

16 Oct 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [BARC suspends ratings of all news channels](#)

Context:

Television rating agency Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) has announced the suspension of audience estimates and ratings for all news channels for the next three months.

Background:

- Recently, the Mumbai police pointed at possible tampering of Target Rating Point (TRP) by certain news channels.

This topic has been comprehensively covered in the [9th October 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Details:

- The decision was taken after the BARC Board directed its technical committee to review and augment the current standards of measuring and reporting data.
- The council opined that the pause is necessary to enable the industry and BARC to work closely to review its already stringent protocols and further augment them to enable the industry to focus on collaborating for growth and well-natured competitiveness.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. GST: Centre to borrow for States

Context:

The Centre has announced that the Government of India (GOI) will now undertake the required borrowings in tranches and pass them on to the States as back-to-back loans that will reflect on their own books.

Background:

- There was an impasse between the Centre and the States over the issue of borrowings to recompense the states.
- A consensus was not reached over three GST council meetings despite extensive talks.
- While 21 States and Union Territories had acceded to the Centre's proposal that the States undertake the borrowings to meet the shortfall (with the principal and interest repayments to be paid from future GST collections), states insistent on the Centre undertaking the borrowing had begun preparing to move the Supreme Court over the matter.
- The latest announcement may help break this impasse.

This topic has been comprehensively covered in [28th August 2020](#) and [30th August 2020](#) Comprehensive News Analysis.

Details:

- The borrowing would be conducted through a Special Window and would not affect the Centre's fiscal deficit or expand general government debt.
- The amounts will be reflected as the capital receipts of the State governments and as part of the financing of the respective [fiscal deficits](#).
- It is being done to ensure that States would not have to pay different interest rates for these borrowings.

2. 'Latest stimulus to have minimal growth impact'

Context:

According to Moody's Investors Service - a rating agency, the government's latest fiscal stimulus measures will have a minimal impact on India's growth prospects.

Background:

In order to spur fresh demand of about ₹1 lakh crore in the second half of 2020-21, the Union Finance Minister unveiled a mini-stimulus of sorts.

This has been covered in [13th October 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Details:

- The rating agency opined that the stimulus measures will provide only a small boost.
- It stressed that the small scale of stimulus is actually a credit negative as it reflects the country has 'limited budgetary firepower to support the economy'.
- Moody's observed that India's very weak fiscal position has constrained its scope for discretionary stimulus spending in response to the coronavirus shock.
- The two rounds of stimulus bring the government's direct spending on coronavirus-related fiscal support to around 1.2% of GDP, while the average spending by 13 Baa-rated nations is 2.5% of GDP as of June 2020.
 - India's rating is Baa3 negative - following a downgrade from Baa2 negative in June 2020.

Category: SECURITY**1. IFF questions India's move to seek encryption access****Context:**

Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) has questioned the Indian government's move to join five other countries, including the US, in calling on tech companies to allow backdoor access to encrypted communication.

Background:

- The UK Home Department issued a joint statement signed by the governments of Australia, Canada, India, Japan, New Zealand and the United States calling on tech companies to work with governments and find solutions to ensure the safety of citizens, without eroding user privacy or cybersecurity.
- It has demanded that tech firms build backdoors to deal with 'significant challenges to public safety' posed by end-to-end encryption.
- It was opined that while encryption is vital and privacy and cybersecurity must be protected, it should not come at the expense of wholly precluding law enforcement, and the tech industry itself, from being able to act against the most serious illegal content and activities online.

Details:

- IFF has filed an [RTI](#) with the Ministries of Home Affairs, External Affairs and Electronics & IT asking if any legal opinion was sought before becoming a signatory and whether the government plans to introduce any legislation pursuant to becoming a signatory.
- IFF is a digital rights advocacy group.

Note:

- In the recent past, the Centre had demanded that WhatsApp help it trace the origin of fake messages.
- However, the demand was turned down by WhatsApp, which pointed out such a move would undermine the privacy of users.

This topic has been covered in [4th October 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The message in the Peace Nobel — multilateralism

Context:

- Nobel peace prize of 2020 has been accorded to the [World Food Programme](#).

For information on this topic, refer to:

[CNA dated Oct 11, 2020: Leading the global fight against hunger](#)

Details:

- This year's Nobel peace prize apart from recognizing the substantial role being played by the World Food Programme in combating hunger and malnutrition across the developing world seems also to be drawing attention to two other important aspects.

Multilateralism:

- An important message which this award is sending to the world is that the world needs multilateralism as an expression of international solidarity in the face of the global crisis.

Background:

- Nations have not been willing to cooperate and collaborate even in the face of cross-national and global health-cum-economic crisis brought out by the pandemic. Given the rise in nationalist urges, fuelled by political opportunism, there is diminished appeal for international cooperation.
- The [United Nations](#), considered a beacon of international solidarity and cooperation, has become increasingly marginal in mobilising international responses to global challenges.

- The UN has been deprived of its funding from its member nations.
- The UN's present structure no longer reflects the changes in power equations that have taken place, yet still, the much overdue reforms of the UN have been stalled.
- This has led to what has been referred to as “**global integration without solidarity**”.

Significance of multilateralism:

Provides global governance architecture:

- The global network of multilateral institutions enables governance in areas that require coordination among nation-states and set norms to regulate the behaviour of states so as to avoid conflict and to ensure both equitable burden-sharing and, equally, a fair distribution of benefits.

Advantages of collaboration:

- Active collaboration between nations would enhance humanity's collective ability to overcome common challenges and achieve common goals.
 - Example: Given the urgent need for a vaccine against COVID-19, the nations agreeing to pool their limited resources together could lead to the development of an effective and affordable anti-virus vaccine in a shorter frame of time.
 - The World Health Organization's ([WHO](#)) Covax alliance is a significant step in this direction.

Increasing interconnectedness of the world:

- International solidarity is indispensable in an increasingly globalizing world resulting in increased interconnectedness.
- In the contemporary world, the line separating the domestic from the external has become increasingly blurred. In tackling domestic challenges deeper external engagement is often indispensable.
 - Example: In the case of climate change, even if India goes ahead towards reducing its carbon emissions, climate change would still continue to affect it if other nations do not also reduce their emissions.
 - Example: The COVID-19 pandemic originated in China and quickly raged across national borders much quicker than the earlier such pandemics. The presence of a robust and truly global early warning system could have perhaps helped contain the spread.

Increasing inter-connectedness of the challenges:

- Multilateralism should not be viewed only as countries coming together for a common cause, it can also signify different stakeholders, institutions coming together to address common challenges. This becomes all the more significant given the increasing inter-connectedness among various challenges.
 - For example, food, energy and water security are interlinked with strong feedback loops. The inordinate and non-sustainable approach towards enhancing food security may lead to diminished water and energy security and also health security.
- The set of [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) are recognition of these inter-connections. The SDGs are cross-domain and also cross-national in character, and hence demand greater multilateral cooperation in order to succeed.

Increasing salience and complexity of global challenges:

- The salience of global issues like climate change, poverty and the current pandemic has expanded over the years.

- The scale, complexity, urgency and seriousness of these global challenges have increased the need for multilateral approaches in finding solutions.

India's stand on multilateralism:

- India has been a consistent advocate of multilateralism and has always insisted that the path to achieving sustainable peace and prosperity is through multilateralism.

For related information on multilateralism, refer to:

[CNA dated March 18, 2020: A revival of multilateralism, steered by India](#)

The looming humanitarian crisis:

- The novel coronavirus pandemic has reversed the substantial gains made in the fight against poverty and hunger.
 - According to the WFP, 132 million additional people could become malnourished as a consequence of the pandemic.
 - As per the estimates from the World Bank, under the baseline scenario, COVID-19 will push 71 million into extreme poverty, measured at the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day. With the downside scenario, this increases to 100 million.
- This accounts for a major worldwide catastrophe and the Nobel Prize to the WFP is also aimed at nudging the collective conscience of mankind to come together and relieve this looming humanitarian crisis.

Category: FOOD SECURITY

1. The road to zero hunger by 2030

Context:

- 16th October marks **World Food Day**.

Background:

Sustainable Development Goal 2:

- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 aims to **achieve "zero hunger"**. It aims to "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture".
- The Goal has **five targets** to be achieved by 2030.
 - Ensuring universal access to safe and nutritious food, ending all forms of malnutrition, doubling the productivity and income of small scale food producers, sustainable food production and resilient agricultural practices and maintaining the genetic diversity in food production.
- SDG 2 considers the complex **inter-linkages between food security, nutrition, rural transformation and sustainable agriculture**. Malnutrition and extreme hunger constitute a crucial barrier to sustainable development. Hungry people are less productive and easily prone to diseases.

Concerns:

- Despite some progress, more than two billion people globally still lack access to sufficient, nutritious and safe food. Projections show that the **world is not on track to achieve zero hunger by 2030, or to meet global nutrition targets.**
- According to the United Nations, there are **around 690 million people who are hungry, which accounts for 9.9 percent of the world population.**
- Under-nutrition has been on the rise since 2015, after falling for decades.
- The COVID-19 pandemic poses a threat to food security.
 - Up to 142 million people in 2020 have suffered from undernourishment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stunting and wasting children statistics are likely to worsen with the pandemic.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated March 31, 2020: A threat to food security](#)

Progress made in India:

- Agricultural productivity has improved significantly in recent decades.
- India has gone from being a net importer to a net exporter of food grains. This allowed it to distribute around 23 million tonnes of food grains from the large domestic reserves to the needy.
- Thanks to the supportive measures from the administration, agriculture grew at 3.4% during the first quarter of the financial year and the area cultivated this Kharif exceeded 110 million hectares.

Challenges for India:

- India faces a **multi-dimensional food security challenge.**

Malnutrition challenge:

- The Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey 2016-18 revealed that over 40 million children are chronically malnourished, and more than half of Indian women aged 15-49 years are anaemic.

Climate change:

- The climate change phenomenon will increase the frequency and intensity of climatic hazards. Apart from the traditional climate-related shocks such as floods and cyclones, the farmers are also having to deal with pests and locust attacks.
- Climate change also poses a potent threat to agro-biodiversity, which can impact agricultural productivity and livelihoods across food and farm systems.

Challenges in the agricultural sector:

- The excessive use of chemicals and unsustainable farming practices have caused soil degradation, fast depletion of groundwater table and rapid loss of agro-biodiversity.
- The increasing fragmentation of landholdings poses serious challenges to the adaptability of the farmers to the changing circumstances in agriculture and also their profitability.
 - In India, more than 86% of farmers have less than two hectares of land contributing around 60% of the total food grain production and over half the country's fruits and vegetables.

Initiatives taken in India:

- The initiatives such as the **Integrated Child Development Services** — which provides cooked meals and take-home rations to 100 million children under the age of six, as well as to pregnant and

lactating mothers — and the mid-day meal programme would help address the malnutrition challenge that India faces.

- The [POSHAN Abhiyan](#) is also aimed at addressing the malnutrition issue that plagues India.
- To enhance the adaptability of Indian agriculture to the changing climatic conditions, drought and flood-tolerant seed varieties are being developed, weather-based agricultural advisories are being issued, millets and hardy varieties of crops are being promoted and there is a growing emphasis on more efficient use of available water resources in the agricultural sector.
- During the COVID-19-precipitated lockdown, the [FAO](#), IFAD and the WFP worked in close coordination to support the Government of India's Empowered Group 5 on facilitating supply chain and logistics management, to ensure unimpeded supply of essential items such as food and medicines.

Way forward:

Sustainable food system:

- A food system is a framework that includes every aspect of feeding and nourishing people: from growing, harvesting and processing to packaging, transporting, marketing and consuming food.
- There is the inevitable need to move towards a more sustainable food system.
- This would involve **ensuring more sustainable production methods through agroecology and sustainable practices in agriculture and allied sectors**. This will also make the food systems more resilient and robust to future shocks as well.
 - To be sustainable, a food system must provide enough nutritious food for all without compromising feeding future generations.
- This will also entail the need to **reduce and eliminate food waste**.
 - Almost one-third of the food we produce is wasted.
- This would also require the strengthening of capacity for **climate change adaptation of the agricultural sector**.

Multilateral approach:

- The UN and other international agencies like the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), [IFAD \(International Fund for Agricultural Development\)](#) and WFP (World Food Programme) must work with government, civil society, farmers' organisations and the private sector to build sustainable food systems.
- There is a need for global solidarity to help all populations, and especially the most vulnerable, to recover from the crisis.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Dealing with a deluge

Context:

- Flooding in Hyderabad.

Background:

- The development of **deep monsoon depression over the west-central Bay of Bengal** and its subsequent landfall on the Indian subcontinent resulted in downpours over several districts in the state of Telangana severely affecting the city of Hyderabad.
- The rainfall on a single day on October 13th surpassed even the monthly average rainfall of Hyderabad for October.

Causative factors:

Natural causes:

- The **high-intensity downpour in a short span** is a primary factor for the current flooding in Hyderabad.

Lack of working drainage infrastructure:

- The **inadequacy of drainage infrastructure** has also contributed to worsening the impact of the flooding.
- Very little work has been done to unblock existing storm drains or upgrade the existing drainage system. Hyderabad still depends upon an antiquated sewerage and drainage system.

Developmental activities:

- **Construction over lake beds and encroachments of drainage channels** have played a role in exacerbating flooding and inundation in the city.
 - Much of the damage was due to the overflowing of lakes — in particular, the Hussain Sagar Lake in the middle of Hyderabad.
- Rapid urbanisation in Hyderabad has resulted in the **loss of a large portion of the wetlands**. Wetlands and watersheds play a vital role in absorbing excess rainfall.
 - An analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment in 2016 revealed that 3,245 hectares of water bodies were lost in Hyderabad between 1989 and 2001.

Lack of planning:

- The current flooding also shows a **lack of preparation and disaster mitigation**, a problem that plagues most urban centres in the country.

Way forward:

- Hyderabad urgently needs to expand and remodel its drainage system.
- In the long term, there is a need to **take into account the hydro-geology of cities in planning developmental activities**.
- Recognizing the vital role played by the wetland in flood mitigation, there is the need for a **focussed conservation programme for these wetland ecologies in cities**.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Zoo revives scheme for animal adoption

What's in News?

The Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) which suffered a huge loss following its closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has revived its innovative 'Adopt-An-Animal' programme.

- The 'Adopt-An-Animal' programme has been revived to mobilise resources for animals.
 - The zoo authorities came up with the scheme urging animal lovers to provide funds from ₹500 to ₹2.5 lakh.
 - In lieu, an adoption certificate, a plaque in the zoo and income tax rebates are available to individuals and organisations.

Read more about [Nandankanan Zoological Park](#).

G. Tidbits

1. U.S. warship in Taiwan Strait enrages China

What's in News?

A U.S. warship - the guided-missile destroyer USS Barry, sailed through the Taiwan Strait in what the American military described as a routine passage.

- The U.S Pacific fleet said that the ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- The move enraged China, which claims sovereignty over the island and surrounding seas.
- Ties between Beijing and Washington have deteriorated over issues including trade and Hong Kong, with the self-ruled island of Taiwan a long-running source of tension.

2. No end to violence against women: SC

What's in News?

The Supreme Court said that crimes against women continued in a never-ending cycle in India.

- The Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan said women in India faced violence and discrimination in one form or the other in their various roles as daughter, sister, wife, mother, partner or single woman.
- The court asserted that women continue to be vulnerable to these crimes because of non-retaliation, coupled with the absence of laws addressing their rights and ignorance of the existing statutes. Societal attitude, stigma and conditioning also made women vulnerable to domestic violence.
- The Bench said domestic violence continued to be the least reported form of violence towards women.
- However, the judgment called the 2005 law against domestic harassment - a milestone.
- These set of circumstances ensured that a majority of women preferred to suffer in silence, not out of choice but of compulsion the bench said.
- It said that the progress of any society depended on its ability to protect and promote the rights of women.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. It is a classical dance form that was initially practiced by male dancers only.
2. It includes a display of dexterity of the dancer's footwork through techniques such as dancing on the rim of a brass plate and with a pitcher full of water on the head.

The dance form being talked about is:

- a. Bharatanatyam
- b. Mohiniattam
- c. Kuchipudi
- d. Sattriya

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

Self-explanatory.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Nandankanan Zoological Park:

1. It is located in Tamil Nadu.
2. It is the first zoo in India to become a member of the World Association of Zoos & Aquariums (WAZA).
3. It is recognized as a leading zoo for the breeding of the Indian pangolin and white tiger.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

Nandankanan Zoological Park is located in Odisha. It is the first zoo in India to become a member of the World Association of Zoos & Aquariums (WAZA). It is recognized as a leading zoo for the breeding of the Indian pangolin and white tiger.

Q3. Which of the following pairs are correctly matched?

1. Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty
2. Sustainable Development Goal 2: Gender Equality
3. Sustainable Development Goal 5: Quality Education
4. Sustainable Development Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1 and 4 only

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

Sustainable development goals

SDG 1 No Poverty	SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy	SDG 13 Climate Action
SDG 2 Zero Hunger	SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth	SDG 14 Life Below Water
SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being	SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	SDG 15 Life on Land
SDG 4 Quality Education	SDG 10 Reduced Inequality	SDG 16 Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
SDG 5 Gender Equality	SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities	SDG 17 Partnerships to achieve the Goal
SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation	SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production	

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Formosa Strait:

1. It separates Taiwan and mainland China.
2. It is a part of the South China Sea and connects to the Sea of Japan to the north.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Formosa Strait, also known as Taiwan Strait, separates Taiwan and mainland China.
- The strait is currently part of the South China Sea and connects to the East China Sea to the north.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The increasing global integration without the commensurate strengthening of global solidarity is a cause of concern. Discuss the significance of multilateralism in current circumstances and also enumerate the impeding factors. (15 marks, 250 words) (GS paper 2/International Relations)
2. Despite impressive progress over the years, more than two billion people globally still lack access to sufficient, nutritious and safe food. Identify the factors responsible and suggest suitable measures required to meet the target of zero hunger by 2030. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS Paper 3/Food security)