

07 Jan 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. [China denies entry to WHO experts](#)

Context:

- China, which was the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic, has denied permission to the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) team to investigate.

Details:

- The WHO team was scheduled to reach Wuhan and investigate the origin and transmission of the virus.
- China's decision to deny permit at the eleventh hour has not gone down well with the global body.

WHO response

- WHO Director-General has expressed his disappointment with the conduct of China.
- WHO has underlined the importance of the mission and how important it is to conduct an investigation by the global body.
- Several observers termed this Chinese move as a betrayal considering how the WHO had guarded China during rising tensions about China's involvement in the spread of the pandemic.
- The WHO chief had earlier said good words about how China had responded to the outbreak, praised the Chinese leadership for their efforts and commitment. Thus, this move by China has come as a surprise to the WHO.

China's views

- China stood by its decision to delay the visit; Chinese Government sources said that tracing of the origin of the virus is no simple task.
- China hid behind the excuse that they had to undertake certain procedures and make certain arrangements that would ensure that the work of the international expert team in China is done without hiccups.
- China in recent months has been playing a different tune. The authorities have suggested they will have superintendence over the extent of access given to the international experts and the local scientists have gone on to say that the studies pertaining to the origin of the virus will have to go under critical examination by them before it is made public or taken up for further studies.
- The State media in China has increasingly backed a narrative suggesting the virus came to China from elsewhere, while some scientists in China have put forth studies indicating that the virus was circulating in other countries, such as Italy, before it made its presence felt in China.

Conclusion:

- China's withdrawal of its support will not only hinder an investigation by WHO but will also tarnish the image of China.
- There have been countries that have been training their guns on China and blaming China for all the hardship faced due to the global lockdown. Thus, China has the responsibility to come out clean by allowing an impartial, objective investigation with regards to the virus' origin and its transmissibility.

Category: POLITY

1. SC to study anti-conversion laws of Uttarakhand and U.P.

Context:

- The Supreme Court without issuing a stay has agreed to examine the constitutional validity of laws enacted by certain States that appear to infringe upon a person's right to marry a person of choice.

Details

- Several states such as Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have passed legislations that criminalise religious conversion via marriage and mandate prior official clearance before marrying into another faith, while a few other states have hinted at coming up with such legislations in the near future.
- The implementation of the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018, has resulted in the disruption of inter-faith marriages, creating an atmosphere of fear and hate.

Draconian law

- The state legislations have been criticized by several legal experts for they undermine human dignity and autonomy.
- The prospect of taking prior permission and the responsibility to carry the burden of proof stating that they were not marrying to convert hasn't gone down well with legal experts and the civil society.
- The guilty under these laws will have to serve a 10-year prison sentence. The offences are non-bailable.
- However, the Bench, which asked the petitioners to go to the respective State High Courts with their challenge, did not stay the implementation of the laws.
- The laws concerned blatantly violate the fundamental rights of dignity and liberty enshrined under [Article 21](#) in Part three of the Constitution.
- The state governments have gone ahead in enacting such laws even when the Supreme Court through its series of judgments, including in the Hadiya case, had underlined that the right to marry a person of one's choice was part of an adult's privacy.

Conclusion

- These laws will disrupt peace and harmony, and create fear and hate in society.
- A series of Supreme Court verdicts underline that the choice of a life partner, whether by marriage or outside it, was part of an individual's "personhood and identity".

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. China surging ahead, says NITI Aayog.

Context:

- The NITI Aayog officials opine that China has been recovering well in the aspects of trade flows, financial markets, etc.

Details:

- To discuss the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a Standing Committee on Finance has been set up.
- The committee has been mandated to view the developments on the global economy, trade flows and financial markets.
- It has been found that the Chinese had been recovering well, inching well ahead of India and also at a rate that is bridging the gap between China and the USA in the post-pandemic era.
- The officials however did not give any specific details about the current economic state of India.

State of the global economy

- A NITI Aayog official said the global economy was going through a similar phase like the one it witnessed post the first world war.
- The NITI Aayog officials were quizzed if the pandemic had turned out to be a critical point in the global supply chain and if there was any evidence to suggest if China would persist as the factory of the world.
- The officials in response replied that China had been doing well on the economy front, and it was fast narrowing the gap with the USA.
- China has adapted itself better than most other countries to the post-pandemic era.

The reforms suggested

- India has to initiate reforms that are deep-rooted similar to the one witnessed during the 1991 reforms.
- With reference to the current state of the Indian economy, it was said that India should focus on becoming an export-based economy.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Boosting India with maritime domain awareness

Context:

- India's confrontation with China over territorial disputes on the border is pressing India to look at other possible avenues to respond.
- The naval arena is one such theatre where India can proactively look to counter China's threat.

Sun Tzu's piece of advice on warfare

- Sun Tzu, a well known military strategist, observed that the most important element in warfare would be foreknowledge, and that could be attained only through specialized tools and by having personnel who had studied the enemy well.

- A detailed homework about the enemy, nature of the battle ahead could be key in deciding which way the battle will swing. Prior reading of the adversary and the theatre of battle, the master tactician asserted, could decisively shift the balance of fortune in war.

Nature of the enemy at sea

- The modern era has seen warfare evolve and become more complex.
- The maritime domain has become a theatre for seeking dominance, this can be seen in the case of the Indian Ocean, where the world's largest navies are deployed. Vital shipping routes pass through the Indian Ocean and is central to connecting markets in Europe.
- The maritime domain is not a theatre for only state actors, it is increasingly witnessing the presence of non-state actors like a terrorist, a pirate, a criminal or a sea-robber — an invisible presence that lurks behind regular actors such as fishermen and port workers.
- Law enforcement agencies find it difficult to protect the mainland from threats emanating from maritime areas, therefore there is a case for the law enforcement authorities to be more vigilant, depending on high-grade sensors and communication networks that will help in real-time tracking of doubtful and mistrustful movements.
- Maritime domain awareness is defined by several security experts as having alertness and awareness to identify the threat and nullify before it can threaten national security.

Recent endeavours

- Recent times have seen the Indian Navy embarking on the strengthening of its domain awareness in the Indian Ocean.
- The Indian Navy hitherto has installed radar stations in the littoral states of the Indian Ocean such as Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka and this integration into the wider coastal radar chain network is now being extended to other countries like Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- The strengthening of maritime domain awareness has been largely directed towards keeping an eye on Chinese activity in the Eastern Indian Ocean, in the seas around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The clashes with China's People's Liberation Army during the month of June last year has alerted India's security experts about the possibility of a greater Chinese presence in the eastern littorals.
- India has been proactive post the Galwan valley skirmishes to carry out deep surveillance of the ocean's waters for any presence of Chinese submarines. India's P-8I aircraft has been deployed along with the Indian naval ships to patrol the Andaman Seas and eastern chokepoints to nip any Beijing threat in its bud.

Neighbourhood synergies

- The maritime domain awareness is not just an exclusive domain of one country, thus attempts at improving maritime domain awareness have been contributing towards cooperative synergies in the neighbourhood.
- Some of the reports have hinted that the seven Indian Ocean countries — Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles — have expressed their willingness to

deploy Liaison Officers at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region in Gurugram.

- There has been active interest taken by the western powers, such as, France, who have already posted an officer at the IFC, and the four other Indo-Pacific navies namely Australia, Japan, the U.K and the U.S. have also agreed to position officers at the centre. This active interest expressed by these countries shows the significance of the information hub.
- India has taken active steps towards raising its engagement in the Western Indian Ocean by positioning a Liaison Officer at the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) at Madagascar.
- The Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) was established under the auspices of the [Indian Ocean Commission](#) that India joined recently as an 'observer'. The RMIFC is a key centre of maritime information in the Western Indian Ocean.
- India has also posted an officer at the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH) in Abu Dhabi to assist in the monitoring of maritime activity in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

The French connection

- France, a permanent member at the United Nations Security Council has aided and supported Delhi's moves in the Western and South-Western littorals, indicative of France's interests in the Indian Ocean, and that it is a critical partner for India in the region.
- India and France are both committed to the logistics agreement signed in 2019; Paris is keen for a stronger partnership in the maritime commons.
- France had been instrumental in pushing for India's candidature for the observer status at the Indian Ocean Commission and is nudging India for enhanced participation in security initiatives in the Western Indian Ocean.

China watch

- A cause for concern for the Indian security establishment has been the future technological sophistication of China's submarines that will make it difficult to detect them in the Indian backyard.
- The Chinese achieved a breakthrough in submarine propulsion by successfully testing shaftless rim-driven pump-jets; analysts fear that the next generation of PLAN nuclear submarines could be stealthier than ever, capable of beating adversary surveillance.
- The recent discovery of a Chinese unmanned underwater vehicle close to a southern Indonesian island is indicative of Chinese attempts to map the undersea terrain of the Indian Ocean region.

India's navy arsenal

- India has not taken China's threat lying down, instead, it has chosen to be on its toes and has moved to expand its underwater detection capabilities in the Eastern chokepoints. India went ahead to acquire two Sea Guardian drones on lease from the United States for better surveillance.
- Indian navy capabilities are bolstered by an additional nine operational P-8I aircraft to be inducted. Currently, the Navy's coverage of the Bay of Bengal littoral is adequate.

- Speculation abounds that New Delhi might also partner Japan in installing an array of undersea sensors near the Andaman Islands to help detect Chinese submarines.

Way forward

- The maritime domain response of India is largely driven by Chinese threat but it also takes into consideration the emerging transnational threats in the littorals and the need to combat it.
- India has White shipping agreements with 21 countries in the Indian Ocean enabling a comprehensive picture of maritime traffic, even as efforts are underway to help smaller island states build capacity to combat regional threats.
- The launching of India's military satellite (GSAT-7A) will soon pave way for a real-time sharing of data on maritime areas with partners.
- India's maritime initiative vis-à-vis the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region is guided by Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), it seeks to put forth the idea of India as a 'security provider' and 'preferred partner' in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Cooperation, collaboration in information sharing will allow for collective action in dealing with threats in the region.
- To bring real change, India must ensure seamless information flow, generating operational synergy with partners, and aim to expand collaborative endeavours in shared spaces. That would be the real test of the maritime domain awareness 'game-changing' potential.

2. The quagmire that is Brexit

Context:

- The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union was finally concluded at the eleventh hour.
- A deal was reached between the two parties to guide their future commercial relations.

Details:

- The much sought after BREXIT eventually became a reality with finalizing of the deal between the United Kingdom and the European Union.
- The BREXIT process has had a plethora of people defending it and opposing it, only time will tell what the BREXIT will actually lead to eventually.
- The BREXIT was based on claiming sovereignty in decision making, economic gains but also included a tinge of nationalistic pride.
- The agreement became a superficial grandstanding moment, however, the reality may not actually concur with grandstanding.
- The deal was hurried through a Parliamentary approval with little time for discussion and deliberation.
- The process of arriving at the deal was so cumbersome and draining with a number of rounds of negotiation, that there was wide agreement that a bad deal was a better outcome than a no-deal.

Eyewash

- Many have opined that Brexit may not be a panacea, and it might be a smokescreen used to divert attention from real issues like deindustrialisation and the loss of manufacturing, and economy over-reliant on the service sector, low productivity.
- The United Kingdom is also suffering from depleted public services who have had to bear the brunt of several austerity measures. The pandemic meant that the British Government had to be liberal in its spending.

What the future holds?

- The proponents of the U.K wanted independence and autonomy in decision making, something that was not always available given the supra-national status of the European Union.
- The sovereignty reclaimed with the BREXIT will not actually translate into meaningful outcomes. The Brexit might pave way for changes to both parties, with signs already pointing towards the break-up of Britain, with Scotland and Northern Ireland hinting at it.
- As far as the European Union is concerned, it has its fair share of problems, immigration problems, a call to increase its defence spending under NATO by the outgoing US President, the split of EU into haves and the have-nots.

Conclusion:

- The BREXIT could be termed as a 'hard-BREXIT', it is a version of BREXIT that is favoured by the extreme Eurosceptic wing of the Conservative Party, that has time and again wished to create a deregulated, low-tax economy.
- The above mentioned 'hard-BREXIT' could bring the U.K into a conflict with the more regulation-friendly EU, which is likely to view the U.K. as a competitor and consequently increase the tariff barriers.
- To ensure the 'divorce' is without deeper aftershocks, both sides should perhaps try to reach common ground on the version of neoliberalism each claim to profess.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Foundation stone laid for 'New Anubhava Mantapa'

Context:

- Karnataka Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the 'New Anubhava Mantapa' in Basavakalyan.

Details:

- Basavakalyan is an important pilgrim centre for Lingayats, the place where 12th-century poet-philosopher Basaveshwara lived for most of his life.
- A project to highlight the teachings of Basaveshwara (an icon of the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community) was first proposed back in 2016.

Grand structure

- The New Anubhava Mantapa is projected to be a six-floor structure in a 7.5 acres plot and it embodies the principles Basaveshwara's philosophy stood for.
- The new structure will exhibit the 12th Century Anubhava Mantapa (often referred to as the "first Parliament of the world") established by Basaveshwara in Basavakalyan.
- The Anubhava Mantapa housed numerous discussions, deliberations and debates amongst several philosophers and social reformers.
- The building will adopt the Kalyana Chalukya style of architecture.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. The famous Rev Stanislaus vs Madhya Pradesh, 1977 case is associated with which of the following

- a. Right to equality
- b. Right to constitutional remedies
- c. Right to practise and propagate religion
- d. Right to privacy

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Supreme Court has held that there is no fundamental right to conversion. In the case of Stanislaus vs State of Madhya Pradesh (1977), the court made a clear distinction between the right to propagate one's religion or faith and the right to convert. The former is guaranteed by Article 25 of Constitution. Conversion enjoys no such protection.

Q2. Pong Dam wildlife sanctuary is located in

- a. Madhya Pradesh
- b. Odisha
- c. Himachal Pradesh
- d. Assam

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Pong Dam Sanctuary located in Himachal Pradesh is also a national wetland.
- In 1975, it was created as a result of a dam built across Beas River. It was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1983, and is now also a Ramsar site.

- The sanctuary plays host to around 220 species of birds belonging to 54 families. Migratory birds from all over Hindukush Himalayas and also as far as Siberia come here during winter

Q3. Consider the following statements.

1. Parliamentary committees do not find a mention in the constitution of India.
2. The consultative committees are not a part of parliamentary committees.

Which of the following statements are true?

- a. I only
- b. II only
- c. Both I and II
- d. Neither I and II.

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Parliamentary committees are mentioned in the constitution of India.
- The consultative committees which consists of Member of Parliaments are not a part of parliamentary committees., they are distinct in nature.

Q4. Consider the following statements

1. Indian Ocean Commission is an initiative of India with the ASEAN nations
2. The commission was established immediately after the 2004 tsunami.
3. Japan and the European Union are observers on this platform.

Which of the following tatements are true?

- a. I and II.
- b. II and III.
- c. III only
- d. All of the above.

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Indian Ocean Commission is the only intergovernmental body in Africa composed of island nations alone.
- The nations belong to the African/Western Indian Ocean.
- The IOC was formed in 1982 in Port Louis in Mauritius, where its secretariat is also based.

- The chief objective of the Commission is to foster ties of friendship among the member countries and also spread solidarity among the populations of the entire island countries of the African Indian Ocean.
- The IOC defends the members nations' interests in Africa and also in international fora.
- It has many projects in arenas such as sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem preservation, maritime security, entrepreneurship, public health, culture and renewable energies.

IOC Members

The IOC has five member countries. They are:

1. Comoros
2. Madagascar
3. Mauritius
4. Réunion (an overseas region of France)
5. Seychelles

The IOC has seven observers. They are:

1. India
2. China
3. Japan
4. European Union
5. Sovereign Order of Malta
6. International Organisation of La Francophonie
7. United Nations

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the steps taken by the Indian navy in the recent years to strengthen its maritime domain awareness. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. "The BREXIT was driven largely by nationalistic impulse rather than economic considerations", critically examine. (15 marks, 250 words)