

22 Mar 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. SC walks a tightrope over vacancies

Context:

The Supreme Court Collegium is striving to reach a consensus on recommendations to fill the five vacancies.

Details:

- The names of several High Court judges are in the zone of consideration.
- The Collegium is discussing diverse opinions from within on issues like proportionate representation from various High Courts and seniority among High Court judges before finalising the names to recommend to the government for appointment.
- Proportionate representation from High Courts and seniority carry weight during the appointment process.
 - However, these are only conventions and not constitutional or legal mandates.

Issue:

- The past several months have seen the Supreme Court function under a series of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, even as its judicial strength faded to 29 with the retirement of Justice Indu Malhotra.
 - The maximum possible strength is 34.
- The year 2021 will see four retirements in the top court.
 - As per the Constitution of India, judges of the Supreme Court retire at the age of 65.

Appointment of Judges to the Supreme Court:

- The Collegium System of the Supreme court of India deals with the appointment and transfer of judges.
- Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) is an agreement between the Government and the judiciary that has a set of guidelines for the appointment of judges of the Supreme Court.
- The MoP was formulated after the Third Judges Case in order to govern the process of how the Collegium System would make recommendations to the executive.

Read more about the [Appointment and Removal of Judges of the Supreme Court of India.](#)

2. Corrective voice from top court against stereotyping women

Context:

Recently, the Supreme Court in a judgement forbade judges from making gender-stereotypical comments.

Details:

- A judgment by the Supreme Court forbidding judges from making gender-stereotypical comments came as a corrective voice from within the highest level of judiciary in India.
- The judgment stopped courts from trying to mandate marriage or compromise between a sex offender and his victim.

- It is one among a series of interventions with which the top court has clamped down on abuse and sex stereotyping of women.

Note:

- Some notable judgments which have lashed out at sex stereotyping include:
 - The framing of the [Vishaka Guidelines](#) on sexual harassment of women at workplaces.
 - Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's historic judgment giving women Armed Forces officers equal access to Permanent Commission while debunking the establishment's claim that women were physiologically weaker than men.
 - In the Anuj Garg case, the Supreme Court had rebuked the notion of romantic paternalism, which, in practical effect, put women, not on a pedestal, but in a cage.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Myanmar border shut amid strains over refugee crisis

Context:

India has sealed all entry points along the border with Myanmar and is closely monitoring them to prevent any Myanmar national from entering the country.

Details:

- People belonging to Myanmar's Chin community were seeking to migrate to Mizoram to escape a military crackdown.
- There is considerable support and sympathy among the people of Mizoram over the situation in Myanmar as many have relations across the border.
- The tussle between the Centre and Mizoram on the issue has created a tough time for New Delhi and security agencies in handling the situation on the ground.
- Mizoram CM had written to the centre asserting that India cannot turn a blind eye to the humanitarian crisis unfolding in our own backyard (Myanmar).
- "Myanmar area bordering Mizoram is inhabited by Chin communities, who are ethnically our brethren with whom we have been having close contacts throughout all these years even before India became independent", he stated in the letter.

Note:

- India and Myanmar have an arrangement called the Free Movement Regime (FMR).
- In March 2020, FMR was suspended due to COVID-19 and no one has been allowed since.
- The fallout of this was that there has been an increase in smuggling across the border as the livelihood of people has been disrupted due to the pandemic.
- The Myanmar border is unfenced and completely blocking incursions is not possible given the tough terrain.

Free Movement Regime (FMR):

- India has a 1,643-km border with Myanmar.
 - Mizoram shares a 510-km-long border with Myanmar.
- It has a visa-free movement regime for people living within 16 km on either side of the border known as FMR.
- “Free movement regime” is a bilateral agreement with Myanmar that allows free movement of Indian and Myanmar citizens within 16 km of the border.
- This regime has been in place keeping in view the traditional social relations among the border people. It helps genuine people living in close proximity to the border.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. CPWD to lay three roads near China border in Ladakh

Context:

The Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has floated tenders worth a total of ₹212.99 crore for laying and maintenance of three high-altitude roads near the India-China border in Ladakh.

Details:

- The projects are titled as roads to “Indo-China Border” from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police bases at Shilung La, Nyakmikle and Hena.
- The three tender documents said: "All the three roads would be single lane projects as per the relevant specifications of National Highways."

Note:

The Ministry of Home Affairs has made it clear that 57 roads along the India-China border were being constructed, as well as 47 outposts, 32 helipads and 18 foot tracks in Arunachal Pradesh.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Doubling down on a resilient India

Context

- The article speaks about India's investment climate.

FDI inflows

- Despite India experiencing economic contractions due to covid-19, India saw the fastest growth in Foreign Direct Investment ([FDI](#)) inflows among all the major economies in 2020.
- Google, Facebook, Walmart, Samsung, Foxconn, and Silver are some of the companies which have placed trust in the Indian markets.

But India still remains a complex place to do business.

Challenges

- Companies usually are concerned about market access as they encounter obstacles or conditions which are tough for them to achieve when it comes to operating in India.
- Policies change quite often which shows a lack of planning and frequent changes in rules, laws, create a complex environment for executing an action plan.
- The government's push to build a "self-reliant" India has rattled investors.
- Smaller companies lack the resources and monetary advantages to navigate on-the-ground hurdles.

Still, leading corporate investors see the Indian market differently. They have the vision to understand that these are risks worth taking given the scale of the India Opportunity.

India an essential part of their growth story

1. **First, sheer demographics.**

- What India offers through its nearly 1.4 billion people and their growing purchasing power is uniquely valuable for multinationals with global ambitions.
- No other country outside of China has a market that houses nearly one in six people on the planet and a rising middle class of 600 million.

2. **Second, shifting geopolitics.**

- Trade war and rising tensions between the USA and China are making companies rethink on its strategies as they are moving to different production hubs.
- Savvy countries such as Vietnam have capitalised on this opportunity to great effect, but India is only finally getting serious about attracting large-scale production and exports.
- Major multinational companies such as Samsung have invested billions in the Indian market, and manufacturers such as Cisco, Nokia, Ericsson, and Flex are reportedly weighing new investments that take advantage of fresh incentive programs.

3. **Third, rising digital connectivity.**

- India's digital landscape has further expanded due to cheap mobile data and India has an estimated 700 million active internet users.

- This is the primary reason why leading global tech companies are investing in India and weathering acute policy pressure.
 - Domestic Indian companies have also demonstrated their ability to innovate and deliver high-quality services at scale.
 - The partnerships and FDI flows linking multinationals and Indian tech firms will continue to unlock shared market opportunities for years to come.
4. **Fourth, national resilience.**
- Despite facing the scourge of the novel coronavirus head-on, India has managed the pandemic better than many of its western peers and restored economic activity even before implementing a mass vaccination programme.

Way forward

- Companies should continuously demonstrate their commitment to India.
 - Successful companies do this by placing shared value creation at the heart of their business strategy. They tie corporate success to India's growth and development.
 - They forge enduring partnerships and lasting relationships, elevate and invest in Indian talent, align products with Indian tastes, and ultimately tackle the hardest problems facing India today.

2. Junk inefficiency

Background

Check the link: [CNA dated Jan 31, 2021.](#)

Implementational Challenges

- Enforcement will be key to get the vehicles scrapped once they are found unfit for use and to stop them from moving to smaller towns.
- States must also come on board to provide road tax and registration concessions, while the automobile industry is expected to sweeten the deal with genuine discounts on new vehicles.

Way forward

- The Centre has to offer incentives that reward manufacturers of vehicles that are the most fuel-efficient.

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. How to treat unpaid work

Introduction

- Women everywhere carry a disproportionately higher burden of unpaid work, namely, unpaid domestic services as well as unpaid care of children, the old and the disabled for their respective households.
 - Unpaid work can be understood to comprise all productive activities outside the official labour market done by individuals for their own households or for others.
- Women do this job not necessarily because they like it or are efficient in it, but because it is imposed on them by patriarchal norms, which are the roots of all pervasive gender inequalities.
- Though this work contributes to overall well-being at the household level and collectively at the national level, it is invisible in the national database and particularly in national policies.

This unequal division of unpaid work between women and men is unfair and unjust and it deprives women of equal opportunities as men.

What the government could do?

- First, the government should recognise unpaid work in the national database by a sound time-use survey and use the data in national policies.
 - The most obvious and simple measures are data collection, presentation and analysis.
- A second step in making visible the importance of unpaid work for society as a whole is imputing its value in monetary terms.
 - Imputing a monetary value for unpaid work is a necessary condition for its inclusion in national accounts.
- Third, they could relieve women's burden of unpaid work by improving technology (e.g. better fuel for cooking), better infrastructure (e.g. water at the doorstep), shifting some unpaid work to the mainstream economy (e.g. childcare, care of the disabled, and care of the chronically sick), and by making basic services (e.g. health and transportation) accessible to women.
- Also, they could redistribute the work between men and women by providing different incentives and disincentives to men (e.g. mandatory training of men in housework, childcare, etc.) and financial incentives for sharing housework.
- The government can also look at the payment of pension to old women (60+ years).

Indirect policies relating to unpaid work

- A well-known indirect way of recognizing unpaid work is granting to the male breadwinner/head of the household a (minimum) wage level that is supposed to include some 'reward' for his wife's unpaid household work and a compensation for the fact that he has to support his 'non-earning' wife.

Way forward

- The concept of unpaid work and its place in the economy at large deserves more in-depth research and analysis.

Conclusion

- The reality of the huge unpaid contribution of households to economic value needs to be accepted. If policy-makers became aware of all these effects and took them into account, unpaid work would be 'mainstreamed' as a regular element in the policy-making process.
- Therefore, measures have to be taken to give free time to women, so that new opportunities can strengthen their progress.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Iran deal could be rescued by the IAEA

Reference:

[CNA dated Feb 28, 2021.](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. Centre warns of COVID-19 spike at Kumbh

What's in News?

A Health Ministry team has reported that nearly 10 to 20 pilgrims and 10 to 20 locals at the ongoing Kumbh Mela in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, are being reported positive every day.

Kumbh Mela:

- The Kumbh Mela is the largest public gathering and collective act of faith, anywhere in the world.
- Crowds gather at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mystical [Sarasvati](#); four pilgrimage places on four sacred rivers.
- In 2017, it was included in the list of “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO.
- Kumbh Mela is celebrated four times over a course of 12 years.
- The Kumbh Mela site keeps rotating between one of the four pilgrimage places:
 1. Haridwar on the Ganges in Uttarakhand.
 2. Ujjain on the Shipra in Madhya Pradesh.
 3. Nashik on the Godavari in Maharashtra.
 4. Prayagraj at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati in Uttar Pradesh.

2. Ahom warrior a symbol of atmanirbhar military: PM

What's in News?

The Prime Minister of India called 17th-century Ahom General Lachit Borphukan a symbol of India's “atmanirbhar” military might.

Lachit Borphukan:

- Lachit Borphukan was a commander in the Ahom dynasty, located in present-day Assam.
- He showed exemplary leadership in the Battle of Saraighat (1671).
- The Battle of Saraighat was a naval battle fought between the Mughal Empire and the Ahom Kingdom.
- 24th November is observed as Lachit Diwas in Assam in honour of Lachit Borphukan to commemorate his heroism and the victory of the Assamese army at the Battle of Saraighat.

3. International Day of Forests

- The United Nations observes March 21 as the International Day of Forests, commemorating the green cover around the world and reiterating its importance. The theme of the International Day of Forests for 2021 is “Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being”.
- The Day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests. On this day, countries are encouraged to undertake local, national and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree-planting campaigns.
- The Day is celebrated by the United Nations Forum on Forests and the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant organisations in the field.
- This year’s theme aims to emphasise how restoration and sustainable management of forests can help address climate change and the biodiversity crisis.

G. Tidbits

1. Philippines accuses China of ‘incursion’ in disputed sea

What’s in News?

The Philippines has accused China of incursion after more than 200 militia boats were spotted near a disputed reef in the South China Sea.

- The Philippine coast guard detected the boats in line formation at the boomerang-shaped Whitsun Reef, around 320 km (175 nautical miles) west of Palawan Island.
- Philippines Defence Secretary asserted that these territories were well within Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone and called on the Chinese to stop the incursion and immediately recall the boats violating maritime rights and encroaching into their sovereign territory.

Read more on [South China Sea dispute](#).

- Also, the U.S. had previously accused China of using maritime militia to intimidate, coerce and threaten other nations over its claims to almost the entire South China Sea.

2. Indian-Israeli collaboration testing oral COVID vaccine

What's in News?

An Indian-Israeli collaboration has reportedly developed an oral vaccine for COVID-19.

- The vaccine can be swallowed like a pill instead of being injected, as is the norm.
- The nascent COVID-19 vaccine candidate is a protein-based VLP (Virus Like Particle) vaccine candidate that generates triple protection against the SARS CoV-2 virus, i.e., it is able to target the spike, membrane, and envelope proteins of the coronavirus.
- A preliminary test in animals showed that the vaccine produced the expected antibodies that confer protection.
- However, the findings have not been reported in a scientific publication yet and cannot be independently verified.
- The product is also far from being tested in human trials.
- Premas Biotech, a Gurugram-based biotechnology firm (India), and Oramed Pharmaceuticals, a Jerusalem headquartered company (Israel), have a long-standing collaboration on developing new drug delivery techniques.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. United Nations Refugee Convention sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
2. The United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 includes refugees from Europe only.
3. India is not a signatory of both the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- United Nations Refugee Convention is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- While the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 includes refugees from Europe only, the 1967 Protocol included refugees from all countries.
- India is not a signatory of both the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol.

Q2. Lachit Borphukan is associated with which of the following?

- a. Battle of Itakhuli
- b. Battle of Saraighat

- c. Battle of Khongjom
- d. Gorkha War

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Lachit Borphukan was a commander in the Ahom dynasty, located in present-day Assam.
- He showed exemplary leadership in the Battle of Saraighat (1671).
- The Battle of Saraighat was a naval battle fought between the Mughal Empire and the Ahom Kingdom.

Q3. Muria tribe belongs to which state?

- a. Mizoram
- b. Assam
- c. Chhattisgarh
- d. West Bengal

Answer: c

Explanation:

The Muria are scheduled tribes of the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Whitsun Reef:

1. It is a reef in the Spratly Islands of the South China Sea.
2. It is a V-shaped reef.
3. It is a part of the ongoing maritime dispute between China and the Philippines.

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

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Whitsun Reef is a reef in the Spratly Islands of the South China Sea. It is a V-shaped reef.
- It is a part of the ongoing maritime dispute between China and the Philippines.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Companies with global ambitions invest in the Indian market in spite of hurdles as the rewards for investment are substantial and well worth pursuing. Substantiate. (10 marks, 150 words) [GS 3, Economy]
2. The unpaid work of women has to be recognized and should be taken into account in the formulation of socio-economic policies. Discuss. (10 marks, 150 words) [GS1, Social Issues]

