

## 06 May 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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### A. GS 1 Related

#### Category: GEOGRAPHY

##### 1. [Unfamiliar lineament among Assam earthquake factors](#)

##### Context:

An unfamiliar lineament is among the factors behind frequent earthquakes in northern Assam's Sonitpur area.

- Sonitpur was the epicentre of the huge 6.4 earthquake after 33 years because of the **tectonic complexity**.

Read more on the recent Assam Earthquake covered in **29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis**.

Details:

- According to the Geological Survey of India (GSI), **Sonitpur district lies within a tectonically complex triangular area** bounded by the **east-west trending Atherkhet Fault**, the **northwest-southeast trending Kopili Fault** and a **north-south trending lineament**.
  - A lineament is a **linear feature in a landscape dictated by an underlying geological structure such as a fault**.
- The **two faults and the lineament**, along with the **oblique convergence of the Indian plate**, have caused **frequent earthquakes**.
  - Both the Atherkhet and Kopili faults are active.
  - However, Atherkhet and Kopili are not the only faults that impact the Sonitpur region.
  - The Siang Fracture, Yemla Fault, Namula Thrust and Canyon Thrust are spread across the northeast and are active along with Main Himalayan Thrust, Main Boundary Thrust, Main Central Thrust and several subsidiary faults.
- The **northeast is demarcated as Seismic Zone V**, which indicates a **zone with high vulnerability**.
  - The **Indian plate is moving northeast toward the Eurasian plate** in the Himalayan region, their **oblique collision and release of stress and strain accumulated in the local tectonic or fault environments lead to earthquakes**.

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Maratha quota unconstitutional, violates right to equality, says SC

Context:

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court unanimously declared the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act of 2018, unconstitutional.

- The **Maharashtra law** provides reservation benefits to the Maratha community **taking the quota limit in the State in excess of 50%**.
- The law granted **reservation to the Maratha community in admissions and government jobs in the state**.

Details:

- The Bench, led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, found there were **no “exceptional circumstances” or “extraordinary situation” in Maharashtra**, which required the State government **to break the 50% ceiling limit** to bestow quota benefits on the Maratha community.

- All five judges agreed that the **Marathas are a dominant forward class** and are **in the mainstream of national life**. The above situation is not extraordinary.
- The **SC struck down the findings of the Justice M.G. Gaikwad Commission**, which **led to the enactment of the Maratha quota law**, and set aside the Bombay High Court judgment which validated the **Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act of 2018**.

#### State Government's Argument:

- The state government's argument was that **since the population of the backward class is 85% and the reservation limit is only 50%**, an increase in reservation limit would qualify as an **extraordinary circumstance**.
- **All five judges disagreed with this argument.**

#### Supreme Court Verdict:

- The High Court, in June 2019, reduced the quantum of reservation for Marathas from the 16% recommended by the Gaikwad Commission to 12% in education and 13% in employment.
  - The Supreme Court concluded that even the **reduced percentages were ultra vires**.
- The Supreme Court held that a separate reservation for the Maratha community **violated Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (due process of law)**.
- "The ceiling of 50% with the 'extraordinary circumstances' exception, is the just balance — what is termed as the '**Goldilocks solution**' — i.e. the **solution containing the right balance that allows the State sufficient latitude to ensure meaningful affirmative action to those who deserve it and at the same time ensures that the essential content of equality**," Justice S. Ravindra Bhat on the Bench agreed.

#### Revisiting 1992 Indra Sawhney judgment:

- The Supreme Court **declined to revisit its 1992 Indra Sawhney judgment**, which fixed the reservation limit at 50%.
- The Indra Sawhney judgment had categorically said "**50% shall be the rule**, only in certain **exceptional and extraordinary situations** for bringing far-flung and remote area population into mainstream, **50% rule can be relaxed**."
- The court said that the **50% ceiling, although an arbitrary determination by the court in 1992, is now constitutionally recognised**.

#### On 102<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Amendment:

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Second Amendment) Act, 2018 gives **constitutional status to the National Backward Classes Commission**. The Amendment also **gives the President powers to notify backward classes**.
- Several states raised questions on the interpretation of the Amendment and argued that it curtails their powers.
- The **Bench unanimously upheld the constitutional validity** of the 102nd Amendment.

- The Court has ruled that, henceforth, **there will only be a single list of socially and educationally backward classes** with respect to each State and Union Territory notified by the President of India.
- The Supreme Court held that “the **final say in regard to inclusion or exclusion (or modification of lists) of socially and economically backward classes (SEBCs)** is firstly with the President under Article 342A (1), and thereafter, in case of modification or exclusion from the lists initially published, with the Parliament”.
- In the task of **identification of SEBCs**, the President shall be guided by the **Commission set up under Article 338B**; its advice shall also be sought by the state in regard to policies that might be framed by it.
- The **Centre alone is empowered to identify Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC)** and include them in the Central List for claiming reservation benefits.
- While the **identification of SEBCs will be done centrally**, state governments retain the power to **determine the extent of reservation** and make specific policy in the spirit of “cooperative federalism”.
- The **President’s prerogative** as regards the identification and inclusion of SEBCs in the List **would not affect the States’ power to make reservations in favour of particular communities or castes, the quantum of reservations, the nature of benefits and the kind of reservations**, and all other matters falling within the ambit of **Articles 15 and 16**.

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. After 10 hours, Sri Lanka frees 86 Indian fishermen

#### Context:

Eighty-six Indian fishermen were detained for about 10 hours by Sri Lankan Navy personnel on charges of crossing the Indian waters while fishing in the Palk Strait.

#### Issue:

- **The arrest of Indian fishermen** on the Sri Lankan side of the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) in the Palk Straits and the Gulf of Mannar by Sri Lankan authorities** has been a long-standing problem with the Sri Lankan Navy firing on Indian fishing vessels.
- The **catch on the Sri Lankan side is better** both in terms of quality (high-value prawns) and quantity.
- The issue started because **of Indian fishermen having used mechanised trawlers**, which deprived the Sri Lankan fishermen (including Tamils) of their catch and **damaged their fishing boats**.
- The **Sri Lankan government wants India to ban the use of mechanized trawlers in the Palk Strait region**.
- So far, **no concrete agreement has been reached since India favours regulating these trawlers instead of banning them altogether**.
- However, the number of trespassing bottom-trawlers has come down considerably, especially after Sri Lanka introduced tougher laws and stiff fines for foreign vessels.

Read more on the related issue covered in the **25<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis**.

## 2. EU unveils plan to cut dependency on China

### Context:

The European Union (EU) has unveiled a plan to **cut its dependency on Chinese and other foreign suppliers** in six strategic areas after the pandemic-induced economic slump.

### Details:

- The **six strategic areas** include raw materials, pharmaceutical ingredients and semiconductors.
- EU outlined the urgency of the task citing **Europe's reliance on China for about half of 137 products used in sensitive ecosystems**, mainly raw materials, pharmaceuticals and other products key to its green and digital goals.
- The updated industrial strategy plan was devised after the COVID-19 pandemic showed **bottlenecks in supply chain**.
- The executive European Commission plans to conduct **in-depth reviews of supply chains** in raw materials, batteries, active pharmaceutical ingredients, hydrogen, semiconductors and cloud and edge technologies, to decide how to deal with them.
- To reduce import dependency, **EU countries could pool resources for Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs)** in next-generation cloud, hydrogen, low-carbon industry, pharmaceuticals and a second IPCEI on cutting-edge semi-conductors.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: **ECONOMY**

## 1. RBI steps in to ease COVID-19 burden

### Context:

The Reserve Bank of India has stepped in with **measures aimed at alleviating any financing constraints** for healthcare infrastructure and services, as well as small borrowers who may be facing distress due to a sudden spike in health expenditure amidst the surge in COVID-19 cases.

### Details:

- RBI Governor announced a **Term Liquidity Facility of ₹50,000 crore** with a tenor of **up to three years**, at the **repo rate**, to ease access to credit for providers of emergency health services.
- Under the scheme, **banks will provide fresh lending support to a wide range of entities**, including vaccine manufacturers, importers/suppliers of vaccines and priority medical devices, hospitals/dispensaries, pathology labs, manufacturers and suppliers of oxygen and ventilators, and logistics firms.
- These loans will continue to be **classified under the priority sector till repayment or maturity**, whichever is earlier.
- Under the scheme, banks are expected to **create a COVID loan book**.

- As part of a “**comprehensive targeted policy response**”, the RBI has also unveiled **schemes to provide credit relief to individual and MSME borrowers** impacted by the pandemic.
  - To provide further support to small business units, micro and small industries, and other unorganised sector entities, the RBI decided to conduct **special three-year long-term repo operations (SLTRO) of ₹10,000 crore at the repo rate for Small Finance Banks**.
  - The SFBs would be able to deploy these funds for fresh lending of up to ₹10 lakh per borrower.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: HEALTH

#### 1. A CT scan for COVID merits a word of caution

##### Context:

- The widespread use of **computerised tomography (CT) scans** of the thorax as a diagnostic test for the treatment of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

##### Background:

- In clinical medicine, diagnostic tests play three important functions:
  - **Diagnosis** (what is the disease?)
  - **Etiognosis** (what caused a disease?)
  - **Prognosis** (how will the disease evolve?)

##### CT scan:

- A computerized tomography scan (CT scan) is a medical imaging technique used in radiology to get detailed images of the body noninvasively for diagnostic purposes.
- It **uses computers and rotating X-ray machines** to create cross-sectional images of the body.
- These images provide **more detailed information than normal X-ray images**. They can show the soft tissues, blood vessels, and bones in various parts of the body.

##### Arguments against the widespread use of CT scans:

##### Inaccuracy in diagnosis:

- Various studies based on available data note that a chest CT is likely to **diagnose only 62% of all individuals having COVID-19, making it a relatively inaccurate test for diagnosis**.
- A normal CT chest does not exclude COVID-19, and, therefore, should not be a reason to come out of isolation, especially when the CT is done very early in the disease.

##### Inaccuracy in etiognosis:

- Studies have found that when radiologists convincingly labelled a CT pattern as being consistent with COVID-19 disease, they **mislabeled 20% of those who did not have the disease as having COVID-19**, getting the etiognosis wrong in a significant proportion of individuals. Thus the CT scans have not been very accurate in deciphering the cause of an abnormal CT scan.
- Telling someone who does not have COVID-19 that they do have the disease has serious implications, leaving the **real diagnosis undetected**, and subjecting the individual to the psychosocial consequences of the knowledge that she/he has the disease.

#### **Possibility of misguiding prognostication:**

- CT scans are being prescribed for prognostication.
  - The severity of lung involvement as seen on a CT is reflective of the status of the lungs at that point in time and based on that treatments are being decided.
  - Intensivists have on occasion used CT scans to optimise ventilator strategies for individuals with severe COVID-19 disease.
- However it is to be noted that lung involvement is a dynamic process, i.e., a limited involvement at an early stage could progress with time to severe involvement. Thus the **low lung involvement in the CT scans done in the early stages of the diseases could misguide the doctors** into a false sense of safety and thus affect treatment processes.

#### **Limited usefulness:**

- CT scans are being touted as being a monitoring test that provides unique information that cannot be obtained by easier means.
- However, given the fact that a CT scan is unlikely to give a treating physician more information than a **simple tool such as an oximeter**, CT scans can in fact be avoided altogether in people with mild symptoms.

#### **Risks:**

##### *Cancer:*

- One of the major concerns associated with the widespread use of CT is the associated **increased radiation exposure** incurred by patients. Various studies have indicated that some proportion of **cancer cases can be attributable to the radiation** from CT studies.
  - A study published in The New England Journal of Medicine in 2007 postulated that “0.4% of all cancers in the United States may be attributable to the radiation from CT studies”, and further speculated that the current estimate could be in the range of 1.5%-2%.
- In addition to this risk to the individual undergoing the scan, there are risks to radiology technicians, staff and doctors that need to be accounted for.

##### *Potential for spread of COVID-19:*

- CT scanners need to be kept in **closed air-conditioned spaces**. The risk of transmission of the coronavirus at such centres cannot be ruled out.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Going by data and the risk factors, the widespread use of CT scan in diagnosing infectious disease needs to be questioned.
- The author calls for more informed decisions on the use of CT scans and argues that they should be the exception, not the norm.

## F. Prelims Facts

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Which of the following was held by the Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney v Union of India case?**

1. Economic backwardness is not a criteria for providing reservation.
2. Reservation can be provided only at the time of recruitment, and not at the time of the promotions.
3. Reservation cannot exceed 50% under any circumstance as it was needed to ensure “efficiency” in administration.

**Select the correct option from below:**

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. All of the above

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- The Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney v Union of India case 1992 held that economic backwardness is not a criterion for providing reservation.
- It said that reservation can be provided only at the time of recruitment, and not at the time of the promotions.
- It fixed the reservation limit at 50%.
- The Indira Sawhney judgment had categorically said “50% reservation shall be the rule, only in certain exceptional and extraordinary situations for bringing far-flung and remote areas population into mainstream, 50% rule can be relaxed.”
- That is reservation can exceed 50% in “exceptional circumstances” or “extraordinary situation”.

**Q2. The Constitution (One Hundred and Second Amendment) Act, 2018 deals with:**

- a. Withdrawal of political reservation in favour of Anglo Indians.
- b. Providing constitutional status to National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
- c. 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the economically weaker section in the unreserved category.
- d. Implementation of Goods and Services Tax.

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Second Amendment) Act, 2018 gave constitutional status to the National Backward Classes Commission.
- The Amendment gives the President powers to notify backward classes.

**Q3. Which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. Department of Military Affairs (DMA) is headed by the Chief of Defence Staff, as its ex-officio secretary.
2. Officers from the Army, Navy and the Air Force are posted as Joint Secretaries in the Department of Military Affairs (DMA).
3. Department of Military Affairs (DMA) is an independent department directly under the command of the Prime Minister.

**Options:**

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. All of the above

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Department of Military Affairs (DMA) is the department in charge of military matters within the Indian Ministry of Defence.
- It is headed by the Chief of Defence Staff, as its ex-officio secretary.
- The DMA provides integration between the armed forces of the Union and the Ministry of Defence.
- Officers from the Army, Navy and the Air Force are posted as Joint Secretaries in the Department of Military Affairs (DMA).

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. MRIs (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) use radio waves and CT (Computed Tomography) scans use X-rays.

2. CT scans can spot blood clots while X-rays cannot.

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

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- MRIs (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) use radio waves and CT (Computed Tomography) scans use X-rays.
- CT Scan uses computers and rotating X-ray machines to create cross-sectional images of the body. These images provide more detailed information than normal X-ray images. They can show the soft tissues, blood vessels, and bones in various parts of the body.
- CT scans can spot blood clots while X-rays cannot.

**Q5. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding Brahmo Samaj? (UPSC 2012)**

1. It opposed idolatry.
2. It denied the need for a priestly class for interpreting the religious texts.
3. It popularized the doctrine that the Vedas are infallible.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Brahmo Samaj opposed polytheism and idol-worship.
- It denied the need for a priestly class for interpreting the religious texts.
- The doctrine of the infallibility of Vedas was not popularized by Brahmo Samaj. Many of its members questioned the infallibility of Vedas.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The Supreme Court declared the Maratha quota to be unconstitutional as it violates the right to equality. Critically evaluate. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Polity and Governance]
2. Write a detailed note on the India-Sri Lanka fishermen dispute. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, International Relations]

