

# 16 Sep 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. New Bill on powers of Delhi govt., L-G soon

#### **Context:**

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is likely to introduce a legislation - the National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2020, to amend a 1991 act pertaining to the powers and functions of the Delhi government and the Lieutenant-Governor.

### Background:

- The Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government is often at loggerheads with the Centre regarding administrative matters in the Capital.
- A clutch of petitions was filed in the Supreme Court against a 2015 notification by the MHA, which said that the Delhi government had no powers in services-related matters and the Anti-Corruption Branch could not register cases against any employee, officer or functionary of the Central government.
- The apex court is still examining the services matter.
- In 2018, a five-judge Bench of the SC had unanimously held that the L-G was bound by the “aid and advice” of the Delhi government and both had to work harmoniously with each other.

### Details:

- The National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2020, proposes to clearly spell out the functions of the Council of Ministers and the Lieutenant-Governor by giving more discretionary powers to the L-G.
- According to changes proposed in the new Act, the L-G could act in his discretion on any matter that is beyond the purview of the powers of the Assembly of Delhi in matters related to the All India (Civil) Services and the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB).
- It will also give more teeth to the L-G, and the validity of any decision taken as per such discretion shall not be questioned.

### Note:

- The Union Territory of Delhi with a Legislative Assembly came into being in 1991 under Article 239AA inserted by the ‘Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act, 1991’.
- It said that the UT of Delhi shall be called the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and the administrator thereof appointed under Article 239 shall be designated as the Lieutenant-Governor.
- According to the existing Act, the Legislative Assembly of Delhi has the power to make laws in all matters except public order, police, and land.

## 2. Govt. refuses demands to restore MPLADS funds

This topic has been covered in [5th May 2020](#) and [17th June 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

## 1. UAE, Bahrain set to ink deals with Israel

This topic has been covered in [15th September 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

## C. GS 3 Related

**Category: ECONOMY**

## 1. Fewer than 34,000 inter-State migrant workers in 2019-20

### Context:

Right to Information (RTI) Act request for data on inter-state migrant workers.

### Details:

- According to the response to the [RTI](#), in the last five years, there have been no inter-state migrant workers registered in the Delhi, Dehradun or Patna regions.
- Nationwide, there were less than 34,000 workers registered in 2019-20 under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (ISMW) Act, 1979.
- The lackadaisical approach towards this law meant that when the sudden lockdown was imposed, the government had no information about migrant workers.

### Inter-State Migrant Workmen (ISMW) Act, 1979:

- The ISMW Act came into force four decades ago.
- It is meant to protect vulnerable workers who leave their own home state for employment.
- It applies to every establishment and contractor who has five or more migrants on their rolls and prohibits their employment without a certificate of registration.
- According to the Act, each registered worker must be issued a passbook with details of employment, wages and benefits.

## 2. New powers for aviation regulators

### Context:

Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020 has been passed by Parliament.

### Details:

- It is an amendment to the Aircraft Act, 1934 which regulates manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of civil aircraft, and licensing of aerodromes.
- The amendments address several regulatory shortcomings that were highlighted by aviation watchdogs of the United Nations and the U.S. — the [International Civil Aviation Organisation](#) and the Federal Aviation Authority — during their audits on safety and security in the Indian aviation ecosystem.
- The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha in March 2020.
- It now awaits Presidential assent to become a law.

### Highlights of the Aircraft Amendment Bill, 2020:

- The Bill gives statutory powers to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security and the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau.
  - These bodies were set up through various government notifications but did not have a defined role under the parent Act, as well as air navigation services.
  - These statutory bodies are to be headed by Directors General appointed by the Centre.
  - DGCA will have safety oversight and regulatory functions.
  - BCAS will carry out regulatory activities related to civil aviation security.
  - AAIB will look into investigative activities for aircraft accidents.

- The central government can issue directions to these bodies with respect to their activities in the public interest.
- The Bill empowers the DGCA to levy enhanced penalties of up to ₹1 crore, from the existing ₹10 lakh, on airlines, airports and other aviation entities.
- The legislation also provides for keeping defence aircraft out of the purview of Aircraft Act, 1934.
- The Bill also empowers the central government to cancel the licences, certificates or approvals granted to a person if the person contravenes any provisions of the Act.

### 3. Essential Commodities Bill passed

#### **Context:**

The Lok Sabha passed the Essential Commodities Amendment Bill by a voice vote.

#### **Details:**

- The Bill is meant to replace an ordinance promulgated in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown.
- It proposes to deregulate the production, storage, movement and sale of several foodstuffs, including cereals, pulses, edible oils and onions, except in the case of extraordinary circumstances.
- It says stock limits can only be imposed if retail prices surge 50% above the average in the case of non-perishables and 100% in the case of perishables.

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

### 4. RBI issues draft on rupee IR derivatives

#### **Context:**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed allowing foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to undertake exchange-traded rupee interest rate derivatives transactions.

#### **Details:**

- The transactions would be subject to an overall ceiling of ₹5,000 crore.
- The proposed directions are aimed at:
  - Encouraging higher non-resident participation.
  - Enhancing the role of domestic market makers in the offshore market.
  - Improving transparency and achieving better regulatory oversight.

#### **Interest Rate Derivatives**

- Interest Rate Derivatives (IRDs) are contracts whose value is derived from one or more interest rates, prices of interest rate instruments, or interest rate indices.
- For an Interest Rate Derivative, the underlying asset is the right to pay or receive a (usually notional) amount of money at a given interest rate.

**Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

## 1. Kerala to have certified snake handlers

### Context:

Kerala Forest Department has framed guidelines for snake handling. By doing so, it has become first to institutionalise snake handling in the country.

### Need for guidelines:

- Several allegations point to snake catchers following unscientific approaches that tend to create stress to the animal thereby posing risk to their own lives and that of others.
- There have also been allegations of snakes being supplied for criminal purposes.

### Details:

- The guidelines make it mandatory for snake handlers, aged between 21 and 65 years, to seek certification.
- The applications will be screened by the Assistant Conservators of Forest (ACF, Social Forestry) to prepare lists of snake handlers in each district.
- During the selection and the certification process, various parameters such as track record, experience, age, health, etc, will be considered.
- The shortlisted applicants will be put through a mandatory training on the safe and scientific handling of snakes.
- The certification would be valid for five years. However, ACFs can withdraw or cancel the certification if the snake handler is found to be involved in any illegal or unethical practices.
- The snakes rescued from human-dominated areas must be safely released in uninhabited areas.
  - If found injured, the snake can be released only after ascertaining its fitness.
  - Non-native species must be handed over to the Forest Department.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

#### 1. Venus in focus

##### Context:

- The **discovery of traces of phosphine in the atmosphere of Venus.**

##### Background:

##### Venus:

- Venus is the second closest planet to the sun in the Solar system and is often referred to as '**Earth's twin**' because its size and shape are very much similar to that of the earth.
- Venus has no satellite.
- Venus is considered **hostile to life** due to the following reasons:
  - Venus is the **hottest planet in the solar system** with surface temperatures being above 460° Celsius. It possesses a **dense atmosphere of carbon dioxide (Green House Gas)** which is said to be causing the heating of Venus.
  - Also, the **presence of sulphuric acid** in the atmosphere of Venus makes it a highly corrosive environment.

#### **Details:**

- Phosphine, a compound of one phosphorous atom and three hydrogen atoms, has been discovered in Venus's atmosphere. The researchers estimate that phosphine forms about 20 parts per billion of Venus's atmosphere.
  - Phosphine was first identified in Venus's atmosphere in 2017, using the **James Clerk Maxwell Telescope in Hawaii**. This was further confirmed through observations made using the **Atacama Large Millimeter/sub-millimeter Array facility in Chile**.
- Phosphine is given out by some species of bacteria during biochemical processes (in the absence of oxygen). It occurs **from the breakdown of organic matter** and is thus considered an important biomarker.
  - Biomarkers are chemical molecules that are considered indicative of life.
  - In 2011, the European Space Agency's mission, Venus Express had found signs of **ozone (considered a biomarker)** in the upper atmosphere of Venus.
- Phosphine gets oxidized in an atmosphere rich in carbon dioxide and hence should be shortlived in Venus's atmosphere. The presence of phosphine despite this has led to speculations of the **presence of life forms in the hostile conditions of Venus**.

#### **Conclusion:**

- To be able to conclusively correlate the discovery of Phosphine and the presence of lifeforms on Venus, the following actions are required.
  - Currently, the discovery of phosphine is based on telescopic observations. To conclusively confirm the presence of Phosphine, there is a need to make in situ measurements in the atmosphere of Venus.
  - Given that the atmospheric conditions are drastically different between the earth and Venus, the presence of phosphine alone may not prove the presence of life on Venus. Phosphine could have also originated from unknown photochemistry or geochemistry processes on Venus. Thus, there is a need to also evaluate the source of phosphine on Venus.

#### **Additional Information:**

##### **Missions to venus:**

- More than 40 spacecraft have explored Venus so far. The **90s Magellan mission of NASA** mapped the entire surface of Venus. The **Japanese satellite Akatsuki** is currently orbiting Venus to study its atmosphere.
- Missions to Venus have been planned by NASA and **ISRO**. While NASA's mission named **DAVINCI (Atmospheric probe)** is slated for launch in 2021, ISRO is looking for the launch of the **Shukrayaan-1 (orbiter and atmospheric balloon)** in 2023.

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



## 1. Parliament and its panels

### Context:

- Reports in the media of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha being keen on amending the business rules of the Rajya Sabha, to give the Department-related Standing Committees a fixed tenure of two years.

### Background:

#### Department-related Standing Committees:

- There are **24 Department-related Standing Committees (DRSCs)**. These committees were created for the first time in 1993. Out of 24 DRSCs, 16 work under Lok Sabha and 8 under Rajya Sabha.

#### Composition:

- DRSCs are **joint committees** of the two Houses of Parliament. **Each DRSC has a total of 31 members consisting of 21 members from Lok Sabha and 10 members from Rajya Sabha.**
- The **term of office of the members is one year.**
- The members are **nominated** by the Speaker and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
- Ministers cannot be nominated as a member of the committee.
- The chairman is appointed from amongst the members by the president of the house responsible for that DRSC.

#### Function:

- They **consider the demand for grants** of the concerned ministries/departments before they are discussed and voted in the house.
- They **examine bills and consider annual reports** pertaining to concerned ministries.

#### Significance:

- The DRSCs aid in **securing the accountability of the executive to the parliament** by ensuring their financial accountability.

### Details:

- According to current provisions of the Lok Sabha Rules and the Rajya Sabha Rules, the term of office of the “members” of the DRSC’s shall not exceed one year.
- The article calls for a rethink of the tenurial prescription for the Department-related Standing Committees based on the following lines.
  - The tenure of Department-related Standing Committees must be prescribed differently for the two Houses. It may be two years for the Rajya Sabha members and for the Lok Sabha members, it may be coterminous with its life.
  - The Rules could also provide that casual vacancies may be filled in by the Presiding Officers, who may also be empowered to reconstitute the membership of their respective Houses in the committees if they so desire.

### Arguments in favour of change:

*Cuts unnecessary reconstitution:*

- The **Rajya Sabha undergoes partial biennial renewal** since one-third of its members retire every two years, while the Lok Sabha has a fixed tenure of five years, unless and until it is dissolved earlier. Currently, in the Rajya Sabha, the annual renewal of the DSRCs' membership is only notional; major changes are brought about only after each biennial election. Hence it would be redundant in going through the re-nomination exercise every year.

*Building expertise:*

- It would be prudent to formulate a system wherein once a member is nominated to a committee, based on his expertise and/or preference, he should be allowed to continue till he retires or otherwise discontinues the membership in order that the **committee is able to benefit from his experience and expertise.**

*Flexibility offered in the rules:*

- The language of the Rules of the two Houses makes it clear that the one-year term is of the members of the committees and not of the committees per se. **The Standing Committees are permanent.**
- Hence, there should be no difficulty if the terms of the members of the two Houses on these committees are different, in consonance with the tenure of the Houses themselves.

## F. Prelims Facts

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Tidbits

### 1. 'U.S. curbs on China textiles to help India'

#### What's in News?

According to a report, U.S. restrictions on some textile imports from Xinjiang in China are likely to benefit Indian textile exporters.

- The U.S. has recently imposed restrictions on the import of certain products originating from the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in China, citing concerns on illegal and inhumane forced labour in the region.

### 2. 'FDI of \$1 bn flowed from China to over 1,600 firms'

#### What's in News?

According to government data, more than 1,600 Indian companies have received foreign direct investments (FDI) worth \$1 billion from China from April 2016 to March 2020 period.

- These companies were in 46 sectors.



- The automobile industry, the printing of books, electronics, services and electrical equipment received more than \$100 million in FDI each during the period.

### 3. An economic disaster foretold

- The **unorganised sector forms a significant part of the Indian economy**.
- According to estimates by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, the unorganized sector **accounts for 45% of output and 93% of employment of the working population**.
- Amongst the characteristic features of this sector are smaller scales of operation, uncertain legal status, using lower technology-based methods, inadequate access to government schemes, finance and government aid. The employees have a lower rate of compensation, lower job security and no leave or paid holidays, they have lower protection against employers indulging in unfair or illegal practices.

### 4. Impediments to equal productivity, dignity

#### **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:**

- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 was passed by the Indian Parliament to fulfill its obligation to the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, which India ratified in 2007.

#### **Salient provisions:**

- The RPWD Act, 2016, has increased the list of scheduled disabilities to 21 conditions.
- The Act provides that the appropriate government shall ensure that the **PWD enjoys the right to equality, life with dignity**, and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others.
- It is stipulated in Section 3 that **no PWD shall be discriminated against on the ground of disability** unless it is shown that the impugned act or omission is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim and no person shall be deprived of his personal liberty only on the ground of disability.
- The Government is to take steps to utilize the capacity of the PWD by providing an appropriate environment. The Act provides for access to **inclusive education, vocational training, and self-employment of disabled persons**.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to planet Venus:

1. Venus is the hottest planet in the Solar System.
2. It possesses a dense atmosphere of carbon dioxide.
3. Sulphuric acid is present in the atmosphere of Venus.

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

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

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Venus is the hottest planet in the solar system with surface temperatures being above 460° Celsius.
- It possesses a dense atmosphere of carbon dioxide (Green House Gas) which is said to be causing the heating of Venus.
- The presence of sulphuric acid in the atmosphere of Venus makes it a highly corrosive environment.

**Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Department Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) :**

1. The DRSCs were created for the first time in 1993.
2. The members are nominated by the Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman for a term of 1 year.
3. Ministers cannot be nominated as the members of the committee

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

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

All the statements are correct.

**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

1. An Interest Rate Derivative (IRD) is a contract whose value is derived from one or more interest rates or interest rate indices.
2. An interest rate swap is a forward contract in which one stream of future interest payments is exchanged for another based on a specified principal amount.

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

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

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Derivatives are a contract between two or more parties with a value based on an underlying asset.
- Swaps are a type of derivative with a value based on cash flow, as opposed to a specific asset.
- An Interest Rate Derivative (IRD) is a contract whose value is derived from one or more interest rates or interest rate indices.
- An interest rate swap is a forward contract in which one stream of future interest payments is exchanged for another based on a specified principal amount.

**Q4. "Akatsuki", recently in news is:**

- a. A United Arab Emirates' satellite on a mission to orbit the planet Mars.
- b. A Japanese space probe tasked to study the atmosphere of Venus.
- c. China's latest mission to study the atmosphere of Mars.
- d. The mission of NASA to map the entire surface of Venus.

**CHECK ANSWERS:-**

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

The Japanese satellite Akatsuki is currently orbiting Venus to study its atmosphere. It was successfully placed into the Venusian elliptic orbit in 2015. By using five different cameras working at several wavelengths, Akatsuki is studying the stratification of the atmosphere, atmospheric dynamics, and cloud physics.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the major provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and recommend further measures for the true empowerment of persons with disabilities. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS Paper 1/ Social Issues)
2. The fact that the unorganized sector accounts for a significant part of the Indian economy does not augur well for the economic and social development process in India. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS Paper 3/Economy)

