

23 Sep 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. TRAI recommends body to monitor net neutrality

Context:

The [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India](#) has recommended the creation of a multi-stakeholder body (MSB) to ensure that Internet access providers adhere to the provisions of net neutrality.

Details:

- The MSB could include telecom service providers, Internet service providers, content providers, researchers, academic and technical community, civil society organisations, and the government.
- It is recommended that it be set up as a non-profit entity.
- The role of the MSB shall be to provide advice and support to the DoT in the monitoring and enforcement of net neutrality principles.
- The MSB may also be required to investigate complaints regarding the violation of net neutrality.
- TRAI also suggested that the MSB help DoT in the maintenance of a repository of reasonable traffic management practices.

What is Net Neutrality?

- Net Neutrality is a principle which states that all traffic on the internet should be treated equally and there should be no discrimination by telecommunication companies/Internet Service Providers.
- The service providers should not differentiate this service with different forms and categories of traffic on the internet.

Note:

The net neutrality principles adopted by DoT were technology-neutral and would apply equally to 5G technology, the telecom regulator clarified.

2. Lok Sabha clears 3 labour Bills

Context:

The Lok Sabha cleared three labour bills amalgamating laws on social security, occupational safety and industrial relations.

The three Labour Bills are:

1. The Industrial Relations Code, 2020.
2. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.
3. The Code of Social Security, 2020.

This topic has been covered in the [20th September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

3. Amid boycott, Rajya Sabha passes 7 Bills

Context:

Amid a boycott of House proceedings by many opposition parties, [Rajya Sabha](#) passed seven key bills in three-and-a-half hours.

Details:

1) [Indian Institutes of Information Technology Laws \(Amendment\) Bill, 2020:](#)

- It seeks to declare five Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) set up under the public-private partnership mode in Surat, Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala, and Raichur as [institutions of national importance](#).

2) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020:

- The bill has provisions to remove commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities.
- It aims to remove fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference in their business operations.
 - The freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply will lead to the harnessing of economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment into the agriculture sector.
 - It will help drive up investment in cold storages and modernization of the food supply chain.
 - It will create a competitive market environment and also prevent wastage of agri-produce that happens due to lack of storage facilities.
- It has been provided in the Amendment, that in situations such as war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamity, such agricultural foodstuff can be regulated.
- The installed capacity of a value chain participant and the export demand of an exporter will remain exempted from such stock limit imposition so as to ensure that investments in agriculture are not discouraged.

The Essential Commodities Amendment Bill 2020 was earlier passed in the Lok Sabha. This topic has been covered on the [16th September 2020 CNA](#).

3) Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020:

- The bill amends the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 as applicable to Cooperative Banks.
- The amendment will bring cooperative banks under the direct supervision of the RBI and bring them under some of the same governance norms as commercial banks.

This topic has been covered in the [17th September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

4) Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2020:

- The Companies Amendment Bill 2020 amends 13 sections and adds one chapter.

5) National Forensic Sciences University Bill, 2020 and 6) Rashtriya Raksha University Bill, 2020:

- The two universities were suggested in the Union Budget 2020 to further strengthen the technological infrastructure in the country.
- The National Forensic Sciences University would entail upgradation of the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University.
- Rashtriya Raksha University Bill, 2020 has been passed to upgrade the Gandhinagar Police Training University to a national university.
- Both the universities would be set up under the Institutions of National Importance tag.

7) Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provisions) Bill, 2020

- The Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provisions) Bill, 2020, seeks to replace an ordinance and make a few other changes in direct and indirect tax laws.
- The reliefs in the bill include extending deadlines for filing returns and for linking PAN and Aadhaar.

- It also provides tax benefits on donations made to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES FUND) set up in March in the wake of the pandemic.
- The Bill amends the provisions of the Income Tax Act to provide the same tax treatment to PM-CARES Fund as available to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Sri Lankan govt. tables 20th Amendment Bill

Context:

Sri Lanka's Justice Minister tabled the contentious 20th Amendment Bill in Parliament amidst protests by the opposition members.

Details:

- The proposed 20th Constitution Amendment Bill aims to bolster the powers of the President.
- The government gazetted 20A, the new proposed legislation that would replace the 19th Amendment introduced in 2015 that curtailed the powers of the President and strengthened the role of Parliament.
- The 19A was seen as the most progressive pro-democracy reformist move since Sri Lanka came to be governed under the all-powerful executive presidency in 1978.
 - It depoliticised the government administration by ensuring the independence of key pillars such as the judiciary, public service, and elections.
- The 20th Amendment proposes to restore full legal immunity to the President, removing the provisions made in 19A to take legal action against the President.

Concerns:

- Earlier, the government said it would revisit the Amendment and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa appointed a committee to study the proposed legislation and give recommendations.
- However, it appears that no changes have yet been made to the draft that has triggered concern among public intellectuals, activists and government critics.

Note:

- Sri Lanka's Attorney General, the government's chief legal adviser, has said the draft Bill of the 20th Amendment will not require a referendum, and could be enacted with a two-thirds parliamentary majority, which the ruling party of the Rajapaksas has secured.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Borrowing by States increase 45% this fiscal

Context:

Eleven States raised a total of ₹14,298 crore at the auction of State government securities or State Development Loans (SDLs).

State Development Loans

- State Development Loans (SDLs) are dated securities issued by states for meeting their market borrowings requirements. It is a Government Security (G-Sec).
- In effect, the SDLs are similar to the dated securities issued by the central government.
- The purpose of issuing State Development Loans is to meet the budgetary needs of state governments.
- In India, the Central Government issues both, treasury bills and bonds or dated securities while the State Governments issue only bonds or dated securities, which are called the State Development Loans (SDLs).

Details:

- Having faced a sharp decline in revenues, State governments have been increasingly resorting to market borrowings.
- From April to September in the financial year 2020-21, market borrowings of 27 States and 2 Union Territories have seen an increase of 45% from the borrowings in the corresponding period of 2019-20.

Note:

- Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Rajasthan have been the top 5 borrowing States, accounting for 54% of the total borrowings by States so far.
- Karnataka, Maharashtra and T.N. have seen their market borrowings increase by more than 100% from the year-earlier period.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. EPCA chief asks Punjab, Haryana to act against stubble burning

Context:

The Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority has written to the chief secretaries of Punjab and Haryana urging them to address the issue of stubble burning urgently.

Issues:

- Paddy residue is not used as fodder as it's unfit and hence farmers burn both the paddy stalk and straw close to autumn every year which is a key contributing factor of pollution causing breathing problems in the northern region.
- Early burning of crop residue has begun in the states of Punjab and Haryana.
- According to a SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research under the Central government) estimate, based on harmonising the INSAT-3, 3D and NASA satellite, EPCA noted that Punjab has seen 42 fire counts in a single day.
- In 2019, about 9.8 million tonnes of the total estimated crop residue of 20 million tonnes were burnt in Punjab. In Haryana, of a total of 7 million tonnes, 1.24 million tonnes of stubble was burnt.

Read more on this topic covered in the [26th May 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

INSAT-3D:

- INSAT-3D is an advanced weather satellite of India configured with an improved Imaging System and Atmospheric Sounder.
- INSAT-3D is designed for enhanced meteorological observations, monitoring of land and ocean surfaces, generating a vertical profile of the atmosphere in terms of temperature and humidity for weather forecasting and disaster warning.

Read more about [SAFAR](#).

Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA):

- Environment Pollution Control Authority is a Supreme Court-mandated body tasked with taking various measures to tackle air pollution in the Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region).
- The body is constituted under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- It is mandated to enforce the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in the Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Making the language of the law comprehensible

Context:

- A plea was filed by the citizens who protested against the publication of the draft EIA notification in only English and Hindi, on the grounds that such a policy excludes a large number of Indians who do not speak Hindi or English from participating in the public consultation process.
- They demanded that the draft be published in 22 Indian Languages.
- This issue has brought much-needed attention to the issue of official languages used by the central government in its functioning.

Central Government's Response:

- Two High Courts have asked the government to publish the notification in all 22 languages mentioned in Schedule VIII to the Constitution.
- However, the central government is pushing back against this order, arguing that it is not required by the law to publish these notifications in the 22 languages mentioned in Schedule VIII.
- One of the other reasons offered by the central government to resist the translation of the notification into 22 languages is that translations may result “in the meaning of the words being obfuscated and often even lost”, thereby leading to greater legal uncertainty.

- The Official Languages Act, 1963 requires the publication of the law in only English and Hindi. As a result, the central government, de facto, ends up excluding non-English and non-Hindi speaking citizens from the law-making process only because of their linguistic identity.

Authoritative Texts (Central Laws) Act, 1973:

- There exists a central law called the Authoritative Texts (Central Laws) Act, 1973 that creates a legal mechanism to recognise authoritative translations of all central laws into languages mentioned in Schedule VIII to the Constitution of India.
- This law extends to rules and delegated legislation issued under central laws.
- The Legislative Department of the Law Ministry hosts these translations on its website.

Translations as legal right:

- In many of the cases especially with regard to legislative enactments, it is reasonable to argue that citizens are not bound by laws that are not made available to them in their local language.
- The Supreme Court of India in *Harla v. State of Rajasthan*, 1951 has ruled that citizens are not bound by laws that have not been published and publicised.

Language Politics:

- This issue is yet to garner the political attention it deserves despite the fact that since independence, language has been one of the main markers of political identity in India.
 - The reorganisation of Indian States on linguistic lines in 1956 took place because of the agitations demanding the creation of a State for the Telugu-speaking people of the Madras Presidency.
- Ever since then, language has played a key role in shaping Indian politics.
- The rise and success of several regional political parties have been associated with linguistic pride, which sometimes can boil into language chauvinism against other linguistic minorities.

Concerns:

- Despite the importance of language to Indian politics, the key political parties which owe their existence to their politics around language, appear to be weak and inadequate in convincing Parliament or the central government in ensuring that all 22 languages recognised in the Schedule VIII to the Constitution are used by all institutions of the central government while communicating or interfacing with the public.

The Example of the European Union:

- EU has a policy in place to respect the linguistic diversity of its member nations.
- In the European Union (EU) - multi-linguistic jurisdictions, all EU-level official documents are made available in all 24 official languages of member States.
- This policy allows all EU nationals to communicate with EU institutions in any of the 24 official languages and these institutions are required to respond in the same language.

Way forward:

- Central government offices, such as the passport office, should give citizens the option to engage with the government in a language of their choice.
 - So far, only the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) which runs the Aadhaar digital identity programme has an inclusive language policy allowing citizens to get identity cards in languages other than English and Hindi.

- An inclusive language policy must be integral to the law-making and enforcement process.
- This should include mandatorily publishing all parliamentary debates and associated records such as reports of parliamentary committees, the entire record of the Gazette of India, all legislation and delegated legislation of the central government in all 22 languages in Schedule VIII.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A new world order

Context:

At a special session marking 75 years of the United Nations, the Prime Minister of India called for reform of its outdated structures, pointing out that in the absence of comprehensive changes, the world body today faces a crisis of confidence.

This topic has been covered in the [22nd September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

India's call for UNSC Reforms:

- India has been at the forefront of demanding reform in the UN, particularly its principal organ, the [Security Council](#).
- For decades, India has been staking its claim as one of the world's largest economies and most populous countries, with a track record in promoting a rules-based international order, and contributing to peacekeeping through UN forces.
- Despite the dysfunctional power balance that prevails, the UN's reform process, held through Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) has not made progress over decades.
- The UN has chosen to roll over the discussions of the IGN, which are looking at five major issues:
 - Enlarging the Security Council.
 - Categories of membership.
 - The question of the veto that five Permanent Members of the UNSC wield.
 - Regional representation.
 - Redistributing the Security Council-General Assembly power balance.

Read more about [UNSC Reforms](#).

Need for Reforms:

- The UN was born in the crisis of the World War era, and the realities of that time can hardly be compared to the present.
- The UNSC's permanent, veto-carrying members - the U.S., the U.K., France, Russia and later China, chosen by virtue of being winners of World War II can hardly claim adequate representation of the world's leadership today.
- The UNSC does not include a permanent member from the African, Australian and South American continents.
- Pillars of the multilateral order, such as the G-4 group of Brazil, India, Germany and Japan, have been ignored for long.
- Many more representative options exist, and that has been the crux of the battle for change.
- There is a deep polarisation within the UN's membership, so decisions are either not taken, or not heeded.
- Frequent divisions within the UNSC P-5 end up blocking key decisions.

Conclusion:

- These issues have become all the more significant at a time when the coronavirus pandemic has brought the world to a standstill; yet, the UN, the UNSC, and WHO have failed to play an effective role in helping nations deal with the spread.
- The UN's 75th anniversary declaration passed by all members pledges to upgrade the United Nations with a commitment to instil new life in the discussions on the reform of the Security Council.
- The UNSC's permanent members must recognise the deep peril the UN faces, look beyond their own interests for the greater good of the world and its peace-building architecture and support the reform process.

2. Uniting to combat COVID-19

This topic has been covered in the [14th March 2020](#) and [16th March 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

F. Prelims Facts

1. NIA empowered to probe drug-related offences

What's in News?

The government has empowered the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to investigate offences under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

- As per a notification issued by the Revenue Department in the Ministry of Finance, NIA officers of inspector rank and above have been vested with the same powers as an officer in charge of a police station under the 1985 NDPS law.
- The change had been operationalised after consultations with State governments.
- The latest development is to ensure that the agency need not rely on local police to unravel drug trade ties that emerge during counter-terrorism operations.

National Investigation Agency:

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a central counter-terrorism agency functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Read more about the [National Investigation Agency](#)

G. Tidbits

1. 'A vaccine must have at least 50% efficacy'

What's in News?

- According to draft guidelines issued by the Central Drugs and Standards Control Organisation, a potential COVID-19 vaccine must confer at least 50% protection and be able to either prevent infection or disease — but not necessarily both.
 - Central Drugs and Standards Control Organisation is the apex regulator of drug and vaccine trials.
- These guidelines are similar to standards set by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) as well as peer international regulatory organisations such as the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA).
 - The WHO says for a vaccine that safety, immunogenicity and efficacy are the three criteria.
- The Director-General of ICMR said that they were aiming for 100% efficacy but that's unlikely being a respiratory infection, and so the target is 50% and above.

Note:

- In animal trials, all animals are deliberately infected with SARS-CoV-2 and the responses of the vaccinated and unvaccinated group are compared.
- Because such deliberate infections are not allowed in people, trial designers deploy statistical techniques to decide on whether the administration of the vaccine has a protective effect.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following is/are the function/s of Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA):

1. To protect and improve the quality of the environment and prevent and control environmental pollution in the National Capital Region.
2. To enforce the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in NCR.
3. Effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection in NCR.
4. Provision of relief and compensation to the victims of pollution and other environmental damage in the NCR.

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1, 3 and 4 only
- c. 1 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

Functions of the Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA):

- To protect and improve the quality of the environment and prevent and control environmental pollution in the National Capital Region.
- To enforce the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in NCR as per the pollution levels.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Central Government issues treasury bills and bonds.

2. The State Governments issue only bonds.
3. The purpose of issuing State Development Loans is to meet the budgetary needs of state governments.

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:

- State Development Loans (SDLs) are dated securities issued by states for meeting their market borrowing requirements. It is a Government Security (G-Sec).
- In effect, the SDLs are similar to the dated securities issued by the central government.
- The purpose of issuing State Development Loans is to meet the budgetary needs of state governments.
- In India, the Central Government issues both, treasury bills and bonds or dated securities while the State Governments issue only bonds or dated securities, which are called the State Development Loans (SDLs).

Q3. Which of the following is/are incorrect about the Air Quality Index (AQI)?

1. There are five AQI categories.
2. AQI is an index for reporting daily air quality.
3. AQI is calculated for eight major air pollutants.

Options:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Air Quality Index (AQI) is an index for reporting daily air quality.
- There are six AQI categories, namely Good, Satisfactory, Moderately polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe.
- AQI is calculated for eight major air pollutants: Ground-level ozone, PM10, PM2.5, Carbon monoxide, Sulfur dioxide, Nitrogen dioxide, Ammonia, Lead.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) :

1. It acts as the Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.
2. As per the NIA Act, Central Government can order NIA to take over the investigation of any scheduled offense anywhere in India.
3. Officers of the NIA are drawn from the Indian Police Service and Indian Revenue Service.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- National Investigation Agency is a central agency established by the Indian Government to combat terror in India.
- It acts as the Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.
- As per the NIA Act, Central Government can order NIA to take over the investigation of any scheduled offense anywhere in India.
- As per the NIA Act, NIA is empowered to deal with terror-related crimes across states without special permission from the states.
- Officers of the NIA are drawn from the Indian Police Service and Indian Revenue Service.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the mandate of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Analyse the impediments in its effective functioning. (GS 3 Security) (10 Marks, 150 Words).
2. Reforms are needed in the United Nations to strengthen its legitimacy, representativeness and relevance in order to address the realities of the present. Discuss. (GS 2 International Relations) (15 Marks, 250 Words).

