

23 Oct 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. U.S. to nix business visas for H-1B speciality jobs

Context:

The U.S. State Department has proposed not to issue temporary business visas for H-1B speciality occupations, which allowed several companies to send tech professionals for a short stay to complete jobs on site.

Details:

- According to the U.S State Department, the proposal, if finalised, will eliminate any misconception that the “B-1 in lieu of H policy” provides an alternative avenue for foreign professionals to enter the U.S. to perform skilled labour that allows them and their employers to circumvent the restrictions and requirements relating to the H non-immigrant classification established by the Congress to protect U.S. workers.

Impact on India:

- The move could affect hundreds of Indians.
- It is likely to impact several Indian firms that send their professionals on B-1 visas for a short stay to complete jobs on site.

Difference between H-1B Visa and B-1 Visa:

- An H1 visa is needed by foreigners who seek employment in the United States. A B1 visa allows a person to perform business transactions temporarily.
- The application process for a B-1 visa does not include similar procedural requirements to protect the U.S. workers like that of H-1B visas.
- Fees for the B-1 visas are far lower than that of H-1B visas.

Read more about some important U.S Visas covered in the [9th February 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. Sri Lankan Parliament passes 20th Amendment

Context:

The controversial 20th Amendment to Sri Lanka’s Constitution has been passed in Parliament with a two-thirds majority.

Background:

- Since 1978, Sri Lanka had been ruled under a powerful executive presidential system.
- In 2015, a reformist government amended the Constitution (Amendment 19A) and clipped presidential powers and empowered Parliament.
- The 20th Amendment was introduced by the Rajapaksa administration stating that reduced powers deterred the President from performing his duties.

This topic has been covered in the [21st October 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Details:

- The amendment will concentrate power with the President.
- The President would be able to hold ministries.
- He would be empowered to appoint and fire ministers.
- The President will also be the appointing authority of the elections, public service, police, human rights, and bribery or corruption investigation commissions.
 - Previously, these commissions were perceived as independent. A constitutional council comprising legislators from different political parties and civil personalities were to make the appointments.

- With the amendment, the constitutional council is abolished for a parliamentary council whose observations the President is not bound to implement.
- The President has the power to dissolve Parliament after two years and six months of it being elected.
 - The previous law prohibited the President from dissolving Parliament until six months before its five-year term ends.
- The amendment allows dual citizens to hold political office, which could strengthen President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's familial political clout.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. CPCB flags unsafe disposal of carcasses

Context:

The [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#) has issued guidelines for the incineration of dead cattle and livestock.

Issue:

- According to CPCB, about 30% of India's dead cattle and 40% of goats weren't flayed.
- There were nearly 25 million head of cattle including buffalo that died of natural causes.
- Nearly nine million bovine hides were lost annually due to non-recovery.

Draft Guidelines:

- The draft guidelines require carcasses of livestock to be disposed of in incinerators.
- The municipal authorities have been asked to ensure that such facilities are set up and made available.
- The Board has not specified any deadline for the implementation of the guidelines.

Dead livestock – Environmental Hazard:

- There isn't any organised system of disposal and it has become a major environmental hazard.
- Carcasses, especially those that result from animal slaughter, are an 'environmental hazard'.
- They are one of the reasons for bird-hit hazards at airports.
 - While the hide is mostly removed for leather, the carcasses are frequently left to putrefy in the open and attract vultures and dogs polluting the environment and creating environmental hazards.
 - Open dumping attracts birds which can cause air accidents.

Commercial Opportunities:

- Flaying of cattle could yield more commercial opportunities, for instance - meat-meal, bone-meat and technical fat.
- The process would require setting up more carcass utilisation plants where the parts of the animal could be used to make tallow, nutritional supplements and fertilizer.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Drive a harder bargain at the Delhi meet

Context:

- The upcoming **third India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue**.
 - U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.S. Defence Secretary Mark Esper would be holding discussions with India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Background:

- The U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo is scheduled to visit India as part of his visit to Asia (Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Indonesia).

Increasing focus on China:

- The ministerial forum apart from dealing with bilateral relations between the two countries would also involve the issues of **collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region to counter increasing Chinese aggression**.
- Given the recent statements issued by the U.S. administration, it is evident that the U.S. expects a strong, public, strategic commitment to the U.S. on its plans in the Indo-Pacific.
 - In the **recently concluded Quad Foreign Ministers meeting in Tokyo**, Mr. Pompeo had called upon the Quad countries to collaborate to put up a united front against Chinese assertiveness.

India's stand:

- **India however has been measured in its response, reiterating that its membership of the Quad is aligned to its Indo-Pacific policy** and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement at the Shangri-La dialogue stating that the Quad grouping is not directed against any country.
- India has maintained that it will **resolve the boundary issues with China bilaterally**.
- However, China's aggression against India at the Line of Actual Control and its refusal to disengage or withdraw might influence India's priorities going ahead.

Details:

- India must consider carefully what it discusses and projects from the upcoming 2+2 meeting. The article argues that any shift in India's current position should be based on the following two aspects.

U.S. presidential elections:

- India should consider the electoral aspects of the upcoming U.S. elections while arriving at an apt decision.
 - There have been **previous instances of reversal of U.S. policy post the change in US presidentship**, for example, with respect to the Paris Climate deal and funding of the Green Climate Fund. Under the Green Climate Fund, the developed countries including the U.S. committed to mobilise \$100 billion per year by 2020 to help developing countries such as India with climate adaptation methods and renewable technologies. It was partly based on this commitment that India decided to join the [Paris climate deal](#).
 - India should carefully assess the commitments made before the elections given the chances of it being mere election rhetoric.

National interest of India:

- Any strategic commitment to the U.S. on its plans in the Indo-Pacific **must also accrue proportional benefits for India**.

Countering China:

- India's collaboration with the U.S. should help counter China's challenge on each of India's three fronts: at the LAC, in the maritime sphere, and in the [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation \(SAARC\)](#) region surrounding India.

Along the LAC:

- India's most immediate challenge from China is at the LAC.
- While the Indian Army will defend its borders with China on its own, the U.S. can help by **enhancing and expediting U.S. defence sales to India**.
- Also, **U.S. pressure on Pakistan** may help disperse the threat of a "two-front" conflict along India's continental borders.

Maritime sphere:

- **Strengthening ties in the Indo-Pacific on the Quad platform** and enhancing joint military exercises like the 'Malabar' could help India counter China's growing influence in the maritime sphere.
- The signing of the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Cooperation (BECA)** between India and the U.S. can help India by enhancing its maritime domain awareness.

SAARC region:

- The U.S. would be finalizing a defence agreement with the Maldives. A similar agreement is on the cards with Sri Lanka too. Additionally, with SL there would be discussions on infrastructure projects and progress of the U.S.'s Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) offer of a five-year aid grant of about \$480 million.
- India has been accommodative of U.S. presence in the South Asian region. Unlike in the past, India has not objected to ceding space in its area of influence in the Indian Ocean Region, as it will allow the **U.S. to counter Chinese influence** in the region. The U.S. aid offer to SL will be seen as one way of staving off China's inroads into Sri Lanka.

Bilateral relation:

- India could also push the U.S. on resolving trade issues with India and perhaps commit to **restoring India's [Generalised System of Preferences](#) status**.

- The government could press for more **cooperation on 5G technology sharing**.
- India should also seek an assurance that its S-400 missile system purchase from Russia will receive an exemption from the U.S.'s Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) sanctions.

Conclusion:

- By inviting the U.S. Secretary of State this close to the U.S. elections, India has taken a calculated and bold gamble. India must drive a harder bargain to consolidate the pay-offs from the visit.

2. At 75, the UN needs a rebirth

Context:

- October 24, 2020 marks the diamond jubilee celebrations of the [United Nations](#).

Background:

Objective of the UN:

- The UN represents a platform for multilateral cooperation to ensure abidance to international law and collaborative work for the upliftment of the downtrodden in the hopes of establishing a peaceful and just world order.

Concerns:

Inequitable nature of UN structure:

- The UN has been designed to privilege the most powerful states of the post-World War II dispensation.
- The **current structure is deemed undemocratic** given the provisions of **veto power and permanent seats in the Security Council (UNSC)**.
- Though one line of argument can be that the provision of the permanent seats was included to keep all the major powers of the time satisfied and avoid a repeat of the ill-fated League of Nations, this **seems anachronistic** in current times.

Ill effects of excessive concentration of power:

- The provisions such as veto power and permanent membership of UNSC grant the select few states with extraordinary powers over international politics which has had a **detrimental impact on world affairs**.
 - The Cold War-era resulted in the UN being pushed into irrelevance mainly due to the fact that the two powers of the time, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, took differing stands and almost always vetoed each other's moves. This left the UN little room to implement noble visions of peace, development and human rights. The **competitive vetoing by P-5 countries has prevented the UNSC from fulfilling its collective security mandate**.
 - The unipolar phase post the 1990s has been short-lived and was mostly led by U.S.'s objectives.

Emerging global scenario:

- There are clear indications of the emergence of a multipolar world and its accompanying complexities. The phrase '**new Cold War**' is in vogue to depict the clash between China and the U.S. Tensions involving other players like Russia, Turkey, Iran and Israel in West Asia, as well as between China and its neighbours in Asia, are at an all-time high.
- **The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has labelled the present peaking of geopolitical tensions as a "great fracture"**. So dangerous are the divisions and their spillover effects that it couldn't even unite the countries to cooperate against the immediate global threat of the pandemic.
- The UN with its existing structure and functioning is ill-equipped to deal with the current situation. The lack of a global forum for multilateral cooperation and deliberation could as well lead to soaring of tensions among the nations and lead to disastrous outcomes as observed during the previous two world wars.

Obstacles to reforms:

- The current UN structure does not reflect the changed global scenario with many countries like India, Japan, Germany and Brazil despite accounting for a major share of the world's economy and their democratic ideals do not find representation at the global high table. **Only substantial reform of the UN can help retain some degree of respectability for the UN.**
 - Some of the major reforms being proposed include **expanding the permanent membership of the UNSC** reflecting the changed global scenario and also ensuring **greater regional equity**.
 - There are also proposals to **do away with the veto powers of the permanent members** and instead move to a simple majority voting mechanism in the UNSC.
- However, the P-5 countries (China, France, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S.) have continuously blocked the proposed reforms.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated Sep 23, 2020: A new world order](#)

Conclusion:

- There should be a thorough evaluation of the UN's functioning over the last 75 years and suitable reforms should be undertaken at the earliest.
- This could ensure a renaissance of the UN and empower it to fulfil the ideals set forth at its inception.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Wilful murder

- The **Disorders Inquiry Committee or the Hunter Committee of 1919** was appointed with the stated purpose to investigate the 1919 disturbances in Bombay, Delhi and Punjab and their causes.
- It was appointed by the **Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu**, in the aftermath of the [Jallianwala Bagh massacre](#).
- The committee also **had Indian representation** with the membership of Pandit Jagat Narayan, (Member of Legislative Council, United Provinces), Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmad Khan (Gwalior State lawyer) and Sir Chimanlal Harilal Setalvad, (Vice-Chancellor, Bombay University)

- The majority of the members **reprimanded General Dyer for a ‘mistaken concept of duty’ with respect to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre**. It concluded that the gathering was not the result of a conspiracy by Indians. However, **martial law declared in Punjab was justified**.

2. ‘Tri-Service synergy visible amid recent events’

What’s in News?

- The Navy Chief said that the Tri-Service synergy and coordination has peaked with the establishment of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA).
- He highlighted that this was visibly demonstrated in the joint response of the three services to recent events.

Carrier Battle Group

- The Navy Chief visited the Karwar naval base and embarked on the Carrier Battle Group, comprising INS Vikramaditya, destroyers, frigates, corvettes, fleet support ships and integral swing-role fighters and helicopters.
- A carrier battle group (CVBG) is a naval fleet consisting of an aircraft carrier (designated CV) capital ship and its large number of escorts, together defining the group.

Department of Military Affairs

- The Department of Military Affairs (DMA) was created under the Ministry of Defence with the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as Secretary.
- It was created to facilitate optimal utilization of resources and promote jointness among the three Services.

Read more about the Department of Military Affairs covered in [24th December 2019 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

3. Army chief commissions INS Kavaratti at Visakhapatnam

What’s in News?

INS Kavaratti has been formally inducted into the Navy at the Naval Dockyard in the Eastern Naval Command.

- It is the last of the four indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) stealth corvettes built under Project 28 (Kamorta class), by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.

This topic has been covered in the [21st October 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

4. Nag anti-tank missile completes final user trial

What’s in News?

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has carried out the final user trial of the third generation anti-tank guided missile (ATGM), Nag.

This topic has been covered in the [22nd October 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

5. CPI-IW base year revised to 2016

What's in News?

The Labour and Employment Ministry has revised the base year of the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW).

- The base year has been revised from 2001 to 2016.
- The revision has been made to reflect the changing consumption pattern, giving more weightage to spending on health, education, recreation and other miscellaneous expenses, while reducing the weight of food and beverages.
- The reduction in weight to spending on food and beverages indicated an increase in disposable income.
- The change in the base year of CPI-IW may give a much real inflation index and thus influence the connected pay matrices.

Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW):

- The CPI-IW is used to measure inflation in retail prices.
- It is used to regulate the dearness allowance (DA) of government staff and industrial workers.
- It is also used to revise minimum wages in scheduled employments.

For more on the [Consumer Price Index](#), click on the linked article.

G. Tidbits

1. Govt. relaxes visa restrictions

What's in News?

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has further relaxed visa restrictions.

- The relaxed restrictions enable foreigners to come to India for various purposes, such as business, conference, employment, education, research and medical reasons.
- Earlier, it allowed foreign nationals from the U.S., the U.K., Germany and France to travel to India on business, medical and employment visas under the air bubble scheme.
- Restrictions on the electronic tourist visa on arrival have not been lifted.

Read more about the air bubble agreement covered in the [22nd October 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. Time is ripe for a demand push: Sanyal

The Principal Economic Advisor in the Finance Ministry has said that the time is right for a generic push to spur demand in the economy.

- He suggested that there is a need to rebuild the demand as there has been a shock in the economy.
- He asserted that the time has come for a generic push for reinflating demand in a fuller sort of way.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Organization of American States (OAS):

1. OAS brings together all 35 independent states of the Americas.
2. European Union, India, China and Pakistan are permanent observers of OAS.
3. The four main pillars of the organisation are democracy, human rights, security, and development.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

All the statements are correct.

Q2. Which of these foundational military communication agreements have been signed by India and the U.S.?

1. General Security of Military Information Agreement
2. Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement
3. Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
4. Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- India and the US have already signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement, Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement and Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement.
- Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA) has not yet been signed.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. The Disorders Inquiry Committee of 1919 was appointed by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu.
2. The committee did not have Indian representation.
3. The committee was appointed in the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.
4. It was tasked with the investigation of the disturbances in Bombay, Delhi and Punjab in 1919.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Disorders Inquiry Committee of 1919 or the Hunter Committee of 1919 was appointed by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu.
- The committee was appointed in the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.
- It was tasked with the investigation of the disturbances in Bombay, Delhi and Punjab in 1919 and their causes.
- The committee also had Indian representation.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to INS Kavaratti:

1. It is an anti-submarine warfare corvette built under Project 28.
2. The ship has up to 90% indigenous content.
3. It belongs to the same class as INS Kamorta, INS Kadmatt and INS Kiltan.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- INS Kavaratti is the last of the four indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) stealth corvettes built under Project 28 (Kamorta class), by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.
- The first three built under the Kamorta class - INS Kamorta, INS Kadmatt and INS Kiltan have been commissioned.
- The ship has up to 90% indigenous content and the use of carbon composites for the superstructure is a commendable feat achieved in Indian shipbuilding.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Any deviation from the long-cherished principle of 'Non-alignment' should be based purely on India's immediate as well as long term national interests. Discuss in the context of India-US-China ties. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS Paper 2/International Relations)
2. Discuss the concerns associated with the current structure and functioning of the United Nations and analyze how it has been a hindrance to the achievement of its set ideals and objectives. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS Paper 2/International Relations)