

## 29 Apr 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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### A. GS 1 Related

#### Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. [2 die of shock after quake hits Assam](#)

##### Context:

An **earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 struck Assam.**

**Details:**

- The earthquake was felt across **northeast India, Bihar, West Bengal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.**
- The National Centre of Seismology said the **epicentre of the quake**, at a depth of 10 km, was **Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district**, and initial analysis showed it was located near the **Kopili Fault closer to the Himalayan Frontal Thrust.**
- The **area is seismically very active falling in the highest Seismic Hazard Zone V** associated with **collisional tectonics** where the **Indian Plate subducts beneath the Eurasian Plate.**
- The last major quake in the region was of magnitude 6.0 on July 29, 1960.

An earthquake is the **shaking of the surface of the Earth** resulting from a **sudden release of energy** in the **Earth's lithosphere** that **creates seismic waves.**

Read more on **Earthquakes.**

**Seismic Zones in India:**

- The **Bureau of Indian Standards**, based on the past seismic history has grouped the country into **four seismic zones namely Zone-II, Zone-III, Zone-IV and Zone-V.**
- **Zone-V is the most seismically active region** whereas Zone-II is the least active region.
- Entire northeastern India, parts of the UTs Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rann of Kutch, parts of North Bihar and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are classified as Zone-V.

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. India, Australia, Japan push for supply chain resilience

**Context:**

The **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** was formally launched by the Trade Ministers of **India, Japan and Australia.**

**Details:**

- The three sides agreed that the pandemic revealed supply chain vulnerabilities globally and in the region.
- The countries noted the importance of risk management and continuity plans in order to avoid supply chain disruptions.
- The SCRI aims to **create a virtuous cycle of enhancing supply chain resilience with a view to eventually attain strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth in the region.**
- It seeks to **build upon the existing bilateral frameworks** like the Asean-Japan Economic Resilience Action Plan and India-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership and **attract foreign direct investment in the region.**

- Some of the joint measures being considered are:
  - **Supporting the enhanced utilisation of digital technology.**
  - **Trade and investment diversification.**
- Initially, SCRI will focus on sharing best practices on supply chain resilience and holding investment promotion events and buyer-seller matching events to provide opportunities for stakeholders to explore the possibility of diversification of their supply chains.

**Note:**

- The initiative is seen as a **move to counter China's dominance of the supply chain in the Indo-Pacific region.**
- China has described the effort as unrealistic.

## Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### 1. Centre notifies Act giving more powers to Delhi L-G

**Context:**

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a gazette notification stating that the **provisions of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021**, would be deemed to have **come into effect from April 27, 2021.**

**Details:**

- The Act gives the **Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi more powers** and **significantly waters down the powers of both the elected government and the Legislative Assembly.**
- The Act will clarify the expression "Government" and address ambiguities in the legislative provisions to promote harmonious relations between the legislature and the executive.
- The Act defines the responsibilities of the elected government and the L-G along with the constitutional scheme of governance of the NCT interpreted by the Supreme Court in recent judgments regarding the division of powers between the two entities.
- It will also seek to ensure that the **L-G is necessarily granted an opportunity to exercise powers** entrusted to him under **clause (4) of Article 239AA of the Constitution.**

This issue has been comprehensively covered in **21<sup>st</sup> March 2021** and **23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021** Comprehensive News Analysis.

For in-depth understanding, watch the **Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021.**

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. 'Limited sops make scrappage policy for vehicles unattractive'

**Context:**

According to a report by ratings agency Crisil Research, **limited sops would make the [vehicle scrappage policy](#) unattractive.**

#### Details:

- The report states that **limited incentives and poor cost economics for trucks in the Vehicle Scrappage Policy**, coupled with **lack of addressable volumes for other segments** are unlikely to drive freight transporters to replace their old vehicles with new ones.
  - Eg: The potential benefit from scrapping a 15-year-old, entry-level small car will be ₹70,000, whereas its resale value is around ₹95,000.
- However, it said that though the scrappage volume of buses, PVs and two-wheelers are expected to be limited as well, **the policy's impact on new commercial vehicle (CV) sales could be sizeable.**
- The policy **proposes to de-register vehicles that fail fitness tests or are unable to renew registrations after 15-20 years of use.**

Read more on the Vehicle Scrappage Policy covered in [19<sup>th</sup> March 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: HEALTH

#### 1. Antimicrobial resistance: the silent threat

##### Context:

- The health crisis brought out by the COVID-19 pandemic has starkly exposed the **vulnerabilities of health systems to infectious diseases**, both in the developing as well as in the richest countries.

##### Antimicrobial resistance:

- Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines making **infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death**. Read more on [antimicrobial resistance](#) in the linked article.

##### **Factors aiding AMR:**

- Though the mutations are common in micro-organisms, **human activities seem to be augmenting the process of mutation** in these micro-organisms, which seem to be driving the evolution of resistance in microbes.
- Drug resistance in microbes emerges for several reasons, some of which are as follows:
  - **Misuse of antimicrobials in medicine**
  - **Inappropriate use in agriculture**

- **Contamination around pharmaceutical manufacturing sites** where untreated waste releases large amounts of active antimicrobials into the environment.

#### Concerns:

- AMR represents an existential threat to modern medicine. Without functional antimicrobials to treat bacterial and fungal infections, even the most common surgical procedures, as well as cancer chemotherapy, will become fraught with risk from untreatable infections.
- **AMR is already responsible for up to 7,00,000 deaths a year.** Unless urgent measures are taken to address this threat, the global community could witness an unprecedented health and economic crisis of **10 million annual deaths and costs of up to \$100 trillion by 2050.**
- Though the AMR would be a global challenge, the **low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) of Asia and Africa are more likely to be more impacted.** The LMICs have significantly driven down mortality using cheap and easily available antimicrobials. AMR which would render these antimicrobials ineffective would overrun the already **deficient and overburdened health systems** in these countries.
- Notably, no **new classes of antibiotics have made it to the market in the last three decades.** This is mainly due to the inadequate incentives for the development and production of antibiotics.
  - A recent report from the non-profit PEW Trusts found that over 95% of antibiotics in development today are from small companies, 75% of which have no products currently in the market. Major pharmaceutical companies have largely abandoned innovation in the antibiotics segment.
- The World Health Organization Director-General has termed **AMR a slow tsunami** that threatens to undo a century of medical progress.

#### Recommendations:

- Tackling the diverse challenges posed by AMR requires action in a range of areas.

#### Developing new antimicrobials:

- The medicine sector should focus on developing new generation antimicrobials.
- The **government should design and devise appropriate policies to incentivize pharmaceutical companies** to engage in the research and development of antibiotics.
  - A multi-sectoral **\$1 billion AMR Action Fund** was launched in 2020 to support the development of new antibiotics.
  - The U.K. is trialling a subscription-based model for paying for new antimicrobials towards ensuring their commercial viability. This will involve the governments paying upfront for these new antimicrobials, thereby delinking the life-saving value of the drugs from the volume of sales and providing an incentive for their production.

#### Infection control measures:

- The infection-control measures can help reduce antibiotic use on one hand and also aid in limiting the spread of AMR diseases.

#### Surveillance:

- To track the spread of resistance in microbes, surveillance measures to identify these organisms need to expand beyond hospitals and encompass livestock, wastewater and farm run-offs.
- There is a need for **sustained investments and global coordination to detect and combat new resistant strains** on an ongoing basis.

#### Ensuring appropriate clinical use of antibiotics:

- Regulating clinician prescription of antimicrobials alone would do little in settings where patient demand is high and antimicrobials are freely available over-the-counter in practice, as is the case in many LMICs. Efforts to control prescription through provider incentives should be accompanied by efforts to educate consumers to reduce inappropriate demand, issue standard treatment guidelines that would empower providers to stand up to such demands, as well as provide point-of-care diagnostics to aid clinical decision-making.
- **A mix of incentives and sanctions should encourage appropriate clinical use.**
  - Peru's efforts on patient education to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions will help ensure the appropriate use of antibiotics.
  - Australia has undertaken extensive regulatory reforms to help influence prescriber behaviour when it comes to antibiotics.
  - **The EU supported VALUE-Dx programme** aims to increase the use of point-of-care diagnostics. This would aid clinical decision-making and help avoid unnecessary antibiotic usage.

#### Looking beyond the health sector:

- **The integrated approach to dealing with AMR will require the administration to look beyond the health system.** Solutions in clinical medicine must be integrated with improved surveillance of AMR in **agriculture, animal health and the environment.**
- AMR needs engagement from a wide range of stakeholders apart from the health sector, representing agriculture, trade and the environment with solutions that balance their often-competing interests.
  - **Denmark's reforms to prevent the use of antibiotics in livestock** have not only led to a significant reduction in the prevalence of resistant microbes in animals but also improved the efficiency of farming.
  - **India's recently proposed law to curb the amount of active antibiotics released in pharmaceutical waste** is a welcome initiative in helping address the critical role of manufacturing and environmental contamination in spreading AMR through pharmaceutical waste.

#### Global collaborative effort:

- The high potential for the spread of infectious diseases across international borders necessitates the need for **cross-national cooperation around surveillance, monitoring and disease notification.** These key activities will help minimise the impact of acute public health events such as COVID-19 and will help maintain global health security.



- Given the fact that successful policies in individual countries are no guarantee of global success, international alignment and coordination are paramount in both policymaking and its implementation.
  - The Paris Agreement should act as a blueprint for developing a similar global approach to tackling AMR.

### **Conclusion:**

- **Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century.**
- Given the threat posed by AMR, which the author of the article refers to as a “silent pandemic”, there is the need for urgent action to tackle the challenge.

## **Category: GOVERNANCE**

### **1. Making social welfare universal**

#### **Background:**

- Despite being one of the largest welfare states in the world, India seems to have failed to provide for its most vulnerable citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- India witnessed multiple crises: **mass inter- and intra-migration, food insecurity, and crumbling health infrastructure.** As per some estimates, **the pandemic has pushed an estimated 75 million people into poverty.** The second wave of the pandemic has also affected middle and upper-class citizens.
  - Economic capital, in the absence of social capital, has proven to be insufficient in accessing healthcare facilities.
- India has over 500 direct benefit transfer schemes for which various Central, State, and Line departments are responsible. However, these schemes have not reached those in need.

#### **Details:**

- The author argues for **a universal social security system in India.**

#### **International best practice:**

- A good example of a social protection scheme is the **Poor Law System in Ireland.**
- The Poor Law System of Ireland not only provides timely assistance but also helps maintain the dignity and respectability of the poor while doing so.
- These have acted as necessary responses to a time of economic crisis rather than being mere handouts to the poor. Today, the social welfare system in Ireland has evolved into a four-fold apparatus that **promises social insurance, social assistance, universal schemes, and extra benefits/supplements.**

#### **Arguments in favour:**

#### **Advancement in technology:**

- With the advancements in knowledge and technology, universal coverage of social welfare is possible in a shorter time frame.

#### Ease of application:

- Existing schemes cover a wide variety of social protections. However, they are fractionalised across various departments and sub-schemes. This causes problems beginning with data collection to last-mile delivery. Having a universal system **would improve the ease of application by consolidating the data of all eligible beneficiaries under one database.**

#### Reduce exclusion errors:

- The universal schemes will also help reduce exclusion errors.
- Generally, social assistance schemes are provided on the basis of an assessment of needs. Having a **universal scheme would take away this access/exclusion barrier.** For example, PDS can be linked to a universal identification card such as the Aadhaar or voter card, in the absence of a ration card. This would allow anyone who is in need of foodgrains to access these schemes. It would be especially useful for migrant populations.

#### Potential of such a scheme:

- Making other schemes/welfare provisions like education, maternity benefits, disability benefits, etc. also universal would ensure a **better standard of living for the people.**

#### Recommendations:

- There is a need to **map the State and Central schemes** in a consolidated manner. This is to avoid duplication, inclusion and exclusion errors in welfare delivery.
- There is a need for **detailed studies to understand the costs of welfare access** for vulnerable groups. This will help clear the concerns over the financial viability of universal social security schemes.
- The implementation of effective universal social security schemes is only possible through a focus on **data digitisation, data-driven decision-making and collaboration across government departments.**
- The [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana \(PMGKY\)](#) is one scheme that can be strengthened into universal social security.

#### Conclusion:

- The pandemic has revealed that leveraging our existing schemes and **providing universal social security is of utmost importance.** This will help absorb the impact of external shocks on our vulnerable populations.

## F. Prelims Facts

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Tidbits

### 1. China pushes defence ties with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka

#### What's in News?



China's Minister of Defence, visiting Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, has called on countries in the neighbourhood to resist powers from outside the region setting up military alliances in South Asia.

- The comments came amid a push back from Chinese officials on the India-U.S.-Australia-Japan [Quad](#) grouping.
- China also **convened a six-country South Asia dialogue on COVID-19 and economic cooperation** with the Foreign Ministers of **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**.
- In Bangladesh, the Chinese Defence Minister called for the **two militaries to increase high-level visits, deepen cooperation in equipment technology, broaden exchanges in specialized fields and forge closer military relations**.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following regions fall under seismic zone 5?

1. Entire northeastern India
2. Parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh
3. Andaman & Nicobar Islands
4. Rann of Kutch in Gujarat
5. Delhi-NCR region

Options:

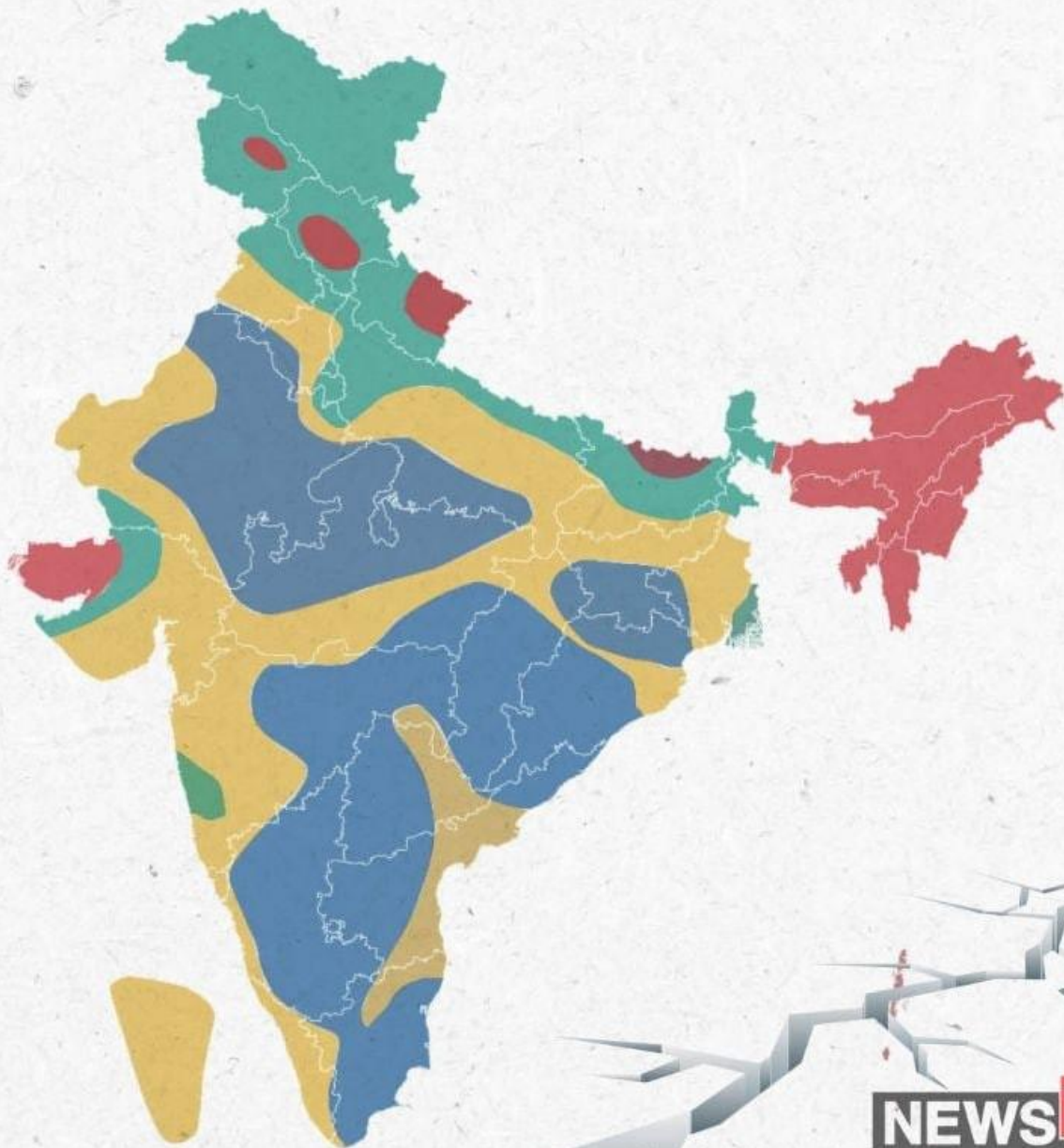
- a. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- b. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c. 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: a

Explanation:

Entire northeastern India, parts of the UTs Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rann of Kutch, parts of North Bihar and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are classified as Zone-V.

# SEISMIC ZONES OF INDIA



### Zone-V

Entire northeastern India, parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, part of North Bihar and Andaman & Nicobar islands

### Zone-IV

The remaining parts of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Sikkim, northern parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, parts of Gujarat and small portions of Maharashtra near the west coast and Rajasthan

### Zone-III

Comprises Kerala, Goa, Lakshadweep, remaining parts of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal, parts of Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamilnadu and Karnataka

### Zone-II

Covers remaining parts of the country



Images source: <https://www.news18.com/>

Q2. Which of the following statements about remdesivir is/are correct?

1. The drug prevents the virus from producing a particular enzyme RNA-dependent RNA polymerase (RdRp) that is necessary for the virus to replicate itself.
2. The drug has also been shown to shorten the duration of patient hospital stays.

Options:

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

Answer: c

**Explanation:**

- Remdesivir drug prevents the virus from producing a particular enzyme RNA-dependent RNA polymerase (RdRp) that is necessary for the virus to replicate itself.
- The drug has also been shown to shorten the duration of patient hospital stays.

**Q3. With reference to Red Herring Prospectus, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. It is the preliminary registration document prepared by merchant bankers for prospective IPO-making companies in the case of book building issues.
2. It contains details of either price or number of shares being offered or the amount of issue.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Red Herring Prospectus is the preliminary registration document prepared by merchant bankers for prospective IPO-making companies in the case of book building issues.
- It does not disclose the details of price, the number of shares being offered, the coupon of the issue, or the size of the issue.
- It has the details regarding the company's operation and financial position and standing.

**Q4. Python-5 recently seen in news is a**

- a. Anti-Tank Guided Missile
- b. Air-to-Air Missile
- c. Surface to Air Missile
- d. Surface to Surface Missile

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Python is a family of air-to-air missiles (AAMs) built by the Israeli weapons manufacturer Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.
- Now, India's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft Tejas has added the 5th generation Python-5 Air-to-Air Missile in its air-to-air weapons capability.

- Python 5 is the newest member in the range of Python AAMs.

**Q5. With reference to the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), consider the following statements: [UPSC 2018]**

1. IRNSS has three satellites in geostationary and four satellites in geosynchronous orbits.
2. IRNSS covers the entire India and about 5500 sq. km beyond its borders.
3. India will have its own satellite navigation system with full global coverage by the middle of 2019.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) system consists of a constellation of seven satellites and a supporting ground segment.
- Out of the seven satellites of the space segment; four satellites are in geosynchronous orbit and three satellites are in geostationary orbit.
- IRNSS covers an area of about 1,500 km around India.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Is it time to rethink on multi-phase polls? Critically analyze. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [GS-2, Polity and Governance].
2. The Covid-19 guidelines should be re-written in cognizance of the current strains on the healthcare system. Substantiate. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [GS-2, Health].