

18 Sep 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. **Pak. to make Gilgit-Baltistan a full-fledged province: report**

Context:

According to a Pakistani media report, Pakistan has decided to elevate the status of Gilgit-Baltistan to that of a full-fledged province with all constitutional rights.

Details:

- It is also said that the work on the Moqpondass Special Economic Zone would begin under the [China Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#).
- The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The CPEC is a collection of infrastructure and other projects under construction throughout Pakistan since 2013.

India's objections:

- India has said the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it.
- India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.
- India expresses strong opposition to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor as it passes through the disputed territory (Gilgit-Baltistan) and hence violates India's sovereignty.

2. Pak. told to allow Queen's Counsel

Context:

- After being stuck on the issue of who will represent Kulbhushan Jadhav in the civilian court in Pakistan, India has invoked the Commonwealth grounds to end the debate over the appointment of his counsel.
- The External Affairs Ministry has suggested that Pakistan should consider appointing a Queen's Counsel for the Kulbhushan Jadhav case to ensure a free and fair trial.

What is Queen's Counsel?

- Queen's Counsel is a barrister or advocate, appointed Counsel to the UK Crown on the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor.
- Queen's counsels are recognised in almost all courts around the world.

Details:

- The [International Court of Justice](#) had asked Pakistan to ensure a fair review of the death sentence.
- Pakistan has not yet addressed the basic issues with respect to the case, which includes:
 - Provision of all documents related to the case.
 - Unconditional and unimpeded consular access to Shri Kulbhushan Jadhav.
 - Appointment of an Indian lawyer or a Queen's Counsel to ensure a free and fair trial.

Read more about Kulbhushan Jadhav Case covered in [18th July 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

3. U.S. keen on finalising BECA at 2+2 dialogue

Context:

The U.S. is keen that India sign the last foundational agreement, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA), at the next India-U.S. 2+2 ministerial dialogue.

Details:

- Beginning 2016, India had signed three foundational agreements:
 - The [Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement](#) (LEMOA).
 - The [Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement](#) (COMCASA).
 - While the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) was signed a long time ago, an extension to the GSOMIA, the [Industrial Security Annex](#) (ISA), was signed at the last 2+2 dialogue.
- BECA will allow India to use US geospatial maps to get pinpoint military accuracy of automated hardware systems and weapons such as cruise and ballistic missiles.

Note:

- There has been a sharp increase in India's maritime interactions with the Quad countries on a bilateral basis centred around information sharing for improved Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in the Indian Ocean Region and Indo-Pacific.
- A maritime information agreement is also under active deliberation between India and the U.S.
- Once concluded, India will have such arrangements with all Quad countries — Australia, Japan and the U.S.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**1. Special Benches to hear cases against legislators****Supreme Court Order:**

The Supreme Court (three-judge Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana) has asked the Chief Justices of High Courts to head Special Benches and immediately hear long-pending criminal cases against sitting and former legislators.

Issue:

- Over 4,400 criminal trials have been held up, some for decades, because the powerful MPs and MLAs had approached the High Courts and got an interim stay. Some date back nearly 40 years.
- Most are stuck at the stage of framing of criminal charges.
- There are over 2,500 criminal cases against sitting legislators alone.

Read more on this topic covered in [10th July 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY**1. 'Telcos must conduct special security audit of networks'****Context:**

The Department of Telecom has directed all telecom service providers in the country to carry out a special audit of their networks by an external agency to ensure security.

Details:

- The modern age telecom equipment and networks used for provisioning of telecom services are prone to spyware/malwares, including the backdoor and trapdoor vulnerabilities.
- The move comes at a time when there are renewed discussions in the country over allowing the use of telecom equipment supplied by China-headquartered firms due to security and surveillance concerns.
- As per license conditions, the licensees had to get their networks audited for security once in a financial year by a network audit and certification agency.
- Further, the DoT, in 2019, directed the telecom service providers to carry out Special Security Audit of their network.

Security Audit:

A security audit is a systematic evaluation of the security of a company's information system by measuring how well it conforms to a set of established criteria.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Not all convalescent plasma may have protective effect

Context:

A multi-institutional study says that not all plasma from those who have recovered from COVID-19 in India may contain enough protective antibodies.

What is convalescent plasma therapy?

- Plasma therapy is the administration of filtered serum from the blood of those who had recovered from the infection to those who are battling it.
- It is among the permitted off-label interventions recommended by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in patients with moderate disease but whose oxygen saturation levels are not improving in spite of the use of steroids.

This topic has been covered in [11th April 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

Details:

- There are at least three kinds of antibodies produced in an infection: IgG, IgA, IgB but the neutralising effect was most visible only in the case of the IgGs.
- The study underscored that only those IgG (Immunoglobulin G) antibodies that bind to the receptor-binding region of the coronavirus spike protein, which attaches itself to the body's healthy cells and infiltrates, had a neutralising response.
- Antibodies that bind to other parts of the virus did not succeed in provoking such a response.
- Thus, doctors, when assessing plasma therapy, must evaluate the quality of the plasma via an assay, or a chemical test, that specifically evaluates the levels of RBD (receptor-binding domain)-specific IgG titres and not just crude IgG levels.

1. Wetlands being identified in Rajasthan to protect biodiversity

Context:

- Efforts are being made in Rajasthan to protect the wetlands which have played an important role in the storage of sediment and nutrients.
- While six wetlands are already identified in the State, 52 more have been earmarked for time-bound development.

Steps taken:

- Such wetlands are being identified to stop encroachments on them and enable the local authorities to maintain them.
- The wetlands would be strengthened for increasing vegetation of aquatic plants and protecting biodiversity.
- No waste would be allowed to be dumped at the wetlands and effective steps would be taken for water conservation.
- Strict action would be taken against those running submersible pump sets for illegal salt mining in the world-famous Sambhar Lake.
 - A large number of migratory birds died last year in the Sambhar Lake.
- The State Government's Directorate of Environment and Climate Change will function as the secretariat of the State Wetland Authority.
- Environment committees would take up the works for the conservation of wetlands and water bodies.
- Fresh and saline lakes supporting unique ecosystems in the State would be protected with the strict implementation of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2019.

Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2019

- As per the Wetlands Rules, the Wetlands Authority within a state is the nodal authority for all wetland-specific authorities in a state/UT.
- The Wetlands Authorities are responsible for ensuring the enforcement of the Wetlands Rules and other relevant acts, rules and regulations.
- Prohibited activities under the rules:
 - Setting up any industry and expansion of existing industries on wetlands.
 - Dumping solid waste or discharge of untreated wastes and effluents.
 - Encroachment or conversion of wetlands for non-wetland uses.

Importance of Wetlands:

- Wetland systems help check floods, prevent coastal erosion and mitigate the effects of natural disasters like cyclones and tidal waves. They store water for long periods.
- Their capacity during heavy rainfall to retain excess floodwater that would otherwise cause flooding results in maintaining a constant flow regime downstream, preserving water quality and increasing biological productivity for both aquatic life as well as human communities of the region.
- Flooded wetlands are very effective in storing rainwater and are the primary source for recharging groundwater aquifers.
- Wetlands provide shelter to wading birds, waterfowl and mammals.

Read more about the [Ramsar Convention](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Is the Quad rising after China's challenge at the LAC?

This topic has been covered in [20th July 2020](#) and [26th July 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. For the welfare of animals

Issue:

- Over the last one year, India has seen multiple instances of animals being subjected to sexual abuse, acid attacks, being thrown off rooftops, and being burnt alive.
- A major factor that enables such violence is an inept legal framework in the country to prevent cruelty to animals.

The editorial talks about the need to reconsider several aspects of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

Concerns:

Paltry fine:

- The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960 punishes the most serious forms of animal violence with a meagre fine of ₹50.
 - This is one of the many issues plaguing the PCA Act.
- Several petitions, social media campaigns and amendment bills seeking stricter punishment for animal abuse have all gone in vain.

Classification of offences:

- Section 11 lists a series of offences, which vary from abandoning an animal to kicking it, mutilating it or killing it, and prescribes the same punishment for all these offences.
 - Severe offences are treated on par with less severe ones.
- At present, a majority of the offences under the Act are non-cognisable, which means the police cannot investigate the offence or arrest the accused without the permission of a Magistrate.
- This facilitates police inaction and ensures that most culprits of animal abuse go scot-free.

Exceptions diluting the protection to animals:

- Though Section 11 criminalises several forms of animal cruelty, sub-section (3) carves out exceptions for animal husbandry procedures such as dehorning, castration, nose-roping, and branding.
- These procedures cause tremendous physical and psychological pain to animals.
- Moreover, the law does not provide any guidelines for these procedures. This allows individuals to resort to cruel methods.

Ambiguity in definition:

- The PCA Act was enacted to “prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals”. However, this phrase is not defined anywhere in the Act.
- This is crucial because what constitutes unnecessary is entirely a matter of subjective assessment.
- In the absence of a clear statutory definition, crucial questions of animal welfare are left to the subjective moral compass of judges.

Way forward:

- Given that the aim of the law is to achieve a certain standard of objectivity in questions of animal welfare, it is essential that the expression “unnecessary pain or suffering” be defined in the Act.
- There is an urgent need to reconsider the exceptions in favour of animal husbandry practices as there are viable alternatives that would prevent animals from undergoing such trauma.
 - A petition by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) India suggests mandating the use of anesthetics prior to castration, and the replacement of cruel practices such as nose-roping with face halters and branding with radio frequency identification.
 - As opposed to dehorning cattle, it recommended that farmers breed hornless cattle.
- An amendment is required to grade the offences according to their severity and specify punishments accordingly.
- More severe offences must be made cognisable and non-bailable.

2. Reject this inequitable climate proposal

Context:

- The UN Secretary-General António Guterres advised India to give up coal immediately and reduce emissions by 45% by 2030.
- Also, at a press conference at the UN Headquarters, the UN Secretary-General has further asked China and India to reduce their emissions by 45% by 2030, on par with the developed countries.
- The editorial argues that the UN Secretary-General’s recent advice to India amounts to asking for its virtual de-industrialisation, stagnation and abandon the population to a permanent low-development trap.

Criticisms:

- The current incumbent of the post of UN Secretary-General has embraced the strategy of pressurising the developing countries to bear the brunt of climate mitigation.
- The U.S. has rarely been called out for its withdrawal from the [Paris Agreement](#), or the EU nations for their long-term reliance on gas and oil.
- He has been promoting the agenda of carbon neutrality by 2050 as national level goals applicable to all, without any reference to global and international equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in climate action.

- This points to wilful neglect of the core principles of the climate convention, and extreme demands that the developing world cannot satisfy.

India's track record:

- India's renewable energy programme is ambitious while its energy efficiency programme is delivering, especially in the domestic consumption sector.
- India is one of the few countries with at least 2° Celsius warming compliant climate action.
- It is also a part of a much smaller list of those countries currently on track to fulfilling their Paris Agreement commitments.
- Despite the accelerated economic growth of recent decades, India's annual emissions, at 0.5 tonnes per capita, are well below the global average of 1.3 tonnes.
- It is also below those of China, the United States and the European Union (EU), the three leading emitters in absolute terms, whose per capita emissions are higher than this average.
- In terms of cumulative emissions, India's contribution by 2017 was only 4% for a population of 1.3 billion, whereas the European Union, with a population of only 448 million, was responsible for 20%.
 - Cumulative emissions are what really count in determining the extent of temperature increase.
- By any yardstick, India is at least on a par, if not above, its weight in responsibility and economic capacity in climate action.

Why should India reject the proposal?

- India, with the lowest per capita income among the G-20 nations, is undergoing the worst economic contraction.
- Renewables alongside coal will generate, directly and indirectly, far more employment than renewables alone.
- The [UNFCCC](#) itself has reported that between 1990 and 2017, the developed nations (excluding Russia and east Europe) have reduced their annual emissions by only 1.3%.
- The Global North has hidden the reality of continued dependence on oil and natural gas, both, equally fossil fuels. Also, there are no timelines for their phaseout.
- Also, they have diverted attention by talks of "carbon neutrality" by 2050, and the passage of resolutions declaring a climate emergency.
- The foundational principles of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) distinguish sharply between the responsibilities and commitments of developed countries vis-à-vis those of developing countries.
 - The UN Secretary-General's climate diplomacy signals a deliberate setting aside of the foundational principle.

A First World strategy:

- Large sections of First World environmentalists, while unable to gather the domestic political support required for climate action, have turned to pressurize the developing countries to bear the brunt of climate mitigation.
- Their strategies include:
 - Demonising of coal mining and coal-based power generation.
 - Promoting claims that immediate climate mitigation would miraculously lower domestic inequalities and ensure climate adaptation.
 - Promoting Third World natural resources as active sites of mitigation and not adaptation.
 - Promoting theories of "de-growth" or the neglect of industrial and agricultural productivity for the pursuit of climate change mitigation.

- Increasing appeals are made to multilateral or First World financial and development institutions to force this agenda on to developing countries.
- A section of concerned youth in the developing countries, fearful of their futures, but unsensitised to global and international inequalities, have also helped promote the undifferentiated rhetoric of a climate emergency for which all are held equally responsible.

What will be the consequences if India ceases all coal investment from this very year?

- Currently, manufacturing growth powered by fossil fuel-based energy is itself a necessity, both technological and economic, for the transition to renewables.
- Unlike the developed nations, India cannot substitute coal substantially by oil and gas. Despite some wind potential, a huge part of this growth needs to come from solar.
- None of this will really drive industry, particularly manufacturing, since renewables at best can meet residential consumption and some part of the demand from the service sector.
- Whether providing 70% to 80% of all generation capacity is possible through renewables depends critically on technology development, including improvements in the efficiency of conversion of energy from its source into electricity, in the management of the corresponding electricity grids, as well as advance in storage technologies.
 - Since the Copenhagen Accord signalled the end of legally binding commitments to emissions reduction by the developed countries, technology development in climate change mitigation technologies has registered a significant fall.
 - The annual filing of patents shows a decline.
- Lacking production capacity in renewable energy technologies and their large-scale operation, deployment on this scale will expose India to increasing and severe dependence on external sources and supply chains.

Conclusion:

India must unanimously reject the UN Secretary-General's call and reiterate its long-standing commitment to an equitable response to the challenge of global warming.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Ramsar Convention was established by UNESCO.
2. Chilika Lake and Keoladeo National Park were the first ones to be recognized as Ramsar Sites of India.
3. Rajasthan has two Ramsar sites.

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

- a. 1 only

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental environmental treaty established in 1971 by UNESCO.
- Chilika Lake of Odisha and Keoladeo National Park of Rajasthan were the first ones to be recognized as Ramsar Sites of India in 1981.
- Rajasthan has two Ramsar sites: Keoladeo National Park and Sambhar Lake.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Gwadar Port:

1. It is a warm water, deepsea port.
2. The port is located in Pakistan's Balochistan province.
3. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor will connect Gwadar Port with China's Xinjiang province.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Gwadar Port is a warm water, deepsea port in Pakistan's Balochistan province.
- The China Pakistan Economic Corridor will connect Gwadar Port with China's Xinjiang province.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Plasma:

1. In the blood, apart from RBC, WBC and platelets, all the other fluid content is known as Plasma.
2. Plasma contains antibodies.
3. It makes up more than 55% of blood in the human body.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

Plasma is the major part of the blood. Apart from RBC, WBC and platelets in the blood, all the other fluid content is referred to as Plasma. It makes up more than 55% of blood in the human body. The main role of plasma is to carry hormones, nutrients and proteins to different parts of the body. Composed of 90% water, salts, lipids and hormones, it is especially rich in proteins (including its main protein albumin), immunoglobulins, clotting factors and fibrinogen. Plasma also contains antibodies.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to the National Human Right Commission:

1. It is a constitutional body.
2. President appoints the Chairman and members of NHRC on the recommendation of a high-powered committee headed by the Prime Minister.
3. It has the power to intervene in any judicial proceedings involving any allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court with the approval of such court.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India is an independent statutory body established on 12 October, 1993 as per provisions of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
- President appoints the Chairman and members of NHRC on the recommendation of a high-powered committee headed by the Prime Minister.
- It has the power to intervene in any judicial proceedings involving any allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court with the approval of such court.
- NHRC investigates grievances regarding the violation of human rights either suo moto or after receiving a petition.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Should India consider not making new investments in coal after 2020 in order to allay the risk of being seen as an unreliable climate saviour? What are the consequences if it does so? Critically Examine. (GS 3 Environment) (15 Marks, 250 Words).
2. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) has regained strength in the face of an aggressive China. Analyse India's dilemma with respect to closer coordination with the Quad. (GS 2 International Relations) (15 Marks, 250 Words).

