

15 Sep 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

SOCIAL ISSUES

1. [Centre opposes move to recognise same-sex unions](#)

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [What's next for Palestine after UAE, Bahrain deals with Israel?](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Bhushan pays fine, files review plea](#)
2. [Three agri reform Bills introduced](#)
3. [It's official: Question Hour gone](#)

C. GS 3 Related

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Scientists find 'life harbouring' gas on Venus](#)

ECONOMY

1. [GST compensation due to States is ₹1.51 lakh cr.](#)
2. ['Sell enemy assets worth ₹1 lakh crore'](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

ECONOMY

1. [Urban employment as the focal point](#)
2. [For a different yardstick](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [Bharatiyar, the charioteer of wisdom](#)
2. [Kondapochamma reservoir](#)

G. Tidbits

1. ['Regulatory set-up for OTT players not required now'](#)
2. [Truth Fund to provide legal aid in fight for free speech](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Centre opposes move to recognise same-sex unions

Context:

The Centre has opposed before the Delhi High Court, a petition seeking recognition of same-sex marriages.

Details:

- The Centre argued that the Indian legal system, society and values do not recognise marriage between same-sex couples.

- The Solicitor General, representing the Centre, said the 2018 judgment of the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court merely decriminalises homosexuality or lesbianism.

For more on the Supreme Court Judgement on Section 377 watch Explained: Sec 377 - SC Judgment below:



- The Solicitor General said the petition was not permissible as it was asking the court to legislate and also that any relief granted “would run contrary to various statutory provisions”.

Issue:

- The petitioner argued that in the absence of a declaration from a court or authority, same-sex couples were being denied registration of their marriage under the 1955 Act. This, the counsel said, was happening despite the Supreme Court’s verdict on [IPC Section 377](#).
- It was also argued that the definition within the Hindu Marriage Act does not say that the marriage has to take place between a ‘man’ and a ‘woman’.
- The petitioners submitted that the denial of registration impacted both the [right to equality](#) and the right to life because benefits available to heterosexual couples were denied to homosexual couples.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. What’s next for Palestine after UAE, Bahrain deals with Israel?

Context:

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the top diplomats of the UAE and Bahrain are to sign the deals on normalising relations.
- They have agreed to establish full diplomatic ties as part of a deal to halt the annexation of occupied land sought by the Palestinians for their future state.

Background:

- It took more than three decades for the first Arab country to recognise Israel.

- Egypt signed a peace treaty with its Jewish neighbour in 1979, a year after the Camp David summit between President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.
- Jordan, the second Arab country that established peace with Israel, took 15 more years to do so.
- There was a gap of 26 years between Jordan's peace treaty and that of the UAE with Israel.
- It took less than 30 days for the fourth agreement — between Bahrain and Israel.

Arab Peace Initiative:

- The new-found readiness of Arab countries to have peace with Israel, under the mediation of the Trump administration, appears to be transforming one of the oldest conflicts in modern West Asia.
- There are speculations that more Arab countries, from Morocco to Sudan and Oman, might follow the footsteps of the UAE and Bahrain.
- These deals, which have formalised years of back-room contacts between the Gulf kingdoms and Israel, suggest that the pan-Arab-Israel conflict is turning the page.

Where does it leave the Palestinians?

- The agreement between Bahrain and Israel dispenses with the pretence altogether, making no mention of Palestinian land.
- Till the [UAE-Israel deal was announced on August 13, 2020](#), the official Arab position on the question of Palestine was rooted in the Arab Peace Initiative, proposed by Saudi Arabia in 2002, and endorsed by the Arab League in the same year.
 - The proposal called for normalising relations between the Arab world and Israel, in exchange for full Israeli withdrawal from the territories it captured in the 1967 war, including the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee issue and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.
- Since 2002, both the UAE and Bahrain have supported the Arab Peace Initiative. However, the recent agreements made by Bahrain and the UAE break with this consensus.
- The Palestinian leadership considers this step to blow up the Arab Peace Initiative and the decisions of the Arab and Islamic summits, and international legitimacy, as an aggression against the Palestinian people.
- The Palestinians have further called for an immediate emergency session of the Arab League and the [Organization of Islamic Cooperation](#) to reject this declaration.
- The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has rejected the Bahrain-Israel deal as well.

A Gulf analyst opines that by normalising relations outside the framework of 'land for peace', the two states have broken with a decades-old Arab consensus on the Palestinian issue, and effectively endorsed Israel's military occupation over the Palestinians. This leaves the Palestinians more isolated than ever and further weakens the already-dim prospect of a two-state solution.

Read [How will the Israel-UAE pact impact the Gulf? in CNA dated Aug 16, 2020](#)

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Bhushan pays fine, files review plea

Context:

Advocate Prashant Bhushan has filed a review petition in the Supreme Court against its decision finding him guilty of criminal contempt by scandalising the court with his tweets. Read more on [contempt of court](#).

Details:

- The review is a limited and rare remedy against a Supreme Court verdict.
- The two grounds for review are apparent errors in the judgment and factual or legal mistakes.
- Besides the review plea, a writ petition had been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the lack of an “intra-court appeal” mechanism against a judgment in a suo motu contempt case under Article 129 of the Constitution.

Read more on this issue covered in the [1st Sep 2020 CNA: SC imposes ₹1 fine on Bhushan for contempt](#).

2. Three agri reform Bills introduced

Context:

Three Bills on agriculture reforms have been introduced in Parliament to replace the ordinances issued during the lockdown.

Details:

- Amendments have been made to the Essential Commodities Act, new laws have been framed to bypass the State APMC Acts and to facilitate contract farming.
- The Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, and the Farmers Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill have been introduced in the Parliament.
- The proposed legislations will replace the ordinances promulgated during the lockdown and will bring about changes to the marketing and storage of farm produce and agri commodities outside registered markets, as well as the facilitation of contract farming.

Read more about the agri marketing reforms covered in [17th May 2020](#) and [4th June 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

3. It’s official: Question Hour gone

This topic has been covered in the [3rd Sep 2020 CNA: Question Hour dropped in LS schedule of monsoon session](#).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Scientists find ‘life harbouring’ gas on Venus

Context:

Scientists have found that the atmosphere of Venus contains traces of phosphine gas.

Details:

- A team of experts used telescopes in Hawaii and Chile's Atacama Desert to observe Venus' upper cloud deck, around 60 km from the surface.
- They detected traces of phosphine.
- The latest finding is a fresh insight into conditions on planet Venus.
- Conditions on Venus are often described as hellish with daytime temperatures hot enough to melt lead and an atmosphere comprised almost entirely of carbon dioxide.
- However, the team has stressed that the presence of phosphine alone did not prove the presence of life on Venus.

Phosphine gas

- Phosphine is a chemical that belongs to the group of organophosphorus compounds.
- It is a colourless and highly poisonous gas.
- Phosphine gas is associated with living organisms.
- It is a flammable gas that on Earth occurs from the breakdown of organic matter.
- It is released by microbes in oxygen-starved environments, such as lake sediments and animals' innards.

Conditions on Venus:

- For 2 billion years, Venus was temperate and harboured an ocean.
- At present, a dense carbon dioxide atmosphere blankets a near-waterless surface where temperatures top 450 degrees C.
- The clouds in the sky are hardly inviting, containing droplets of 90% sulphuric acid.
- The conditions on Venus are so deeply unpleasant that many scientists believe the planet is dead.
- Rather than coming from floating Venusians, they suspect phosphine arises from more mundane processes.
- The discovery raises the possibility that life gained a foothold on Venus and remnants floated on as the planet suffered an out of control global warming that made the planet hellish.
 - Venus is so close and of such similar size to Earth that some experts believe it serves as a warning of the dangers of an out of control climate change.

Category: ECONOMY**1. GST compensation due to States is ₹1.51 lakh cr.****Context:**

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation due to States stands at over ₹1.51 lakh crore.

Details:

- In the current fiscal year (2020-21), States are looking at a staggering ₹2.35 lakh crore GST revenue shortfall.

Read more on this issue covered in [11th August 2020](#) and [28th August 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

2. 'Sell enemy assets worth ₹1 lakh crore'

Context:

A part-time member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister has suggested that India should look at selling enemy properties valued at over ₹1 lakh crore to take care of the current expenditure, which will drive growth.

What is Enemy Property?

- When war broke out in 1962 (with China) and in 1965 and 1971 (with Pakistan), the Government of India took over the properties of the citizens of China and Pakistan under the provisions of the Defence of India Acts.
 - These legislations defined an 'enemy' as any country that committed acts of aggression against India and her citizens.
 - Their properties were categorised as 'enemy properties'.
- The law of succession does not apply to enemy property, i.e. it denied legal heirs any right over the enemy property.
- The estimated value of all enemy properties is approximately Rs 1 lakh crore.

Details:

- The properties include buildings, land, gold, and jewellery and shares held in companies.
- As per the [Tashkent Declaration](#) signed in January 1966 after the end of hostilities during the 1965 war with Pakistan, both the countries were to discuss the return of properties taken over by either side during the war.
- These "enemy properties" were vested by the central government in the Custodian of Enemy Property for India.
- While Pakistan was able to liquidate the assets in 1971, India is 49 years behind.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Urban employment as the focal point

Context:

- Economic contraction and the associated unemployment problem in India.

Background:

Economic Contraction:

- India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) suffered a steep contraction of 23.9% in the April-June quarter of the current fiscal year.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated Sep 2, 2020: Inevitable collapse](#)

Employment concern and associated issues:

- Notably, the **employment-intensive sectors** like construction (–50%), trade, hotels and other services (–47%), manufacturing (–39%), and mining (–23%) have suffered the worst contractions. Given the contraction and lack of demand in the economy, there would be a **significant dip in urban employment opportunities**.
- This raises concern on the employment situation in India as it would lead to either a growing number of people losing jobs or the newly joining labour force failing to find new opportunities. This could lead to a rise in unemployment levels.
- There has been a wave of **massive 'reverse migration'** with millions of workers returning to their home states due to a loss of livelihoods in urban areas.
 - In the rural areas, this reverse migration has resulted in surplus labour force availability which could result in **depression of rural wages** and will also further add to the **problem of disguised unemployment** in the rural areas. The **viability of agriculture** to provide these workers with a decent living is also questionable.
 - The **lack of workers in the urban areas** has limited the industries' capacity to ramp up production to pre-COVID levels.

Governmental efforts:

- The central government launched the '**Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan**' in June 2020 with an outlay of Rs. 50,000 crore. This employment scheme aims to provide livelihood opportunities in rural India.

For more information on this topic, refer to:

[CNA dated June 19, 2020: Rs 50000 crore scheme for migrants](#)

- The Government has **enhanced the budgetary announcement for the Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee scheme**. Rs 40,000 crore was allocated to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) over and above the budgetary allocation of Rs 61,500 crore making it the highest-ever allocation towards MGNREGA. This will help boost employment opportunities in rural areas and will be a big relief to returning migrant labourers.

Concerns:

Structure of the economy:

- The **informal sector accounts for a large share of Indian employment**.
 - According to the [International Labour Organization](#), of the 535 million labour force in India in 2019, some 398.6 million have poor quality jobs.
- These jobs are characterized by **inadequate earnings, low productivity and difficult conditions of work** that undermine the basic rights of workers. They lack effective representation by trade unions. Thus despite higher economic growth in recent years, **working poverty in India remains high**.
 - The working poor are working people whose incomes fall below a given poverty line due to low-income jobs and low familial household income.

- The high level of informal employment can be mainly attributed to the economic structural transformation process in India, wherein capital and labour transfer instead of taking place from low to higher value-added sectors have been flowing from one low value-added activity to another but not to higher value-added activities. This leads to a situation where a large proportion of the **jobs being created are of poor quality**. This undermines the prospects of reducing working poverty.

Demographic profile:

- India enjoys a demographic dividend and a large number of people are joining the labour market annually. The estimates are that **more than 10 million people join the labour force annually**. The lack of adequate job opportunities will turn this **demographic dividend to a demographic disaster**.

Inadequacy of the government schemes:

- While the move to expand MGNREGA is a welcome move, it is very idealistic to assume that the entire workforce, which has returned to their respective home states, will be accommodated by an expanded MGNREGA or any other similar schemes.
- Also, there seems to be very **little attention towards urban employment**.

Way forward:

- There is a need for urgent policy interventions to secure the livelihoods of workers in urban areas.

Generating more jobs:

- The emphasis should be to design and implement **employment-intensive investment policies**.

Incentivizing private enterprises:

- The policies should incentivize private entrepreneurs and private investments need to be facilitated. **Enterprise formation needs to be an integral part of the strategy.**
- Small and micro-enterprises which are considered employment-intensive need to be supported by the administration.

Investing in infrastructure:

- The government will need to prioritise urban infrastructure as it accounts for a large share of total investments in the local economy.
- A **labour-intensive approach** to building municipal infrastructure can be a cost-effective alternative to capital intensive-approach as currently, the wage rates are low.
- Infrastructure investments would spur employment, generate earnings and contribute to small enterprise formation.

Urban employment scheme:

- The government needs to immediately launch an urban employment scheme on the lines of the MGNREGA scheme. This has to focus on building large-scale medical, health and sanitation infrastructure in cities and towns across India.
- Another avenue for immediate employment generation can be to expand networks of essential services as a part of welfare interventions of state and local governments.

Reducing vulnerabilities in the informal sector:

- Given the vulnerabilities of urban informal jobs, apart from ensuring adequate job generation, there is also the need to generate jobs which **provide decent wages and some form of job security.**

2. For a different yardstick

Context:

- The article examines the need to revamp the **World Bank's 'Doing Business'** survey to make it more comprehensive.

Background:

- The World Bank has decided to halt its annual 'Doing Business' report on data authenticity issues.

For information related to concerns in the current framework of the 'Doing Business' report, refer to the following article:

[CNA dated Aug 31, 2020: A development that will hardly put India at ease](#)

Details:

'Doing Business' index:

- The doing business index estimates the cost to business from regulations. Erratic procedures and delays hamper business in India and **simplifying procedures brings economic benefits.**
- The survey assumes that **lower tax rates** are best and it **supports lighter rules and regulation** to encourage shifts from informal to formal sectors.

Concerns:

- The desire for better ranking in the index has encouraged countries to even **slash down vital regulations which could have a detrimental impact in the long run.**
- There are concerns that the index sidesteps the **societal costs of deregulating pollution, worker safety, and health risks.**

Environmental concerns:

- Countries like Brazil, India, and the U.S. have slashed environmental standards which are making significant **contributions to climate change and threatening the ecological stability.**
 - Brazil has been opening up the pristine Amazon forests for developmental activities.
 - India is considering an *Environment Impact Assessment with dilutions* to the existing environmental law.
 - There has been the watering down of effluent benchmarks for power plants and automobiles and the production of fossil fuels like oil and shale gas have witnessed a boom in the U.S.
- Despite the unsustainability of these economic policies, these countries have exhibited higher ranking in the doing business rankings.
 - China and India improved their scores sharply in 2019 and 2020 edition of the doing business ranking, though these countries continue to be among the largest emitters of carbon effluents. **The Environmental Performance Index ranked China 120, and India 168, out of 180 countries.**

Worker safety:

- **Slack business safeguards may prove to be detrimental to worker safety.**
 - The 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory in Bangladesh, the second deadliest industrial accident resulted from lackadaisical factory regulation.

Labour rights:

- The **states have been relaxing the labour laws to help attract higher private investment in their economies.**
- However, the states seem to be **neglecting workers' well-being** while considering changes to labour laws.

Neglect of vital indicators:

- The survey neglects indicators like **capital availability, availability of skilled workforce, infrastructure availability and entrepreneurship support systems** which are as important as the other parameters in the doing business index.

Conclusion:

- The doing business index needs a total revamp wherein aspects such as safety standards, labour rights and environmental performance also find a provision.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Bharatiyar, the charioteer of wisdom

- Subramanian Bharathi also known as Bharathiyar, was a **Tamil writer, poet, journalist, Indian independence activist and a social reformer.** Popularly known as "Mahakavi", he was a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry and is considered one of the greatest Tamil literary figures of all time.
- Subramanian Bharathi worked as a journalist with many newspapers, including **The Hindu**, the **Swadesamitran** and **India**.
- One of his famous literary works is '**Gnanaratham**'.

Read more on Subramanian Bharathi in [This Day in History dated Dec 11](#).

2. Kondapochamma reservoir

What's in News?

Water has been leaking from the Kondapochammasagar reservoir located at the Markook mandal headquarters in Telangana.

Kondapochamma reservoir - Kaleswaram multi-purpose irrigation project:

- The Kondapochamma reservoir is a part of Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project. It is being constructed in the Medak district of Telangana.

- From the river to the Kondapochamma reservoir which is over 200 km away, through various lifts and pumps, the water is lifted to a height of over half km to the reservoir.
 - While the Godavari river flows at a lower level, all the reservoirs are at a higher level which requires lifting and pumping the water.
- Rs 1 lakh crore Kaleshwaram Multipurpose Lift Irrigation Project is on River Godavari.
- As part of the Kaleshwaram Project, water is pumped from the Medigadda Barrage on the Godavari into several reservoirs through canals, tunnels and aqueducts to be distributed to several districts in the state.
- The Kaleshwaram project is divided into different packages to lift the water from Godavari River and 20 of the state's 31 districts will get drinking and irrigation water.

G. Tidbits

1. 'Regulatory set-up for OTT players not required now'

The [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India \(TRAI\)](#) has said that the time is not opportune to recommend a comprehensive regulatory framework for various aspects of OTT services such as WhatsApp, Skype and Hike.

- In its recommendation on 'Regulatory Framework for OTT Communication Services', TRAI said that market forces may be allowed to respond without prescribing any regulatory intervention (framework).
- It, however, mentioned that the developments shall be monitored and intervention, as felt necessary, shall be done at appropriate time.

Note:

OTT services refer to applications and services that are accessible over the internet and ride on an operator's network.

2. Truth Fund to provide legal aid in fight for free speech

- With hundreds of people wanting to support advocate Prashant Bhushan by symbolically contributing Re.1 or more towards his fine in the contempt of court case in the Supreme Court, a fund has been set up to use the money to help others fighting for free speech.
- The Satyamev Jayate or Truth Fund will be used to provide legal support and amplify the voices of those facing criminal charges for standing by their conscience and speaking the truth.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to T-cells:

1. T cells are a part of the lymphatic system.
2. T cells originate in the bone marrow and mature in the thymus.
3. They are responsible for removing the pathogens from the body.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- T cells are a part of the lymphatic system.
- Lymphoid stem cells produce T lymphocytes and B lymphocytes.
- T lymphocytes, also commonly known as T cells, are cells involved in fighting specific pathogens in the body.
- T cells may act as helpers of other immune cells or attack pathogens directly.
- T cells originate in the bone marrow and mature in the thymus.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Venus:

1. It is the only planet that has no natural satellites.
2. It rotates backwards compared to the Earth and the other planets.
3. The atmosphere of Venus contains traces of phosphine gas.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Venus and Mercury have no moon or satellite of its own.
- It rotates from east to west while the Earth rotates from west to east.
- The atmosphere of Venus contains traces of phosphine gas.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Enemy Property in India:

1. Movable property is not included under 'enemy properties'.
2. The law of succession does not apply to enemy property.
3. Among the properties left behind by Pakistani nationals, the highest properties are located in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

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

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

d. 3 only

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Enemy Property Act, enacted in 1968, provided for the continuous vesting of enemy property in the Custodian of Enemy Property for India.
- The central government, through the Custodian, is in possession of enemy properties spread across many states in the country.
- Some movable properties too, are categorised as enemy properties.
- The law of succession does not apply to enemy property.
- Among the 9,280 properties left behind by Pakistani nationals, the highest 4,991 properties are located in Uttar Pradesh.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Supplementary Grants:

1. The additional grant required to meet the required expenditure of the government is called Supplementary Grants.
2. Supplementary grants are defined in the Constitution of India.
3. Supplementary grants are presented and passed by the Parliament at the beginning of the financial year following the year in which the expenditure has been incurred.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The additional grant required to meet the required expenditure of the government is called Supplementary Grants.
 - When grants, authorised by the Parliament, fall short of the required expenditure, an estimate is presented before the Parliament for Supplementary or Additional grants.
 - These grants are presented and passed by the Parliament before the end of the financial year.
- Supplementary, additional or excess grants are defined in the Constitution of India.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Given the high likelihood of the steep economic contraction leading to an intense unemployment problem in India, suggest what measures are required to ensure the livelihoods of workers both in urban and rural areas. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS Paper 3/Economy)

2. The World Bank's 'Doing Business' index encourages countries to slash down vital regulations sidestepping societal costs of deregulating pollution, worker safety, and health risks and this could have a detrimental impact in the long run. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS Paper 3/Economy)

