

# 09 Sep 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: EDUCATION

#### 1. NSO report shows stark digital divide affects education

##### Context:

National Statistical Organisation (NSO) has released the findings of the survey on household social consumption related to education, as part of the NSO's 75th round, conducted from July 2017 to June 2018.

##### Details:

- The report shows just how stark the digital divide is, across States, cities and villages, and income

groups.

- Across India, only one in 10 households have a computer — whether a desktop, laptop or tablet.
- However, almost a quarter of all homes have Internet facilities, accessed via a fixed or mobile network using any device, including smartphones.
  - Most of these Internet-enabled homes are located in cities, where 42% have Internet access.
  - In rural India, however, only 15% are connected to the Internet.
  - The national capital has the highest Internet access, with 55% of homes having such facilities.
  - Himachal Pradesh and Kerala are the only other states where more than half of all households have Internet.
  - Odisha has the least Internet-enabled homes.

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. 40% children not fully vaccinated: NSO report

#### Context:

- ‘Health in India’ report has been published by the [National Statistical Organisation \(NSO\)](#).
- The report is based on the 75th round of the National Sample Survey (July 2017-June 2018) on household social consumption related to health.

#### Key findings:

- Across the country, only 59.2% of children under five years are fully immunised.
  - This contradicts the Centre’s Health Management Information System portal data, which claimed that full immunisation coverage for 2017-18 stood at 86.7%.
- It points out that although almost all children in India are vaccinated against [tuberculosis](#), and receive their birth dose of the polio vaccine, two out of five children do not complete their immunisation programme.
  - Most of these children remain unprotected against measles, and partially protected against a range of other diseases.
- About 97% of children across the country received at least one vaccination — mostly BCG and/or the first dose of OPV at birth. This remains steady across income groups and geographies.
- However, only 67% of children are protected against measles.

#### Note:

- Full immunisation means that a child receives eight vaccine doses in the first year of life.
- Among the states, Manipur (75%), Andhra Pradesh (73.6%) and Mizoram (73.4%) recorded the highest rates of full immunisation. At the other end of the spectrum lies Nagaland, where only 12% of children received all vaccinations, followed by Puducherry (34%) and Tripura (39.6%).

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

#### 1. SC to Centre: adhere to Ministry circular on roads in Char Dham

### Context:

The Supreme Court has ordered the Centre to adhere to a Union Road Ministry circular of March 2018.

### **Chardham Project:**

- It is aimed at ensuring better connectivity to pilgrimage centres in Uttarakhand.
- The project involves developing and widening 900-km of national highways connecting the holy Hindu pilgrimage sites of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri.
- The project had proposed the widening of single-lane roads into double-lanes by up to 10 metres, developing the highways and thereby improving access to the Char Dham (four shrines).

Read more about the Char Dham Project covered in [26<sup>th</sup> May 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

### Details:

- The circular had advised against building full-fledged roads cutting across the fragile Himalayan slopes while implementing the ₹12,000-crore ambitious Char Dham project.
- The bench also directed the government to undertake reforestation of the area to make up for the loss of green cover caused by the construction.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

#### **1. What is in a NAM and India's alignment**

### Context:

- India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, has stated recently that non-alignment as a foreign policy was a concept of relevance in a specific era and a particular context (Cold War era), though the independence of action enshrined in it remains a factor of continuity in India's foreign policy.
- This statement seems to strengthen **the growing perception that India has abandoned the policy of non-alignment.**

### Background:

#### **Non-alignment policy:**

- Non-alignment policy gained traction **during the Cold War era**. It meant **not seeking to formally align with or against the two politico-military blocs** led by the United States or the Soviet Union. It meant remaining independent or neutral and retaining autonomy of policy for the country.

### Non-alignment movement:

- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is an international organization based on the Non-alignment policy.
- **The Non-Aligned Movement was established in 1961 in Belgrade**, mainly based on the initiative of the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, Indonesian President Sukarno, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito.
- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) provided a platform for newly independent developing nations to join together to protect their autonomy. The members united around NAM's flagship campaigns for de-colonisation, universal nuclear disarmament and against apartheid.

Also read: [Non-Aligned Movement \(NAM\)](#)

### Dynamics of foreign policy:

*Alliance system of the cold war era:*

- During the Cold War, **the countries in an alliance had ideological convergence and also faced a common military threat**. With the disintegration of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, the international options of alliance partners widened.
- Notably, **the strategic interests of former alliance partners are no longer congruent**.
  - The growing differences between the EU and the U.S. and the divergences within the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#) are a case in point.

*The decreasing influence of NAM:*

- The disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, universal decolonization and the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa has resulted in the **NAM countries diversifying their network of relationships across the erstwhile east-west divide** and the non-alignment policy losing its relevance.

### Details:

- The author of the article, P.S. Raghavan, a former diplomat and the Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board analyzes the current situation and discusses **India's options in the dynamic international relations realm**.

### India's geo-strategic objectives:

- Two significant aspects of India's foreign policy has been to **secure its economic and security interests in the Indo-Pacific space** and also to **ensure strategic influence and security along the continental landmass to its north and west**.
  - As part of its Indo-Pacific outreach, India has adopted the [Act East policy](#) of bilateral and multilateral engagements in Southeast Asia and East Asia and the Pacific.
  - India has been trying to establish connectivity and cooperation with Afghanistan and Central Asia.

### India's geo-strategic challenges:

- **India's primacy in the Indian Ocean is being challenged** by the growing presence of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean region and China's deepening relations with the Indian Ocean littoral countries.

- Given that **India shares its northern and western border with two hostile and nuclear-armed neighbours**, India has not been able to establish its influence in the continental landmass. India has been busy addressing the security aspects along its borders. This has also **limited India's access to Central Asian economies**.
- The growing cooperation between Pakistan and China also raises the **threat of a two-front war for India**.
- **China has been making inroads into India's neighbouring countries** like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Chinese influence has been growing at the cost of India's strategic depth in these countries.

### **Aligning with the U.S.:**

- In the wake of the border tensions with China along the LAC and China's increasing assertiveness, there have been calls for India's foreign policy to make a decisive shift towards the United States to counter China.

### *Convergence:*

- Shared India-U.S. interests in dealing with the challenge from China in the maritime domain have been a strategic underpinning of the bilateral partnership between India and the U.S. since the early 2000s.
- The trade war between the U.S. and China and the deteriorating ties between the two superpower nations have brought India and the U.S. on a **common platform to counter Chinese assertiveness**.

### Challenges:

- In the immediate-term, **Indian and U.S. perspectives are less convergent in India's continental neighbourhood**.
  - While India is keen on engagement with Iran and Russia to help increase its connectivity in the region, the U.S. on account of its deteriorating ties with Iran and Russia has pressed on India to reduce its interactions and dependency on these nations.

### The way forward for India:

- Presently as reiterated by the current External Affairs Minister, **the Indian foreign policy vis-a-vis its international relationships should be driven primarily by the objective to advance prosperity and influence of India**.
- Given that **China poses the single largest threat to India in the current circumstances**, India's options should be guided by the intent to neutralize this threat posed by the Chinese.

### **Partnership with the U.S. based on mutual interests:**

- Given the current circumstances, it might seem that a decisive shift in the form of **increased convergence with the U.S.** is a viable option for India.
- India should see its ties with the U.S. as a **joint venture and not as an alliance**. The two countries should pursue shared objectives for mutual benefit and accept the differences of perspectives and try to address them.
  - The U.S. should acknowledge that India's development of trade routes through Iran would also serve its strategic interest of finding routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan and Russia, respectively.
  - As the U.S. confronts the challenge to its dominance from China, the classical balance of power considerations would dictate a modicum of accommodation with Russia.

- Despite the growing partnership between India and the U.S., the Indian administration has repeatedly clarified that the rejection of non-alignment does not mean alignment and the government has reiterated that India will not join an alliance system.

#### **The Russia factor:**

- While partnering with the U.S., India must also consider further **broad basing its relations with Russia beyond the traditional defence and energy pillars**. India should build a strong relationship with Russia to try to **exploit Russia's reluctance to be a junior partner of China**.

For more information on this topic, refer to:

[CNA dated Aug 20, 2020: China-Russia ties as a major determinant](#)

#### **Stitching together an alliance of like-minded countries:**

- The countries in the Asia-Pacific region are having to face an assertive China in the South China Sea. These countries are reluctant to define **China as a strategic adversary**, because of their economic engagement with it and the huge military asymmetry.
- Deepening India's engagement with such countries might play to India's advantage.

For related information, refer to:

[CNA dated July 22, 2020: The main planks in a counter-China policy](#)

[CNA dated Aug 11, 2020: Isolating China, as proposition and the reality](#)

### **Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

#### **1. A case for down-to-earth governance**

##### **Context:**

- The article discusses the challenges in a democratic form of governance and suggests ways to strengthen the democratic governance structure in India.

##### **Challenges in representative democracies:**

##### **Money as a factor in elections:**

- Around the world, electoral democracies are affected by the **issue of funding political parties and elections**.
- **Money has become an important factor deciding the winnability of the candidates**. Money is required to win elections legitimately, even when people are not bribed to vote. Uninterrupted visibility and communication with citizens require advertisements as well as teams of professionals for managing social media. This has increased the cost of elections.
- The race to raise more money for even legitimate electioneering purposes can **corrupt the process of funding parties and elections**. This happens to be the **root cause of corruption in politics and government**.

### Quality of elected representatives:

- Despite having been elected based on the principle of universal adult franchise and enjoying popular mandate, the quality of the elected representatives is a cause of concern.
  - There are growing indications of **increasing criminalization of politics**.
  - Debates within India's Parliament, in which all members have been elected by the world's most impressive election machinery, hardly inspire citizens' confidence in their representatives' ability to govern the country.

### Process flaws:

- There is an inherent flaw in the design of the process for electing representatives.
  - Representatives of the people are chosen by smaller electorates within geographical constituencies. However, when they meet together in the national assembly, they are expected to govern the whole country and consider what is best for the whole country.
  - Constituency favouring leads to challenges for reaching optimal solutions.
  - However, if the people who elected them find they are not protecting local interests, they will not be elected again.
- Political parties in electoral democracies provide a solution to the problem of creating an alignment of views among representatives from hundreds of constituencies around the country.

### Multi-party systems:

- It is easier to form effective governments in electoral democracies when there are fewer parties. When there **are too many parties and too many contradictory points of view to be accommodated within a coalition, governance can break down**.
  - The 1990s witnessed political uncertainty in India due to the lack of a clear mandate in the general elections. Recently, Israel had to undertake multiple rounds of elections to form a government.

### Intraparty democracy:

- There is a **lack of intraparty democracy** in most political parties of the day.
- Political parties when not internally democratic, serve as means for self-aggrandising politicians to amass power and wealth as a result of which democracy as a whole suffers.

### The temptation of direct democracy:

- Given the above-discussed challenges to representative democracy, it is tempting to abandon political parties and parliaments and revert to **direct forms of democracy where every decision can be put directly to all citizens to vote on**.
- New Internet technologies could provide relevant tools to make this possible.
- However, there are challenges with respect to direct democracy as well. If all voters have not understood what is at stake, they cannot decide well and they could be guided by emotions rather than objective facts and figures. **Complex issues, where many interests collide, must be resolved by reason, not settled by the numbers**.
  - The article quotes [Brexit](#) as an example of the hasty results of a referendum.

### The Way forward:

#### Addressing the existing concerns:

- **Electoral funding must be cleaned up.** The criminalization of politics must be ended and democracy within political parties must be improved to make representative democracy work better.
- **Electoral reforms are essential.**
- This will require appropriate legislation and their **strict enforcement by the constitutionally backed institutions like the election commission and the judiciary.**

#### **Local governance and citizen participation:**

- Local governance, wherein citizens manage their local affairs democratically is a must for a good, democratic governance system. There is a need for **greater decentralization of powers and functions.**
- Active citizen participation in the democracies would allow them to become the source of solutions to many problems in society.
- Given the familiarity with the local conditions, the locals will be able to take optimal decisions.
- Local systems solutions will be effective even in solving global systemic problems of environmental sustainability and inclusive growth.

## **F. Prelims Facts**

### **1. Telangana seeks Bharat Ratna for former PM Narasimha Rao**

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

The Telangana Assembly has requested the Central Government to confer Bharat Ratna posthumously on former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao for his contributions to the country.

Read more about [Bharat Ratna Award](#) and other [Sports & Literature, Gallantry And Civilian Awards](#).

## **G. Tidbits**

### **1. 'Borrowings by States soar 51% to ₹2.97 lakh cr.'**

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

According to CARE (domestic rating agency), the pandemic-stricken states have borrowed a whopping ₹2.97 lakh crore so far this financial year, which is as much as 51% more than the corresponding period a year earlier.

- States with highest borrowing: Karnataka - ₹23,000 crore (475% more ), Maharashtra - ₹37,500 (200% more) and Tamil Nadu - ₹46,000 crore (117% more).
- This means that these 3 states contributed as much as 38% of the total incremental borrowing by the states so far, this fiscal.



## 2. 'Global economy to contract 4.4%, China to grow at 2.7%'

### What's in News?

Fitch Ratings projected the global GDP to contract 4.4% for 2020-21 but revised upwards China's growth estimate to 2.7% for 2020.

- Fitch has slashed India's growth projection to (-)10.5% from (-)5%.
- It said that India imposed one of the most stringent lockdowns worldwide and domestic demand fell massively. Limited fiscal support, fragilities in the financial system, and a continued rise in virus cases hamper a rapid normalisation in activity.

Read more about [Fitch Ratings](#).

## 3. PLA fired shots in the air, says India

### What's in News?

There are fresh tensions between India and China on the south bank of Pangong Tso (lake).

- Hours after the Chinese Army claimed that Indian troops opened fire along the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, the Indian Army stated that it was actually Chinese troops that fired a few rounds in the air.
- Brigadier-level talks have been going on for de-escalation in the area but have made no progress.

### Concerns:

- Three key bilateral agreements of 1993, 1996 and 2013, that have been central to maintaining peace and tranquility on the disputed Line of Actual Control, were violated by China in June 2020.
- The recent firing is the first in Ladakh since the 1962 war.
- No shots have been fired along the disputed boundary between India and China since 1975 at the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The killings of soldiers at Galwan were also the first since 1975.
- The recent incident of the death of a Special Frontier Force soldier, who stepped on a vintage landmine while patrolling near Pangong Tso, was the first publicly known killing of a Tibetan soldier at the LAC in Ladakh.

Read more about [India-China Standoff](#).

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following:

1. Global Economic Prospects (GEP) – World Bank
2. World Economic Outlook (WEO) – World Economic Forum (WEF)
3. Global Financial Stability Report – International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Which of the given pairs is/are correctly matched?

- a. 1 and 3 only

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Global Economic Prospects (GEP) is published by the World Bank.
- World Economic Outlook (WEO) and the Global Financial Stability Report are both published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

**Q2. Consider the following statements:**

1. Khangchendzonga National Park in Sikkim is the only UNESCO Mixed World Heritage Site in India.
2. Jaipur has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
3. Rajasthan is the only state to have both Cultural and Natural sites in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

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

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Khangchendzonga National Park in Sikkim is the only UNESCO Mixed World Heritage Site in India.
- Jaipur has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2019.
- Rajasthan is not the only state to have both Cultural and Natural sites in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

**Read more: [UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India](#)**

**Q3. Arrange the following from West to East:**

1. Kedarnath
2. Badrinath
3. Yamunotri
4. Gangotri

**Choose the correct option:**

- a. 3, 4, 1, 2

- b. 4, 3, 1, 2
- c. 4, 3, 2, 1
- d. 2, 1, 3, 4

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

West to East: Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. National Bamboo Mission (NBM) is a sub-scheme under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).
2. NBM is a centrally sponsored scheme.
3. In 2017, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 was amended to include bamboo in the category of trees.

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

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- National Bamboo Mission (NBM) is a sub-scheme under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme.
- Keeping in consideration the importance of bamboo, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 was amended in 2017 to remove bamboo from the category of trees. As a result, now anyone can undertake cultivation and business in bamboo and its products.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Despite the previous attempts made at the decentralization of power in India, strong local governance remains the unfinished agenda to make India's democracy stronger and deeper. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS paper 2/Polity and Governance)
2. Given the historically dynamic nature of international relations, evaluate the need for India to abandon its non-alignment policy and consider aligning more closely with the U.S. to meet the immediate threat posed by an assertive China. Are there any challenges or concerns associated with such an approach? (15 marks, 250 words)(GS Paper 2/International Relations)