

31 Oct 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. New wage code bars bonus for those facing sex abuse charges

Context:

Owing to a provision in the Code on Wages, those indulging in sexual harassment of any form could run the risk of losing out on bonus dues from their employers.

Details:

- The Code on Wages lays down norms for annual bonus dues that accrue to employees, replacing the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965.
- As per the extant law, bonus dues are barred only in case of employees dismissed for fraud, violent conduct and theft or sabotage.
- The new Code includes 'conviction for sexual harassment' as a ground for denying bonus payouts to employees.

Significance:

- This a step forward towards creating seriousness towards instances of sexual harassment. The prospect of losing one's benefits may make employees more careful of their conduct.
- This is believed to be a great nudge to get people to be on their best behaviour in the workplace.
- This would serve as an additional deterrent apart from the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) law of 2013.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) law

- As per the PoSH law guidelines, firms are required to form an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) to inquire into complaints.
- The Committee is required to make recommendations to employers on the action required pursuant to its inquiry in such complaints.
- If the ICC upholds a complaint, it could be taken as a conviction.
- Though not all sexual harassment cases translate into a police case, ICC has the power to decide if someone is guilty and report it further to the police.

Way forward:

- The rules should clarify whether the conviction would cover cases of outcomes of the investigation by the ICC arriving at a conclusion to pay compensation to the victim or not.
- It is not clear if sexual harassment incidents or related crimes against women outside the workplace could lead to dismissal of employees with loss of bonus payments. Harassing a co-worker irrespective of where it is done, should come under this provision's purview.

2. Fifteenth Finance Commission to hand in report on Nov. 9

Context:

The Fifteenth Finance Commission has finalised its report for fund devolution from the Centre to States for the five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

Fifteenth Finance Commission

- Finance Commission is a constitutional body for the purpose of allocation of certain revenue resources between the Union and the State Governments.
- The Finance Commission is constituted by the President under article 280 of the Constitution.
- The Fifteenth Finance Commission was constituted in November 2017, by a Presidential Order against the backdrop of:
 - The abolition of the Planning Commission.
 - Abolition of the distinction between Plan and non-Plan expenditure.
 - Introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- It is chaired by N.K. Singh.

Read more about [Finance Commission](#).

Details:

- The panel also had to determine the viability of a separate defence and national security fund.
- It also had to deliberate on the issue of GST compensation.
- Although its original remit was to recommend the fund-sharing formula between the Centre and States from 2020-21 to 2024-25, the commission's term was extended by 11 months.

Note:

- In the initial report that the commission had submitted just for the year 2020-21, it pared the States' share of the divisible tax pool from 42%, as recommended by the Fourteenth Finance Commission, to 41%, citing the creation of the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

3. Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Goa best governed States: report

Context:

Public Affairs Index-2020 has been released by the Public Affairs Centre.

- The States are ranked on governance performance based on a composite index in the context of sustainable development defined by the three pillars of equity, growth and sustainability.

Public Affairs Centre (PAC)

- The Public Affairs Centre (PAC) is a not-for-profit research think tank situated in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- It works at improving the quality of governance in India.
- The institute conducts research activities in two major fields, public policy and participatory governance.

Key findings:

- Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka stood in the first four ranks in the large State category in terms of governance.
- Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Bihar were at the bottom of the ranking.
- In the small State category, Goa ranked first, followed by Meghalaya and Himachal Pradesh.
- The worst performers in the index with negative points were Manipur, Delhi and Uttarakhand.
- Chandigarh emerged at the top in the category of Union Territories followed by Puducherry and Lakshadweep.
- Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Andaman, Jammu and Kashmir and Nicobar were the worst performers.

4. EC revokes Kamal Nath's status as star campaigner

Context:

The Election Commission (EC) revoked the status of a Congress leader as a star campaigner for the party in the ongoing State Assembly by-polls.

Details:

- The reason for revocation was repeated violation of the [Model Code of Conduct \(MCC\)](#) and completely disregarding the advisory issued to him.
- The expenditure of star campaigners' events, travel and stay is borne by the party and is not added to the candidate's spending, which is limited.
 - The EC said that the entire expenditure on any campaigning by him for the by-election would be borne by the candidate in whose constituency he campaigns.

Star campaigner:

- They are people who are nominated by parties to campaign in a given set of constituencies. These persons are, in almost all cases, prominent and popular faces within the party.
- There is no specific definition of a "star campaigner" according to law or the [Election Commission of India](#).
- A recognised political party can have 40 star campaigners and an unrecognised (but registered) political party can have 20.
- The list of star campaigners has to be communicated to the Chief Electoral Officer and Election Commission within a week from the date of notification of an election.
- If a candidate or her election agent shares the stage with a star campaigner at a rally, then the entire expenditure on that rally other than the travel expenses of the star campaigner is added to the candidate's expenses. Even if the candidate is not present at the star campaigner's rally, but there are posters with her photographs or her name on display, then too, the entire expenditure will be added to the candidate's account.
- The same applies when the star campaigner even mentions the candidate's name during the event. When more than one candidate shares the stage, or there are posters with their photographs, then the expenses on such rally/meeting are to be equally divided among the expenditure account of all such candidates.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China gears up for 'strategic period'

Context:

A key annual conclave was conducted by China's ruling Communist Party.

Details:

- Eyeing what it called "an important strategic period" for fulfilling its ambitions at home and abroad, it outlined long-term targets for boosting innovation and military strength.
- It announced three goals to be achieved by 2025, 2027 and 2035 — a 14th five-year plan (2021-2025) that emphasises:
 - Boosting domestic consumption and innovation.
 - A national security and defence modernisation plan ahead of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) centennial in 2027.

- A 'Vision 2035' longer-term economic blueprint that calls for big leaps in economic strength and technological prowess.
- The communique said China's GDP would cross 100 trillion yuan (around \$15 trillion) in 2020-21. The new economic blueprint would push for China to double its GDP and current per capita GDP of \$10,000 by 2035.
 - This would require a real GDP growth of around 3.5% annually.
- The communique mainly focused on economic issues. However, it also outlined China's national security plans and a goal to establish the PLA as a modern force by 2027.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. 'Import barriers will not be perpetual'

Context:

NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman asserted that any tariff protection to promote local manufacturing in India will come with an in-built sunset clause.

Note:

A sunset provision provides for an automatic repeal of the entire or sections of the law once a specific date is reached.

Details:

- He emphasised that the protection from imports won't be perpetual.
- He made it clear that India's self-reliance mission must not be equated to it becoming a protectionist and closed economy.
- The government is set to extend the [production-linked incentive \(PLI\) scheme](#) for manufacturing pharmaceuticals, medical devices and electronics announced under the [Atma Nirbhar Bharat](#) package to six more sectors.
 - This is meant to incentivise investors already in the country to put up globally comparable capacities in scale and competitiveness.
- The incentives would operate within the multilateral trading rules framework.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: URBANISATION

1. Time for a 'sponge cities' mission in India

The article talks about recent instances of urban floods while suggesting the need and methods for effective management of urban floods.

Context:

- Torrential rains in Hyderabad caused devastation in the city killing over 50 people washing away hundreds of riverbed hutments. Thousands of homes remain submerged weeks after the flood.
- This experience is not unique to the city of Hyderabad but something that cities across India have been experiencing in recent years.

What caused devastation in Hyderabad?

- Hyderabad witnessed an unprecedented rainfall - breaking a 16-year record it received 16 cm of rain in a single day.
- The rainfall received in 2020 has been the highest for the month of October in a century.

Issues:

- The constant, unwavering attention to the rainfall levels drew the attention away from the inability to manage the city's drainage systems.
- The floods occurred because the water was not discharged in time. And when the water was discharged, it was done in a sudden, uncontrolled manner.
- Hyderabad's century-old drainage system (developed in the 1920s) covered only a small part of the core city. In the last 20 years, the city has grown at least four times its original built-up area.
- Issues of incremental land use change, particularly of those commons which provide necessary ecological support (wetlands) are neglected.

Way forward:

Involving local communities:

- The risk is going to increase year after year with changing rainfall patterns and a problem of urban terrain which is incapable of absorbing, holding and discharging water.
- There is a need to start paying attention to the management of our wetlands by involving local communities — people with traditional rights for fishing and farming.

Participation of civil society organisations:

- Urban floods of this scale cannot be contained by the municipal authorities alone. Nor can they be dealt with by the State government.
- They cannot be managed without concerted and focused investments of energy and resources. Such investments can only be done in a mission mode organisation with the active participation of civil society organisations at the metropolitan scale.

Sponge cities mission:

- There is a need for a mission that mitigates flood risk and provides a pathway to water security.
- The most promising idea across the world at this time appears to be the idea of "sponge cities".
- The idea of a sponge city is to make cities more permeable so as to hold and use the water which falls upon it.
- Sponge cities absorb the rainwater, which is then naturally filtered by the soil and allowed to reach urban aquifers.

- This allows for the extraction of water from the ground through urban or peri-urban wells. This water can be treated easily and used for city water supply.
- In built form, this implies contiguous open green spaces, interconnected waterways, and channels and ponds across neighbourhoods that can naturally detain and filter water.
- It implies support for urban ecosystems, bio-diversity and newer cultural and recreational opportunities.
- These can all be delivered effectively through an urban mission along the lines of the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), [National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana \(HRIDAY\)](#) and Smart Cities Mission.
- On a top priority, such a mission should address the following:
 - The first subject is the wetland policy. Regardless of ownership, land use on even this small scale needs to be regulated by development control.
- Cities must be rebuilt such that they have the sponginess to absorb and release water without causing so much misery and so much damage to the most vulnerable of our citizens.

Watersheds, terrain alteration:

- Urban watersheds are micro ecological drainage systems, shaped by contours of the terrain.
- Watershed management and emergency drainage plan should be clearly stated in policy and law.
- Detailed documentation of these must be held by agencies that are not bound by municipal jurisdictions.
 - There is a need to consider natural boundaries such as watersheds instead of governance boundaries like electoral wards for shaping a drainage plan.
- The Metropolitan Development Authorities, [National Disaster Management Authority](#), State revenue and irrigation departments along with municipal corporations should be involved in such work together.

Ban against terrain alteration:

- Lasting irreversible damage has been done to the city by builders, property owners, and public agencies by flattening terrain and altering drainage routes.
- Terrain alteration needs to be strictly regulated and a ban on any further alteration of terrain needs to be introduced.

Encouraging new materials and technologies:

- Because of increasing built up and with the usage of hard, non-porous construction material that makes the soil impervious, water absorption is becoming increasingly difficult.
- To improve the city's capacity to absorb water, new porous materials and technologies must be encouraged or mandated across scales.
- Examples of these technologies are bioswales and retention systems, permeable material for roads and pavement, drainage systems that allow stormwater to trickle into the ground, green roofs and harvesting systems in buildings.
- These reduce run-offs and also help keep water in the city for later use.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/SECURITY

1. Terror in Nice

Context:

The article talks about the knife attack in the southern French city of Nice that killed three people and injured many more.

Read: [“What is behind the spat between Turkey and France?” covered in 30th October 2020 CNA.](#)

Details:

- France is home to Europe’s largest Muslim community.
- It has particularly been hit by Islamist terrorism in recent years.
 - The recent incident is the latest in a series of terror attacks in the country in the last eight years that have killed more than 200.
- Though the leaders of France have repeatedly said they would not give in to threats from terrorists, the tragic reality is that terrorist attacks continue to strike, taking innocent lives.
- Each time, it serves as a reminder that neither the government’s preventive measures, that include credible intelligence gathering and deradicalisation efforts, nor its combative postures work in ending this terror run.
- These attacks are driving a wedge between France’s already polarised communities.

Way forward:

- An unforgiving security response is vital for any counter-terrorism strategy. But it is important to understand the enemy.
 - Terrorists who are inspired by the ideology of organisations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, see the world as an arena of a clash of civilisations.
 - Driven by a perverted interpretation of religion, they unleash violence against anybody who does not subscribe to their worldview.
- In the fight against such terrorists, France should be mindful of not allowing them to sow discord on the basis of religious identities.
- The fight must be for civilisational values, democracy, secularism, freedom, and equality against a medieval ideology that has equipped itself with modern weapons. It is important for the world that France wins this fight.
- This is the biggest challenge before the French President, Emmanuel Macron.
- France should lead a united response to terrorism that does not put forward its values against any belief system.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Science of monsoons

Context:

The southwest monsoon 2020 has officially drawn to an end with the [India Meteorological Department \(IMD\)](#) declaring a withdrawal of the associated winds and rainfall pattern from India.

Details:

- The over 8% surplus in 2020 has surpassed the IMD’s estimates.
- For the first time since 2010, India got more than 100% of its long period average (LPA) of 88 cm in consecutive years.
- In 2019, India saw a record rainfall of 110% of the LPA - the highest in a quarter-century.

- Since 2000, India was in a low patch with several drought years and had barely a handful of above normal or excess rainfall.
- In that light, the two years of a generous monsoon could signal a return to a rainy epoch.

Concerns:

- More rain also implies floods, overflowing dams, landslides and loss of lives.
- Moreover, surplus rains are not evenly distributed in time and space.

Way forward:

- Much like there are attempts to improve flood forecast warnings (especially the short-term ones) there must be commensurate efforts by authorities and infrastructure agencies to prepare for the environmental and ecological impact of excess rain.
- In 2020, the withdrawal of the south-west monsoon has been extremely delayed. Factoring in changes must become a key part of a State and city's disaster management preparedness.
 - In 2020, IMD undertook a long-due revision of the onset and withdrawal dates of the monsoon in India.
- There have been significant investments in super computing infrastructure to simulate weather as well as to tune forecasts to go beyond just giving rainfall estimates and factor in the potential damage of floods and cyclones.
- The southwest monsoon's withdrawal also heralds the advent of north-easterly winds that bring in the northeast monsoon to parts of peninsular Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
 - Not much attention is paid to northeast monsoon owing to its limited geographic spread.
 - Studies show that northeast monsoon rainfall displays significant variation and climate models are fairly inaccurate in their forecasts of its unfolding over the subcontinent.
 - Northeast monsoon is significant to agriculture in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
 - It contributes 10%-12% of India's annual rainfall, against the southwest monsoon's 75%-80%.
- Scientists must also put in more effort and design research programmes that better analyse the vagaries of the northeast monsoon.
- An understanding of how climate is changing locally is needed.
- India also needs better science to prepare more effective disaster management plans and improve resilience in the backdrop of climate change.

F. Prelims Facts

1. WII to conduct study on Olive Ridley turtles

What's in News?

The Odisha government has requested the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to conduct a fresh study for identifying the movement of Olive Ridley sea turtles.

- This would help Odisha renew its conservation efforts along its coast.
- Odisha has emphasised on working with the local community for conservation.

Read more about Olive Ridley Turtles covered in [22nd March 2020 CNA](#).

G. Tidbits

1. Govt. seeks comments on draft IR Code rules

What's in News?

- The Union Labour and Employment Ministry published the draft rules framed under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, that would require firms with 300 or more workers to seek government approval for layoffs 15 days prior to the intended action.
- For retrenchment and closure, the establishments would have to apply for permission 60 days and 90 days ahead of the actions respectively.

Read more about the [Industrial Relations Code 2020](#).

2. SC issues 'mirror order' in child custody case

What's in News?

The Supreme Court has applied the principle of mirror order in a child custody case where one of the estranged parents is living abroad, in Kenya.

Mirror Order:

- An order made in one country which reflects the original order made in another country is known as Mirror Order.
- Mirror orders are often made in circumstances where contact arrangements have been agreed and the child will then be living in another country.
- When a competent court in India passes a series of conditions for the transfer of custody of a child to a parent living abroad, an identical or mirror order is passed by an equally competent court to ensure that the conditions are met.
- It ensures that contradictory judicial orders are not passed and is considered a remedy against transnational parental abduction of children.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following is/are known for its/their unique mass nesting called Arribada?

1. Olive Ridley Turtle
2. Indian Star Tortoise
3. Kemp's Ridley Turtle

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Arribada is a Spanish word meaning “arrival by sea” and refers to the mass nesting behaviour exhibited by Kemp's Ridley and Olive Ridley sea turtles.
- It is the unique mass nesting of female olive ridley turtles and Kemp's ridley turtles.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to star campaigners:

1. Any recognised political party can have 20 star campaigners.
2. An unrecognised (but registered) political party cannot have any star campaigners.
3. If a candidate or her election agent shares the stage with a star campaigner at a rally, then the entire expenditure on that rally other than the travel expenses of the star campaigner is added to the political party's expenses.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- A recognised political party can have 40 star campaigners and an unrecognised (but registered) political party can have 20.
- The list of star campaigners has to be communicated to the Chief Electoral Officer and Election Commission within a week from the date of notification of an election.
- If a candidate or her election agent shares the stage with a star campaigner at a rally, then the entire expenditure on that rally other than the travel expenses of the star campaigner is added to the candidate's expenses. Even if the candidate is not present at the star campaigner's rally, but there are posters with her photographs or her name on display, then too, the entire expenditure will be added to the candidate's account.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. The Finance Commission is constituted by the Prime Minister under Article 280 of the Constitution.
2. The 15th Finance Commission was constituted in the backdrop of the abolition of the Planning Commission.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Finance Commission is a constitutional body for the purpose of allocation of certain revenue resources between the Union and the State Governments.
- The Finance Commission is constituted by the President under article 280 of the Constitution.
- The Fifteenth Finance Commission was constituted in November 2017, by a Presidential Order against the backdrop of:
 - The abolition of the Planning Commission.
 - Abolition of the distinction between Plan and non-Plan expenditure.
 - Introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Q4. Arrange the following from West to East:

1. Alboran Sea
2. Ionian Sea
3. Aegean Sea
4. Tyrrhenian Sea

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

West to East: Alboran Sea, Tyrrhenian Sea, Ionian Sea, Aegean Sea.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. With monsoons causing flooding and enormous damages in cities across India, it is time to focus on smart urbanisation. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 1 Urbanisation).
2. In light of two consecutive years of generous monsoons, India needs better science to prepare more effective disaster management plans. Comment. (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS 3 Disaster Management).

