

## 28 Mar 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

### A. GS 1 Related

#### Category: POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA

##### 1. Amid Bangladesh liberation anniversary, role of India, U.S. in 1971 in spotlight

###### Context:

- Bangladesh commemorates 50 years of its Liberation movement.

###### Background:

- On March 26, 1971 **Bangladesh Liberation movement** began with the declaration of Independence by the **Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters)** led by **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**.
- Following which Pakistani troops launched **Operation Searchlight** that targeted Bangladeshi freedom fighters and activists brutally, with millions of casualties.
  - Approximately 2 to 3 million people were killed, over 200,000 women were raped in organised rape camps, and over 10 million people were displaced, most finding refuge in India.

###### Details:

###### India's response:

- A few days after the Mujib declaration, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi moved a resolution in Parliament condemning the Pakistani crackdown as "genocide".
- The government offered support to the Bangladeshi freedom fighters. The government was also involved in training and arming the Mukti Bahini cadres
- The then Prime Minister also played a significant role in garnering international support for the Bangladeshi cause.
- While the U.S. was against India's stand, Mrs. Gandhi found some support in Moscow, and the **Indo-Soviet treaty of Peace and Cooperation** was signed in August 1971. The Soviet treaty dented India's non-aligned policy, but Soviet naval support and military supplies assisted New Delhi in the 1971 war.

###### American response:

- The U.S. had a pro Pakistan policy. The U.S. under President Richard Nixon moved its "Seventh fleet" into the Bay of Bengal in an attempt to deter the Indian Army from advancing towards Dhaka (Dacca) during the two-week **war in December 1971**.

#### Category: GEOGRAPHY

##### 1. Linking the East with the West

### Context:

- The grounding of a container ship in the Suez Canal has blocked off traffic along the critical shipping lane.
  - The 193-km-long **Suez Canal across Egypt's Isthmus of Suez connects the Mediterranean Sea in the north and the Red Sea in south.**
  - The man-made channel has been a critical artery for global trade since 1869

### Background:

#### **Construction of Suez Canal:**

- In the mid-19th century, French diplomat and engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps won permission from Egypt's Ottoman-appointed ruler to start building the canal.
- In 1858, Universal Suez Ship Canal Company was formed to execute the project and construction work began a year later. Britain, which controlled the route around the African continent, continued to oppose the project as a new waterway would hurt its interests. But in 1869, the canal was officially opened for traffic.
- The Egyptian government, straddled with financial problems, sold its stake in the canal to London in 1875. Since then, France and Britain operated the canal, until **Egypt's socialist President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the Suez canal in 1956.**

#### **Suez crisis:**

- Three months after Nasser nationalised the canal, Israeli troops attacked the Egyptian Sinai. French and British troops joined in later. The plan was to retake control of the canal and remove Nasser. By March 1957, the invading troops were fully withdrawn and Egypt's authority over the canal was recognised. The **Suez crisis** marked Great Britain's dwindling influence in West Asia, a region it controlled since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the arrival of the U.S. as the new great power in the region.
- The canal was closed again during the **1967 war**. It would be reopened only in 1975 after Egyptian-Israeli relations started warming following the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

### Details:

- About 19,000 ships passed through the Suez Canal in 2020 carrying 1.2 billion tonnes of cargo. As much as 13% of all maritime trade, from oil to automobiles, pass through the canal every year.
- **A delay in reopening the channel will have a huge impact on export businesses, commodities, ship and cargo companies and even Egypt's national economy.**

## **B. GS 2 Related**

### **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

#### **1. China, Iran sign a 25-year 'strategic pact'**

### Context:

- China and Iran signing of a 25-year “**strategic cooperation pact**”.

#### Details:

- The agreement covers ‘**political, strategic and economic**’ components and seeks to deepen cooperation.
- The agreement would establish a blueprint for reciprocal investments in the fields of transport, ports, energy, industry and services.
- The agreement comes amid a major push from China to back Iran, as it deals with the continuing weight of sanctions from the U.S. administration.
  - Recently China and Russia called for the U.S. to unconditionally return to the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** as soon as possible and revoke the unilateral sanctions against Iran.
  - The two nations have proposed the establishment of a **regional security dialogue platform** to converge a new consensus on resolving the security concerns of countries in the region.

#### **China’s West Asian push:**

- The agreement came during Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s ongoing six-nation tour to West Asia including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, the UAE, Bahrain and Oman.
- China has proposed a **five-point initiative** on achieving security and stability in the Middle East advocating mutual respect, upholding equity and justice, achieving non-proliferation, jointly fostering collective security, and accelerating development cooperation in the West Asian region.
- China has been keen to deepen its Belt and Road Initiative in the region. China is looking to conclude a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council.
- China’s trade with Arab States reached \$240 billion last year, establishing it as the region’s largest trading partner and a major buyer of crude oil.

### **Category: HEALTH**

#### **1. Will intranasal vaccine give sterilising immunity?**

For information on this topic refer to the following article

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 24th Jan](#)

### **C. GS 3 Related**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### **D. GS 4 Related**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### **E. Editorials**

### **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

## 1. The Afghan endgame

### Context:

- S. Afghanistan Policy under the Presidentship of Joe Biden.

### Background:

For information on the U.S. Taliban deal refer to:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 02nd March 2020](#)

### Details:

- As per the **S.-Taliban deal**, May 1 is the deadline for pulling out all American troops from Afghanistan. However, given the continued violence in Afghanistan, there are growing doubts over U.S. pull out from Afghanistan.
  - No U.S. troops have been targeted by Taliban militants in the past year, but **violence against Afghan civilians**, particularly women, journalists, students and activists has gone up manifold, and despite the peace agreement, more than 3,000 civilians were killed in 2020.

For related information refer to:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 24th Jan 2021](#)

### **Options available for the U.S.:**

- **The U.S. could negotiate with the Taliban for an extension of the agreement**, offering other incentives like the release of more prisoners and the delisting of sanctioned Taliban terrorists. The other option is that the U.S. could scrap the 2020 agreement and back the Ashraf Ghani government to continue towards a negotiated settlement, even as U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan to stabilise the security situation.
  - The recent statements by senior U.S. administrators make it clear that the U.S. is not in favour of completely scrapping the 2020 agreement. The U.S. has shown impatience with the Ghani government, believing that it is dragging its feet on intra-Afghan negotiations.
- Notably, the U.S. President has stated that he did not foresee U.S. troops staying in Afghanistan “for a long time” or until 2022, but that adhering to the May 1 commitment at this point would be “hard”.
- The U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has proposed a **new peace plan** to revive the ongoing talks.

For related information refer to:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 11th March 2021](#)

### **Dialogue platforms:**

- Apart from the **intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha**, there have been other ongoing efforts to resolve the deadlock in Afghanistan.
- **“Troika”** (U.S., Russia and China) along with Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar and Afghanistan and Taliban leaders.

- The U.S secretary of state has also proposed another mechanism for regional envoys to be led by the United Nations, which would include India and Iran as well.

#### Afghanistan government's plan:

- Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani has proposed his own peace plan.
- The plan would involve a **full ceasefire, inviting the Taliban to participate in early elections in Afghanistan**, and then the serving President Mr. Ghani would hand over power to the elected government.
- The Afghanistan government has **reached out to India for support**. The Current Afghan administration has repeatedly reiterated the significance of India in the peace process. India is an important development partner of Afghanistan.

#### India's stand:

- India's position has been to **back an "Afghan-owned, Afghan-led, Afghan-controlled" peace process**. It has always backed the elected government in Kabul, and it **has not yet held talks with the Taliban directly**. India has been pitching for constitutional methods that guarantees a democratic process and rights of women and minorities.
- Notably, India has not foreclosed the option of talking to the Taliban if it does join the government in Afghanistan.
- Though the Indian government has not yet announced a special envoy on Afghanistan who could be a part of the UN-led process for regional countries, India has made it clear that it seeks to be an integral part of the process.

### Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

#### 1. Permanent commission for women in Army

This issue has been covered previously in the following articles:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 18th Feb 2021](#)

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 06th Mar 2021](#)

## F. Prelims Facts

#### 1. Kerry to visit India in April ahead of Biden's climate meet

- The **World Sustainable Development Summit** is organised by **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)**.

#### 2. New species of red algae seen in west, south east Indian coast

- Two new species of seaweed named **Hypnea indica** and **Hypnea bullata** have been discovered by a group of marine biologists.
- While *Hypnea indica* was discovered Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu, and Somnath Pathan and Sivrajpur in Gujarat, *Hypnea bullata* was discovered from Kanyakumari and Diu island of Daman and Diu.



- The seaweeds are part of the genus Hypnea or red seaweeds. The **genus Hypnea consists of calcareous, erect, branched red seaweeds.**
- They grow in the **intertidal regions** of the coast, namely the area that is submerged during the high tide and exposed during low tides.
- Species of Hypnea contain the biomolecule carrageenan, which is **widely used in the food industry.**
- Several recent studies have shown that algae with calcareous mineral deposits are prone for the damage from **ocean acidification** – an aftermath of climate change. As carbon dioxide in the atmosphere gets dissolved in ocean waters, the seawater becomes more acidic. Algae like Hypnea cannot survive in acidic seawater.
- The study also reports one other species of Hypnea for the first time in Indian coasts, Hypnea nidifica.

### 3. Currents on Enceladus

- **Enceladus is one of Saturn's moon.**
- **Cassini spacecraft** has previously sampled water from Enceladus's Polar Regions.
  - The Cassini–Huygens space-research mission, commonly called Cassini, involved a collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Italian Space Agency to send a space probe to study the planet Saturn and its system, including its rings and natural satellites.

### 4. Bearers of tradition

- **Bhagoriya festival is celebrated by the tribal people of the Indian states Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra.** The Bhangoriya Festival is celebrated by the local tribes includes Bhil, Bhilala, Pateliya etc.
- Bhagoriya Festival has an agricultural significance attached to it, it coincides with the end of harvesting of crops. People celebrate it to mark the completion of harvesting.

### 5. For a brighter future

- The annual tradition of shutting down electric lights for one hour was started by the World **Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** and it is now known as 'Earth Hour'.
- This year Earth Hour was held on March 27, 2021.
- The aim was to encourage individuals, communities, and businesses to turn off all non-essential lights for an entire hour. The goal of this activity is to **spread awareness about sustainability and climate change.**

### 6. Amphan impact looms over remote Ghoramara

- **Ghoramara island** bore the brunt of the Amphan Cyclone.
- The island is located where the Hooghly river meets the Bay of Bengal. Ghoramara island lies near Sagar Island, which has a population of two lakh people and is the biggest island of the Sunderban archipelago. Sagar also hosts the annual Gangasagar pilgrimage.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. India sends 2 lakh doses of vaccine to UNPKF

- India has delivered 2,00,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines for the **United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNPKF) worldwide**.
- The cargo of AstraZeneca Covishield vaccines produced by the Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune was sent despite the government's decision to reduce exports in view of the need for vaccines domestically.
- **India had thus far supplied more vaccines globally than have vaccinated its own citizens.** India has exported 62 million doses of vaccines, while it has vaccinated about 55 million people, many of whom have taken only the first dose.
- India's donation to the UNPKF will also benefit Indian soldiers, who make up one of the largest contingents of peacekeeping troops and police, with more than 5,000 men and women deployed in the Congo, South Sudan and Lebanon, among other countries.

### 2. Divestment goal achievable; LIC IPO to fetch ₹1 lakh cr.: CEA

- Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) K. V. Subramanian has asserted that **the disinvestment target of ₹1.75 lakh crore for 2021-22** as being achievable given that the proposed initial public offering (IPO) by LIC itself could garner ₹1 lakh crore for the government.
- With regard to LIC's IPO, the Centre has already had amendments in the LIC Act passed through Finance Bill 2021 in Parliament.

### 3. Better judicial infra needed: Justice Ramana

- Supreme Court judge, Justice N.V. Ramana, has called for the need to establish a **National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation** to drastically improve judicial infrastructure across the country.
- The proposed corporation could bring the much-needed "uniformity and standardisation" which could "revolutionise" judicial infrastructure. **An efficient "judicial infrastructure" would help ensure free access to justice for the ordinary citizens.**

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. The World Sustainable Development Summit is organised by which of the following?

- a. UNDP
- b. UNEP
- c. TERI
- d. UNFCCC

Answer: c

Explanation:



- The World Sustainable Development Summit is organised by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

**Q2. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to the newly discovered *Hypnea indica* and *Hypnea bullata* species?**

1. The genus *Hypnea* consists of calcareous, erect, branched red seaweeds.
2. They grow in the intertidal regions of the coast

**Options:**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Two new species of seaweed named *Hypnea indica* and *Hypnea bullata* have been discovered by a group of marine biologists.
- While *Hypnea indica* was discovered Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu, and Somnath Pathan and Sivrajpur in Gujarat, *Hypnea bullata* was discovered from Kanyakumari and Diu island of Daman and Diu.
- The seaweeds are part of the genus *Hypnea* or red seaweeds. The genus *Hypnea* consists of calcareous, erect, branched red seaweeds.
- They grow in the intertidal regions of the coast, namely the area that is submerged during the high tide and exposed during low tides.

**Q3. The Bhagoriya festival is associated with which of the following states?**

- a. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh
- b. Odisha and West Bengal
- c. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- d. Rajasthan and Gujarat

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Bhagoriya festival is celebrated by the tribal people of the Indian states Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra. The Bhagoriya Festival is celebrated by the local tribes includes Bhil, Bhilala, Pateliya etc.

- Bhagoriya Festival has an agricultural significance attached to it, it coincides with the end of harvesting of crops. People celebrate it to mark the completion of harvesting.

**Q4. Enceladus is a natural satellite of which of the following planets?**

- a. Jupiter
- b. Saturn
- c. Mars
- d. Uranus

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Enceladus is one of Saturn's moon.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss India's stand in the ongoing Afghan peace process highlighting India's stake in the process. Also suggest what should be India's approach in this regard. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-2, International Relations]
2. In the light of Bangladesh commemorating 50 years of its Liberation movement, discuss the role played by India. Also analyse the reasons for India's stand in the issue. (10 marks, 150 words)[GS-1, Post Independence India]