

12 Nov 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Govt. to govern OTT platforms

Context:

- **Gazette notification** placing 'Over the Top' (OTT) platforms or video streaming service providers like Netflix, Hotstar, Amazon Prime and digital news under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
 - The change was made through the amendment of the Allocation of Business Rules.

Background:

- Currently, there is **no law or autonomous body governing digital content**. Complaints regarding these had largely been dealt with by the Communications and IT Ministry with laws such as the **Information Technology Act** and the [Indian Penal Code](#) being invoked.
- The government wanted the platforms to come up with a self-regulatory body on the lines of the News Broadcasting Standards Authority, which governs the TV news channels.
- **In January 2019, eight video streaming services had signed a self-regulatory code** that laid down a set of guiding principles for the content on these platforms. The **code prohibited five types of content**, including content which deliberately and maliciously disrespects the national emblem or flag, any visuals or storylines that promote child pornography, any content that “maliciously” intends to outrage religious sentiments; content that “deliberately and maliciously” promotes or encourages terrorism; and any content that has been banned for exhibition or distribution by law or by a court.
- The government had refused to support this code.

Significance:

- The gazette notification gives the government control over the OTT platforms, which were unregulated till now. **The exponential growth in the reach of the OTT platforms and digital media forums and their ability to influence** necessitates the need to regulate them and the current move is a step in this direction.
- The move will **help tackle the issue of fake news** being propagated through some of the digital media platforms.
- The move will also help create a **level playing field between linear TV and over-the-top (OTT) services**.
- The government would be able to **prevent objectionable content** that some smaller and newer companies in the space have been distributing.

Concerns:

- The move has raised **fears of censorship**.
- Some digital media creators have lamented that the move and the subsequent regulation could **undermine creativity** due to undue regulation.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Centre unveils incentives to boost manufacturing

Context:

- The Central government’s **new production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme**.

Background:

- Previously, a Production Linked Incentive scheme was announced for the electronic manufacturing sector.

For information on this scheme, refer to:

[CNA dated Oct 7, 2020: Govt. clears Rs. 11,000-cr. of PLI proposals by Samsung, others](#)

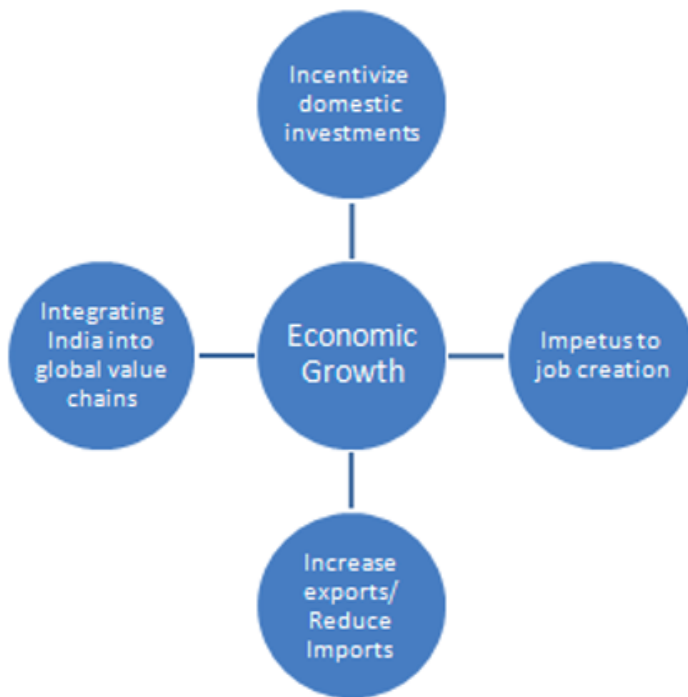
- The government had proposed expanding this scheme to other sectors as well.

Details:

- The new scheme focuses on **10 sectors**. The sectors have been identified on the basis of their employment creation potential and with the vision to make India self-reliant. Sunrise sectors and products with linkages with the global value chain have been prioritized.
 - The selected sectors include **food processing, telecom and networking products, electronics, textiles, speciality steel, automobiles and auto components, solar photovoltaic modules, advanced chemistry cell battery, pharmaceuticals and white goods**, such as air conditioners and LEDs.
- According to the scheme, companies will **get incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units**.
- The scheme has an estimated outlay of about Rs. 1.46 lakh crore for over the next five years, with around ₹57,000 crore allocated for automobiles and auto components production.
- Individual Ministries in charge of the sectors would be implementing the scheme.
- Applications to avail of the benefits will be vetted by an **Empowered Finance Committee**, following which they will be taken up to the Cabinet for final approval.

Significance:

- The PLI scheme would **encourage domestic manufacturing investments** in the considered sectors.
- The increased domestic investments would lead to **job creation** and assuage some of the employment pressures in the Indian economy.
- Given the focus on cutting-edge technology, the scheme is expected to help fulfil the vision of **making India self-reliant**. This will help **reduce imports**.
- The scheme will help **make Indian manufacturers globally competitive**, by creating economies of scale. This will help enhance exports from India and make India an integral part of the global supply chain.
- The scheme is also aimed as a clear signal to potential foreign investors that India is not turning protectionist as foreign companies are also encouraged to set shop in India as the government is providing incentives.
- The above moves are expected to help India in its **economic revival in the post-pandemic phase**.



2. 'GDP shrank 8.6% in Q2 pushing economy into a recession'

Context:

- Reserve Bank of India's monthly bulletin.

Details:

- The [RBI](#) bulletin notes a sharp rebound of the Indian economy from May/June owing mainly to the reopening from lockdowns. This has helped **slow the pace of economic contraction to 8.6% in the second quarter of the current fiscal year.**

Positive signs:

- Given the fact that the **manufacturing industry has been normalising faster than contact-intensive service sectors**, this seems to be indicative of a **short-lived contraction**. This has helped brighten the near-term outlook for the Indian economy and stirred up consumer and business confidence.

Concerns:

- Technically, **India has entered a recession given the two successive quarters of GDP contraction**. This is also the first time in India's history that it has witnessed two successive quarters of GDP contraction.
- Despite some signs of recovery, **formidable downside risks still exist** in the Indian economic recovery process.
 - **High inflation** over the last few months is a cause of concern. The accelerating inflation will only further pressurize India's pandemic-hit economy.

- For related information, refer to [CNA dated July 16, 2020: Inflation Alert.](#)
- The **second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic could hit external demand** for Indian goods. This would reduce exports from India. Foreign trade has been an important aspect of India's economy since the liberalization of the economy in 1991.
- **Financially stressed households and companies** would undermine the recovery. The low disposable income with the households will subdue demand in the economy while the financially stressed companies would subdue supply in the economy and would also entice a financial crisis in the Indian economy due to the rise in [non-performing assets](#). Thus unlike previous economic challenges, the government will have to concentrate on both the demand as well as the supply sides of the economy.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. 'Meghalaya govt. encouraging illegal mining'

The issue of the illegal and ecologically unsustainable rat hole mining has been dealt with in the following article:

[CNA dated Feb 8, 2020: Meghalaya to conduct special programme for granting coal mining licence](#)

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

1. A time for cautious optimism

Context:

- Pfizer and BioNTech's vaccine candidate against [COVID-19](#), (BNT162b2) has reported notable success in the first interim analysis from its phase 3 study.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated Nov 11, 2020: Dose of optimism](#)

Background:

Phase 1 trial:

- The results from the Phase-1 trial showed that the **vaccine induced neutralising antibodies and specific T cells (major components of the adaptive immune system) responses** in younger and older adults.

- Notably, the neutralising antibodies induced through the candidate vaccine were observed to be more than even in convalescent plasma.

Positives from phase 3 study:

Safety:

- The vaccine appears to be safe as **no serious adverse events** were reported in the over 43,000 phase-3 trial participants.

Effectiveness:

- The vaccine showed more than **90% effectiveness in preventing disease**. The neutralising antibodies and T cells responses observed in the phase 1 trials would have played a vital role in preventing disease in many vaccinated participants.
 - The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sets at least 50% vaccine effectiveness to prevent disease or decrease disease severity to be approved.

Arguments for further examination:

- Despite the impressive progress, the first interim analysis of the Phase-3 trial of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine calls for **cautious optimism**.

Lack of comprehensive data:

- Except for the information that trial 3 has yielded 90% effectiveness, not much information is available on the vaccinated group or the symptoms observed in the vaccinated group.

The duration of protection:

- The **duration of protection available from vaccination is not clearly known**. Longer duration studies are needed to ascertain this fact.

Lack of clarity on asymptomatic cases:

- The over **90% vaccine effectiveness is based on symptomatic infection**.
- While the inability of the vaccine to prevent asymptomatic infection might not matter for protecting individuals against severe disease outcomes, it might matter in its ability to cut down on transmission.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Rs. 25,000 cr. for Gairsain: Rawat

- Bhararisain, also called **Gairsain, is being developed as the summer capital of Uttarakhand**.
- The winter capital of Uttarakhand is Dehradun, the largest city of the state.

G. Tidbits

1. Home Ministry amends FCRA rules

- As per the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act**, members of legislatures, political parties, government officials, judges and media persons are prohibited from receiving any foreign contribution.
- Under the new amendment, norms have been relaxed for those not involved in ‘active politics’. The **Ministry of Home Affairs** (MHA) has relaxed norms for farmer, student, religious and other groups who are not directly aligned to any political party to receive foreign funds provided that these groups are not involved in “active politics”.

2. Social infra PPPs eligible for viability gap funding

- The government has expanded the provision of financial support by means of **viability gap funding** for public private partnerships (PPPs) **in critical social sectors such as health, education, water supply, wastewater treatment and solid waste management**.
 - Viability Gap Finance means a grant to support projects that are economically justified but not financially viable.
- Under the scheme, private sector projects in these specified areas could get 30% of the total project cost from the Centre while the States could chip in with another 30%.

3. Haryana CM unveils ‘Project Air Care’ for Gurugram

- Haryana has unveiled ‘Project Air Care’.
- Under this scheme, 65 **Wind Augmentation Purifying Units** will be installed across critical traffic junctions in Gurugram through a public-private partnership.

4. 18-tonne red sandalwood cargo seized

- **“Operation Thunder 2020”** targeted against environmental crime has resulted in large seizures of protected wildlife and forestry specimens and products.
- The operation has focused mainly on the species protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (**CITES**).
- **Wildlife and forestry crime is the world’s fourth-largest illegal trade.**
- Apart from the far-reaching and devastating consequences that wildlife crime has for the environment it also has negative consequences for society, public health and global economics.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. When travelling from Gairsain to Challakere, what is the minimum number of states that one would pass through including the two states in which the mentioned places lie in?

- 5
- 6
- 7

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Gairsain is being developed as the summer capital of Uttarakhand.
- Challakere in Karnataka is housing premier science and research organizations such as IISc, DRDO, BARC and ISRO.
- While travelling from Gairsain to Challakere one would pass through the following states: Uttarakhand—Uttar Pradesh—Madhya Pradesh—Maharashtra—Karnataka.



Q2. Which of the following is/are correct with respect to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora?

1. It prohibits the trade of only such species of flora and fauna which are listed as critically endangered under the IUCN Red List.
2. In States that have agreed to be bound by CITES, the Convention takes the place of national laws to ensure there is a uniform legal framework in the countries party to the CITES agreement.

Option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The CITES has many wildlife species that are not endangered.
- CITES is an international agreement to which States and regional economic integration organizations adhere to voluntarily. States that have agreed to be bound by the Convention ('joined' CITES) are known as Parties. Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties – in other words, they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws. Rather it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.

Q3. Which of the following correctly explains the term viability gap funding?

- a. It means a grant to support projects that are economically justified but not financially viable.
- b. It implies government equity in infrastructural PPP projects.
- c. It means a loan at a low rate of interest to infrastructural PPP projects.
- d. It implies private-sector owned equity in governmental projects.

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Viability Gap Finance means a grant to support projects that are economically justified but not financially viable.

Q4. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act?

1. As per the FCRA, members of legislatures, political parties, government officials, judges and media persons are prohibited from receiving any foreign contribution.
2. NGOs receiving foreign grants have to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs and are also required to renew their registration number every 5 years.

Options:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- As per the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, members of legislatures, political parties, government officials, judges and media persons are prohibited from receiving any foreign contribution.
- Foreign grants received by NGOs are regulated by the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, or FCRA. In order to receive foreign funds, an NGO has to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is assigned a unique FCRA registration number, to be renewed every five years.

1. The central government's new production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme is envisioned to play a critical role in the economic recovery process in the post-pandemic scenario. Comment. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS Paper 3/Economy)
2. The central government's move to bring 'Over the Top' (OTT) platforms or video streaming service providers and digital news under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for their regulation is a much-needed step. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS Paper 2/Polity and Governance)

