

17 Nov 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Judge recuses himself from Jagan case](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [What's behind the conflict between Ethiopian govt. and Tigray rebels?](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ECONOMY

1. [GAIL completes Kochi-Mangaluru pipeline](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

GOVERNANCE

1. [Andhra Pradesh's capital conundrums](#)
2. [Unabating attacks on journalists](#)
3. [Needed, a policy framework in step with technology](#)

F. Prelims Facts

G. Tidbits

1. [Winter session of Parliament unlikely amid rising COVID cases](#)
2. ['Stimulus 3.0 supportive for growth, fiscal impact unclear'](#)
3. [Comply with FDI ceiling, govt. tells digital news firms](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Judge recuses himself from Jagan case

Context:

Justice U.U. Lalit of the Supreme Court recused himself from hearing separate writ petitions that sought action against the Andhra Pradesh government and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for levelling “false, vague and political allegations” against Supreme Court judge N.V. Ramana and other High Court judges.

Background:

- The petitions relate to a letter by Mr. Jagan addressed to the CJI against the judges and the subsequent revelation of its contents at a press conference.

- Recently, the Attorney-General refrained from giving his statutory consent to pleas seeking contempt of court action against Mr. Jagan and his Principal Adviser Ajeya Kallam.

This topic has been covered in the [3rd November 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Recusal

- Recusal is the act of abstaining from participation in an official action such as a legal proceeding due to a conflict of interest of the presiding court official or administrative officer.
- It is the withdrawal of a judge, prosecutor, or juror from a case on the grounds that they are unqualified to perform legal duties because of a possible conflict of interest or lack of impartiality.

As noted by the Supreme Court in the NJAC judgment, a judge may be required to step down in one of two scenarios:

- Cases of presumed bias, where the judge has a pecuniary interest in the outcome of a case (extended, through the Pinochet judgment to other similar non-pecuniary interests); or
- Cases of apparent bias, where a reasonable, fair-minded observer would believe there is a real possibility that the judge is biased.

Read more on “Recusal” comprehensively covered in the Editorial “When can a judge opt out of a case?” in [16th February 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

What Next?

- The judge (Justice Lalit), who leads a three-member Bench, withdrew from hearing the case, explaining that he had, as a lawyer, represented some of the parties involved in the case.
- The Bench then recorded a short order, requesting the Chief Justice of India (CJI) to list the case before an appropriate Bench.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. What’s behind the conflict between Ethiopian govt. and Tigray rebels?

Context:

In November 2020, Ethiopia’s Nobel Prize-winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed started a military operation in the rebellious Tigray region.



Details:

- Abiy has said it would be a limited campaign focusing on the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF): the militia-cum-political party that runs the northern region.
- However, almost two weeks into the conflict, Ethiopia risks falling into an ethnic civil war with regional implications.

This topic has been covered in the [10th November 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Tigray People's Liberation Front:

- The TPLF was founded in 1975 as a resistance army of the Tigrayan people against the military dictatorship, which was called the Derg.
- The leftist Derg, which was established in 1974, would change its title in 1987 but practically remained in power till it was ousted by the armed rebels in 1991. The TPLF played a crucial role in ousting the junta and they were welcomed as national heroes in 1991.
- TPLF leader Meles Zenawi took over as the interim President in 1991 and became the first elected Prime Minister in 1995. He is largely seen as the architect of the country's ethno-federal system and remained in power till 2012.

Issue:

- Over the years, the government led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), was accused of being increasingly authoritarian and there were frequent mass protests in the regions.
- Though the EPRDF contains regional political parties, the TPLF remained the dominant political force.
- In 2018, the EPRDF chose Mr. Abiy (a former military intelligence officer), to lead the government amid growing protests and a political deadlock.
- Though the EPRDF provided a stable rule with high economic growth for 17 years, there was mounting criticism against the country's ethno-federal arrangement.
 - Abiy reached out to Eritrea, a sworn enemy of the TPLF, which shares a long border with the Tigray region.
 - He purged TPLF functionaries from key government posts, released political prisoners (jailed by the TPLF-led government) and promised freer media.
- The TPLF saw the formation of a new party as an attempt by Mr. Abiy to consolidate more power in his hands. The party's leadership shifted from Addis Ababa to Mekele, the Tigray regional capital.
- TPLF saw his moves as hostile.

Geopolitical angle:

- Abiy's outreach to Eritrea had outraged the TPLF, which had fought a prolonged war with the Eritrean government along the Tigray border.
- The TPLF accuses Eritrea of backing Mr. Abiy's offensive.
- The rebels have fired rockets into Eritrea from Tigray, threatening a wider regional war in the [Horn of Africa](#).
- Tigray rebels also fired rockets into the neighbouring Amhara region.
- The operation by Mr. Abiy could spill out of control, given the underlying complexities of the conflict.
- Sudan has a border dispute with Ethiopia. If Sudan's new rulers keep the old links with the TPLF active and the border open for the rebels, the conflict could go on. If it does, it could derail Mr. Abiy's reform agenda at home as well as the diplomatic agenda abroad.
 - The Tigray region shares a border with Sudan.
 - The TPLF enjoyed good relations with Sudan's ousted dictator Omar Bashir.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. GAIL completes Kochi-Mangaluru pipeline

Context:

The Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline project is ready for commissioning.

Background:

- The 444-km-long natural gas pipeline was launched in 2009 at an estimated cost of ₹2,915 crore.
- It was to be commissioned in 2014.
- However, due to the opposition with regard to safety and on commercial grounds, wherein the land price was the main hurdle, the project cost nearly doubled to over ₹5,750 crore.
- The first phase of the project was commissioned in August 2013 in the Kochi metropolitan area.

Details:

- GAIL India has completed the final 540-metre treacherous stretch across the River Chandragiri in northern Kerala.
- The pipeline would supply gas to all seven districts it passes through in Kerala (Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod) and the hilly Wayanad district.
- Kootanad is the main junction of the pipeline from where the line bifurcates to Mangaluru and Bengaluru.

Significance of the project:

- With the commissioning of the pipeline, gas demand in Kerala is expected to touch 80-90 million cubic metres per annum from 60 million cubic metres now.
- The State can gain monetarily as it can get up to ₹1,000 crore by way of taxes alone.
- Besides, huge environmental gains are also expected.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Andhra Pradesh's capital conundrums

The editorial throws light upon the question “Will designating three capitals for the State of Andhra Pradesh promote ‘distributed development’?”

Context:

- The Andhra Pradesh government, in its previous session, proposed a three-capital plan for the state.
- As per the Andhra Pradesh Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020, the State will have Visakhapatnam, Amaravati and Kurnool respectively as the executive, legislative and judicial capitals of the State.

Issues:

- The matter has become contentious and the Bill is facing myriad legal and procedural challenges.
- The proposal is set to replace the ambitious plan (of the previous government) of building Amaravati as a world-class greenfield capital city.

Origins of the three-capital plan:

- It is opined that attribution to similar plans in South Africa and elsewhere can be shallow.
 - South Africa has three capital cities: executive Pretoria, judicial Bloemfontein and legislative Cape Town.

- The K.C. Sivaramakrishnan (KCS) Committee constituted in the aftermath of a bifurcation driven by an agitation legitimised and politicised by regional imbalances in development made recommendations along similar lines.
- Though the current government's rationalisation of the three-capital plan leans on the KCS committee's recommendations, there is a difference between the two.
- While the government's formula of three capitals — calling them judicial, legislative and executive capitals — appears to be an imported idea, perhaps inspired by the South African example, the KCS committee stressed distributed development through decentralised governance.
- The essence of the 'distributed development' concept was to make deliberate efforts to spatially deconcentrate executive power, driven by region-specific economic activities. For instance:
 - While discussing the Vizag region's suitability, the committee recommended having government offices relevant to local economic potential, such as for ports, shipping, fisheries and industry, in Visakhapatnam. It recommended developing the Visakhapatnam region as a high-tech zone.
 - In a similar manner, it recommended developing the 'Rayalaseema Arc', building on the Hyderabad-Kurnool-Anantpur-Bengaluru highway.
 - It recommended the 'Kalahasti Spine', using the potential of the Nadikudi-Kalahasti railway line.

Challenges:

For Government's functioning:

- Running legislative business with most of the secretariat located 400 km away can lead to logistic inefficiencies, in the absence of efficient infrastructure.
- Andhra Pradesh can learn from Maharashtra's experience of running Winter Sessions in Nagpur, aimed essentially at placating regional sentiments.
- International experiences — including that of South Africa — of deconcentrating executive power by shifting capitals to address regional sentiments do not inspire confidence either.

Ability to cope with intense development:

- Infrastructure development within the proposed growth centres is critical. The KCS committee stressed this extensively.
- Visakhapatnam, as the executive capital, will experience much stress.
- Visakhapatnam, in spite of its excellent and natural advantages, is woefully lacking in its infrastructure. It could not even deliver a functional Bus Rapid Transit system, even with the availability of resources.

Environmental impact:

- The KCS committee has warned about the environmental impact of intensification and densification in cities, with a special reference to Visakhapatnam.
- The recent environmental disasters, including the LG Polymers gas leak, expose the city's vulnerabilities.
- The ongoing processes of preparing the Master Plan and Strategic Plan for the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region are an opportunity to address these challenges.
- Ad hocism and a casual approach can undo its future potential.

Way forward:

- The Andhra Pradesh Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020 is thin in details but offers hope in its broad contours of pursuing inclusive development through Zonal Planning and Development Boards.
- There may be other reasons for the functionally organised, multiple-capital plan. But the key principle of distributed development must not be lost in executing it.
- The success of distributed development depends on a well-developed infrastructural network linking the growth centres.
- Andhra Pradesh lacks these linkages now, and the sooner the State focuses on these preconditions the better for it.
- A re-invigorated focus on projects like the Chennai-Visakhapatnam Industrial Corridor is important.
- The proposed three-capital plan claims to produce decentralised growth, but it should also be ensured that it achieves the primary goal of decentralised development, irrespective of how the functionalised multiple-capital plan plays out.

2. Unabating attacks on journalists

The article talks about the need for concrete laws to protect and provide accountability to media persons.

Context:

Recently, many instances of attacks on journalists have come to light.

- A 26-year-old television journalist who reported on illegal encroachment of land and the sale of ganja was hacked to death in Tamil Nadu.
- Another journalist was found brutally murdered in a jungle on the outskirts of Bhopal.
- A prominent journalist from Kashmir and the Chief Editor of Kashmir Times was shot dead by three militants in the heart of Srinagar, when he was returning home from office.

Issue:

- According to the [United Nations](#), “Journalism is one of the most dangerous professions in the world”.
- Attacks on journalists who dare to expose corruption and misdeeds of anti-social elements, or who do not toe the line of the establishment, have proved to be a threat to journalists the world over.
- Between 2006 and 2019, over 1,200 journalists have been killed the world over.

Indian Scenario:

- A report released by an NGO in 2019 states that 40 of the 198 journalists attacked in India between 2014 and 2019 died due to the attack.
- The killing of journalists is more rampant in smaller towns, while the figures in metro towns are quite low. Only a few cases draw country-wide attention and impel the police to investigate the murder.
- Over the last few years, India has been going down on the [World Press Freedom Index](#).
- In the annual reports of Reporters Without Borders, India has steadily gone down in the global index from a rank of 138 in 2018 to 140 in 2019, and further down to 142 in 2020.

Way forward:

- There is a need for stringent laws to protect journalists.

- Considering the rising trend in the number of journalists killed each year, the Chairman of the Press Council of India (PCI), counselled the government “to enact a special law for protection of journalists and speedy trial of cases of attacks and assaults”.
 - The PCI’s records indicate that 96% of the cases of attacks on journalists end up without conviction.
- While it is estimated that one journalist is killed every four days, sadly, in just one out of every ten such cases, the killers get convicted, while the rest go unpunished.

The Maharashtra Example

- Maharashtra has emerged as the first state in the country to enact a law to protect journalists.
 - Under the Maharashtra Media Persons and Media Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Act, 2017, any attack on journalists would be non-bailable and cognisable, and would be investigated by an officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.
 - A conviction under this Act could lead to imprisonment of up to three years and/or a fine of up to ₹50,000.
 - The attacker will also have to compensate for medical treatment in case of injuries to the journalist and also pay for damage to any equipment.
-
- Taking a cue from the Maharashtra law, Chhattisgarh is in the final stages of enacting a law known as the Chhattisgarh Protection of Mediapersons Act.
 - While these two states have taken the initiative to enact laws to protect journalists, other states have to soon follow.

3. Needed, a policy framework in step with technology

The article argues that the rapid pace of technology blurring standard boundaries that dictate policy framework in the government, calls for a holistic view of schemes.

- With the evolution of technology in the latter part of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st century, the traditional boundaries between goods and services have blurred.
- Computing capabilities have surged faster than capabilities in traditional industries. These information-based technologies have been widely adopted across a broad range of industries and products that traditionally have not been perceived as electronic or software-based.

Data is the new currency:

- Information is the new currency powering economies.
- The expansion of computing power has driven the pace of information gathering and analysis.
- The new currency drives processes and decision-making across a wide range of products and services, making them more efficient and value accretive for consumers.
- There is increasing digitisation and electronification of industrial activities, products and services. This influences the evolving skill sets in the industry.
- This revolution is taking place across products (information availability drives efficiency and creates value for customers by providing greater control over the product and its surrounding environment). And, therefore such products with evolving technologies are valued more.

Working in silos:

- As governments have focused on improving the lives of people, they have looked at economic development and industry as catalysts to progress.
- Specialised departments and policies have been formulated to govern those areas.
- Over time, as each of these departments grew, they have tended to operate in silos (isolation).
- The recent developments in technology have, however, blurred standard boundaries that dictate policy frameworks in most governments.

Way forward:

Capital formation through intangibles:

- Technology is driving an increasing share of the value addition coming from digitisation and data analytics in products and services across industry segments.
- There needs to be a way of encouraging capital formation by way of intangibles in traditionally tangible industries.
 - For example: increasing electronification and digitisation of the automobile are not covered by industrial policies that govern the Electronics and Information Technology Ministry.

Inter-departmental cooperation:

- There is a need for inter-departmental cooperation and synergy not only in policy framework but also in deployment.

Taking a holistic view of policies:

- Departmentalisation of policies is facing a challenge from technology that very often blurs the boundaries served by different policies.
- There is a need to have a holistic view of policies for economic development as technology is becoming a significant enabler in most industries.
- A change in policy framework regarding economic development that enables various ministries to work together is essential.
- A sufficiently empowered policy clearing cell could ensure a holistic view on policy across departments of government, at the State and the Centre.

Developing a nourishing ecosystem for attracting investments and capital formation:

- For attracting investments, policies have always been driven by subsidies and incentives but increasingly, in a competitive scenario, these are becoming hygiene factors.
- A nourishing ecosystem for industry, including the hard infrastructure and softer areas such as education, skilling, technical institutions, laboratories, testing centres, etc., has to be cultivated.
- The creation of clusters of companies in adjacent but complementary areas could constitute an ecosystem that encourages multi and cross-disciplinary learning and spur innovation and economic development.

Conclusion:

- There is also the larger issue of a shift of value between manufacturing and services as technology changes. The policy, by and large, promotes and gives incentives for manufacturing.
- It is important to include intangibles such as software, research and development or even servicing of products even in traditional manufacturing companies to encourage innovation and technological development.

- In this evolving policy framework, it is important that there are close cooperation and alignment between the Centre and State to ensure effective implementation on the ground.
- Some of these changes would help in navigating through an ecosystem that is changing with technology.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Winter session of Parliament unlikely amid rising COVID cases

What's in News?

According to sources, the winter session of Parliament is unlikely to be held owing to a large number of COVID-19 cases in Delhi.

- As per parliamentary records, there have only been three instances in the past of the winter session not being held — in 1975, 1979 and 1984.
- The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) meets to decide the dates for the session and the announcement has to be made giving Members of Parliament at least two weeks' notice.

Note:

- The winter session usually commences by the last week of November.
- The Constitution mandates there should not be a gap of six months or more between two sessions.
- With the monsoon session of Parliament held in September 2020, the government has no constitutional compulsion to hold a winter session.

Read more about the [Sessions of the Indian Parliament](#).

2. 'Stimulus 3.0 supportive for growth, fiscal impact unclear'

What's in News?

Recently, the Finance Minister announced a fresh set of relief and stimulus measures for the economy – worth ₹1.19 lakh crore.

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

Details:

- Fitch Solutions has said that while the third tranche of stimulus measures should support an economic rebound over the coming quarters, the actual fiscal impact is difficult to ascertain.
- It said “estimating using the outright fiscal outlays from this announcement, ‘Stimulus 3.0’ appears to suggest additional expenditure of ₹1 lakh crore (0.44% of FY2019/20 GDP).

3. Comply with FDI ceiling, govt. tells digital news firms

What's in News?

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has issued a detailed notification asking digital news portals to comply with the 26% cap on Foreign Direct Investment ([FDI](#)) sanctioned in 2019.

Background:

Recently, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting brought video-streaming platforms such as Netflix under its jurisdiction.

Details:

- The notification reiterates the Cabinet's decision of imposing a 26% cap on FDI under government route for uploading/streaming of news and current affairs through digital media.
- The companies with investment below the 26% cap must also intimate the Ministry about the shareholding pattern.
- The firms which have more than 26% of FDI have been instructed to take steps to bring down the figure before October 15, 2021.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following are the possible causes of deflation?

1. High Supply and Low Demand.
2. High Demand and Low Supply.
3. A decrease in the money supply in the economy.
4. Net capital outflow.

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Deflation is a decrease in the general price level of goods and services.
- High Supply and Low Demand is a major cause of Deflation.
- Other factors include a decrease in money supply, net capital outflow from the economy.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Global Gender Gap Report is an annual report published by the United Nations Development Programme.
2. The Global Gender Gap Index ranks countries according to the calculated gender gap between women and men in health, education, economy and politics.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Global Gender Gap Report is an annual report published by the World Economic Forum.
- The Global Gender Gap Index ranks countries according to the calculated gender gap between women and men in health, education, economy and politics.

Q3. Wholesale Price Index is released by:

- a. Office of Economic Advisor
- b. National Statistical Office
- c. Reserve Bank of India
- d. National Sample Survey Office

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

The Wholesale Price Index is released by the Office of Economic Advisor under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Q4. Which of the following is/are the mandate(s) of the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)?

1. Advise the government in matters of financial restructuring of Central Public Sector Undertakings.
2. Advise on matters relating to the sale of Central Government equity through private placement.
3. Decisions in matters relating to Central Public Sector Undertakings for purposes of Government investment in equity-like capital restructuring, bonus, dividends.

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

Mandates of the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management or 'DIPAM' include:

- Advise the government in matters of financial restructuring of Central Public Sector Undertakings.
- Decisions in matters relating to Central Public Sector Undertakings for purposes of Government investment in equity-like capital restructuring, bonus, dividends.
- All matters relating to the management of Central Government investments in equity including disinvestment of equity in Central Public Sector Undertakings.
- All matters relating to the sale of Central Government equity through an offer for sale or private placement or any other mode in the erstwhile Central Public Sector Undertakings.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. With journalists facing various kinds of harassment and false cases across the country, there is an urgent need to enact comprehensive legislations that protect media persons. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 2 Governance)
2. Judicial recusals have the potential to turn into a tool to manoeuvre justice. Critically comment. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 2 Polity)