

08 Aug 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Will close marines' case only after 'hefty' compensation: SC

Context:

While the Supreme Court has appreciated the efforts put in by the Republic of Italy to prosecute its marines accused of killing two fishermen off the coast of Kerala in 2012, it has insisted that it will close their criminal trial in India only after the victims' families are heard and paid a hefty and adequate compensation.

This issue has been covered in [3rd July 2020](#) and [4th July 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

Category: HEALTH

1. Tie-up promises vaccine for India

Context:

Serum Institute of India (SII) has announced that it has entered into a new partnership with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to accelerate the manufacture and delivery of up to 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines for India and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Details:

- The collaboration would provide upfront capital to SII to help them increase the manufacturing capacity now so that, once a vaccine gains regulatory approval and [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) pre-qualification, doses could be produced at scale for distribution to India and LMICs.
- The current deal builds on an MoU between AstraZeneca and Gavi, which will guarantee 300 million doses of AstraZeneca's candidate vaccine to the wider COVAX facility, to be supplied upon licensure or prequalification.
- These two deals can help guarantee access to early doses for the most vulnerable on a global scale.

Note:

- SII has earlier partnered with Gavi and pharmaceutical companies to manufacture vaccines that protect against meningitis, severe diarrhea, pneumonia and measles.

Read more about [COVAX Facility](#).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. RBI sets up panel for stressed loans resolution norms

Context:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted the proposed expert committee under the chairmanship of K.V. Kamath to make recommendations on norms for the resolution of [COVID-19](#) related stressed loans.

Background:

- As part of the recently released Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies along with the Monetary Policy Statement, the RBI has announced a 'Resolution Framework for COVID-19-related Stress'.
 - It would be a special window under the [Prudential Framework on Resolution of Stressed Assets issued in June 2019](#).

- The resolution framework envisages the constitution of an expert committee by the RBI to make recommendations on the required financial parameters to be factored into the resolution plans, with sector-specific benchmark ranges for such parameters.

Details:

- The committee will submit its recommendations on the financial parameters to the RBI.
- The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) will function as the secretariat to the committee.
- The expert committee will also undertake the process validation for the resolution plans to be implemented under this framework, without going into the commercial aspects, in respect of all accounts with aggregate exposure of Rs 1,500 crore and above at the time of invocation.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT**1. 18 killed as landslide buries tea workers' quarters in Idukki****Context:**

A series of landslips occurred at the Nayamakkad tea estate in the Idukki district.

This topic has been covered in the [7th August 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**1. Leopard poaching highest in Uttarakhand, Maharashtra****Context:**

- A study has been published by TRAFFIC India on the seizure and mortality of common leopards (*Panthera pardus fusca*).
- It is titled: 'SPOTTED' in Illegal Wildlife Trade: A Peek into Ongoing Poaching and Illegal Trade of Leopards in India.

TRAFFIC:

- TRAFFIC is a leading wildlife trade monitoring network across the world.
- It is a non-governmental organisation working on wildlife trade in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.
- It is a joint program of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#).

Key Findings:

- The study revealed that, of the total of 747 leopard deaths between 2015-2019 in India, 596 were linked to illegal wildlife trade and activities related to poaching.
- The highest numbers of poaching incidents were reported from the States of Uttarakhand and Maharashtra.

- Among all the derivatives found in illegal wildlife trade, skin remained the most in-demand product, accounting for 69% of all seizures, while derivatives like claws, teeth and bones were also traded.
 - Bones of the leopard have a larger international demand for traditional medicines.

Read more about Leopards covered in the [4th August 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. Govt. launches Electric Vehicle Policy to boost economy, reduce pollution

Context:

The Delhi government has launched its Electric Vehicle Policy.

Details:

- The Electric Vehicle Policy aims to boost the city's economy, reduce pollution levels and generate employment in the transport sector.
- The aim of the Delhi government is to ensure that 25% of the newly registered vehicles across the city by the year 2024 are electric vehicles. Today, the percentage is only 0.2%.
- It includes incentives for the purchase of electric vehicles.
 - A subsidy of up to ₹30,000 on the purchase of two-wheelers, autorickshaws, e-rickshaws, freight vehicles, each, and of ₹1.5 lakh on cars will be provided.
 - These would be in addition to the incentives under the Central government's '[FAME India](#)' Phase 2.
 - The government would also offer low-interest rates for the purchase of electric commercial vehicles, waive off registration fees and road tax on newly registered electric vehicles and aim to create a network of charging stations in the city.
- It would also provide scrapping incentives, first across the country.
- The policy is designed for three years, after which it will be reviewed.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Alert amid uncertainty

The Editorial talks about the third review of the monetary policy by the Reserve Bank of India since the COVID-19 pandemic spread in the country.

Details:

- Citing the extreme uncertainty that characterises the current outlook for inflation and economic activity, the RBI has left the key policy rates unchanged.

- While the monetary policy committee (MPC) recognised the primacy of supporting a recovery, RBI asserted that it was necessarily mindful of its inflation targeting mandate.
 - The MPC's mandate is to maintain inflation at 4 percent, within a band of +/- 2 percent.
 - RBI is answerable to Parliament if it misses the inflation target for three consecutive quarters.
- Provisional June 2020 [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\)](#) inflation reading of 6.1% had edged over the upper bound of the mandated medium-term goal.
- A spike in food prices, as well as cost-push pressures from higher transport fuel and raw material prices, are combining to obscure the inflation outlook.
- The RBI Governor has emphasised that the RBI is ready to act on rates once a durable reduction in inflation is sighted, vowing to ensure that the policy stance remains 'accommodative' for as long as needed to revive growth.

This topic has been covered in the 7th August 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

Concerns:

- The forecast on the economy is worrisome.
- The RBI expects the rural economy to turn in a robust recovery on the back of a strong showing by agriculture. However, deterioration in consumer sentiment in the RBI's July survey undermines the prospects for a more broad-based revival in domestic demand.
- External demand faces headwinds from a world economy in recession and as global trade shrinks.

Way forward:

- RBI forecasts a contraction in real GDP in the current fiscal year. Nevertheless, it optimistically asserts that an early containment of the pandemic may reinvigorate its outlook.
- RBI has opted to focus its energies on trying to resolve the issues hindering the flow of credit amid more than adequate liquidity, cautious lenders and severely stressed borrowers.
- Through its recent policy decisions i.e, restructuring, resolution and enhanced gold loan proposals, it has acknowledged the sheer scale of the pandemic's devastation on the finances of firms and households.
- The onus now is on Governor to ensure that the stability of the financial sector is safeguarded even as loan terms are reset to protect otherwise viable businesses.
- Any harm to financial stability risks undermining the economy as a whole.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Floods to plane crashes, the role National Disaster Response Force plays in India

Note: This Editorial has been picked from the Indian Express dated 8th August 2020.

The editorial talks about the origins and role of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) during natural calamities and man-made disasters in India. The NDRF is equipped and trained to handle a range of difficulties, from borewell accidents to chemical, biological and radioactive emergencies.

Origin:

- Its origin lies in the National Disaster Management Act (NDMA), 2005.
- The National Disaster Management Act was passed by the Parliament in 2005.

- In the backdrop of the 2001 earthquake and 2004 tsunami, it was a much-needed step towards determining responsibility and accountability for disaster response.
- The legislation was also the result of ongoing discussions about disaster management on international forums at the time.

Details:

- NDMA laid down a legal framework for disaster response at the national, state and district levels.
 - The [National Disaster Management Authority](#) is chaired by the Prime Minister.
- The Act paved the way for establishing Disaster Management Authorities at the national, state and district levels, setting up the National Disaster Response and Mitigation Funds, and formation of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

The constitution of NDRF and its structure:

- The NDRF was raised in 2006, initially with eight battalions, and now has 12 spread across the country.
- Each battalion, which has a sanctioned strength of 1,150 rescuers, caters to particular states as their areas of responsibility.
- In case required, teams from other battalions are moved for emergency response.
- The NDRF functions under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and is headed by a Director-General.
- The NDRF officials believe that the strategies of preemptive availability and pre-positioning of teams anticipating emergency situations, facilitated by the nationwide presence of its battalions, have made sure that damages are contained.

Note:

It has been recently announced that four more NDRF battalions will be raised, and teams of women rescuers will also be inducted.

Personnel and training of the NDRF:

- The NDRF gets personnel and officers on deputation from the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) for a period of seven years.
 - After serving their tenure, personnel will go back to their force.
- Currently, the NDRF has battalions staffed by personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).
- Sections of personnel are given specialised training in deep diving, special search and rescue, collapsed structure search and rescue, Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear emergencies and also psycho-social intervention.
- Some of the personnel further undergo specialised training with national and international institutions including those on chemical and biological warfare situations.

F. Prelims Facts

1. India to take part in Kavkaz 2020 in Russia

What's in News?

India is set to take part in the Russian Kavkaz 2020 strategic command-post exercise.

- The invitees also include China and Pakistan, apart from other member-states of the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](#).
- A small tri-service contingent will take part in the exercise to be held in Astrakhan.
- Russia holds a major military exercise every year at one of its four military Commands i.e Vostok (East), Zapad (West), TSENTR (Centre) and Kavkaz (South).

G. Tidbits

1. 2011 report had flagged unsafe conditions at Calicut airport

What's in News?

A Vande Bharat mission flight from Dubai overshot the runway at Calicut International Airport, broke into two parts and fell into a deep gorge resulting in casualties.

Concerns expressed:

- According to an aviation safety report submitted to the Ministry of Civil Aviation in 2011, the runway at Calicut International airport was unsafe for flight operations due to inadequate safety area along the runway and at the end of the runway to safeguard against planes skidding off.
- An aviation safety expert said that there had been no effort on the part of the [Airports Authority of India \(AAI\)](#) to rectify the safety infringements.
- It was highlighted that landing in wet and tailwind conditions could be a safety hazard.
- Adding that it is important to clean the runway of rubber which gets deposited after every flight, the failure to do so can lead to aircraft losing control.

Note:

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation had ordered a safety audit of airports earlier this year after several airports saw instances of aircraft overshooting the runway or skidding during heavy rains.

2. Food Vision 2050 Prize for Naandi Foundation

What's in News?

The Rockefeller Foundation has selected Hyderabad-based non-profit, Naandi Foundation, as one of the 'Top 10 Visionaries' in the world for the Food Vision 2050 Prize.

Details:

- The award recognised the application of the Arakunomics model in regions of Araku, Wardha and New Delhi.
- Arakunomics model leads to Food Vision 2050 that follows an “**ABCDEFGH**” framework centering on:
 - Agriculture
 - Biology

- Compost
 - Decentralised decision-making
 - Entrepreneurs
 - Families
 - Global Markets
 - Headstands or turning current approaches on their head.
- Naandi's vision titled "Arakunomics" was based on work with tribal farmers in Araku for nearly 20 years.
 - It is a new integrated economic model that ensures profits for farmers, quality for consumers through regenerative agriculture.
- The model is a tribute to the tribal farmers of Araku region for the world-class coffee produced and launched in Paris in 2017, as well as for the high carbon landscape transformation they did in over 955 villages, thereby planting 25 million trees.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Eravikulam National Park:

1. It is home to the largest population of Nilgiri Tahr.
2. It is located in Tamil Nadu.
3. It is a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Eravikulam National Park is located in the Western Ghats in the Idukki district of Kerala.
- It is home to the largest population of Nilgiri Tahr. Nilgiri Tahr is a species of mountainous goat endemic to Nilgiris.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Arabian Sea humpback whales:

1. They are the only non-migratory population of humpback whales in the world.
2. They are listed under the endangered category in the IUCN Red List.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Arabian Sea humpback whales are the only sedentary whales in the world, feeding and breeding in the same area. They are the only non-migratory population of humpback whales in the world.
- They are listed under the endangered category in the IUCN Red List.

Q3. "Astrakhan", recently in news is located in which country?

- a. Afghanistan
- b. Lebanon
- c. Russia
- d. Indonesia

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Astrakhan is a city on the Volga River in southern Russia.
- India is set to take part in the Russian Kavkaz 2020 strategic command-post to be held in Astrakhan.
- Russia holds a major military exercise every year at one of its four military Commands i.e Vostok (East), Zapad (West), TSENTR (Centre) and Kavkaz (South).

Q4. Which of the following pairs are correctly matched?

1. Garuda Shakti – Maldives
2. Mitra Shakti – Sri Lanka
3. Ekuverin – Indonesia
4. Surya Kiran – Nepal

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

1. Garuda Shakti – Indonesia
2. Mitra Shakti – Sri Lanka
3. Ekuverin – Maldives
4. Surya Kiran – Nepal

1. Discuss the measures to be taken for India's electric vehicle goals to flourish. What are the challenges involved? (15 Marks, 250 Words). [GS Paper 2 - Polity & Governance]
2. What are the ethical issues to consider while distributing a COVID-19 vaccine? Suggest the best way forward in ensuring immunization access for all, including the developing and low-income countries. (15 Marks, 250 Words). [GS Paper 2 - Health]

