

# 05 May 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS 1 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. India flays nod for Gilgit-Baltistan polls

##### Context:

The External Affairs Ministry issued a strong protest over an order by the Pakistan Supreme Court allowing the government to hold elections in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

##### Gilgit-Baltistan:



- Gilgit-Baltistan borders China in the North and Kashmir and Ladakh to the southeast.
- It shares a geographical boundary with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and India considers it as part of the undivided Jammu and Kashmir, while Pakistan sees it as separate from PoK.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also passes through this region.
  - The main reason behind India's opposition towards China's [One Belt One Road \(OBOR\)](#) policy is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is a part of OBOR.
- Three of the world's longest glaciers outside the Polar regions are found in Gilgit-Baltistan.

#### Details:

- Gilgit-Baltistan has functioned as a “provincial autonomous region” since 2009.
- India has issued a demarche to protest what it called Pakistan's attempt to make material changes to the disputed area, by bringing federal authority to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B).
- India asserts that the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it.
- India's reaction is consistent with its previous objections against elections in G-B and in other parts of PoK.
- India maintains that Gilgit-Baltistan is a part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir that is an integral part of India.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Mallya seeks approval to move U.K. Supreme Court

##### Context:

Businessman Vijay Mallya has sought permission from the U.K. High Court to move the Supreme Court against the order dismissing his appeal challenging the lower court's clearance to his extradition to India in the IDBI Bank fraud case, issued in April 2020.

- In its 43-page judgment, the High Court of U.K. did not find any merit in the objections raised by Mr. Mallya to the Senior District Judge's order approving India's extradition request that was made on February 9, 2017.

This issue has been covered in 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

## Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 1. DRDO develops UV disinfection tower for sanitising coronavirus-prone areas

#### Context:

The Defence Research and Development Organisation ([DRDO](#)) has developed an ultra violet (UV) disinfection tower for rapid and chemical-free disinfection of high infection-prone areas.

#### Details:

- The equipment is named UV Blaster.
- It is useful for high tech surfaces like electronic equipment, computers and other gadgets in laboratories and offices that are not suitable for disinfection with chemical methods.
- The product is also effective for areas with large flow of people such as airports, shopping malls, metros, hotels, factories and offices.

This topic has been covered in 4<sup>th</sup> May PIB Summary and Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

## Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### 1. MPLADS, its suspension, and why it must go

#### Context:

- The central government has suspended the **Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme** ([MPLADS](#)) for two years, to use the funds instead, to strengthen the government's efforts in managing the challenges and the adverse impact of COVID-19 in the country.

#### Background:

#### Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS):

- Under the scheme, each **Member of Parliament** has the choice to suggest to the District Collector for works to the tune of **₹5 crores per annum** to be taken up in his/her constituency.

- The scheme provides an opportunity for legislators to **develop their constituencies**.

### Arguments against the MPLADS scheme:

- The author of the article argues for the permanent abolishing of the MPLADS scheme for the following reasons:

### **Principle of separation of powers:**

- The scheme violates the **cardinal principle of separation of powers**, as the MPLADS scheme **gives an executive function to the legislators**.
  - Though the principle of [separation of powers](#) is not specifically written down in the Constitution, it actually permeates the entire Constitution through several provisions mentioned in the Constitution.
- Despite the arrangement where the MPs only recommend projects and the implementation is done by the district authorities, more often than not, the district authorities are compelled to toe the line of the local MP.

### **Lax implementation:**

- Implementation of the scheme has not been satisfactory. The **observations made by the [Comptroller and Auditor General \(CAG\)](#) of India**, with respect to the MPLADS scheme, point to several shortcomings and lapses.
  - Expenditure incurred by the executing agencies has been consistently less than the amount booked.
  - Despite specific **provisions in the scheme envisaging that works under the scheme should be limited to asset creation**, 78% of the works recommended were for the improvement of existing assets.
  - There has been use of lesser quantities of material than specified by contractors resulting in excess payments and sub-standard works.
  - There is a **lack of accountability** for the expenditure in terms of the quality and quantities executed against specifications.
  - **Register of assets created**, as required under the scheme, has **not been maintained**.
- Most MPs use money under MPLADS quite haphazardly, and it is prone to **severe leakages**. Audit reports point out gross **irregularities and infirmities in implementation**.

### **Gaps in utilisation:**

- There have been **wide variations in the utilisation of the MPLADS amount** in various constituencies.
  - A report published in IndiaSpend, based on data provided by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, notes that over 50% of the current MPs from [Lok Sabha](#) haven't utilised any amount from the allocated 5 crores annually.
  - Only 35 MPs of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha utilised the entire amount of MPLADS during this period.
  - Since the MPLADS began in 1993, 5,000 crore rupees have been lying unspent with various district authorities as of May 15, 2015.
- Thus, a **significant portion of the allocated amount is left unspent**.

### **Unintended usage of funds:**

- There has been widespread talk of money under MPLADS being used to benefit contractors close to the local MPs or being used to appease opinion makers in the constituency.

- It has often been pointed out that such contractors are often relatives, close friends, or confidants of the MP, and such contractors and the MP are financially linked with each other.
- Reports of underutilisation and **misutilisation of MPLADS funds** continue to surface at regular intervals. There have been innumerable instances of misuse of the funds to construct many **undesirable assets**.

#### **Constitutionality issue:**

- The constitutional validity of MPLADS had been challenged in the [Supreme Court of India](#) in 1999, followed by petitions in 2000, 2003, 2004, and 2005. **The SC has held the scheme to be constitutional.**
- Though the Supreme Court of India has held the scheme to be constitutional, the author argues that the SC seems to have **overlooked the actual situation** prevalent on the field.
- Though well-intended, the implementation has been far from satisfactory. This necessitates a relook by the Judiciary.

## **2. Off course**

#### **Context:**

- The recent notification of the centre bringing the **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) under the administrative control** of the newly constituted **Union Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

#### **Background:**

- The predecessor of CWMA, the Cauvery River Authority (1998-2013) had the Prime Minister as the Chairman and Chief Ministers of the basin States as Members. The Union Ministry of Water Resources had administrative control.
- The **CWMA was created on the direction of the Supreme Court in February 2018.**
- The CWMA has **only a part-time head, the Chairman of the [Central Water Commission \(CWC\)](#)**, attached to the Ministry.

#### **Details:**

##### **State Concerns:**

- Several political parties and some farmers' associations from Tamil Nadu are upset with the new notification on the ground that the move may render the CWMA to be a "puppet" of the Centre.

##### **Centre's arguments:**

- Despite the lack of specific provisions, the **CWMA has always been working under the Union Ministry of Water Resources**. The formalisation of the CWMA's status corrects an apparent lapse and addresses administrative issues.
- There are also **eight inter-State river water boards under the Jal Shakti Ministry**. Along with the CWMA, four other bodies, including the Krishna and the Godavari Water Management Boards have been designated to be under the Ministry.
- **The notification does not, in any way, alter the character, functions or powers of the CWMA**, as approved by the Supreme Court.

#### **Concerns with the functioning of CWMA:**



- Even two years after the formation of CWMA, the **Authority does not have a full-fledged chairman.**
- The CWMA has **not been effective in ensuring the implementation of the Cauvery water tribunal orders.**
- Successive governments at the Centre have been wary of acting decisively for fear of alienating voters in one of the States involved. There has been **increasing politicisation** of the issue in the river basin states.

### Conclusion:

- The politicisation of inter-state water resources does not benefit the stakeholders and the states should guard against any such moves.
- The Centre should ensure that the CWMA is fully operational.

Also read: [Inter-State Water Disputes Tribunals in India](#)

## 3. App for one season

The topic involving the concerns associated with the Aarogya Setu app has been covered in the following articles:

[CNA dated April 26, 2020](#)

[CNA dated April 21, 2020](#)

## Category: ECONOMY

### 1. A grain stockist with a role still relevant

#### Context:

- Food Corporation of India's critical role in countering the challenges posed by COVID-19.

#### Background:

##### Food Corporation of India:

- The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has been set up under the **Food Corporations Act 1964.**
- In the initial decades of its inception, the FCI was praised for being at the forefront of India's quest for self-sufficiency in rice and wheat following the [Green Revolution](#), **managing procurement and stocking grains that supported a vast Public Distribution System (PDS).**
- However, in recent times, there have been **many concerns** over the organisation.
  - FCI's operations are regarded as **expensive and inefficient.** There are long-term concerns regarding the **costs of food subsidy.**
  - The FCI has witnessed **mounting debts** which currently stands at an estimated ₹55 lakh crore in March 2020, in the form of National Small Saving Funds Loan.

- FCI faces serious storage problems and is plagued by the issue of **shortage of modern storage facilities**. In the 1970s and 1980s, poor storage conditions meant a lot of grain was lost to pests, mainly rats.
- There have been reports of **widespread diversion of grains** and high leakage losses.
- FCI has lacked a “pro-active liquidation policy” for excess stocks which leads to **market distortion** in some instances. The distribution of subsidised grains is sometimes blamed for **depressing food prices and affecting farmers**.
- Some experts have argued that given the increasing role of the market economy, the **FCI seems to have long outlived its purpose**.

### Details:

#### FCI role in the pandemic crisis:

- Notwithstanding its dubious reputation, the FCI has consistently maintained the PDS, a lifeline for vulnerable millions across the country.
- Currently, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, FCI with its buffer stocks holds the **key to warding off a looming crisis of hunger and starvation**, especially in regions where lakhs of migrant workers have returned home with little money or food.
  - The FCI has already moved 3 million tonnes (post-lockdown) to States, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Karnataka and those in the Northeast, where demand outstrips State procurement and/or stocks.
  - The FCI has also enabled purchases by States and non-governmental organisations directly from FCI depots, doing away with e-auctions typically conducted for the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS).
  - Given the extended lockdown, the FCI is uniquely positioned to **move grains across State borders** where private sector players continue to face formidable challenges.

### Way forward:

- The author of the article discusses a few **strategies for the FCI** which would enable it to more effectively play its role in countering the challenges posed by COVID-19.

#### Improving transport logistics:

- The FCI has been **traditionally reliant on rail transport**. In 2019-2020 (until February) only 24% of the grains moved was by road.
- Given the fact that road movement is often better suited for emergencies and for remote areas, the FCI can consider **increased road transport of the food stocks**.
- The FCI is also well advised to **promote containerised movement of grains** which is more cost-effective and efficient. It is imperative to move grains quickly and with the least cost and effort, to areas where the need is the greatest.

#### Positioning strategy:

- The coming months will see increased demand of staples from food insecure hotspots.
- In such a scenario, FCI can adopt “**pre-positioning**” strategy for regions that are chronically underserved by markets or where markets have been severely disrupted. This strategy involves **storing of grains closer to demand hotspots**.
- The FCI already has a decentralised network of godowns. In the current context, it would be useful for the State governments and the FCI to maintain stocks at block headquarters or panchayats in food insecure or remote areas, in small hermetic silos or containers.

- Such a move, apart from ensuring a sense of assurance and psychological comfort, would allow **State governments to respond rapidly to demands**.
  - This would provide **flexibility to local governments** to access grains for contextually appropriate interventions at short notice, including feeding programmes, free distribution to vulnerable and marginalised sections, those who are excluded from the PDS, etc.
  - It can also allow freedom to panchayats, to sell grain locally at pre-specified prices until supply is restored.

#### **Higher allocations:**

- The central government should look beyond the PDS and the [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana](#) and **release stocks over and above existing allocations**.
- This should preferably be done **at the centre's expense** rather than by transferring the fiscal burden to States.

#### **Collaboration:**

- The FCI can consider working in collaboration with the **vibrant network of self-help groups formed under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)**. These SHGs can be tasked with the last mile distribution of food aid other than the PDS.

#### **Change in existing guidelines:**

- The **current FCI guidelines prescribe a first in, first out principle (FIFO)**, that mandates that grain that has been procured earlier needs to be distributed first to ensure that older stocks are liquidated, both across years and even within a particular year.
- The FCI must suspend this strategy, to enable the adoption of a strategy that costs the least time, money and effort.

#### **Enhanced role:**

- There has been an increasing trend of farmers growing for markets (like horticultural crops), seeking to reach out to consumers directly. The farmer producer organisations (FPOs) have been at the forefront of this development. The current lockdown and restrictions on movement have broken such supply chains.
- The FCI, along with the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED), is well placed to rope in expertise to **manage the logistics to revive and support direct sales**.
- The FCI can consider expanding its role to support FPOs and farmer groups, to move a wider range of commodities including **agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, packing materials** and so on.

#### **Conclusion:**

- The often questioned relevance of an organisation such as the FCI or of public stockholding has been strongly established by the role of FCI in the current crisis situation.
- The **Shanta Kumar report in 2015** recommended repurposing FCI as an “agency for innovations in Food Management System” and advocated shedding its dominant role in the procurement and distribution of grain.
- The FCI needs to **overhaul its operations and modernise its storage**.



## 1. INS Jalashwa

- INS Jalashwa is an amphibious transport dock currently in service with the Indian Navy.
- It is a Landing Platform Dock and an amphibious warship.
- INS Jalashwa is the second-largest combat warship in the Indian Navy after the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.
- INS Jalashwa was acquired from the United States.
- She is based in Visakhapatnam under the Eastern Naval Command.

## 2. Puri rath yatra

### What's in News?

The Managing Committee of Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri, has recommended the construction of chariots used in the annual Rath Yatra, but uncertainty continues to prevail over holding the mega festival scheduled for June 24, 2020.

- As per tradition, construction of three majestic chariots for deities — Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra — begins from the auspicious day of Akshaya Tritiya.
- Since the nation was under COVID-19 lockdown, the chariot construction was not allowed.
- Rath Yatra is a Hindu festival associated with Lord Jagannath held at Puri in Odisha.
- The festival commemorates Jagannath's annual visit to Gundicha Temple via Mausī Maa Temple near Balagandī Chaka, Puri.

Rath Yatra has been covered in 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

## 3. Sa-dhan

- Sa-Dhan is an association of microfinance institutions (MFIs) recognized by the [RBI](#).
- It is also recognized as a National Support Organization (NSO) by [National Rural Livelihood Mission \(NRLM\)](#).
- Sa-Dhan was founded in 1999 as the Association of Community Development Finance Institutions by SEWA Bank, BASIX, Dhan Foundation and others.
- Its mission is to build the field of community development finance in India to help its members to better serve low-income households, particularly women, in both rural and urban India.
- It was given the status of a self-regulatory organization (SRO) by RBI in 2015.
  - This gave it the powers to monitor MFIs and ensure the lenders are in compliance with the rules.
  - In October 2010, RBI had formed a committee under financial sector expert Y.H. Malegam that recommended an SRO framework for MFIs to regulate the sector.
- Sa-Dhan was the second association in the business of micro-lending to be given the SRO status by RBI.
  - The first one to be given SRO status was the Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN).
  - MFIN is an association of MFIs operating as non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

**Note:**

MFIs advance small loans to low-income borrowers who typically are not covered by the formal banking system.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. States with high swine flu rate record most COVID-19 cases

- Five States — Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Tamil Nadu — account for about 70% of India's confirmed COVID-19 cases, that on 4th May stood at 46, 416.
- However, data from the Health Ministry's National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), show that these are also States that consistently accounted for the bulk of swine flu cases, or seasonal influenza (H1N1) since 2015.
  - In 2019, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi and Maharashtra accounted for 54% of the confirmed H1N1 infections. In 2018 also, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat, made up 65% of H1N1 cases.
  - In 2015, the largest spike in cases since the swine flu pandemic of 2009-10, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi polled 63% of the cases.
  - Excluding 2016, Maharashtra and Gujarat have either led or been among the top three in India's swine flu count.

#### Note:

- While both H1N1 and COVID-19 are due to pathogens that trace their origins to viruses from non-human hosts, they belong to different families.
- While both infiltrate the lungs and cause characteristic pulmonary infections, they have varying lethality.
  - Swine flu infections have a higher case fatality rate (deaths per confirmed cases) and can cause significant deaths in children as well as those under 60.
  - COVID-19 is relatively more dangerous to those above 60 and almost harmless in children.

### 2. Jharkhand launches schemes for job creation

#### What's in News?

Jharkhand government has launched three labour intensive programmes to restore the rural economy.

- These three schemes have been devised in convergence with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- Birsa Harit Gram Yojana (BHGY), Neelambar Pitambar JAL Sammriddhi Yojana (NPJSY) and Veer Sahid Poto Ho Khel Vikas Scheme (VSPHKVS) have been devised to create wage employment for workers in rural areas.
  - The BHGY is envisaged at bringing over two lakh acres of unused government fallow land under the afforestation programme. The initial plantation, maintenance, land work and afforestation will be taken up through MNRGA.
  - As per NPJSY, the government is aiming at creating agro-water storage units by arresting rainwater and runaway groundwater.
  - Under VSPHKVS, as many as 5,000 sports grounds will be developed across the State.

### 3. PM slams Pakistan in virtual NAM meeting

#### What's in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an indirect reference to Pakistan during an online meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group, and said some countries were fomenting terrorism in the midst of the global pandemic.

- Modi supported a more representative post-COVID-19 world order and urged the World Health Organization (WHO) to focus on building health capacity in the developing countries.
- The NAM grouping met on the theme of “United against COVID-19”.
- The remark may be seen as a reference by the PM to Pakistan’s role in supporting cross-border terrorism in recent days, with a spike in ceasefire violations across the Line of Control in Kashmir.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Sa-Dhan:

1. Sa-Dhan is an association of microfinance institutions (MFIs) recognized by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
2. It is the first association in the business of micro-lending to be given the self-regulatory organization (SRO) status by RBI.
3. Sa-Dhan is empowered to monitor MFIs and ensure the lenders are in compliance with the rules.

Choose the correct option:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Sa-Dhan is an association of microfinance institutions (MFIs) recognized by the RBI.
- It is also recognized as National Support Organization (NSO) by the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).
- It was given the status of a self-regulatory organization (SRO) by RBI in 2015.
- This gave it the powers to monitor MFIs and ensure the lenders are in compliance with the rules.
- Sa-Dhan was the second association in the business of micro-lending to be given the SRO status by RBI.
- The first one to be given SRO status was the Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN).

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Rath Yatra:

1. The Puri Rath Yatra is also called the Gundicha Yatra.
2. Rath Yatra is included in the UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Rath Yatra is a festival dedicated to Lord Jagannath (Lord Krishna), Goddess Subhadra (his sister) and Lord Balaram (his elder brother).
- Rath Yatra is widely celebrated and is one of the biggest festivals of India.
- The term especially refers to the annual Rath Yatra in Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and other East Indian states, particularly, the Odia festival.
- The Puri Yatra to the maternal uncle's place is also called the Gundicha Yatra, named after Gundicha Devi, the maternal aunt of Lord Jagannath.
- It is not included in the UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage.

**Read more about [UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage](#).**

**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

1. The world's largest riverine island is on the Brahmaputra river.
2. The Brahmaputra river flows through the Kaziranga National Park (KNP).
3. Dibang and Lohit are Brahmaputra's left bank tributaries.

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

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

The Brahmaputra river originates in the Kailash range near the Mansarovar Lake to the north of the Himalayas in the southwest Tibet region. The world's largest riverine island, Majuli Island, is on the Brahmaputra river in the state of Assam. The Brahmaputra river flows through the Kaziranga National Park (KNP). Dibang and Lohit are Brahmaputra's main left bank tributaries.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. INS Jalashwa is an amphibious transport dock indigenously developed by the Indian Navy.
2. It is the largest combat warship in the Indian Navy.
3. It can be used to operate vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft.

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

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

d. 1 and 2 only

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- INS Jalashwa is an amphibious transport dock currently in service with the Indian Navy.
- INS Jalashwa was acquired from the United States.
- INS Vikramaditya is the Indian Navy's biggest warship.
- Unlike regular warships, this ship has a flight deck for helicopter operations from which four medium helicopters can operate simultaneously.
- This deck can also be used to operate vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft like the Sea Harrier, in special circumstances.
- Since the ship is capable of embarking over 1000 troops, she is fully equipped with extensive medical facilities including four operation theatres, 12-bed ward, laboratory and a dental centre to ensure the health care of the embarked personnel.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The possibility that the implementational effect of a scheme may diverge hugely from the intended purpose of the scheme should necessitate the need for timely evaluations and corrections. Examine the statement with respect to the governmental schemes in general and the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme in particular. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. Discuss the significance of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and the concerns associated with its functioning. Suggest necessary changes in the functioning of the FCI to make it effective and relevant in the current context. (15 marks, 250 words)