

28 Sep 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Tense LAC makes Ladakhi team call off election boycott

Context:

The call for a boycott of the elections to the district autonomous councils in Ladakh has been withdrawn in the wake of the lurking danger on the China border.

Details:

- Demands have been raised to include Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- It is believed that the Sixth Schedule that protects tribal populations and provides autonomy to the communities through the creation of autonomous development councils that can frame laws on land, public health, agriculture and so on will help protect the tribal population in Ladakh.

6th Schedule

- The Sixth Schedule consists of provisions for the administration of tribal areas according to Article 244 of the Indian Constitution.
- The Schedule currently includes 10 autonomous district councils (ADCs) in four northeastern States — Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.
- Along with ADCs, the Sixth Schedule also provides for separate Regional Councils for each area constituted as an autonomous region.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Punjab government appoints nodal officers to curb stubble burning

Context:

Steps taken to tackle stubble burning in this Kharif season.

Initiatives:

- The Chief Minister of Punjab has appealed to farmers not to burn crop residue because the practice could make the situation worse helping COVID-19 to spread, besides causing pollution.
- The Punjab Government has appointed 8,000 nodal officers in villages that grow paddy.
- Over 23,000 crop residue management machines are being given to farmers for on-site management of straw.
- Steps are being taken to sensitize the farmers to the problem.
- As part of the strategy, the state government is advancing crop residue management machines to farmers (individually or in groups or through cooperative societies) at a subsidy of 50%-80%.

Read more on this topic covered in the [23rd September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. Invisible killer threatens country's sandalwood forests

Context:

India's sandalwood trees are facing a serious threat with the return of the destructive Sandalwood Spike Disease (SSD) with the disease having resurfaced in the aromatic tree's natural habitats in Karnataka and Kerala.

Sandalwood Spike Disease (SSD):

- The disease is caused by phytoplasma (bacterial parasites of plant tissues) which are transmitted by insect vectors.
- The disease was first reported in Kodagu in 1899.
- More than a million sandalwood trees were removed in the Kodagu and Mysuru region between 1903 and 1916, prompting the Maharaja of Mysuru to announce a reward in 1907 for anyone finding a remedy.
- The devastating impact in natural habitats resulted in sandalwood being classified as vulnerable by the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) in 1998.
- So far, no cure has been found for SSD but to cut down and remove the infected tree to prevent the spread of the disease.

Concerns:

- SSD has been one of the major causes of the decline in sandalwood production in the country for over a century.
- Each year, between 1 and 5% of sandalwood trees are lost due to the disease.
- Scientists have raised concerns that it could wipe out the entire natural population if measures are not taken to prevent its spread.
- Also, they fear that any delay in arresting the trend may result in the disease spreading to cultivated sandalwood trees.
- According to a study, the present rapid spread of the infection is largely due to restrictions on green felling in forests, which has allowed vectors to spread the disease to healthy trees.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Farmers can now break free of APMC shackles, says PM

Context:

Prime Minister's remarks on the recent agriculture reforms.

This topic has been covered in the [27th September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY

1. Where is the sentinel guarding our rights?

The editorial talks about the need for the Supreme Court to re-address its role assigned under the Constitution as “sentinel on the qui vive” (watchful guardian) of fundamental rights.

Issues

With regard to the exercise of power:

Since the assumption of office by Chief Justice J.S. Khehar in 2017, the Court has increasingly drawn the attention of the public for its repeated failures. Successive Chief Justices have failed to stop the decline of the Court.

- Allegations have been made against the Chief Justice of India, stating that the decisions in some of the most important matters affecting the nation, the Constitution, democracy, and the people and their [fundamental rights](#) have been taken in favour of the executive.
- With the Court upholding the Chief Justice as ‘Master of the Roster’, in a debatable judgment in 2018, Chief Justices have used their powers to constitute Benches and allocate cases to such Benches in a highly selective manner, defeating the fundamental principle of the rule of law.
 - While the Chief Justice must be the administrative head, he must exercise his powers in a fair and just manner.
 - He must not constitute Benches and allocate cases to those Benches in a manner which tilts the balance in favour of the executive.

Disturbing events:

- Former Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Kalikho Pul’s suicide note carried serious allegations against “two senior-most judges” of the [Supreme Court](#).
- The inquiry on the same issue was stopped by Chief Justice J.S. Khehar and his colleagues. The same Court declined to order any inquiry into the demise of judge B.S. Loya, thereby failing to reassure the subordinate judiciary that it stands with it.
- The fact that Chief Justice Dipak Misra presided over the Constitution Bench hearing matters related to the medical college scam, despite the FIR naming unknown persons including constitutional functionaries of misconduct, perhaps weakened his authority. Subsequently, many including retired judges have been charge-sheeted in that case.
- The case of sexual harassment charge against Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi was another case where the entire judiciary and executive demonstrated their high-handedness.

The functioning of the Court:

- Since the lockdown, the Supreme Court has cut short its functioning. Despite repeated requests from the Bar, virtual hearings have not improved.
- While the High Courts have been using better systems, the Supreme Court persists on using a system that does not allow all the judges to sit every day. As a result, generally, seven-eight Benches sit every day as against 13-15 which can be constituted by the master of the roster.
- It has been argued that the working of the Court is far from satisfactory although the Court claims that a sufficient number of matters are being heard.
- The constitution of benches and allocation of matters even under the present dispensation continue to be subjective.
- Senior judges are not assigned [PIL](#) matters and almost all matters raising important issues in respect of acts of commissions and omissions by the executive have been allocated to Benches constituted by the Chief Justice.

Way forward:

- In its own words, the Supreme Court has been assigned the role of a “sentinel on the qui vive” as regards fundamental rights.

- The courts exercise the power of judicial review under Articles 226, 32 and 136 of the Constitution of India Act as a "sentinel on the qui vive." (Padma Vs. Hiralal Motilal Desarda and Others (2002) 7 SCC 564 at 577).
- The right to get redress from the Court is itself a fundamental right, and the Court cannot abandon its own duty in this regard.
- The Court needs to re-address its role assigned under the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court must reassert clearly that it is truly the sentinel on the qui vive as regards the fundamental rights of all citizens.

Category: EDUCATION

1. Diagnosing what ails medical education

The editorial analyses how confusion over policy for human resource development and economic policy is affecting quality, equity and integrity in the field of medical education.

The National Education Policy 2020:

- The [National Education Policy \(NEP\)](#) 2020 aims to provide universal access to quality education and bridge the gap between the current state of learning outcomes and what is required.
- This will be achieved by undertaking major reforms that bring the highest quality, equity and integrity into the system, from early childhood care and education through higher education.
- In addition to the issues of access and equity, the present policy lays emphasis on quality and holistic learning.
- In a brief paragraph on medical education, it states that the aim is to train health care professionals primarily required for working in primary care and secondary hospitals.

On private entities in the field of medical education:

- Successive governments have been faced with the practical dilemma of quickly expanding educational opportunities while simultaneously addressing the issues of quality and equity.
- There is a continuing shortage of healthcare personnel. The infrastructure required for high-quality modern medical education is expensive.
- Private entities have been permitted to establish medical educational institutions to supplement government efforts.
- Though they are supposed to be not-for-profit, the private entities, taking advantage of the poor regulatory apparatus, have completely commercialized education.
- The overwhelming majority of private medical colleges provide poor quality education at extremely high costs.
- None of the three stated objectives of medical education has been achieved by the private sector — that is:
 - Providing healthcare personnel to all parts of the country
 - Ensuring quality
 - Improving equity
- The public has approached the polity, the executive and the courts to ensure equity, if not quality.

Regulation:

- While there have been attempts by the government and the courts, on and off, to regulate fees, efforts have not been fruitful.

- The executive, primarily the Medical Council of India, has proven unequal to the task of ensuring that private institutions comply with regulations.
- It was in this situation that the board of governors, which replaced the Medical Council of India, as an interim before the National Medical Commission became operative, introduced the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET-UG, as a single all-India gateway for admission to medical colleges.

NEET has worsened equity:

- It is well known that despite the NEET entrance exam, seats were being sold to the highest bidder.
- Challenged in courts, after an initial setback, the NEET scheme has been upheld.
- NEET may have improved the quality of candidates admitted to private institutions to some extent, but it seems to have further worsened equity.
- With NEET, the number of students from government schools who were able to get admission to a medical college has become very low.

Way forward:

- The basic cause of inequity in admission to higher educational institutions is the absence of a high-quality school system accessible to all.
- The government must stay determined to ensure that economic policy facilitates quality and equity in education.
- Allowing government medical colleges to admit students based on marks in Standard XII and using NEET scores for admission to private colleges could be a more equitable option at the moment.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Salutory lesson

Context:

- Vodafone Group Plc has won its 13-year-long battle with India's tax authorities.
- An international arbitration tribunal ruled that the Indian government's efforts to claim more than ₹20,000 crore in tax (including related interest and penalties) from Vodafone using retrospective legislation was in clear breach of the 'fair and equitable treatment' protections afforded under Article 4(1) of the Bilateral Investment Treaty between India and the Netherlands.

This topic has been covered in the [26th September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. The benefits of a carbon tax

Context:

- China, the largest carbon dioxide emitter, has announced that it would balance out its carbon emissions with measures to offset them before 2060.
- With this development, the spotlight is on the U.S. and India, ranking second and third in emissions.

- Also, India ranks fifth in the Global Climate Risk Index 2020.

Climate change concerns:

- In the recent past, there have been several indications of the existential danger from global warming.
- E.g.: record heat waves in Delhi, floods in southwest China, and catastrophic forest fires in California.
- According to a [United Nations](#) report, between 1998 and 2017, disaster-hit countries reported \$2.9 trillion in direct economic losses, with 77% resulting from climate change.
 - The U.S. faced the highest losses, followed by China, Japan, and India.
- While air pollution levels have decreased worldwide after the COVID-19 outbreak, with the resumption of polluting activities, emissions in India are set to rise sharply unless strong action is taken.
 - Carbon dioxide, a major culprit in global warming, was 414 parts per million in August 2020 because of past accumulation.
 - As one half comes from the three top carbon emitters, they need to drive de-carbonisation.

Efforts by India:

- It is in the country's interest to take stronger action before 2030, leading to no net carbon increase by 2050.
- India has committed to:
 - 40% of electricity capacity being from non-fossil fuels by 2030.
 - Lowering the ratio of emissions to GDP by one-third from 2005 levels.

Way forward:

- A market-oriented approach to tax and trade carbon domestically and to induce similar action by others through international trade and diplomacy offers a way forward.
- The government can introduce incentives for electric vehicles.
- An environmental tax in the 2020-21 budget can prove to be beneficial.
- Another way to cut effluents while earning revenues is to price the carbon content of domestic production and imports (energy and transport).
 - Big economies like India should also use their global monopsony, or the power of a large buyer in international trade, to impose a carbon tariff.
 - With the [IMF](#) endorsing the European Union's plan to impose carbon levies on imports, India can be among the first movers in the developing world in taxing and switching from carbon-intensive fuels.
- Focusing on trade is important because reducing the domestic carbon content of production alone would not avert the harm if imports remain carbon-intensive.
 - Therefore, leading emitters should use their monopsony, diplomacy and financial capabilities to build a climate coalition with partners.
- Pricing carbon through emission trading, i.e., setting a maximum amount of allowable effluents from industries, and permitting those with low emissions to sell their extra space is also a suitable measure.
 - Pilot projects on carbon trading in China have shown success.
 - There is valuable experience in the EU and some American states.
- Carbon tax can be levied on economic activities — for example, on the use of fossil fuels like coal, as done in Canada and Sweden.
 - A carbon tax is a fee imposed on the burning of carbon-based fuels.
 - This is estimated to reduce [greenhouse gas](#) pollution by between 80 and 90 million tonnes by 2022.
- The fiscal gains from pricing carbon can be fairly large.

- A carbon tax at \$35 per tonne of CO₂ emissions in India is estimated to be capable of generating some 2% of GDP through 2030.

Conclusion:

India is among the nations that are hardest hit by climate impacts. While there is growing public support for climate action, the solutions must be in the country's interests.

F. Prelims Facts

1. India, Japan navies match skills in northern Arabian Sea

What's in News?

JIMEX-20, the India and Japan naval exercise is underway in the north Arabian Sea.

- It is being conducted in a “non-contact at-sea-only format”, in view of the COVID-19 restrictions.
- The Indian Navy has deployed:
 - INS Chennai - indigenous stealth destroyer
 - INS Tarkash - stealth frigate
 - Fleet Tanker Deepak
- Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) has deployed Kaga, an Izumo Class Helicopter Destroyer and Ikazuchi, a guided missile destroyer.
- The P8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft, integral helicopters and fighter aircraft will also participate.

This topic has been covered in the [25th September 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

G. Tidbits

1. Now, Odisha govt. turns to radio for classes

What's in News?

The Odisha state government has opted for radio to reach out to children in remote areas of the State, as online classes fail to reach most students due to poor mobile connectivity.

- The School and Mass Education Department will launch classroom teaching through All India Radio.
- Three hours of classroom instruction are also available through Doordarshan.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following are Kharif crops?

1. Wheat
2. Rice

3. Cotton
4. Mustard
5. Groundnut

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- b. 2, 3 and 5 only
- c. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- d. 2 and 3 only

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The crops that are sown in the rainy season are called Kharif crops.
- The crops that are sown in the winter season are called Rabi crops.
- Rice, Cotton, Groundnut, Fennel, Soyabean are Kharif crops.
- The Rabi crops in India are wheat, barley, mustard, sesame and peas.

Q2. Nagorno-Karabakh region is a subject of dispute between:

- a. Armenia and Azerbaijan
- b. Bhutan and China
- c. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
- d. Israel and Palestine

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The landlocked mountainous region of Nagorno-Karabakh is the subject of an unresolved dispute between Azerbaijan, in which it lies, and its ethnic Armenian majority, backed by neighbouring Armenia.
- Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Artsakh, is a landlocked region in the South Caucasus, within the mountainous range of Karabakh.
- It is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan.

Q3. Naujawan Bharat Sabha was founded by:

- a. Bhagat Singh
- b. Chandra Shekar Azad
- c. Prafulla Chandra Chaki
- d. Khudiram Bose

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

Naujawan Bharat Sabha was founded by Bhagat Singh in 1926. Members from the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities were there in the organization. In the year 1929, the association was banned.

Q4. Which of the following pairs are correctly matched?

1. World Economic Outlook: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
2. Global Competitiveness Report: World Economic Forum
3. Ease of Doing Business Report: World Trade Organisation
4. Global Economic Prospects Report: World Bank

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

World Economic Outlook: International Monetary Fund

Global Competitiveness Report: World Economic Forum

Ease of Doing Business Report: World Bank

Global Economic Prospects Report: World Bank

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Has the NEET exam been successful in ensuring equity in admission to higher educational institutions? Critically examine and suggest the best way forward. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 2 Education)
2. India's commitment to international treaties and the rule of law is instrumental in attracting and retaining foreign investment in India. Elucidate. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 3 Economy)

