

03 Dec 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [‘India will not accept less than bottom line in talks with China’](#)

Context:

The External Affairs Minister has indicated that the talks with China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) could take much longer, drawing a parallel to a similar military stand-off in Arunachal Pradesh’s ‘Sumdorong Chu’ in 1986.

Read more about the [India-China stand-off along the LAC](#).

Sumdorong Chu:

- In 1986–87, a military standoff took place between India and China in the Sumdorong Chu Valley.
 - The valley borders the Tawang district, Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet.
- The stand-off started off as China initiated the moving of a company of troops to Wangdung (a pasture to the south of Sumdorong Chu).
- The Indian troops stood their ground on the neighbouring Longro La ridge and both the sides moved a large number of troops to the border.
- It was the first military confrontation along the disputed [McMahon Line](#) after the 1962 war. The standoff gave rise to fears of escalation.
- The stand-off took nearly nine years to resolve.
- Several years of talks were fruitless before the two armies disengaged in 1995.
- In between, the two sides signed the breakthrough 1993 agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control.

2. Isaac issue sent to ethics panel

Context:

The Speaker of the Kerala Legislative Assembly P. Sreeramakrishnan has referred a breach of privilege notice given by Congress legislator V.D. Satheesan against Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac to the Privileges and Ethics Committee of the Assembly for scrutiny.

Issue:

- Satheesan had alleged that Dr. Isaac infringed on the rights of the House by disclosing the details of an audit report of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) for 2018-19 by the [Comptroller and Auditor General \(CAG\)](#), even before it was tabled in the Legislative Assembly.
- The issue has been referred to a nine-member committee. It has been asked to look into the fundamental issues raised by Dr. Isaac on:
 - The laying of the CAG report in the House.
 - On the breach of privilege committed by the CAG.
- It is the first time in the history of the House that a breach of privilege notice against a Minister has been referred to the committee for scrutiny.

Details:

- Ministers assume office after taking the oath that they will not divulge any confidential information that comes to their notice except for official purposes.
- The Governor has the authority to expel those who violate this oath.
- The legislature has the right to know the details of the CAG report first. A CAG report has to remain a confidential document till it is tabled in the Legislative Assembly.
- Violating the rights of the Assembly can attract punishment.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Panel formed to oversee India's Paris climate goals

The Union Environment Ministry has constituted a high-level interministerial Apex committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA).

Details:

- AIPA has been constituted under the chairmanship of Secretary, MoEFCC.
- Senior officials from fourteen ministries will serve as Members to AIPA who will oversee the progress in implementation of India's NDC.

Functions:

- The purpose of AIPA is to generate a coordinated response on climate change matters that ensures India is on track towards meeting its obligations under the [Paris Agreement](#) including its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).
- Another key function of AIPA would be to operate as a National Authority to regulate carbon markets in India under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.
- It would formulate guidelines for the consideration of projects or activities under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.
- AIPA will issue guidelines on [carbon pricing](#), market mechanism, and other similar instruments that have a bearing on climate change and NDCs.

AIPA will also ensure that India maintains its climate leadership as one of the few countries in the world whose climate actions are consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Category: SECURITY

1. Global alert on vaccine frauds

Context:

Interpol has issued a global alert to law enforcement agencies of its 194 member countries, asking them to prepare for the targeting of COVID-19 vaccines, both physically and online, by organised crime networks.

Details:

- The Interpol Orange Notice outlines potential criminal activity in relation to the falsification, theft and illegal advertising of COVID-19 and flu vaccines, with the pandemic having already triggered unprecedented opportunistic and predatory criminal behaviour.
- It includes examples of crimes in which individuals were found to be advertising, selling and administering fake vaccines.
- Stating that vaccines were the prime target of organised crime, it said that as governments are preparing to roll out vaccines, criminal organisations are planning to infiltrate or disrupt supply chains.
- [Interpol](#) also suspects that there would be parallel production and distribution of unauthorised and falsified testing kits.

Way forward:

It is essential that law enforcement is prepared for an onslaught of all types of criminal activity linked to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Read more on Interpol Notices covered in [8th April 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

1. A Silent Pandemic

Background:

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global health and development threat. It requires urgent multi-sectoral action in order to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

Context:

- WHO has declared that AMR is one of the top 10 global public health threats facing humanity.
- A recent study has revealed that resistance to second and third-line antibiotics which are among the final stages of defence against some of the most common diseases are expected to double between 2005 and 2030.

Read more on [Anti-microbial Resistance \(AMR\)](#).

Details

1. What is anti-microbial resistance?

- Antimicrobial resistance** occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change in ways that render the medications used to cure the infections they cause ineffective. When the microorganisms become **resistant** to most **antimicrobials** they are often referred to as “superbugs”.
- Examples:
 - Carbapenem - resistant *Acinetobacter* causes pneumonia and wound, bloodstream, and urinary tract infections. Nearly all these infections happen in patients who recently received care in a healthcare facility.
 - Candida auris* is an emerging multidrug-resistant yeast. It can cause severe infections and spreads easily between hospitalized patients and nursing home residents.

2. Nature of threat

- Antibiotic resistance is rising to menacingly high levels throughout the world. New resistance mechanisms are emerging and spreading globally, threatening our ability to treat common infectious diseases.
- A growing list of infections – such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, blood poisoning, gonorrhoea, and foodborne diseases – are becoming tougher, and at times impossible, to treat as antibiotics become less productive.

3. The emergence and spread of resistance is made worse because of procurement of antibiotics for animal and human consumption without a doctor's supervision or a prescription.
4. Similarly, in countries without standard treatment guidelines, shortage of trained medical personnel, antibiotics are often over-prescribed by health workers and veterinarians and over-used by the public.
5. In the absence of an immediate response to this burgeoning problem, the world is moving towards a post-antibiotic era, where common infections and minor injuries will be lethal enough to take away lives.

Major causes of anti-microbial resistance

1. Over-prescription of antibiotics

1. The main cause of antibiotic resistance is antibiotic use. When we use antibiotics, some bacteria die but resistant bacteria can survive and even multiply. The overuse of antibiotics makes resistant bacteria more common.

2. Patients not finishing the entire antibiotic course

1. It's very important to finish the complete dosage prescribed by the medical practitioner, incomplete course leads to incomplete treatment and the infection is not treated completely. This provides conditions for the growth and propagation of drug resistant microbes.

3. Overuse of antibiotics in livestock and fish farming

1. The high volume of antibiotics in food-producing animals contributes to the development of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria, particularly in settings of intensive animal production.
2. In some countries, the total amount of antibiotics used in animals is 4 times larger than the amount used in humans. In many countries, much of the antibiotics used in animals are for growth promotion and prevention of disease, not to treat sick animals.

4. Poor hygiene and sanitation

1. This provides more opportunities for resistant bacteria and other germs to spread.
2. Research has showcased that up to 80% of antibiotic drugs are excreted without having undergone any degree of metabolism along with the resistant bacteria.
3. Effluents from households and health and pharmaceutical facilities containing the resistant bacteria will in turn contribute to the spread of anti-bacterial resistance.
4. India's sewage generation far exceeds its treatment facility. Only a third of sewage is being treated, rest is allowed to join water bodies, thus creating a dangerous pathway for the resistant microorganisms to reach new destinations.
5. A sample study done at a treatment facility receiving wastewater discharge from a drug manufacturer had a concentration of antibiotics sufficient to treat 40,000 individuals daily.
6. Humans and wildlife coming in contact with such heavy concentrations of antimicrobial drugs is a serious threat to public health.

UNEP Initiative

- [UNEP](#) has shortlisted AMR as one of the six emerging issues of environmental concern.
- It is working along with other UN agencies to develop the One Health AMR Global Action Plan, that encompasses human, animal, and planet health, food and environment sectors.

AMR in India

- India is particularly vulnerable to AMR given that the burden of infectious disease is high and healthcare spending is low.
- Initiatives taken:
 - The National Health Policy 2017 highlights the problem of antimicrobial resistance and calls for effective action to address it.

- The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) identified AMR as one of the top 10 priorities for the Ministry's collaborative work with WHO.
- India's Red Line campaign demands that prescription-only antibiotics be marked with a red line, to discourage the over-the-counter sale of antibiotics.
- National Policy for Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance 2011.
- National Action Plan on AMR resistance 2017-2021.
- Schedule H-1 has been carved in Drug and Cosmetic Rules to regulate the sale of antimicrobials.
- The [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) banned the use of antibiotics and several pharmacologically active substances in fisheries.
- The government has also capped the maximum levels of drugs that can be used for growth promotion in meat and meat products.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Choppy tidings

Background: The COVID pandemic has thrown the economy off gear. The year has largely witnessed subdued economic activity; while things slowly appear to be changing for the good. The recent Goods and Service Tax collection is one such barometer to measure the health of the Indian economy.

Context: Revenue from GST surpassed Rs.1 lakh crore for the second consecutive month in November, indicating that September and October have seen an uptick in the economic activity.

Details:

- The economy has been showing signs of recovery, the recent positive news about the expansion of industrial output in the second quarter has been another reason for optimism.

Signs of better times to come?

- Gradual unlocking of the economy, by easing inter-state travel and other restrictions that hampered the movement of goods and services across the country during the initial phases of the pandemic, has contributed significantly to an improved GST collection beginning from September.
- Another factor that has raised the GST collection is the compliance-related relaxations for GST paying businesses.
- The beginning of the third quarter in October has also seen positive trends in GST collection, auto sales and also the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing.
- The festive season of Diwali in November also bodes well; the festive season spending will enhance demand.

Caution to be exercised

- While the statistics have been encouraging on different fronts, not all of them can sustain themselves. It is hoped that some of the above-mentioned numbers are not just a spike that withers away later.
- The e-way bills generated by GST covered entities in October have dipped 14% in comparison with the September month.
- The latest PMI data has hinted at a sluggish growth in orders and also has forecasted a decline in employment generation as businesses are wary of the lingering uncertainties.

- Some of the economists have already exercised caution over the second quarter industrial output data, saying that such a rebound may be due to aggressive cost-cutting and trimmed wage bills.
- Amongst the major states, only Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Gujrat showed double-digit growth in GST collection, clearly depicting that there is no uniform recovery across states.
- While the focus has shifted to economic activities and how to resuscitate it, one eye still has to be on containing COVID. While India's infection rate has shown a decline, there are still pockets such as Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujrat that have witnessed some spikes and still have some form of restrictions on certain activities.

Way Forward

- It is imperative that steps be taken to get the economy up and running; this may require the Government to provide a demand stimulus.
- It is appropriate that this stimulus is focused on sectors that have high job creation capacity as providing more employment is one way to spur demand.
- The demand stimulus can have a multiplier effect in terms of credit creation, job creation, private consumption expenditure that are prerequisite to get the economy back on track.

Category: POLITY

1. Hard bargains and the art of policymaking

Context: The farmer protests over the enactment of Farm Acts and also the opposition's criticism have highlighted the need to have greater consultation and deliberation before coming up with laws such as these that have an impact across the country.

Details:

Parliamentary setup in India

- The core theme behind democracy is to give "voice to the voiceless", where every individual matters as one and none more than one.
- India has adopted representative democracy, wherein the elected representatives represent the will of the people and the parliament stands for the institutionalisation of people's will.
- Parliament is at the heart of the Indian democratic setup, it is supposed to be a chamber where policies, laws that are fundamental to the governance of the country are to be discussed, debated and deliberated.

Political consensus

- Parliament through its various mechanisms such as question hour, parliamentary committees, etc. gives an opportunity to refine a policy at multiple levels. The various sieves through which a law has to pass provide numerous iterations by which the laws can be made more impactful.
- Parliament provides a platform to forge a political consensus, establish bipartisanship, establish conventions, precedents that will enable smooth functioning of administrative machinery.

Parliament committees

- The [functions of the Parliament](#) are varied, complex and voluminous. Time and expertise to make a detailed scrutiny of all legislative measures and other matters are not available.

- Parliamentary committees assist in the discharge of the duties of parliament.
- The Standing and Select committees help the lawmakers to source expertise, diverse opinions from outside of the parliament.
- It also provides a platform to overcome rigid party stance and adopt a more flexible, acceptable way to go forward.
- Parliamentary committees work away from the public gaze, hence there are no incentives in 'playing to the gallery'.

Goods and Service Tax (GST)

- GST is one of the major reforms undertaken in independent India; it was a humongous exercise to get all the political parties, states involved on the same boat.
- The GST involved subsuming various taxes from the Union list and the State list, and it required heeding to the concerns of the states, who feared that they would lose their revenue base.
- The fact that it took close to ten years from setting up an Empowered Group of State Finance Ministers in 2007 to finally rolling it out in 2017 highlights the complexity of the legislation.
- The standing committee on Finance and the Select committee played an important role in suggesting the voting procedure for the GST council, including a compensation structure for states, dropping the dispute resolution authority, etc.

Farm Acts mayhem

- The Central Government taking the ordinance route, to begin with, and then passing the bills in the Lok Sabha without referring to the Standing Committee and getting it through the House of elders by not sending the bills to the select committee has raised questions over the hastiness to get the bill passed.
- Lack of discussion, debate, deliberation leaves out multiple perspectives, which the legislation could stand to benefit.
- While there is no denying the Union's jurisdiction in enacting these laws, however, when such laws have a widespread effect, it needs sufficient consultation from important stakeholders.
- The federal nature of the acts have gone unnoticed, states tax revenue from agricultural markets have been affected but no steps have been initiated to alleviate their concerns.
- It has further taken a bitter turn, with three states under opposition parties coming up with their own laws to negate the central farm acts, something that could have been avoided had a proper consultation mechanism been in place.
- The farmer trade unions have also been up in arms over several provisions of the acts. While the faults in drafting legislation are inevitable, the process of consultation and deliberation should not be ignored.
- Parliament is sometimes referred to as the "Temple of Democracy", its role as the highest deliberative organ in the country must not be forgotten. Deliberation is at the centre of any representative democracy, therefore Parliament and its committees should be made full use of for arriving at legislations that contribute to the welfare of people.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Honey, the sweetener on your plate may be sugar syrup

What's in News?

- The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has claimed that the honey marketed by prominent Indian brands failed a key test of purity.
- Current regulations specify around 18 parameters that honey must comply with for producers to label it 'pure honey'.
- While the Indian brands qualified the tests that are required under national food regulatory laws to be labelled as honey, only three qualified the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance test.

Nuclear Magnetic Resonance:

- The NMR spectroscopy is an important technique for structural characterization of pharmaceutical and other chemical molecules.
- NMR can ascertain the composition of a product at the molecular level.
- It has wide applications in analysing molecular structure, quality control as well as for determining purity of samples.

How does it work?

- The sample to be tested is placed in a magnetic field and the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance signal is produced by excitation of the nuclei sample with radio waves into NMR, which is detected with sensitive radio receivers.
- The intramolecular magnetic field around an atom in a molecule changes the resonance frequency, thereby providing access to details of the electronic structure of a molecule and its individual functional groups.

G. Tidbits

1. China buys first Indian rice in decades amid scarce supply

What's in News?

China has begun importing Indian rice for the first time in at least three decades.

- The recent development is due to tightening supplies from Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam and an offer of sharply discounted prices.
- While India is the world's biggest rice exporter and China the biggest importer, it has avoided purchases from India, citing quality issues.
- Indian traders have now contracted to export 100,000 tonnes of broken rice at around \$300 per tonne on a free-on-board (FOB) basis.

2. There has never been a woman CJI, says A-G

What's in News?

Attorney-General's suggestions on ways to gender-sensitise judges.

- Pointing out that there has never been a woman chief justice, he told the Supreme Court that more women judges in constitutional courts would certainly improve gender sensitivity in the judiciary.

- It was also pointed out that there are only 80 women judges out of the sanctioned strength of 1,113 judges in the High Courts and the Supreme Court and that they comprise only 7.2% of the number of judges.
- He opined that improving the representation of women could also go a long way towards a more balanced and empathetic approach in cases involving sexual violence.

3. Centre plans professional courses in mother tongue

- The Centre is drafting a road map to ensure that students of medicine, engineering, law and other professional programmes can study in their own mother tongue.
- The decision was taken by the Education Minister, after a meeting on the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP).

Read more on [National Education Policy \(NEP\)](#).

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Interpol:

1. Interpol is a global police co-operation agency and a non-governmental organization (NGO).
2. It is headquartered at Geneva, Switzerland.
3. Interpol Orange Notice is issued to locate, identify or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Interpol is a global police co-operation agency and a non-governmental organization (NGO). It was established as the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) in 1923.
- Its headquarters is located at Lyon, France. Interpol Purple Notice is issued to provide information on modus operandi, procedures, objects, devices, or hiding places used by criminals.
- Orange notice is issued to warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing an imminent threat and danger to persons or property.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The governor can pardon the death sentence.
2. The governor can suspend or remit the death sentence.
3. The governor can commute the death sentence.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The governor cannot pardon the death sentence and the punishment by court-martial.
- Governor cannot pardon the death sentence even if the said sentence has been prescribed under the state law.
- However, he can suspend, remit or commute the death sentence by using these pardoning powers.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Chang'e 5:

- 1. Chang'e 5 is a robotic lunar exploration mission consisting of a service module, lunar lander, ascender, and a sample-return vehicle.
- 2. It is a mission under the Chinese Lunar Exploration Program.
- 3. The mission aims at retrieving samples from the moon.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

All the statements are correct.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to NETRA:

- 1. It is a real-time network surveillance tool.
- 2. It is being developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- NETRA (short for Network Traffic Analysis), is being developed by the Center for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR), a unit of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It is a real-time network surveillance tool.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Explain anti-microbial resistance and suggest steps to tackle this public health concern. (10 marks, 150 words) [GS 2, Health]
2. Explain the role of Parliament in India's democratic setup. Discuss the concept of 'decline of parliament'. (15 marks, 250 words) [GS 2, Polity & Governance]