

26 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Australia rejects China's sea claims

Context:

- Australia's formal declaration to the UN on the **South China Sea dispute**.

Details:

- In a **formal declaration to the UN, Australia has rejected China's territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea**. Australia has held that there is no legal basis for China's historic claims in the South China Sea.

Australia- U.S. compact:

- Australia's declaration to the UN comes after the U.S. Secretary of State declared China's pursuit of territory and resources in the South China Sea as illegal, backing the claims of Southeast Asian countries against China's claims.

For more information on this refer to: [CNA 15th July 2020](#)

- Through this move, **Australia seems to be aligning itself more closely with the U.S.** in the escalating tensions between China and the U.S.
 - U.S. relations with China have markedly deteriorated in recent months, especially over trade disputes, the COVID-19 pandemic and China's crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong.
- The latest escalation comes ahead of **annual talks between Australia and the U.S.**

2. The confluence of four powers and two seas

Context:

- The article analyzes India's dilemma with respect to closer co-ordination with the Quad.

Background:

Evolution of the Quad:

- The Quad was born out of the crisis that followed the **Tsunami in December 2004**. India's **humanitarian and disaster relief effort in the Indian Ocean** was coordinated with the three other naval powers engaged in similar efforts — U.S., Australia and Japan.
- Since then the idea of the **Indo-Pacific as a larger maritime strategic community**, and the Quad as an effective instrument in it, has gained credence among the four nations.
- **In 2007, the annual India-U.S. 'Malabar' exercises included Japan, Australia and Singapore.**
- After being neglected for about a decade due to strategic reasons, in 2017, the Quad returned, coinciding with the revision in U.S.'s assessment of the challenge from China, and similar reassessments in India, Japan and Australia.

- In **November 2017**, just months after the Doklam stand-off between the Indian Army and the PLA, officials from all four countries met in Manila for the **‘India-Australia-Japan-U.S.’ dialogue**.
- There have been **increasing naval exercises between the nations in the region**. Recently, a trilateral exercise between the U.S., Australia and Japan was held in the Philippines Sea. There has been speculation that Quadrilateral (Quad) exercises will be launched soon between all four navies.

Significance:

- The Quad grouping primary objectives include connectivity, sustainable development, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation and **maritime and cybersecurity**, with a view to promoting peace, stability and prosperity in an increasingly inter-connected Indo-Pacific region.
 - The Quad has been coordinating efforts to provide financing and sustainable **alternatives to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
 - Notable among these initiatives being the India and Australian efforts in the Pacific islands, India-U.S. coordination in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, and India-Japan joint efforts to develop projects in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar.
 - The military aspect of the Quad has also grown. India has strengthened its naval ties with each of the other Quad countries, and there have been more interactions, formal and informal at the official, political and military levels.

Details:

India’s dilemma:

- The article discusses India’s dilemma in being part of the Quad.
- The need to counter the aggressiveness of China on one side by partnering with other powers in the region as against India’s desire for strategic autonomy has thrown tough choices for India in respect of its **Indo-Pacific maritime alliance**.
- India’s choices will have not only far-reaching implications for regional but also global security.

Arguments against India’s greater involvement in the Quad:

- China has always opposed the militarization of the quad coalition which it views as a counter to its claims in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean.
- India has been wary of joining any exercise that could be construed as an alliance.
- India is the only country in the Quad that **shares a land boundary with China**, and the militarisation of the Quad will not help India deal with this threat.
- Unlike the U.S., Japan and Australia, which are tied by military alliances, **India is a member of other strategic forums, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation with China, Russia and Central Asia, BRICS and RIC**, which appear to be at cross purposes with a Quad alliance.

Arguments in favour of enhanced engagement with Quad:

- The recent Chinese moves of transgression and deadly clashes across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) may prove to be the tipping point that makes India move closer to the Quadrilateral Security Group.

For more information on this refer to: [CNA 20th July 2020](#).

India's options:

- India could revert to its **traditional positions of non-alignment**.
- India could opt for a closer coalition with China's adversaries and take sides in the new Cold War-like situation that is developing between the U.S. and China.
- India could **forge closer relations with China's ally Russia** in its attempt to manage the threat from China.
- India could **pursue "multi-alignment"**, inviting middle powers such as the EU, the U.K., France, Russia, and partners such as Brazil, the UAE and South Africa into its Indo-Pacific strategy.

For more information related to possible counter China policy refer to: [CNA 22nd July 2020](#).

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Cabinet decision binding on Governor

Context:

- Political turmoil in the state of Rajasthan.

Background:

- There has been a deadlock between Rajasthan Governor and Rajasthan Chief Minister over the summoning of an Assembly session for a floor test.
- While the Chief Minister has been demanding the summoning of an Assembly session at the earliest, the Governor has not been receptive of the demand.

Details:

- The article discusses a key Supreme Court judgment which could act as a guiding light during the current deadlock.

Nabam Rebia versus Deputy Speaker, 2016:

- In the Nabam Rebia versus Deputy Speaker case of 2016, a **Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court** had held that a **Governor is bound to convene a meeting of the Assembly for a floor test on the recommendation of the Cabinet**. It held that the Governor cannot employ his/her discretion in this matter and should strictly abide by the aid and advice of the Cabinet.

Important observations made in the judgment:

Constitutional provisions:

- The judgment was based on the constitutional provision which states that the Governor can summon, prorogue and dissolve the House only on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister as the head.
 - **Article 163 of the Indian constitution** notes that there shall be a council of Ministers with the Chief Minister at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions.

Limited discretionary power for the governor:

- The Supreme Court has noted that despite the provision for some degree of discretion for the governor provided for under **Article 163 (2) of the Indian Constitution**, it does not mean a general discretionary power to act against or without the advice of his Council of Ministers.
- This judgment **limits the Governor's discretionary power to specific areas**. It noted that the Governor's discretionary powers are limited to specified areas like giving assent or withholding/referring a Bill to the President or appointment of a Chief Minister or dismissal of a government which has lost confidence but refuses to quit, etc.
- The judgment further held that even in areas where there is scope for discretion for the governor, the action **should not be arbitrary** or fanciful and must be dictated by reason, actuated by good faith and tempered by caution.

Responsible form of government:

- **India has a parliamentary democracy with a responsible form of government**. In such a form of government, the **Governor functions only as a Constitutional or formal head** of the State and his/her powers cannot be enlarged at the cost of the **Council of Ministers, who are the real executive**.

Constituent assembly discussions:

- The judgment noted the fact that even the Constituent Assembly was wary of extending the Governor's discretion. Though the draft Constitution had vested the Governor with the discretion to summon and dissolve, it was later omitted by the framers of the Constitution.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Jairam slams draft project clearance rules

Context:

- Former Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh's objections to the **draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020**.

Details:

- Jairam Ramesh has opposed the draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020 based on the following arguments.

- The provision of **post-facto approval** for projects goes against the principle of assessment prior to environment clearance.
- The draft notification **reduces public participation in the environment clearance process** by lessening the notice period for public hearings and doing away with the need for public hearings for a large category of projects.
- The provisions also give the Union government full powers to appoint the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority thus affecting the **principle of cooperative federalism**.
- The proposed changes seem to **promote unrestrained development by way of cutting down on environmental regulations**. This approach could have a detrimental impact on the health and welfare of the people and go against the vision of ensuring development that is sustainable.

For more information on this issue refer to: [CNA 13th March 2020](#) and [CNA 29th June 2020](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Is SARS-CoV-2 a latent virus which can recur?

Context:

- Doubts over **second infection of COVID-19**.

Background:

- There have been repeated instances of ‘**reinfection**’ from **COVID-19** since early January 2020.
 - Reinfection means people who had tested negative for COVID-19 test positive again after a while.

Details:

- The article analyzes the possible reasons for reinfection from COVID-19.

Latency:

- The observation of re-infection of COVID-19 brings to light the **possibility of SARS-CoV-2 virus having latency**. The COVID-19 virus may have “reactivated” in the patients rather than them becoming re-infected.
 - A latent infection is when the virus in the body is **dormant and does not replicate within the host**. It however possesses the capacity to be reactivated at some point, causing the disease at a later point of time.

- As opposed to active infections, where a virus is actively replicating and potentially causing symptoms, latent infections are essentially static which last the life of the host and occur **when the primary infection is not cleared by the adaptive immune response**.
- **Chronic viruses** can go into latency. The latent viral infections can be reactivated into the active lytic form.
 - Examples: **Herpes simplex viruses** type 1 and 2, varicella-zoster virus, HIV, Epstein-Barr virus (human herpesvirus 4), and cytomegalovirus.

Different types of viral infections:

- A chronic virus infects its host for extended periods of time, often through the lifetime of the host.
- An **acute infecting virus**, such as **influenza and rotavirus** creates noticeable symptoms in a short period of time and is cleared from the body after a few days or weeks.

Flaws in testing:

- While the **RT-PCR [reverse transcription/polymerase chain reaction]** tests are considered to be the gold standard for testing, all tests are **not 100% accurate**. False positives and false negative results can occur.
- There are limits of detection of the current testing methods employed. The concept of “**limit of detection**” of a virus notes that there is a threshold where a virus can be detected. A negative SARS-CoV-2 test does not mean zero infection; it means no detectable infection.

Other reasons:

- Many **viruses can survive at the mucosal level in spite of immunity**. A similar behaviour is possible from SARS-CoV-2.
 - Example: In the case of **polio virus**, viral shedding can continue for up to 10 weeks, in spite of very high antibody levels post the vaccination.
- Another reason for the positive test might be due to the **host harbouring an antibody-bound virus that is non-infective**.
- Even fragmented RNA particles can yield a positive result. The remaining virus fragments in humans can also lead to positives during testing.

Conclusion:

- So far none of the observations conclusively prove a second infection. In each one of these cases, there is sufficient reason to suspect that it is one infection, with negative results in between. This necessitates a **change to testing policy**.
- There is the need to globally adopt a system where **clinical signs are considered sufficient** to commence treatment for COVID-19, even before an RT-PCR test is done. Also, cessation of symptoms can be taken as a signal to show that a person has recovered.

For related information refer to: [CNA 6th April 2020](#) and [CNA 3rd May 2020](#).

F. Tidbits

1. UN report flags IS threat in Karnataka, Kerala

- A UN report on terrorism has warned of a significant number of Islamic State (IS) terrorists in Kerala and Karnataka. According to the report, the IS Indian affiliate (Hind Wilayah), announced in 2019 has significant membership.
- The report has also noted the possibility of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) terror group planning attacks in the region.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Made in India: the handmade copy of a Stradivarius violin

- **Thanjavur Quartet** were four brothers, **Chinnaiah, Ponniah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu**, who lived during the early 19th century and contributed to the development of **Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music**.
- The brothers were employed in the courts of the **Maratha King Serfoji II at Thanjavur**
- **Muthuswami Dikshitar** was a **legendary composer of Indian classical music**, who is considered one of the **musical trinity of Carnatic music**, the other two being **Tyagaraja and Syama Sastri**.

2. Kashmir saffron now has GI certificate

- The J&K administration has issued the certificate of **Geographical Indication (GI)** registration for saffron grown in the **Kashmir Valley**.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Who of the following were part of the Thanjavur Quartet?

1. Chinnaiah
2. Ponniah
3. Muthuswami Dikshitar
4. Vadivelu
5. Tyagaraja
6. Syama Sastri
7. Sivanandam

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Thanjavur Quartet were four brothers, Chinnaiah, Ponniah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu, who lived during the early 19th century and contributed to the development of Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music.
- Muthuswami Dikshitar was a legendary composer of Indian classical music, who is considered one of the musical trinity of Carnatic music, the other two being Tyagaraja and Syama Sastri.

Q2. Which of the following has a geographical indication (GI) tag?

1. Kashmir saffron
2. Kandhamal Haladi
3. Tirur Betel Leaf
4. Tawlhlohpuan

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Tawlhlohpuan, is a fine quality fabric woven in Mizoram.
- Tirur betel vine, cultivated in Malappuram district of Kerala, is valued for its medicinal and cultural usages.

For more information on recent GI tags awarded refer to: [GI Tags in India.](#)

Q3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

1. The governor has to always act as per the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister.
2. The constitution has a provision for reservation of state bills by Governors for President's consideration.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Article 163(1): There shall be a council of Ministers with the chief Minister at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, except in so far as he is by or under this constitution required to exercise his functions or any of them in his discretion.
- The articles 200 and 201 of the Indian constitution provides for reservation of bills by Governors for President's consideration.

Q4. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

1. Environment Impact Assessment in India is statutorily backed by the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
2. The environmental clearance to projects can be given only by the Central Government.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Environment Impact Assessment in India is statutorily backed by the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notified new EIA legislation in 2006. Environment Impact Assessment Notification of 2006 has decentralized the environmental clearance projects by categorizing the developmental projects in two categories, i.e., Category A (national level appraisal) and Category B (state level appraisal).

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Analyze the role of a Governor in a responsible and federalism form of government as envisaged by the Indian Constitution. In the light of the recent controversies over the role of the Governors, suggest suitable reforms. (15 words, 250 words)
2. India's need to counter the aggressiveness of China by partnering with other powers in the region and also India's desire for strategic autonomy has thrown tough choices for India in respect of its Indo-Pacific maritime alliance. Comment. (15 marks, 250 words)