In May 2020, as a part of the [Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#) economic stimulus package, the government announced a series of measures to promote domestic defence manufacturing. These include:
 - A negative import list
 - Separate budgetary allocation for domestic procurements
 - Indigenisation of spares and components
 - Raising the FDI cap through automatic route from 49% to 74%
- Also, the second draft of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2020, now renamed as the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 has been put out in the public domain for comments.

Read more about the change in FDI limit in the Defence Sector as a part of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan economic stimulus package, covered in [17th May 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. RIC, a triangle that is still important

Context:

- In the light of growing **calls for a more decisive westward shift in India's foreign policy**, the article analyzes the relevance of continued engagement with China and Russia.

Background:

- Even amid the tensions on the Line of Actual Control between India and China, India decided to attend a (virtual) **meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Russia, India and China (RIC)**.

For more information on this, refer to:

[Russia-India-China Virtual Meet: RSTV- Big Picture](#)

- This move was criticized by some sections amid calls to drastically reduce India's engagement with the Chinese and align with the West led by the U.S. to counter the Chinese.

Evolution of the RIC:

The initial years:

- RIC is a strategic grouping that first took shape in the late 1990s under the leadership of Russia as a counterbalance to the Western alliances. **The RIC dialogue commenced in the early 2000s.**
- The three countries involved in the dialogue - Russia, India and China were positioning themselves for a **transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order.**
- Though the RIC shared some non-west perspectives on the global order, it was not an anti-west construct. They supported democratisation of the global economic and financial architecture which later became the agenda of the BRIC organization (with the addition of Brazil).
- The initial years of the RIC dialogue coincided with an **upswing in India's relations with Russia and China.**
 - This period witnessed the reinforcement of the **political, defence and energy partnership between India and Russia.**
 - This period also witnessed **progress on the border dispute between India and China.** In 2003, it was decided to bring a political approach to the boundary dispute and to develop multi-sectoral engagement. The 2005 agreement, identifying political parameters applicable in an eventual border settlement, implicitly recognised India's interests in Arunachal Pradesh.

The downswing:

- The RIC claim of overlapping or similar approaches to key international issues does not hold anymore.
- China has gone back on the 2005 agreement with India, launched the [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor](#), worked to undermine India's influence in its neighbourhood and expanded its military and economic presence in the Indian Ocean. This goes against the agreed principle of respecting international law and recognizing the legitimate interest of partners.
- Transformations in the external environment have adversely impacted the RIC dialogue. **RIC dynamics have remained sensitive to U.S.-Russia-China relations.**

Deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations:

- The U.S.-Russia relations came to a standstill in 2014 after the annexation/accession of Crimea. **The western campaign led by the U.S. to isolate Russia drove it into a much closer relationship with China.**

The Indo-Pacific issue:

- For India, the Indo-Pacific is a geographic space of economic and security importance, in which a cooperative order should prevent the dominance of any external power.
- However, China sees India's Indo-Pacific initiatives as part of a U.S.-led policy of containing China. At the same time, Russia sees the Indo-Pacific initiatives as part of the American ploy to draw India and Japan into a military alliance against China and Russia.

India-U.S. relations:

- The relationship with Russia has also witnessed a downswing as the India-U.S. collaboration widened.
- India's relations with the U.S. have been on the upswing, encompassing trade and investment, a landmark civil nuclear deal and an expanding defence relationship.

- This is in line with **India's objective of diversifying military acquisitions** away from a near-total dependence on Russia and a **strategic intent to counter the Chinese**.
- The U.S. sees value in its relations with India given the huge market potential offered by India be it for normal goods and services or high-end military equipment. With China rapidly emerging as a challenger to its global pre-eminence, the U.S. sees value in partnering with a democratic India in Asia.

Significance of engagement:

- Despite the current differences between the three nations, the Russia-India-China engagement still holds significance for India.

RIC:

- **The RIC is a significant multilateral grouping because it brings together the three largest Eurasian countries on one platform.** RIC provides a platform to discuss important issues like West Asia, Afghanistan, climate change, terrorism and regional connectivity which are significant aspects for India. RIC allows for cooperation in areas where the mutual interests converge.
- Given the **geopolitical transition** underway, the RIC grouping could have an important role to play in the efforts to renew and rebuild the international organizations.
- Together, the RIC countries occupy over 19% of the global landmass and contribute to over 33% of global GDP. This brings to light the **economic heft of the grouping**.
- RIC could provide a platform for the resolution of differences between the member nations through dialogue. Russia could act as a bridge between India and China since it enjoys strong relations with both.
- Given India's initiatives in groups like the JAI (Japan, the U.S. and India) and the Quad, continued engagement with RIC would **allow India to ensure strategic balance in its relations**.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

- India is part of the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization \(SCO\)](#), which includes Russia, China and four other Central Asian countries. China and Russia are the driving forces behind the SCO.
- **Central Asia is strategically located** and borders India's turbulent neighbourhood. Pakistan's membership of SCO and the potential admission of Iran and Afghanistan as member states would heighten the significance of the SCO for India.
- India could leverage its membership in the association to build its strategic depth in the region.

Relationship with Russia:

- The **defence and energy partnership of India with Russia** remain critical. Access to Russia's abundant natural resources can enhance India's materials security.
- The ongoing India-Iran-Russia project for a sea/road/rail link from western India through Iran to Afghanistan and Central Asia would help achieve an effective Indian presence in Central Asia, alongside Russia and China.
- Growing Chinese influence in the region is testing the Russia-China ties. **Association with Russia will provide India with the leverage to shape the Russia-China dynamics and also help dilute the Russia-China duopoly.**

Relationship with China:

- China is a **dominant player in global affairs** and is poised to evolve as a global superpower.
- China continues to account for a major proportion of the global manufacturing and Indian sectors like automobile and pharmaceuticals continue to remain dependent on Chinese imports.

- With China sharing a long land boundary with India, good relations with China will help India avoid the threat of a two-front war and focus on the economy.

Way forward:

Deepening relations with Russia:

- India should focus on **economic links with the Russian Far East** and activation of the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor. This will help India persuade Russia that its interests in the Pacific are compatible with India's interest in diluting Chinese dominance in the Indo-Pacific.
- India could try to use Russia, considered an ally of the Chinese, to counter the Chinese. Relationship with Russia can act as an important aspect of India's counter China policy.

For more information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated July 22, 2020](#)

Engaging China:

- Though the increasing assertiveness of the Chinese should accelerate India's efforts to bridge the bilateral asymmetries, disengagement is not the ideal way forward.
- There is a need to **keep options open to work bilaterally and multilaterally with China on important issues**, even while firmly protecting India's interests on the border and the economy.

Ensuring autonomy of action:

- India has traditionally avoided taking sides in international politics, especially between the great powers, preferring its **traditional nonalignment policy**.
- Despite China's hostile behaviour and the growing potential of a U.S.-India relationship, India is well advised to retain autonomy in its policies. India's partnership with the U.S., though necessary, will not be a silver bullet to India's security challenges.
- India's foreign policy should be guided by the time-tested principle of non-alignment while responding to the evolving situation.

For more information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated July 24, 2020](#)

2. The South Asian migrant crisis

Context:

- The pandemic crisis has further deteriorated the condition of **South Asian migrants in the GCC countries** and poses new challenges for the countries of their origin.

Background:

- The **South Asia-Gulf migration corridor is among the largest in the world**. South Asians account for nearly 15 million in the Gulf. **Indians constitute the largest segment of the South Asian workforce.**

Details:

- The precarious situation of the migrant labourers in West Asia forced the Indian government to repatriate the NRIs through the **Vande Bharat Mission**. The Indian government has repatriated over 7.88 lakh NRIs from various destinations.
- An increasing number of NRIs who have lost their jobs abroad have returned to India and have been seeking Government aid.

Concerns:

Challenges faced by the migrant labourers:

- Though the South Asian labour force forms the backbone of the Gulf economies, it has **no social security protection or labour rights**.

Pandemic crisis:

- The pandemic, the shutdown of companies, the tightening of borders, and the exploitative nature of the **Kafala sponsorship system** have aggravated the miseries of South Asian migrant workers.
- The South Asian labour force found it hard to ensure the availability of basic necessities like food and medicines during the pandemic.
 - Since medicines are expensive in GCC countries, migrants often procure medicines for lifestyle diseases from India. However, the suspension of flights caused an acute shortage of medicines for these workers.
- The migrants living in the labour camps (mostly characterised by overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions) were vulnerable to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Employers, particularly construction companies, have used the crisis as an opportunity to retrench masses of migrant labourers without paying them wages or allowances.

Anti-migrant sentiments:

- The **movement for nationalisation of labour and the anti-migrant sentiment have peaked in GCC countries**.

Way forward:

Rehabilitate, reintegrate, and resettle:

- India will need to rehabilitate, reintegrate, and resettle these migrant workers.
- This could involve **providing money on arrival, money to launch self-employment projects, and compensation for the families** of those who died abroad from COVID-19 apart from **upgrading the skills of returnees**.
- The Indian government's '**SWADES**' scheme aims at skill mapping of citizens returning from abroad. Kerala's '**Dream Kerala**' scheme aims to utilise the multifaceted resources of the migrants.

Migration policy:

- The need of the hour is a **comprehensive migration management system**. No South Asian country except Sri Lanka has an adequate migration policy.
- The pandemic provides an opportunity to voice the rights of South Asian migrants and to bring the South Asia-Gulf migration corridor within the ambit of SAARC, the **ILO**, and UN conventions.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

<https://byjus.com>

F. Prelims Facts

1. States leverage digital resources as pandemic keeps schools shut

What's in News?

The Human Resource Development Ministry has released a State-wise report documenting the spread of digital classrooms, e-textbooks and mobile learning apps.

- With schools closed across the country, all the states are taking to the digital platform to ensure continuous learning.
- Digital classrooms are being tried in 25 States and Union Territories, although the extent of their reach in each State is unclear.
- States are dependent on broadcast classes via television (where digital technology is completely absent) in at least 25 states and Union Territories, and radio is being used in 18 states and Union Territories.
- The most common type of distance learning seems to be asynchronous digital education.
 - This form does not require the level of connectivity needed for live online classes as it uses already prepared digital content hosted on platforms, to be accessed at one's own comfort.
- Centre's DIKSHA portal has had 200 crore page hits and 60 lakh course completions since the lockdown.

DIKSHA Portal:

- DIKSHA is a National Digital Infrastructure for Teachers.
- It is an initiative of the Human Resource Development Ministry for providing a digital platform to teachers to make their lifestyle more digital.
- The portal consists of the whole teacher's life cycle – from the time they were enrolled as student teachers in Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) to after they retire as teachers.
- Teachers can learn and train themselves for which assessment resources will be available helping them boost their skills.

G. Tidbits

1. 'COVID-19 will lead to rise in child wasting'

What's in News?

The Lancet study titled 'Impacts of COVID-19 on childhood malnutrition and nutrition-related mortality' has been published.

- According to the study, the global prevalence of child wasting in 2020 could rise by 14.3%, translating into an additional 6.7 million children under the age of five suffering from it.
- This is because the pandemic has resulted in the disruption of food systems and impeded access to healthcare services.

- Before the pandemic, nearly 47 million children younger than five years were estimated to be affected by wasting globally.
- According to the study, the total figure for 2020 would be 53.7 million children under five, bringing global wasting to levels not seen this millennium.

Child Wasting and Stunting:

- Wasting alludes to low weight for height, in children.
- It is a strong predictor of mortality among children under five.
- Stunting, or low height for age, is caused by long-term insufficient nutrient intake and frequent infections.

2. 3 bn animals affected by Australia bushfires: WWF

- According to a study by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), nearly 3 billion animals including koalas, kangaroos and other native Australian animals were killed or displaced by bushfires in 2019 and 2020.
- The total number included animals which were displaced because of destroyed habitats and now faced lack of food and shelter.
- The fires destroyed more than 11 million hectares across the Australian southeast, equal to about half the area of the United Kingdom, ranking it as one of the worst wildlife disasters in modern history.

Read more about Bushfires in Australia covered in [12th January 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

3. China halts HK extradition pacts with Canada, Australia and U.K.

What's in News?

China has announced the suspension of Hong Kong's extradition treaties with Canada, Australia and Britain.

- The announcement comes as a tit-for-tat move following similar decisions by those countries as a response to the law imposed on Hong Kong which they see as an erosion of the civil liberties and human rights the city has enjoyed since its handover from Britain in 1997.
- Canada, Britain and Australia are part of the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance. The other members are New Zealand, which suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong and the United States, which has signalled it is preparing to do the same.

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

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to River Pampa:

1. It is the longest river in Kerala.
2. It originates in the Pulachimalai hill in the Western Ghats.
3. It flows westwards and drains into the Vembanad Lake.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Pamba River (also called Pampa river) is the third-longest river in the South Indian state of Kerala after Periyar and Bharathappuzha.
- It originates in the Pulachimalai hill in the Western Ghats.
- It is a west flowing river.
- It flows westwards and empties into the Vembanad Lake.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Palamau Tiger Reserve – Jharkhand
2. Buxa Tiger Reserve – Maharashtra
3. Dampa Tiger Reserve – Mizoram
4. Satkosia Tiger Reserve – Odisha

Which of the above is/are correctly matched?

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

Buxa Tiger Reserve is located in West Bengal.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB):

1. It is headquartered in Beijing, China.
2. India is a member and has the second-largest shareholding and voting rights.
3. Membership is open to members of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development or the Asian Development Bank.
4. The bank allows non-sovereign entities of member countries to apply for membership.

Choose the correct option:

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

d. 2 and 4 only

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

All the statements are correct.

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is headquartered in Beijing, China.
- India is a member and has the second-largest shareholding and voting rights after China.
- The AIIB allows non-sovereign entities to apply for AIIB membership, assuming their home country is a member. Thus, sovereign wealth funds (such as the China Investment Corporation) or state-owned enterprises of member countries could potentially join the Bank.
- Its membership is open to members of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development or the Asian Development Bank.

Q4. The "Five Eyes" alliance comprises of which of the following countries?

1. Canada
2. Russia
3. New Zealand
4. Australia
5. India
6. United Kingdom
7. United States

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 only
- b. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 only
- c. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 only
- d. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 only

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Five Eyes, often abbreviated as FVEY, is an Anglophone intelligence alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Despite the current differences between the three nations, the Russia-India-China engagement still holds significance for India. Analyze. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS paper 2/International Relations)
2. Discuss the challenges faced by the South Asian labour force in the GCC countries, especially in the current context of the pandemic crisis and suggest suitable policy measures. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS paper 2/Indian Diaspora)

