

23 Feb 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India in trade, defence pacts with Mauritius

Context:

India and Mauritius signed a \$100 million Defence Line of Credit agreement.

Details:

- It was a part of several understandings, including the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA).
- CECPA was signed between the two countries during the ongoing visit by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.
- It is India's first such agreement with an African country.
- Using the new framework under the CECPA, India and Mauritius would provide preferential access to a number of items like surgical equipment, medicine, and textile products that would cater to market requirements on both sides.
 - For instance, Mauritius will get preferential access for export of 40,000 tonnes of sugar into India at an early time frame.
- It will provide a timely boost for the revival of our post-Covid economies and also enable Indian investors to use Mauritius as a launch-pad for business expansion into continental Africa helping the prospect of Mauritius emerging as a 'hub of Africa'.
- The two countries also exchanged letters on provisions of a Dornier aircraft and a Dhruv advanced light helicopter.
 - Both would be given on lease to Mauritius on gratis basis for two years.

India-Mauritius Relationship:

- Mauritius occupies a special place in India's Prime Minister's vision of 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- India has expressed support to Mauritius in its effort to be taken off the FATF's grey list.
- India also provided 2 lakh doses of Covid vaccines to Mauritius. Mauritius has requested an additional 2,00,000 doses of vaccines.

2. Maldives Parliament debates defence deal with India

Context:

India and the Maldives signed a defence Line of Credit agreement worth \$50 million during the ongoing visit by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

Read more on this topic covered in **22nd February 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis.**

Details:

- Following the signing of the agreement, Maldives's Parliament took up an emergency motion, demanding greater transparency on the bilateral pact.

- The opposition submitted an emergency motion objecting to the signing of the pact, linked to the “independence and sovereignty” of the Maldives.
- However, the Maldivian Defence Minister made it clear that the project was vital to the effective functioning of the Maldivian Coast Guard.

Background:

- The harbour development agreement, effectively a defence pact, was signed following a request from the government of Maldives — since former President Abdulla Yameen’s term in 2013.
- It was for Indian assistance to enhance the capability of the Defence Forces. Subsequently, Male made requests in 2015 and 2016.
 - However, the then foreign minister asserted that no such agreement was concluded.
- Concerns over Indian military presence were flagged in 2018, when the Yameen government asked India to take back two helicopters it had gifted, with a crew and support staff, causing a major strain in bilateral ties.

Note:

- Following the September 2018 defeat of the Yameen administration, which was known for its China tilt, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih’s government has been pursuing an “India first” policy.
- However, not all in the ruling coalition agree with the government’s current foreign policy.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. Pakistan actions to be reviewed at FATF plenary

Context:

Pakistan’s performance in terms of measures taken against money laundering and terror funding will be reviewed in the three-day virtual plenary session of the [Financial Action Task Force \(FATF\)](#).

Details:

- Pakistan has been in the FATF’s ‘greylist’ since June 2018 when it was presented with a 27-point action plan.
- Given the lack of full compliance on the part of Pakistan in certain key areas related to terror funding, it is likely to remain in the ‘greylist’.

This topic has been covered in the [18th February 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Sedition lies in the effect, not in content

Context:

- Disha Ravi, a climate activist, was arrested by the Delhi police from Bengaluru on charges of sedition.

Background:

Section 124A:

- Section 124A of the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**, which deals with sedition, was drafted by Thomas Babington Macaulay and included in the IPC in 1870.
- Section 124A of the IPC states that 'Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added.'

Cases related to section 124A:

Kedar Nath Singh v/s State of Bihar (1962) case:

- In *Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962)*, the **Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of sedition** and noted it as being a **reasonable restriction on free speech as provided in Article 19(2) of the Constitution**.
- It made clear that a citizen has the right to say or write whatever she likes about the government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comments, as long as she does not incite people to violence against the government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder.

Bombay High Court case:

- The Bombay High Court, in the **case of cartoonist Aseem Trivedi**, issued **guidelines that the police must follow prior to invoking the provisions of sedition**.
- This includes an objective evaluation of the material on whether the words and actions cause disaffection, enmity and disloyalty to the government and if it is of the magnitude that incites violence or tends to create public disorder.
- The police are also required to obtain a legal opinion in writing from a law officer of the district who must give reasons on how the pre-conditions are met. This needs to be followed by a second opinion from the State's public prosecutor.

Concerns:

Misuse of the law:

- There are questions being raised on the **misuse of this law to quell dissent**.
- Notably, many charged are individuals protesting government action, which the Constitution Bench in *Kedar Nath* held falls outside the ambit of sedition.

- Data from the National Crime Records Bureau notes that between 2016 and 2019, **the number of cases of sedition under Section 124A increased by 160%**, while the rate of conviction dropped to 3.3% in 2019 from 33.3% in 2016.

Poor implementation of law and associated guidelines:

- While courts have on numerous occasions cautioned law enforcement agencies not to misuse the provisions on sedition, and follow court directions, they have been grossly ignored. There has been the poor implementation of the law and guidelines related to section 124A.

Way forward:

The law needs a relook:

- Despite a Constitution Bench upholding the law on sedition, the available data and the gross misuse of the legal provisions call for a complete relook at the provision.
- Also given that there have been substantial changes since 1962 when the Kedar Nath case was decided, there is a need for a relook as a law cannot afford to remain static.
- Many nations have repealed sedition like provisions in their statute. **The U.K. repealed the offence of sedition in 2010.**
- In **2018**, the **Law Commission of India** also called for a relook at the controversial law.

Following the guidelines provided by the judiciary:

- The police must follow the process established by law and follow the guidelines provided by the Bombay High Court in the Aseem Trivedi case.

An effect-based test:

- The courts must adopt what some Western countries follow: an effect-based test which **examines the effects of the seditious text** rather than a content-based test which reviews the text alone.

Conclusion:

- The law of sedition is a powerful tool in the hands of the state to maintain peace and order in society. However, it cannot be invoked to quieten the disquiet under the pretence of muzzling the miscreants.

Category: ECONOMY-AGRICULTURE

1. New paradigm in animal husbandry

Context:

- The **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF)** announced in 2020 under the **AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** stimulus package.

Details:

- The Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) aims to incentivize investments by individual entrepreneurs, private companies, MSME, Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs) and

Section 8 companies to **establish dairy processing and value addition infrastructure, meat processing and value addition infrastructure and animal feed plants.**

- As per the provisions of AHIDF, a project will be eligible for a loan amount that covers up to 90% of the estimated cost – with an interest subvention of 3% for all eligible entities.
- The AHIDF has been set up with an outlay of Rs. 15,000 crore.

Significance:

Address infrastructural deficit in dairy value chain:

- AHIDF will help **strengthen the dairy value chain** which is currently facing an infrastructural deficit.
- There is an infrastructure gap of about 120-130 MMT in terms of chilling infrastructure at collection centres. Similarly, there is an infrastructural deficit even in terms of milk processing.
- The setting up of chilling infrastructure at collection centres by setting up bulk milk coolers will **help prevent wastage of milk.**

Help increase productivity of cattle:

- AHIDF's focus on the animal feed sector will help increase the productivity of cattle, especially by **enhancing the quality of animal feed.**
- AHIDF has been designed to support the establishment of animal feed plants of varying capacities – including the setting up of mineral mixture plants, silage making units, and animal feed testing laboratory.
- This could **spur innovative solutions from domestic start-ups for the development of new varieties of green fodder and enriched animal feed.**

Nutritional security:

- The scheme's support to the poultry industry will not only result in economic but also nutritional benefits by boosting the poultry segment's output, efficiency and quality.
 - India is the fourth-largest chicken meat producer and the second-largest egg producer in the world.
- The poultry sector can help **mitigate rampant malnutrition given that chicken meat provides the cheapest source of protein per unit.** Eggs have been introduced as part of the mid-day meal in several anganwadis in the country.

Economic benefits:

- As an allied industry of agriculture, the animal husbandry and dairy sector collectively employ more than 100 million people.
- **The AHIDF has the potential to create over 30 lakh jobs,** as it helps to overhaul domestic infrastructure towards giving greater prominence to India's dairy and livestock products in the global value chain.
- Also given that the bulk of animal husbandry related establishments are concentrated in rural India, the impetus to this sector will have a substantial impact on the **socio-economic development of the nation.**

Climate action:

- Macro benefits regarding climate change are linked to the animal husbandry sector. Enhanced infrastructure can make processing units more energy-efficient and help mitigate their carbon footprint.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Adding heft to diplomacy with some help from science

Context:

- India's ongoing '**Vaccine Maitri**' campaign.
 - India's 'Vaccine Maitri' campaign aims at provisioning COVID-19 vaccines to countries both near and away from its immediate neighbourhood.
 - This initiative aims to leverage India's science and technological advantages for the furtherance of its foreign policy objectives.

Details:

The COVID-19 response:

- India has been able to use its science and technology prowess to address the global challenge brought out by the pandemic.
 - India has been **sending medicines such as hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol to over 150 countries including the U.S.**
 - As scientists developed vaccines to fortify human beings against an aggressive COVID-19 virus, it was India, an established **leader in vaccine manufacturing**, that rose to the challenge of global provision. India's pharmaceutical firms such as the Serum Institute of India have partnered with the U.K.'s Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine project while Bharat Biotech gave rise to indigenous vaccines in the shape of Covaxin.
- India's COVID-19 response was closely aligned with its Neighbourhood First, Act East, Indo-Pacific and Look West policies.
- India has played a crucial role at a time when the developed world was preoccupied with trying to address its own domestic issues and China's health diplomacy came with prohibitively high costs.
- India's efforts to address the current health emergency have been met with vocal appreciation from a number of countries.

Overview of India's science and technology policy framework and diplomacy:

- Since independence, India has been seeking international scientific advances for the country's development and rise.
- More powerful states such as the United States sought to curb India's ambitions in critical spheres such as its nuclear and space programmes.
- By the early years of the 21st century, India sought to reduce its dependence on foreign countries to emerge as a **net provider of development assistance in the international system**. Despite

limitations, India still managed to assist **its partners from the Global South in key areas of science and technology such as health across Asia and Africa.**

- The 21st-century international system was more conducive to the country's science and technology designs in spheres such as nuclear and space technology due to improvement in ties between India and the United States.
- India also signed **strategic partnerships bearing substantial science and technology components with advanced economies** such as the United Kingdom, Japan, Israel, Germany, the European Union, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, South Korea and Australia even as it strengthened its traditional partnerships with countries such as France and Russia.
- India established the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India in November 1999.
- India's critical policy frameworks like the country's Science and Technology Policy 2003 and **Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2013** clearly relate international science and technology cooperation with the national interest. The current administration has been categorical in placing science and technology at the forefront of the country's diplomatic engagement.
- India's has been exhibiting increasing alignment to international science and technology cooperation. India currently fields four Development Partnership Administrations under its Ministry of External Affairs. **The Ministry of External Affairs has set up the New Emerging & Strategic Technologies Division** to manage science and technology issues in the nation's diplomatic matrix.

Recommendations:

- As India moves forward with its Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, there is the need to create an environment where science and technology can not only answer its own national needs and cross-border interests but also global challenges. The following aspects must be addressed.
 - There is a need to **increase India's allocation for science and technology-related research.**
 - There must be an emphasis on **ensuring the participation of all the stakeholders** including the states, universities and the private sector in research and development efforts.
 - India's young scientists and technologists have to be made more aware of the country's foreign policy objectives.

Conclusion:

- The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has presented the country with a unique space to **mainstream science and technology in its domestic and foreign policies.** The administration must work towards converting the challenging situation into an opportunity.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Xi may visit India for BRICS summit

What's in News?

China's President Xi Jinping may visit India in 2021 to attend the **BRICS** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) leaders' meeting.

- China expressed its support for India hosting the meeting and said the meet would not be impacted by the border crisis.
- China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that they would work with India and other members to strengthen communication and dialogue, and consolidate the three-pillar cooperation.
 - Referring to economic cooperation, political and security cooperation, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

Note:

The latest standoff between India and China in Eastern Ladakh led to the biggest violence since 1967, the first loss of life since 1975 and a major rupture in the relationship.

Read about the **India-China Border Clash at Galwan Valley in detail.**

2. '₹70,221 cr. reserved for domestic buying'

What's in News?

The Defence Minister said that about ₹70,000 crore of the capital allocation (63% of the outlay for 2021-22) of ₹1.35 lakh crore in the defence budget would be reserved for domestic procurements.

Details:

- In the budgetary allocation for 2021-22, the capital allocation for defence saw an increase of 18.75% compared to Budget Estimates (BE).
- In 2020-21, the government, for the first time introduced a separate allocation for domestic procurement within the defence budget and reserved ₹52,000 crore for 2020-21.
- To support start-ups, the Ministry has planned to channelise about ₹1000 crore during 2021-22 for procurement from start-ups under the Innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX) initiative.
- He announced that a second negative list of items that could be procured only locally by the Services would be issued.

3. Railways stung by IT 'breaches'

What's in News?

The Ministry of Railways has roped in the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) to educate its officials on Internet ethics, cyber hygiene and best practices in the use of IT equipment, including mobile phones.

- It follows instances of cyber-attacks during the ongoing pandemic across its network.
- The number of incidents had come to notice regarding breaches in various IT applications as electronic working had got further proliferated.
- Incidents occurred due to improper handling of the IT assets by the personnel.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):

1. It has been set up with an outlay of Rs. 15,000 crore.
2. Individual entrepreneurs are not eligible for loans from the fund.
3. Beneficiaries will have to contribute 10 per cent margin towards the proposed infra project and the rest 90 per cent would be a loan component by scheduled banks.

Which of the given statement/s is are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) has been set up with an outlay of Rs. 15,000 crore as a part of the 20 lakh crore stimulus package under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- The AHIDF would promote infrastructure investments in dairy, meat processing and animal feed plants.
- Farmer producer organizations (FPOs), MSMEs, Section 8 companies, private companies and individual entrepreneurs would be eligible to benefit from the fund.
- Beneficiaries will have to contribute a 10 per cent margin towards the proposed infra project and the rest 90 per cent would be a loan component by scheduled banks.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA):

1. It provides for an institutional mechanism to encourage and improve trade between two countries.
2. India has signed the CECPA with Mauritius.
3. It is India's first such free trade agreement with an African country.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) provides for an institutional mechanism to encourage and improve trade between two countries.
- India recently signed the CECPA with Mauritius.
- It is India's first such free trade agreement with an African country.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. A motion of "No Confidence" against the Government can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha.
2. No prior reason needs to be stated for its adoption in the Lok Sabha.
3. The Constitution of India does not mention the No Confidence Motion.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- A "No Confidence Motion" against the Government can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha under rule 198.
- No prior reason needs to be stated for its adoption in the Lok Sabha.
- While Article 75 specifies that the Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha, the Constitution of India does not mention either a Confidence or a No Confidence Motion.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was established by a Group of Seven (G-7) countries
2. Countries in FATF Grey List are "High-Risk Jurisdictions subject to a Call for Action".
3. The first FATF blacklist was issued in 2000.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was established in July 1989 by a Group of Seven (G-7) countries in a Summit held in Paris.
- FATF issues a grey list, officially referred to as Jurisdictions Under Increased Monitoring. The countries in FATF Black List are “High-Risk Jurisdictions subject to a Call for Action”.
- The first FATF blacklist was issued in 2000 with an initial list of 15 countries.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Given the poor implementation of the law and judicial guidelines related to section 124A and its increasing misuse, there have been calls for a complete relook of the provision. Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]
2. The Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) announced in 2020 under the AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan stimulus package would help bring important social, economic, and nutritional benefits to India. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)[GS-3, Economy]