

26 Nov 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Heavy rain as Cyclone Nivar approaches coast

Context:

[Cyclone Nivar](#) is expected to begin the landfall process that occurs before the storm actually crosses the land.

- Nivar is a 'very severe cyclonic storm', the third one that will make landfall in India in 2020.
- Landfall is the process of a storm moving from sea to land.

This topic has been covered in the [25th November 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China slams India's ban on apps

Context:

China said that it firmly opposes India's decision to ban 43 Chinese apps.

Background:

The government has blocked 43 more mobile apps, including major Chinese ones citing threat to national security, integrity and sovereignty.

This topic has been covered in the [25th November 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Govt. allots ₹2,000-cr. for infra funding

Context:

The Cabinet approved the infusion of ₹6,000 crore as equity into a new debt platform to raise up to ₹1.1 lakh crore for financing infrastructure projects by 2025. It has approved ₹2,000 crore for disbursement this year subject to the funds being required.

Background:

- Finance Minister had announced the plan to provide equity capital to the debt platform sponsored by the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF), as part of the last round of stimulus measures.
 - The NIIF's infrastructure debt financing platform is expected to contribute almost ₹1 lakh crore in debt to the infrastructure sector over the next five years.
 - This will act as a catalyst in attracting more investments into the infrastructure sector as envisaged in the National Infrastructure Pipeline.
 - Also, it would help free up space for banks to lend to new greenfield projects.
- It is expected that a well-capitalised, well-funded and well-governed NIIF debt platform can play a major role in infrastructure financing and development of the bond market in India by acting as a AAA/AA-rated intermediary between the bond markets and infrastructure projects and companies.

Read more about the [National Investment and Infrastructure Fund \(NIIF\)](#).

Category: DEFENCE

1. Navy inducts 2 drones on lease from the U.S.

Context:

The Indian Navy has inducted two MQ-9B Sea Guardian unarmed drones procured from the U.S. on lease.

Details:

- The drones are on lease for one year. All planning, execution and operations will be with the Indian Navy.
- The Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) will play a support role for maintenance as laid down in the agreement.

Note:

- The recently released Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 has introduced an option for leasing military platforms.
- As part of its force restructuring to offset budgetary constraints, the Navy has been looking to induct more unmanned solutions, both aerial and underwater.

Read more on Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 covered in [UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis September 29th, 2020](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Refining trade union strategies to strike a chord

What's in News?

Ten central trade unions (CTUs) have called for a nation-wide strike to condemn what they consider to be the anti-people and anti-labour economic policies of the government.

- The strike follows strikes in the coal and defence sectors protesting privatisation and the corporatisation policies of the government.

Why has the nation-wide strike been called?

Codes and flaws:

- With the introduction of economic reforms since 1991, employers and the global financial institutions have been lobbying for labour market and structural reforms.

- The recently introduced Codes are based on the fundamental unproven premise that labour laws and inspection system are obstacles in attracting investment, and, hence the government must promote a cheaper and flexible labour market.
- While the Codes extend some labour rights such as universal minimum wage, statutory recognition of trade unions, formalisation of employment contracts, and social security to gig and platform economy workers, they also afford substantial flexibility to the employers in terms of easy hire and fire, freedom to hire contract labour and unregulated fixed-term-employment, etc.
- The Codes have created tremendous insecurity among workers.
- Trade unions also have contended that many of their suggestions have not been incorporated in the Codes and the COVID-19 relief measures.

Read more on the [Labour Codes](#) in the linked article.

COVID-19 and migration:

- Migrant and informal workers underwent woeful experiences during the COVID-19 period.
- The COVID-19 period has witnessed a maximum amount of legal and extra-legal measures issued by the state.

What are the demands?

In this context, the central trade unions have these demands:

- Direct cash transfer of ₹7,500 per month for all non-income tax-paying families.
- 10 kg of free ration per person per month to all the needy.
- Expansion of [MGNREGA](#) to provide 200 days of work in a year in rural areas at enhanced wages.
- Extension of employment guarantee to urban areas.
- Withdrawal of all anti-farmer laws and anti-worker labour codes.
- A halt to privatisation.
- Protection of government employment
- Restoration of old pension schemes, etc.

The demands reflect disappointment, hurt and anger experienced by the working class not only during the time of COVID-19 but also for events of the last three decades.

Options before the Trade Unions:

The central government, as per trade unions, did not conduct an effective and sustaining social dialogue, though it held a few symbolic parleys with them. At the State level, social dialogue institutions are largely absent or weak. The trade unions have six options to confront or soften these measures:

1. Social dialogue
2. Political lobbying
3. Political confrontation through Opposition parties
4. Legal action by approaching the judiciary
5. Seek the [International Labour Organization's](#) intervention
6. Direct industrial action

Way forward:

- Approaching the judiciary seems to be a suitable option, in the current scenario, provided they have strong legal grounds to challenge reforms introduced by Central or State governments.

- Though the Supreme Court of India did not respond quickly to provide relief to migrant workers, it has struck down the Gujarat government's amendment of the Factories Act.
- Trade unions must explore other avenues such as seeking the ILO's intervention, judicial action and social dialogue.
 - The ILO's intervention in May 2020 only provided a temporary respite to trade unions.
- The labour unions have now resorted to the final option i.e, demonstrative industrial action followed by sustained protest actions.

Conclusion:

- This strike is a signal to the larger society of the concerns of workers. Hence, it is legitimate but such action alone will not change the Codes.
- There is no alternative to social dialogue in a pluralistic democracy which all the parties in the industrial relations system must make effective use of.
- Suitable amendments must be made to the Codes to aid both ease of doing business and to promote labour rights.
- This strike must be seen as a reminder of potential, positive reconstruction of laws.

2. Jobs, exports and the trade pacts link

Context:

As per the figures presented by the Reserve Bank of India, India is in an economic recession for the first time in its independent history.

Issues:

Job loss:

- Jobs are the first casualty during a recession.
 - Thousands of people lost their jobs due to the slowing economy in 2018-19 and 2019-20. Unemployment had reached a 45-year high.
 - More than 2 crore people lost their jobs and incomes during the lockdown.
- In any country, the ultimate economic test is, to ensure that there are sufficient jobs, incomes and livelihoods for all in the workforce. The single biggest challenge confronting India today is jobs.

Reduction in export volumes:

- Despite the "[Make in India](#)", export volumes have decreased in the last six years.
- The reason for this is seen as the complete reversal in the direction of India's foreign trade policy with higher tariffs, non-tariff barriers, quantitative limits, the return of licensing, border country restrictions and the appreciating value of the rupee.

Trade agreements:

- Exports are linked to trade agreements.
 - The member-countries of a trade agreement promote trade among themselves with easy rules but restrict trade with non-members with hard rules.
- Some historic trade agreements that were successful were the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Southern Common

Market (MERCOSUR). Half-hearted and hesitant agreements like the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) failed.

- Unfortunately, India has turned towards what seems like an anti-FTA policy.

Way Forward:

Job creation:

- The biggest priority for India must now be to recover the jobs that were lost and create new well-paying jobs.
 - According to the Economic Survey 2016-17: If the government makes available ₹10 lakh as a loan to four companies for capital investment; a steel manufacturing company will create one new job with this amount. An automobile manufacturer will create three new jobs. A producer of leather goods will create 70 new jobs. An apparel and garment maker will create 240 new jobs including 80 for women (Economic Survey 2016-17).
 - Large numbers of good quality jobs can be created only in sectors that are labour intensive, and where India has a comparative advantage, such as apparel, leather goods, value-added agriculture and so on.
 - These job-creating sectors depend not only on the domestic market but, significantly, on export markets.
 - More than one-half of the leather goods and one-third of the apparel produced in India is exported to other countries.

Export promotion:

- India's economy is in shambles and exports are one of the main engines to revive economic growth and create many new jobs.
- In order to revive exports, India needs greater and frictionless access to global markets.
- India needs to find more export markets, nurture them, and sustain them amid intense global competition.
 - There is irrefutable evidence that India's new trade policy, unveiled first in 1991-92, and taken forward by every subsequent government until 2014, has paid rich economic dividends in generating jobs, incomes and consumption.
 - Also, exports were the most significant factor that drove the Indian economy in the 'boom years' of 2003-2012.
- Merchandise exports also create supporting jobs. It is therefore very important to encourage and incentivise exports to be able to create many new jobs in the country.

Bilateral Free Trade Agreements:

- India needs to shed exaggerated fears of trade agreements.
- India cannot protect its domestic industry with high trade barriers while aspiring for bilateral trade treaties to promote exports.
- Most manufacturing today has a long supply chain that cuts across many countries.
 - To be able to export goods, India must import raw materials or equipment or technology from other countries in the supply chain.
- Hence, India must re-learn to engage with other countries and negotiate favourable trade agreements through the bilateral and multilateral routes.

The art of survival in a fiercely competitive world is engagement and negotiation.

1. Server snag hits nutrition portal

What's in News?

A massive nutrition portal developed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) touted as the world's biggest nutrition system, to record and monitor the delivery of services to children and mothers across nearly seven lakh anganwadis has been down for nearly three months.

- It is used by the Centre as well as most States.
- The software was developed under the [Poshan Abhiyaan](#) approved by the Cabinet in 2017 with a three-year budget of ₹9,000 crore, half of which was for ICT-based real-time monitoring system.
 - While 50% of the amount is funded by the government budgetary support, the remaining 50% is a loan from the World Bank.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan's Integrated Child Development Services Common Application Software (ICDS-CAS) is an innovative web and mobile-phone based application to improve service delivery and programme management.
- The application facilitates anganwadi workers (AWWs) in their daily tasks, helps supervisors to assess and provide feedback to the workers and helps other programme officials to track service delivery and take informed decisions.

Issue:

- The snag comes as a setback at a time when there is a call for the need to intensify efforts to identify mothers and children in need of nutritional interventions due to rising levels of hunger and poverty.

Read more on this topic covered in [25th November 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. More trilateral naval exercises on the cards

What's in News?

Two new trilateral naval exercises are in the works: one among India, Australia and Indonesia, and in the other, France is keen on joining the India-Australia bilateral naval exercise AUSINDEX.

- There are several other proposals but a decision on them would be taken based on operational commitments and other factors.
- This is in continuation of the trend of growing trilateral and multilateral exercises.

Note:

- In the last few years, India has significantly expanded its military to military engagement with both Australia and France on a bilateral level.
- In 2019, India, Thailand and Singapore began an annual exercise named SITMEX, which recently completed the second edition.
- The 24th edition of the [Malabar naval exercise](#) among India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. concluded recently.
 - Australia joined the exercise for the first time since 2017.

3. Jallikattu

- Jallikattu is a traditional bull-taming sport organised in Tamil Nadu during Pongal.
- According to some historical accounts, the practice dates back to as far as 2000 years ago.
- The sport involves a natively reared stud that is set free inside an arena filled with young participants.
- The challenge lies in taming the bull with bare hands.
- It is also known as Eruthazhuvuthal or Manju virattu.

Read more on [Jallikattu](#).

G. Tidbits

1. Bhutan establishes formal ties with Germany

What's in News?

Bhutan announced that it had established diplomatic relations with Germany.

- The ties with Germany mark the first new diplomatic agreement made by Bhutan since March 2013, when it had established ties with Oman.
- This has increased the restricted number of capitals that it has formal ties with to 53 states and the EU.
- In 1949 Bhutan first signed a friendship agreement with India, which kept the two countries closely engaged on all foreign policy issues.
- Since then, Bhutan has been historically cautious about establishing ties with other countries.
- Until 2007, when Bhutan conducted its first election, it had formal relations with just 22 countries, mostly donor countries such as Japan, Australia and several Nordic countries.
- It also made a firm decision not to open ties with any of the permanent five members of the [UN Security Council](#), despite many requests from them and in particular from the U.S. and China.

Note:

- After the election of Prime Minister Jigme Thinley in 2008, the Bhutanese government rapidly increased its diplomatic forays.
- It signed agreements with 31 countries in five years, possibly with a view to winning the election for a non-permanent seat at the UNSC in 2013-14, which it eventually lost.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following pairs:

1. SITMEX: India, Thailand, Singapore
2. AUSINDEX: Australia, India, Japan
3. Malabar: India, USA, Japan
4. SLINEX: India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh

Which of the pairs is/are correctly matched?

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- SITMEX: India, Thailand, Singapore
- AUSINDEX: Australia, India
- Malabar: India, USA, Japan
- SLINEX: India, Sri Lanka

Q2. Which of the following statements best describes the UMANG App?

- a. It provides an account in cloud to every Aadhaar holder to access authentic documents/certificates in digital format from the original issuers of these certificates.
- b. It provides a single platform for all Indian citizens to access pan India e-government services ranging from Central to local bodies and other citizen-centric services.
- c. It is an innovative web and mobile-phone-based application to improve service delivery and programme management of Integrated Child Development Services.
- d. It is an application designed to help women and children travelling in taxis and autorickshaws to raise an alarm in case of any emergency.

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

- UMANG App provides a single platform for all Indian citizens to access pan India e-government services ranging from Central to local bodies and other citizen-centric services.
- DigiLocker provides an account in cloud to every Aadhaar holder to access authentic documents/certificates in digital format from the original issuers of these certificates.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan's Integrated Child Development Services Common Application Software (ICDS-CAS) is an innovative web and mobile-phone-based application to improve service delivery and programme management.
- Recently, the Andhra Pradesh government launched the Abhayam App. It helps women and children travelling in taxis and autorickshaws to raise an alarm in case of any emergency.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Jallikattu:

- 1. Jallikattu is a traditional bull-taming sport organised in Tamil Nadu during Pongal.
- 2. It is also known as Eruthazhuvuthal or Manju virattu.
- 3. Silappatikaram has mentions of Jallikattu.

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

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Jallikattu is a traditional bull-taming sport organised in Tamil Nadu during Pongal.
- It is also known as Eruthazhuvuthal or Manju virattu.
- There are references to people enjoying, observing and partaking in Jallikattu in Silappatikaram, the great epic of the Tamil classical period and two other ancient literary works like Malaipadukadaam and Kalithogai.

Q4. North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a free trade agreement between which of these countries?

1. United States of America
2. Mexico
3. Cuba
4. Canada

Choose the correct option:

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

The North American Free Trade Agreement, known usually as NAFTA, is a free trade agreement among Canada, the United States, and Mexico. NAFTA went into effect on January 1, 1994. NAFTA is also used to refer to the tripartite trading bloc of North American countries.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. With India on the verge of an unprecedented economic catastrophe, it is time for India to let its guard down and consider Free Trade Agreements. Critically comment. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 3 Economy).
2. With recently introduced labour reforms set to change industrial relations, trade unions must include effective social dialogue to get their grievances redressed. Elucidate. What are the other options available to the trade unions to confront the recent reforms? (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 3 Economy).

Read the previous CNA [here](#).

