

# 29 Aug 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS 1 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Police, public order, Central cadre under J&K L-G

##### **Context:**

The Union Home Ministry has notified new rules for administration in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) that specify the functions of the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) and the Council of Ministers.

##### **Background:**

- In August 2019, Parliament withdrew the [Special Status of J&K](#) and bifurcated and downgraded the State into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, with the former having a Legislative Assembly.
- The erstwhile State has been under Central rule since June 2018 and the elected Assembly was dissolved in November the same year.
- J&K has been without a Chief Minister since June 2018.
- According to the requirements of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, fresh elections will be held after the delimitation exercise is completed next year.

### **Details:**

- There will be 39 departments in the UT, such as school education, agriculture, higher education, horticulture, election.
- According to the transaction of business rules, “police, public order, All India Services and anti-corruption” will fall under the executive functions of the L-G.
  - This implies that the Chief Minister or the Council of Ministers will have no say in their functioning.
- The proposals or matters which affect or are likely to affect peace and tranquillity or the interest of any minority community, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes shall essentially be submitted to the Lieutenant Governor through the Chief Secretary, under intimation to the Chief Minister, before issuing any orders.
- The Council of Ministers, led by the CM, will decide:
  - Service matters of non-All India Services officers.
  - Proposal to impose new tax.
  - Land revenue.
  - Sale grant or lease of government property.
  - Reconstituting departments or offices and draft legislation.
- In case of difference of opinion between the L-G and a Minister, when no agreement could be reached even after a month, the decision of the Lieutenant Governor shall be deemed to have been accepted by the Council of Ministers.
- “Any matter which is likely to bring the Government of the Union territory into controversy with the Central Government or with any State Government” shall, as soon as possible, be brought to the notice of the L-G and the CM by the Secretary concerned through the Chief Secretary.
- All communications received from the Centre, including those from the Prime Minister and other Ministers, other than those of a routine or unimportant character, shall, as soon as possible after their receipt, be submitted by the Secretary to the Chief Secretary, the Minister in charge, the Chief Minister and the L-G for information.

## **2. Punjab House passes resolution against Centre’s agri ordinances**

### **Context:**

The Punjab Assembly has passed a resolution rejecting the Centre’s recent farm ordinances and the proposed [Electricity \(Amendment\) Bill](#).

### **Background:**

- In June 2020, the Union Cabinet approved an amendment to the 65-year-old Essential Commodities Act.
- Cabinet also approved ordinances to remove restrictions on farmers selling their produce outside notified market yards, as well as to facilitate contract farming and allow farmers to engage in direct marketing.

Read more about this topic covered in the [4th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

**Details:**

- The Punjab CM said "Entry 14 of List II of the Constitution comprises agriculture as the subject of the States, therefore these ordinances are a direct encroachment upon the functions of the States and against the spirit of cooperative federalism enshrined in the Constitution and will promote distress sale."
- It has been demanded that the Union government withdraw these ordinances and the proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020, and instead, a fresh ordinance be promulgated making the procurement of foodgrains and other agricultural produce at the [Minimum Support Price](#).

## C. GS 3 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

**Category: GOVERNANCE**

### 1. National well-being and the counts that matter

The editorial talks about the importance of adopting new ways for India to know its cumulative human capital and potential, as the decennial census operations are limited.

**Issues:**

- Since India's crime data recording system is not built to capture subtleties, what proportion of pregnancies in India start off without the consent of the woman is not known.
- The intergenerational impact of a regretful and anxiety-loaded pregnancy is inadequately quantified by current clinical or epidemiological tools.
- To tackle the issue:
  - Underage marriage of girls must become history.
  - Ensuring secondary school completion of every child, especially girls in rural areas, has far-reaching impact, and needs to be pursued single-mindedly.
  - Provisioning separate, functional toilets and sanitary pads for girls, and teaching boys biology and gender differences (of their own and female) are key enablers to ensuring gender parity in school completion rates.
  - Teaching school-leaving girls and boys the notion of consent, and also the basics of contraception will ensure that the start of every pregnancy will be a desired and happy one.
  - A desired pregnancy is to be supported by a fully functional health-care system, able to anticipate complications before time and facilitating a safe delivery.

**Parameters that are valuable:**

- What is valuable is measured frequently, at different life stages, and at disaggregated levels: birth weights; the heights and weights of our children when they enter school; school completion rates; perhaps the age, height and weight of a first-time pregnant woman; and most definitely, the number of women in the formal workforce who are on a par with men in terms of earning.
- Birth weight is much more than a number — it is a complex outcome, telling of how well the woman and her family eat, her status among them, and also of any particular condition that the individual mother or new-born child has.
  - Tracking average birth weights by district and sub-district on a regular basis is a fair proxy for food security, the status of women and the delivery of primary health care.
  - For a nation with plans to assign digital health IDs to everyone, what is additionally required is the making of this moving average data live and visible to the people and their government.
- Parameters that take into account such cumulative human capital and potential are of greater importance.

### **Way forward:**

#### *Height-weight proportions:*

- If India is to be truly taking advantage of its large birth rate in the form of a [demographic dividend](#), then the correlate of birthweight and five-year height-weight needs to be reviewed at the highest political levels regularly.
  - It reflects the physical and cognitive nurture of human capital that India can bank on for its future.

#### *Improved learning:*

- Schooling is a socio-economic and gender parity springboard if school completion rates show no gender, rural-urban or parental income divides.
  - With improved education, India may bring down its maternal mortality ratios.
  - Also neonatal and under-five mortality rates can be improved through delayed marriages and exercising of reproductive choices by its empowered young women.
- Improved learning should translate into better completion rates at post-secondary and baccalaureate levels but need not necessarily correspond to universal, meaningful employment.
  - It is for the government and the corporate world to make opportunities and workplaces happen, irrespective of their gender.

### **Conclusion:**

- Timely, disaggregated, multidimensional data helps immensely in ensuring collective well being - physical, mental and social.
- The tools to get these measurements must be employed meaningfully and must be seen in real-time to be able to take corrective actions where needed.
- Public health is about people, their continued well-being, and not just about controlling disease outbreaks.
- The 2017 edition of the national health policy and the recently unveiled new education policy can help India derive the benefits of its demographic dividend.

## **Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

### **1. In 'act of god', coercive not cooperative federalism**

**Context:**

The Centre has acknowledged that states are likely to face a GST revenue gap of ₹3 lakh crore this year, as the economy may contract due to [COVID-19](#), and has offered states two options for borrowing to meet the shortfall.

This has been covered in the [28th August 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

The issue has been covered in the editorial segment of [11th August 2020 CNA: Making up for shortfalls in GST collection](#).

**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****1. Targeting Hezbollah**

The editorial talks about the Israeli attacks in Lebanon.

**Context:**

The Israeli attacks on Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon following what it called “cross border fires” mark a significant escalation in the crisis that has been building up along the border in recent years.

**Background:**

- Hezbollah, a Shia militia-cum-political party in Lebanon, and Israel, which have fought two wars before, have been observing a tenuous ceasefire for 14 years.
  - It is considered an Iranian-funded terrorist group by both Israel and the United States.
- Tensions began after Israel’s targeting of Iranian weapons and supplies within Syria.
- Israel fears that Iranian supplies to Hezbollah via Syria would leave them stronger, enhancing Israel’s security challenges in the northern border.
- In the recent attacks, Israel targeted an observation post, which the Israeli Defense Forces claimed was used by Hezbollah for intelligence collection.
- The exchange was the latest of several recent spikes in tension along the heavily militarized border, which has been monitored by [United Nations](#) forces since the two countries fought a war in 2006.

**Details:**

- Hezbollah has been a tough target for Israel.
  - Israel, which has bombed Gaza several times since its 2005 withdrawal from the strip, had been careful when it came to Hezbollah.
  - In 2000, after 18 years of occupation of southern Lebanon, Israel was forced to withdraw mainly due to the fighting of Hezbollah.
  - In 2006, Israel invaded Lebanon, aimed at destroying Hezbollah’s military capabilities. But after a month of Israeli aerial and land attacks, even on the day of the ceasefire, Hezbollah fired hundreds of short-range rockets into northern Israel. Ever since then, both sides have been wary of another open conflict.
  - The militants, on the other side, turned their focus to capacity building after the 2006 war, and, since 2011, to the civil war in Syria.

**Concerns:**

- The raid, at a time when Israel was carrying out an air campaign in Gaza, shows the growing appetite of the newly formed unity government of Netanyahu for war as a means to address the simmering border problems.
- The Baathist Syria has been a vital link between Hezbollah and Iran ever since the group was founded in the early 1980s.
- Assad (President of Syria) has survived the civil war, and Iran has substantially increased its footprint in Syria, bolstering the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis.
- Israel sees this axis as a growing security challenge and hence, started the bombing operations in Syria, risking another conflict with Hezbollah.

### **Way forward:**

- The past two wars suggest that it would not be easy for Israel, despite its military might, to defeat the battle-hardened Hezbollah fighters at their base.
- Hezbollah, on the other side, might resist an Israeli attack, but risks pulling Lebanon (already battling an economic crisis, political instability and the after-effects of the Beirut blast) into a wider war.
- Both sides should avert such an outcome and stick to the ceasefire.

## **F. Prelims Facts**

### **1. Domestic transfer pricing cases to also be covered under the faceless assessment mechanism**

#### **What's in News?**

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Additional Commissioner has said that the domestic transfer pricing cases will also be covered under the faceless assessment mechanism.

- Reassessment cases would also be a part of the faceless scheme.

#### **Faceless assessment mechanism:**

- In the Union Budget 2019, the Finance Minister proposed the introduction of a scheme of faceless e-assessment.
- The e-assessment scheme of 2019 has been amended and hence is known as the Faceless Assessment Scheme.
- The faceless assessment scheme applies to scrutiny assessment and best judgment assessment.
- The scheme seeks to eliminate the human interface between the taxpayer and the Income Tax Department.
- The scheme lays down the procedure to carry out a faceless assessment through electronic mode.
- The e-assessment is made in respect to such territorial area, or persons or class of persons, or income or class of income, or cases or class of cases, as specified by the CBDT.

Read more about [National e-Assessment Centre of Income Tax Department](#)

### **2. Lakshadweep Islands to have more Kerala barn owls to kill rats**

#### **What's in News?**

The Lakshadweep Administration had embarked on the 'Pilot project on Biological Control of Rodents (Rats) by using Barn Owls (Tyto alba) in Kavaratti Island'.

This topic has been covered in the [10th May 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

## G. Tidbits

### 1. Govt to divest up to 15% stake in HAL

#### What's in News?

The government is looking to raise around ₹5,000 crore by divesting up to 15% stake in state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL).

#### **Background:**

- In February 2020, the government set an ambitious disinvestment target of ₹2.1 lakh crore for 2020-21.
- Also, as part of the [Aatmanirbhar Bharat](#) package, the government had announced opening up of all sectors for private participation.

Read: [Centre to proceed with divestment of 23 PSUs: FM](#)

#### **Details:**

- The government currently holds an 89.97% stake in HAL after selling a 10% stake through an Initial Public Offering (IPO) in 2018 that raised around ₹4,229 crore.
- HAL is the only aircraft manufacturer in the country and assembles and builds a range of military helicopters and aircraft.
- It has several deals and products in the pipeline on offer for the armed forces.

### 2. Chinese buyers help lift Indian steel exports

#### What's in News?

India's steel exports more than doubled between April and July 2020 to hit their highest level in at least six years, boosted by Chinese buying.

- Vietnam and China bought 1.37 and 1.3 million tonnes of steel respectively.
- The Chinese purchases are by far the largest since data was first collated in the current form beginning with the fiscal year 2015-2016.
- Vietnam has been a regular buyer of Indian steel, but China has emerged as a leading buyer, replacing New Delhi's traditional markets, such as Italy and Belgium.
- Although China, the world's leading steelmaker produces vast quantities, it needs imports as it ramps up infrastructure spending.

### 3. 'India's business climate has been continuously improving'

#### What's in News?

NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant has said that India's business climate has been continuously improving and the government will work tirelessly to make India one of the easiest countries to invest in and create wealth.

- India jumped 14 places to the 63rd position in the World Bank's latest ease-of-doing-business ranking.
- India has improved its ranking by 79 positions in five years (2014-19).

#### Note:

Recently, [World Bank](#) announced the decision to pause publication of its global 'Doing Business Report' due to irregularities in reporting of data.

### 4. UN Secy.-Gen. Guterres flays India's coal subsidy

#### What's in News?

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres criticised India for subsidising fossil fuels and promoting coal auctions.

- "Clean energy and closing the energy access gap are good business. They are the ticket to growth and prosperity. Yet, here in India, subsidies for fossil fuels are still some seven times more than subsidies for clean energy. Continued support for fossil fuels in so many places around the world is deeply troubling," Mr. Guterres said.
- He raised concerns that the recent research on G20 recovery packages shows that twice as much recovery money has been spent on fossil fuels as clean energy. In some cases, there are countries doubling down on domestic coal and opening up coal auctions.
- The UN Secretary-General, however, commended several of India's commitments to clean energy, including the initiative on the [International Solar Alliance](#), plans for a World Solar Bank that would mobilise ₹70 trillion of investments in solar projects over the coming decade and, commitment to installing 500,000 MW of renewable energy by 2030.
- Mr Guterres' criticism of coal auctions is significant in the backdrop of Prime Minister's launching of the auction of 41 coal blocks for commercial mining as part of India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.
- The government decided to spend ₹50,000 crore on creating the infrastructure for coal extraction and transport, which would also create job opportunities for locals.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The first hour of every parliamentary sitting is termed as Question Hour and is mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of the House.
2. Zero Hour is an informal device, not mentioned in any rules of the Parliament.
3. The time immediately following the Question Hour is known as "Zero Hour".

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



- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3
- d. None of the above

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- The first hour of every parliamentary sitting is termed as Question Hour. It is mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of the House.
- The time immediately following the Question Hour has come to be known as “Zero Hour”. Members can, with prior notice to the Speaker, raise issues of importance during this time.
- Unlike the Question Hour, the Zero Hour is not mentioned in the Rules of Procedure. Thus it is an informal device available to the members of the Parliament to raise matters without any prior notice.

**Q2. Which of the following are the tributaries of River Mahanadi?**

1. Mand
2. Ong
3. Parry
4. Musi
5. Hasdeo

**Choose the correct option:**

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

Tributaries of River Mahanadi are Seonath (Shivnath), the Hasdeo, the Mand, the Ib, the Ong, the Tel, the Parry and the Jonk.

**Q3. Which of these islands are part of the Lakshadweep Islands group?**

1. Kavaratti
2. Agatti
3. Minicoy
4. Amini
5. Kalpeni

**Options:**

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

Self-explanatory.

**Q4. Which of the following are NOT constitutional bodies?**

1. Central Board of Direct Taxes
2. GST Council
3. National Human Rights Commission
4. Finance Commission
5. National Commission for Backward Classes

**Options:**

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Central Board of Direct Taxes and the National Human Rights Commission are statutory bodies.
- The GST Council, Finance Commission and National Commission for Backward Classes are Constitutional bodies.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In the backdrop of Centre-State friction over pending compensation payments under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, the Central Government should act in the spirit of cooperative federalism. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 2 Polity and Governance).
2. Considering the varying economic, social and political factors in different states, critically comment on the impact of the agricultural marketing reforms announced as a part of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 2 Polity and Governance).

