

27 Jan 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. 'Inclusive reforms must for UNSC to be effective'

Context:

India has said that the [UN Security Council](#) is finding itself unable to act effectively to address increasingly complex issues of international peace and security as it lacked inclusivity of those who need to be members of the powerful organ of the world body.

Details:

- India, along with Brazil, Japan and Germany are pressing for urgent reform of the UN Security Council and for a permanent seat in it.

This topic has been covered in [23rd September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

2. In the footsteps of the legendary Muktiyoddhas

Context:

A 122-member tri-service contingent of Bangladesh marched on Rajpath at the Republic Day parade in India as both the countries celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1971 Liberation War.

Details:

- India is currently celebrating the Swarnim Vijay Varsh -- the Golden Jubilee year -- commemorating the country's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh.
- It is these fraternal ties between the two countries that make the relations transcend even a strategic partnership.

Bangladesh in 1971 Liberation War:

- The Bangladesh Navy had successfully conducted “Operation Jackpot” during the war, destroying 26 enemy ships in seaports and river ports.
- The Bangladesh Air Force conducted 50 successful strikes on the enemy targets as part of “Kilo Flight” from the base in Dimapur, India.
- The legendary Muktiyoddhas of Bangladesh, fought against oppression, mass atrocities by tyrannical forces and for the freedom of Bangladesh.
 - “Muktiyoddhas” are freedom fighters of Bangladesh.

Read more on [India-Bangladesh Relations](#).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Cairn Energy wins arbitration award

Context:

Recently, a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague ruled in favour of Cairn Energy PLC of the U.K and awarded \$1.2 billion in damages against India in the retrospective taxation case.

This topic has been covered in [24th December 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Details:

- In the latest development, Cairn Energy Plc has threatened that, unless the government resolves the issue, it may be forced to begin attaching Indian assets including bank accounts in different world capitals.
- In a letter to the Indian High Commission in London Cairn's top leadership has said that the necessary preparations have been made for the verdict to be enforced against Indian assets in jurisdictions around the world if India failed to discuss paying the amount awarded.
- The assets already under consideration could include Embassy bank accounts, non-diplomatic premises, Air India planes and state-owned ships in several places including the U.K., Holland, France, Canada and the U.S.
- The move would be similar to the action against a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane that was seized in Malaysia over a dispute with an Irish company, or the seizure of a Venezuelan ship ordered by a court in favour of U.S. company ConocoPhillips in 2018.
- Cairn has stressed in the letter that it would only consider this extreme option if the Indian government did not respond.
- It has cited clauses in the U.K.-India Bilateral Investment Treaty, the UNCITRAL arbitration rules, and the New York Convention to which India is a signatory, that would be breached if India fails to pay the dues.
 - The dues include about \$220 million in accrued interest in addition to the \$1.2 billion award.

Note:

In a similar arbitration case, India lost against Vodafone, the government has filed an appeal in a Singapore court to defend the retrospective tax demand on the telecom firm. The officials have stressed that the government's sovereign right to levy taxes cannot be questioned under bilateral pacts.

This topic has been covered in [26th September 2020 CNA](#) and [25th December 2020 CNA](#).

2. India set to grow 11.5% in 2021: IMF

Context:

The International Monetary Fund ([IMF](#)) has projected an 11.5% growth rate for India in 2021.

Details:

- The projection makes India the only major economy to register double-digit growth this year amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.
- IMF's growth projections for India reflected a rebound in the economy, which is estimated to have contracted by 8% in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- China stands next with 8.1% growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9%) and France (5.5%).
- It said that India's economy is projected to grow by 6.8% in 2022 and that of China by 5.6%.
- India had a somewhat faster pace of recovery, but cumulatively by the end of 2022, its GDP is expected to be 9% below its pre-pandemic projected level.

3. 'Data privacy can take form of non-price competition'

Context:

Findings of a study by [Competition Commission of India](#) on data privacy, price and non-price factors of competition in the telecom sector.

Details:

- According to the study, data privacy can take the form of non-price competition and abuse of dominance can lower privacy protection.
 - Abuse of dominance can take the form of lowering the privacy protection and therefore fall within the ambit of antitrust as low privacy standard implies lack of consumer welfare.
- CCI noted that an aspect of data in the context of competition in digital communications market is the conflict between allowing access and protecting consumer privacy.
- In addition to the price-based competition, the CCI observed other non-price factors such as quality of service (QoS), data speeds and bundled offerings, which are likely to be the new drivers of competitive rivalry between service providers in the telecom sector.
- On other non-price factors of competition, the consumers ranked network coverage at the top followed by customer service, tariff packaging and lower tariffs as the most important factors for the preference of a particular network.

4. Gehlot govt. brings M-sand policy for construction works

Context:

The Rajasthan government brought the much-awaited policy on manufactured sand (M-sand).

Details:

- The Supreme Court had banned illegal mining on riverbeds in 2017.
- Due to the fast-growing construction industry, the demand for sand has increased tremendously, leading to a shortage of suitable river sand in most parts of the world.
- The demand for sand in the state in the construction sector had touched 70 million tonnes.
- Sufficient quantity of sand [for construction] is not available in Rajasthan in the wake of judicial orders and environment-related procedures.

Significance:

- The new policy will ensure availability of M-sand as a long-term alternative to bajri.
- The policy gives industry status to the units producing it for construction work and reducing the dependence on bajri (riverbed sand).
- It would help create employment opportunities through new units and resolve the issue of huge quantities of waste generated in the mining areas
- It will enable investors to set up M-sand units by utilising the incentives offered by the State government.
- It will also help in environmental protection and generate faith among the public in the efficacy of M-sand for construction works.

M-sand:

- Manufactured sand (M-sand) is a substitute for river sand in the construction industry.
- It is produced from hard granite stone by crushing.
- Due to the depletion of good quality river sand for the use of construction, the use of manufactured sand has been increasing.
- M-sand will reduce over-exploitation of river beds, it can be dust-free, etc.
- Another reason for use of M-Sand is its availability and transportation cost.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Pursuing national interests, at the UN high table

Context:

- India officially began its two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council with the beginning of the year 2021.

Details:

- India's quest of its goals at the UNSC must have a clear agenda and also reflect its material and geopolitical limitations.

A seat at the global high table

- India has harboured ambitions to be on the seat of the high table of global diplomacy, in fact, it goes back to as early as India's first Prime Minister saying that India should get its rightful place in the comity of nations, a well-deserved place owing to its great civilization.
- Several permanent members of UNSC have backed India's candidature at the high table of the UN Security Council (UNSC), but it is fairly safe to say it is not going to materialize anytime soon.
- India will have to make do with its two-year non-permanent stint at the UNSC. It should be seen as a platform to showcase India's credibility in playing a central role in determining the conduct of global affairs.
- It also presents India a golden opportunity to identify and pursue its national interests at the regional and global level, India must not take the path of having to chase elusive goals like a permanent membership or to issue please-all platitudes.
- The UNSC is considered the 'nucleus' of the UN system, it is the only body that has the real punitive powers, thus the leading powers of the international system try to dictate terms. The fact that the UNSC membership expansion reforms haven't taken place for decades together signifies how the leading powers want it to remain a 'closed club'.
- The seat at the UNSC table as even a non-permanent member is an important position to be in, the UNSC often reflects the true realism in the context of International Relations, it is not a place for pursuing illusionary goals or rhetoric.
- India has secured the place for the eighth time now and must put to use all its past experiences to chart its own course.

Timing of membership

- The timing of India's tenure at the UNSC coincides with the emergence of a new world order, one marked by systemic uncertainty, forgotten global commons, lack of global leadership, deeply entrenched faultlines and an era of unapologetic pursuance of selfish national interests.
- Though there appears to be some change on the horizon with the change in guard in the US administration, with the new US President offering hope on going back to the Paris Climate Agreement and also hinting at an Iran nuclear deal, this will just offset some of the damage but not eliminate the impact of the damage that was done to the world order.
- There have been questions over the relevance of UNSC in the present era of "de-institutionalisation." There have been instances in the past where the UNSC as a forum has been disobeyed like the US invasion of Iraq, the 2008 Georgia crisis. Also, the UNSC has been accused of being a platform for the P-5 for putting national interests ahead of common global interests.
- There also have been doubts if the UNSC will live up to the primary objective of maintaining international peace and security.
- Contemporary India is more self-confident, resolute and wants to be a shaper of geopolitics even though it lacks the material wherewithal, economic heft, and domestic consensus, to action its ambitions. But at least its mindset has changed, from being satisfied on the margins to desiring to be at the centre stage.
- On the downside, however, its hard realism is not just a foreign policy attribute but reflective of and stems from its domestic political dynamics, worrying as it were.
- New Delhi's pursuit of its interests at the UNSC should, therefore, reflect its material and geopolitical limitations, and its energies should be focused on a clearly identified agenda.

The China factor

- India has in the last year seen skirmishes on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, this could have a bearing in the UNSC meetings.
- New Delhi's tenure at the UNSC comes in the wake of its growing military rivalry with Beijing, the impact of which has already started to be felt at the UNSC meetings in New York.
- China's intentions were given away when they chose to firmly oppose India's candidature as the chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) in 2022. The moves of the new Biden administration will be closely watched now, previously, the Donald Trump's policy was to counterattack China at every possible opportunity, and if there is any continuity in such a policy, then India might stand to benefit by finding itself some useful allies in checking Chinese aggression in the region.
- India's recent drift towards the West at the UNSC might resemble a 'zero-sum' game with the widening of the growing gulf between Russia and India, especially in the times of strengthening Sino-Russia ties.
- However, India has to be proactive in this case; trying to please everyone and sitting on the fence will not stand to benefit anyone.

- India's seat at the UNSC will be critical in checking further Chinese incursions along the Line of Actual Control and building up enough infrastructure and mobilising sufficient forces in the forward areas.
- China's reputation of a 'land shark' has been well established through India's experience from Doklam to Ladakh to now Arunachal Pradesh, thus it is important that India acquire help from all possible avenues to thwart Chinese ambitions along the border.

Focus on terror

- India has been a victim of state-sponsored cross-border terrorism, thus the issue of terror is likely to be a major focus for India at the UNSC.
- India has unequivocally argued against describing terrorists as "good" or "bad", for all those who use terrorism as a vehicle are equally guilty, the distinction is merely subject to the pursuance of narrow national interests and has got nothing to do with "good" or "bad".
- New Delhi recently assumed the chair of the Taliban sanctions committee. This is a significant development considering the changes that are happening in Afghanistan, that forms India's immediate neighbourhood.
- The issue of terrorism has been a major threat to India's national security and foreign policy discourse for decades now.
- There have been calls from international experts about the way to deal with the Taliban, a few have recommended that the time has come to engage all elements in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, however, engagement is not endorsement leave alone approval.
- India's policy with regards to terrorism will have to have far more diplomatic finesse and political nuance especially taking into consideration that it is heading the Taliban sanctions committee while courting the very same Taliban.
- Being a non-permanent member gives an opportunity for India to forge a coalition among like-minded states and set out its priorities for the next decade on issues from climate change to non-proliferation.
- The emergence of the 'Indo-Pacific' as a new theatre for a balance of power has put India in the thick of things, thus India's UNSC strategy should involve shaping the narrative and global policy engagement in the context of issues like the Indo-Pacific.
- Given India's centrality in the Indo-Pacific region and the growing global interest in the concept, New Delhi would do well to take it upon itself to shape the narrative around it.

Think beyond reforms

- India must be well aware of the possibility that aiming to achieve national interest at and through the UNSC will be met with resistance and also that the UNSC is unlikely to admit new members in the near future.

- India's past global engagements and efforts have often been contingent on the hope that it would one day be offered a seat at the permanent member's table at the UNSC.
- The recent past observations and experiences suggest that any move to compromise to get into the good-books of the P-5 to gain entry into the UNSC will not yield any result.
- Therefore, India must expand its efforts on what it can achieve during the short period it would be in the UNSC rather than what it wishes happened.

Category: ROAD TRANSPORT

1. Taxing clunkers

Context:

- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways has approved the proposal to levy the tax and it will now go to the states for consultation before it is formally notified.

Details:

- According to the proposal, the transport vehicles which are older than eight years could be charged a Green Tax during the renewal of fitness certificate at the rate of 10 to 25 per cent of the road tax, and personal vehicles are to be charged Green Tax at the time of renewal of Registration Certification after 15 years.

Need for such a policy

- It is estimated that commercial vehicles constitute about 5 per cent of the total vehicle fleet and contribute about 65-70 per of total vehicular pollution.
- It is also an attempt to push for vehicles like strong hybrids, electric vehicles, and alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol, LPG that are environmentally-benign.

What the proposed policy could mean?

- The policy aims to increase the tax on older vehicles and by this prompt a shift to cleaner ones.
- The Centre's proposed policy to raise road tax on older vehicles from April 1 next year could potentially make way for a new fleet of vehicles, replacing the older vehicles that contribute heavily to air pollution.
- This move could potentially bring in progress in terms of reducing air pollution, raising fuel efficiency, and improving safety standards.
- The proposal of "tax on clunkers", i.e, tax on dilapidated vehicles has been on the anvil for several years now.

- The proposal aims to tax the commercial transport vehicles at 10%-25% extra on road tax after eight years when renewing the fitness certificate, and, similarly, personal vehicles after 15 years.
- The public transport is given concessions and at the same time, the hybrids, electrics and farm vehicles are exempt from this new proposal.
- There is a likelihood of a higher tax in cities that are currently witnessing high pollution levels, and the proposal also contemplates on having a higher tax on diesel engines.
- The Constitution lists road transport in the concurrent list, the states, which currently enforce the motor vehicles law, will now have to contemplate on the proposed changes.

A different approach

- There have been efforts in the past by other countries to renew the vehicular fleet, case in point being the Car Allowance Rebate System (CARS), it was a \$3 billion U.S. federal scrappage program intended to provide economic incentives to U.S. residents to purchase a new, more fuel-efficient vehicle when trading in a less fuel-efficient vehicle.
- The program was promoted as a post-recession stimulus program to boost auto sales while putting more fuel-efficient vehicles on the roadways.
- India's scheme deviates from the above-mentioned attempt, wherein the proposed policy relies on penal taxation to nudge the owners to scrap their old vehicles, with no cash-for-trade-in arrangement.
- India's attempt will require the additional tax proposed to exceed the resale value of the polluting motor, thus incentivizing its disposal, backed up with adequate safeguards to ensure that it is indeed scrapped and recycled under a monitored system.
- Equity features can possibly be made a part of the scheme, like offering a discount to operators such as autorickshaw drivers who belong to a lower-income segment, similar to the 2009 stimulus given under the JNNURM scheme for buses.
- The suggested policy shifts the focus on electric vehicles and can be a part of a green post-pandemic recovery plan.

Scrappage plan

- The vehicle scrappage policy has finally been approved by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), however, it is currently applicable only to government vehicles for now.
- The policy mandates that vehicles of both, Central and State Governments that have aged beyond 15 years will be scrapped. The policy was approved this year and will come into effect on April 1st, 2022.
- With the announcement of the scrapping plan for government vehicles, the focus must be on building capacities in the organised sector to manage the task of efficient materials recovery and in the event of extending the policy to private vehicles as well, this will come in handy.

- The scrappage policy is expected to boost demand for new vehicles in a COVID-hit economy. It is considered as crucial for the revival of India's auto sector, which was struggling since a year before the onset of the pandemic.
- Adequate care has to be taken to oversee that the sudden demand stimulus available to the auto industry must not place the consumers at a disadvantageous position.

Way Forward

- The vehicle registration database for all States requires updating to reflect true numbers of old vehicles on the road, eliminating those scrapped; a significant number, more than 15 years old, still runs. Such data will help target scrappage policy benefits better.
- There is a need to support small entrepreneurs who own and operate transport vehicles as they lack the resources to transition to newer ones, therefore, there is a need to provide loans and grants to enable a smooth transition.
- India's policy to phase-out polluting fuel guzzlers has had a long gestation, and States should see the value of operationalising it as planned.
- The new fleet of vehicles and cleaner fuels will make air pollution problem less severe in cities and also ensure road safety.

Category: INDIAN POLITY

1. Many vulnerabilities

Context:

- The Chief Election Commissioner has announced that the ECI is commencing trials of a “remote voting project”.

Details:

- The Election Commission has collaborated with IIT-Madras to come up with a new technology which will allow electors to vote from faraway cities without going to the designated polling station of their constituencies.
- The mock trials for a remote voting facility for electors are expected to begin shortly.

Electronic Voting Machine

- First-time use of EVMs occurred in the general election in Kerala in 1982; however, the absence of a specific law prescribing its use led to the Supreme Court striking down that election. Subsequently, in 1989, the Parliament amended the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to create a provision for the use of EVMs in the elections.

- In 2004, in the General Election to the Lok Sabha, the EVMs (more than one million) were used in all 543 Parliamentary Constituencies in the country.
- The design and application of EVMs in the elections are considered a significant achievement in global democracy. It has brought more transparency, swiftness, and acceptability in the system. It has also helped in creating a vast pool of election officials well versed in its use.

Robustness of EVM

- An EVM consists of two units, namely, Control Unit (CU) and Balloting Unit (BU) with a cable for connecting both. A Balloting Unit caters up to 16 candidates.
- There is a number of variants available for the EVMs and over time, it has evolved and become more robust.
- Since the standalone single-chip device is not connected to any network, it has been deemed to be robust.
- This is also backed up with several technological and administrative safeguards to ensure that the machine is not tampered with.
- The addition of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail as an independent system attached with the Electronic Voting Machines, that allows the voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended has increased the layer of protection against any malpractices.
- Although the ECI generally claims that EVMs are tamperproof and perfect for the Indian elections, there have been occasions where EVMs malfunctioned and had to be replaced.

Remote voting

- The announcement by Chief Election Commissioner that the ECI is commencing trials of a “remote voting project” will surely bring about discussions on the safety of the move.
- There is no official communication from the Election Commission of India about the project, but the ECI officials have mentioned that the system, being developed by IIT-Madras, employs the blockchain method for “two-way remote voting” at designated centres.
- Remote voting was seen in the recent US presidential election, and the concept gained traction owing to the COVID-19 pandemic so as to keep social distancing.
 - The mail-in ballot system was used in the U.S., it is a system wherein the registered voters receive ballots and they return it via post or dropped it off at secure "drop boxes" or voting centres. An important observation to be made here is that the entire exercise was paper-based.

Blockchain technology

- Blockchain is a system of recording information in a way that makes it difficult or impossible to change, hack, or cheat the system.

- A blockchain is essentially a digital ledger of transactions that is duplicated and distributed across the entire network of computer systems on the blockchain.
- The blockchain method implements an online public bulletin board that allows for a linear ordering of data to which a user can only further append data.
- The board itself is public and available for anyone to read and verify.
- The blockchain technology has already been deployed in cryptocurrencies, the Bitcoin blockchain records a list of transactions that can be read to find out who owns which bitcoins without any centralised authority.

Blockchain technology in voting

- In the case of a blockchain-based voting system, the voting authority will have to authenticate this bulletin board in which users sign in using cryptographic signatures to register their votes in a ledger.
- The cryptographic features enable this system to guarantee data security and verifiability, but its dependence upon a network and devices could allow vulnerabilities that are present in any Internet-based system to creep into the system.

Concerns

- A draft paper by MIT and Harvard researchers has raised alarms over the designs of a remote block-chain-based voting system and have flagged off serious vulnerabilities in some instances where it was tried out.
- The paper also points out that the remote block-chain based voting system will not just have the vulnerabilities faced by any Internet-based system, but also introduces an element of complexity.

Conclusion:

- The ECI would do well to exercise caution before deploying this method in elections, besides subjecting it to a rigorous public appraisal.
- The trust of the public in the electoral system is a prerequisite to the healthy functioning of any democracy.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Budget may set higher agri credit target at ₹19 lakh crore

What's in News?

The government is likely to raise farm credit target to about ₹19 lakh crore in Budget 2021-22 to be presented on February 1, with the aim of doubling farmers' income by 2022.

- The government has been raising credit target for the farm sector every year. Consequently, the agricultural credit flow has increased consistently over the years, exceeding the target set for each fiscal.
- For the fiscal year 2020-21, the government set a farm credit target of ₹15 lakh crore.
- In the budget 2020-21, the Finance Minister said that the Non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and co-operatives are active in the agriculture credit space and that NABARD refinance scheme would be further expanded.

Importance of credit in agriculture:

- Credit is a critical input in achieving higher farm output.
- Institutional credit will help delink farmers from non-institutional sources where they are compelled to borrow at usurious rates of interest.
- It is one of the significant factors that would contribute to achieving the central government's goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Indian Pangolin:

1. It is classified as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List.
2. Meat and scales of pangolins are used for medicinal purposes in several parts of the world.
3. It is an insectivorous mammal.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Indian Pangolin is native to the Indian subcontinent.
- It is an insectivorous mammal. It feeds on ants and termites.
- The meat and scales of pangolins are used for medicinal purposes in several parts of the world.
- In the IUCN Red List, Indian Pangolin is classified as Endangered and the Chinese Pangolin is classified as Critically Endangered.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Border Security Force (BSF):

1. BSF is the designated border guarding force for India's borders with Pakistan and Myanmar.
2. It is one of the Central Armed Police Forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
3. It has its own air wing, marine wing, an artillery regiment, and commando units.
4. It is the world's largest border guarding force.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Border Security Force is one of the Central Armed Police Forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs and was raised in the wake of the 1965 War.
- As per the 'One Border One Force' policy, BSF is the designated border guarding force for India's borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- It currently stands as the world's largest border guarding force.
- It has its own air wing, marine wing, an artillery regiment, and commando units.
- Its fleet of watercraft guards the Sunderbans Delta in the Bay of Bengal and Sir Creek in the Arabian Sea.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to M-sand:

1. It is produced from hard granite stone by crushing.
2. M-Sand is a substitute for river sand in construction.
3. Usage of M-sand may lead to environmental disasters like groundwater depletion, water scarcity.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Manufactured sand (M-sand) is an alternative for river sand. Due to the depletion of good quality river sand for the use of construction, the use of manufactured sand has been increased.
- It is produced from hard granite stone by crushing.
- Usage of M-sand prevents dredging of river beds to get river sand which may lead to environmental disasters like groundwater depletion, water scarcity.
- It will reduce over-exploitation of river beds, it can be dust-free, etc.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Asian Giant Softshell Turtle:

1. It is a freshwater turtle occurring in eastern and southern India.
2. It is classified as endangered in the IUCN Red List.
3. It is also called the frog-faced softshell turtle.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Asian Giant Softshell Turtle is also known as Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle and the frog-faced softshell turtle.
- It is a species of freshwater turtle and is native to Southeast Asia.
- It is classified as endangered in the IUCN Red List.
- It has been considered to be among the largest extant freshwater turtles.
- It occurs in southern and eastern India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Philippines and Indonesia.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. “Raising tax on older vehicles will help shift to cleaner ones.” In light of the above statement, discuss the Centre’s proposed policy to raise road tax on vehicles of a certain age. (10 marks, 150 words) [GS-3, Road transport]
2. Explain how India can utilize its status of a non-permanent member at the UNSC to further its foreign policy objectives. (15 marks, 250 words) [GS-2, International Relations]

