

10 May 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [‘FCRA amendments crippling our work’](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Green panel allows Great Nicobar plan to advance](#)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [China rocket debris falls in Indian Ocean near Maldives](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Outreach and overreach](#)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [A TRIPS waiver is useful but not a magic pill](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [Hakki-Pikki Tribe](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [South Sudan President dissolves Parliament as part of peace accord](#)
2. [Back in the shortage economy](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [‘FCRA amendments crippling our work’](#)

Issue:

The **amendments to the [Foreign Contribution Regulation Act \(FCRA\)](#) enacted in 2020** that among others **made it compulsory for NGOs to open a bank account in Delhi** has crippled the work of many organisations that are unable to receive foreign funds.

Details:

- An NGO has now moved the Delhi High Court seeking exemption from the Union Home Ministry's March 31 deadline to open an FCRA account with the SBI branch in New Delhi.
- The petitioner argued that it applied to open the account before the March 31 deadline but the **administrative delays on the part of the bank and the Ministry severely restricted its activities** including providing COVID-19 relief and paying of urgent salaries of staff and also affected its charitable and educational activities.
- Many NGOs are affected by **the new regulations as they are hampering charitable work** during the pandemic.

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment, 2020:

- Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020 was passed in the Parliament in September 2020.
- The Home Ministry had directed all NGOs seeking foreign donations to **open a designated FCRA account at the State Bank of India's New Delhi branch by March 31, 2021.**
- The NGOs registered under FCRA shall not receive any foreign donations in any other bank account from April 1, 2021.

Read more on the provisions of the bill covered in the [21st September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Note:

- An FCRA registration is mandatory for NGOs to receive foreign funds.

Way Forward:

- The pandemic has underscored **the importance of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** (the whole earth is one family) as a framework for India's global engagement.
- Thousands of NGOs **serve extremely disadvantaged sections**, at times filling in for the state, at others, supplementing it.
- Further **relaxations are necessary in terms of opening an FCRA account with the SBI branch in New Delhi.**
- For a global community to function, there is a **need for a seamless sharing of ideas and resources across national boundaries.**

- It should not be discouraged unless there is reason to believe the funds are being used to aid illegal activities.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Green panel allows Great Nicobar plan to advance

Context:

The **Environment Appraisal Committee (EAC)** - Infrastructure I of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has **flagged serious concerns about NITI Aayog's ambitious project for Great Nicobar Island.**

This issue has been covered in the [21st March 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Details:

- The committee has **recommended it for grant of terms of reference (TOR) for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies.**
 - This will include baseline studies over three months.
- The committee has asked for an independent evaluation for the suitability of the proposed port site with a specific focus on **Leatherback Turtle, Nicobar Magapod and Dugong.**
- The pre-feasibility report '**Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island at Andaman and Nicobar Islands**' is prepared for the NITI Aayog by a Gurugram-based consulting agency.
 - The proposal includes an **international container trans-shipment terminal, a greenfield international airport, a power plant and a township complex** spread over 166 sq. km. (mainly pristine coastal systems and tropical forests), and is **estimated to cost ₹75,000 crore.**

Parivesh Portal

- **PARIVESH** is a **web-based, role-based workflow application** that has been developed for **online submission and monitoring of the proposals submitted by the proponents for seeking Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ Clearances** from Central, State and district level authorities.
- The Parivesh Portal was **launched** by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).**

Concerns on Site:

- The discussion on the proposal was deferred as the committee had **procedural and substantive concerns**.
- The document **did not include the details** of the township to be developed, **seismic and tsunami hazards, freshwater requirement** details and details of the **impact on the Giant Leatherback turtle**.
- The committee also noted that there were **no details of the trees to be felled**.
 - The project area has some of the finest tropical forests in India.
- The committee noted that the site selection for the port had been done mainly on technical and financial criteria, **ignoring the environmental aspects**.

Action points:

- The committee has highlighted the need for an **independent assessment of terrestrial and marine biodiversity**, a **study on the impact of dredging**, reclamation and port operations, including **oil spills**, the need for **studies of alternative sites for the port** with a focus on environmental and ecological impact especially on turtles, analysis of **risk-handling capabilities**, a **disaster management plan**, an assessment of the cumulative impact, and a **hydro-geological study** to assess the impact on ground and surface water regimes.

Giant Leatherback turtle



- Giant Leatherback turtles are the largest of the seven species of sea turtles on the planet.
- The most long-ranging leatherbacks are found in all oceans except the Arctic and the Antarctic.
- Within the Indian Ocean, they nest only in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- South Bay and West Bay on Little Andaman and Galathea on Great Nicobar, along with other nesting beaches in the islands are Important Marine Turtle Habitats in India and the largest Leatherback nesting grounds in India.

- They are listed in Schedule I of India's [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#), according to the highest legal protection.

Nicobar megapode



- It is a bird species found only in the Nicobar Islands.
- Nicobar megapode (*Megapodius nicobariensis*) is a large-footed bird that builds nests on the ground.
- It is categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. China rocket debris falls in Indian Ocean near Maldives

Context:

Debris from the last stage of **China's Long March rocket** fell into the waters of the Indian Ocean west of the Maldives.

Details:

- China Manned Space Agency (CSMA) said that the vast majority of the device burned up during the re-entry, and the rest of the debris fell into the sea.

Concerns:

- The re-entry of the rocket was described by astrophysicists as the **fourth-largest uncontrolled re-entry in history**.
- It was on a par with the **first Long March rocket that in 2020 fell in the Ivory Coast** where there were reports of debris damaging homes in villages.

- This has evoked **concerns about possible damage should it have fallen on land.**
- It has been criticised by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the U.S. for failing to meet responsible standards.

Note:

- The **Long March-5B Y2 rocket** was **carrying the Tianhe**, or Heavenly Harmony, the **first of three key components for the construction of China's space station.**
- The space station, which will be only the second after the International Space Station (ISS), has been designed with a lifespan of 10 years but could last 15 years, or until 2037.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Outreach and overreach

Context:

- Supreme Court order forming a **national task force** for the effective and transparent allocation of medical oxygen to the States and Union Territories.

Background:

Judicial intervention:

- There have been numerous **proceedings in different High Courts** relating to the allocation and availability of oxygen.
 - Example - The Karnataka High Court ordered the Centre to supply 1,200 tonnes of medical oxygen daily to the State.
- Several High Courts and even the Supreme Court are also examining different aspects of the pandemic response, including the availability of beds.

Concerns expressed by the executive:

- The centre has been arguing that if every High Court started entertaining petitions on the equitable allocation of oxygen, **pandemic management would become unworkable.**

- The increasing trend of judicial orders by the High Courts has raised concerns about the **judiciary encroaching on the executive domain**.
 - The allocation of resources based on a formula related to the present and projected requirements of each State comes across as an executive function.
- The Central government while challenging the orders by the various High Courts at the Supreme Court had submitted that an **expert committee may be constituted, consisting of persons drawn from public and private healthcare institutions**, to facilitate a fresh assessment of the basis for the allocation.

Counter arguments:

- Given the steep rise in daily infections and death toll, the judiciary felt obliged to take it upon itself to **protect the right to life and good health of the population**.
- The Bench hearing the suo motu proceedings, has clarified that the Court was **not usurping the executive's role**, but only wanted to facilitate a dialogue among stakeholders.

Mandate of the task force:

- The 12-member national task force would work towards **effective and transparent allocation of medical oxygen** to the States and Union Territories “on a scientific, rational and equitable basis”. It would facilitate audits by sub-groups within each State and UT.
- The task force would make **recommendations on augmenting the supply** based on present and projected demands.
- It is also mandated to **review and suggest measures for ensuring the availability of essential drugs and remedial measures** to meet future emergencies during the pandemic.

Conclusion:

- The national task force has become a judicially empowered group that may significantly guide the handling of the health crisis set off by the second pandemic wave.
- Judicial intervention should be seen as a response to the ongoing health crisis. As long as the court does not usurp the executive's role, **action to mitigate a crisis is welcome and the present intervention need not be seen as a dangerous judicial overreach**.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. A TRIPS waiver is useful but not a magic pill

Context:

- The **United States' declaration of support for a temporary waiver of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement** for COVID-19 vaccines at the [World Trade Organisation \(WTO\)](#).
 - Article IX of the WTO Agreement allows for **waiving obligations in 'exceptional circumstances'**.

Challenges:

- While the U.S.'s decision is to be welcomed, the article argues that there continue to be many challenges in ensuring that this move would be truly effective in meeting its stated **objective of ensuring faster, equitable and quality vaccine access to everyone**.

Time-consuming text-based negotiations approach:

- Given the **consensus-based approach of the WTO**, the complexity of the issues involved and given the **lack of political will** of the developed countries that house the giant pharmaceutical corporations producing COVID-19 vaccines and medicines, the negotiations are bound to be time-consuming.

Possibility of high degree of regulation:

- Previous experience of negotiating such waivers, especially on TRIPS, point to **gross ineffectiveness**.
- In the aftermath of the **HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa in the 1990s**, the WTO adopted a decision in **2003 waiving certain TRIPS obligations** to increase the accessibility of medicines in countries that lacked manufacturing capability. Article 31(f) of TRIPS was waived.
 - Article 31(f) of TRIPS mandates that medicines produced under a **compulsory licence** are predominantly for the domestic market of that country.
- However, this waiver was subject to **several stringent requirements** such as the drugs so manufactured are to be exported to that nation only; the medicines should be easily identifiable through different colour, or shape; only the amount necessary to meet the requirements of the importing country are to be manufactured; the importing country has to notify to the WTO's TRIPS Council, etc. Given these **cumbersome requirements**, hardly any country, in the last 17 years, was able to make effective use of this waiver.

Limited scope of the waiver:

- As against the original proposal made by India and South Africa at WTO calling for a waiver for vaccines, medicines and other therapeutics and technologies related to the treatment of COVID-19, it appears that the U.S. supports waiving intellectual property (IP) protections only on COVID-19 vaccines.

- This amounts to **narrowing down the scope of the waiver considerably by restricting it to vaccines**. Medicines useful in treating COVID-19 and other therapeutics must be also included in the waiver.

Non IP challenges:

Technology transfer:

- While the TRIPS waiver would lift the legal restrictions on manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines, it would not solve the problem of the **lack of access to technological 'know-how' related to manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines**.
- Waiving IP protection does not impose a legal requirement on pharmaceutical companies to transfer or share technology.
- This might lead to individual countries adopting coercive legal measures for a forced transfer of technology, which could turn out to be draconian and also counterproductive in the long run.

Production constraints:

- A considerable amount of time, even several years could be needed for production plants to become operational at optimal capacity.

Logistical challenges:

- Logistical challenges such as **inadequacy of supply chains and unavailability of raw materials** to manufacture vaccines and medicines could derail the production process.

Recommendations:

- The governments would have to be proactive in **negotiating with pharmaceutical companies** to transfer technology using various legal and policy tools including **financial incentives**.
- Countries should start working towards making suitable **changes in their domestic legal framework to operationalize and enforce the TRIPS waiver**.

Conclusion:

- Though the U.S.'s support of the TRIPS waiver is a significant step forward in the global fight against the pandemic, the waiver will have an effect only if countries simultaneously address non-IP bottlenecks among other things.

1. Hakki-Pikki Tribe

- The Hakki Pikkis are a **nomadic tribe based largely in Karnataka**.
- They were rehabilitated in the 1970s once their trade of bird hunting was banned.
- They now live in villages in Karnataka.
- The origin of Hakki-pikki tribal communities have got a rich history and they are said to have ancestral relations with the **legendary Ranapratap Singh**.
- They are said to have **migrated to southern India after their defeat with the Mughal king**.

G. Tidbits

1. South Sudan President dissolves Parliament as part of peace accord

What's in News?

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir has dissolved Parliament, opening the way for lawmakers from opposing sides of the country's civil war to be appointed under a **2018 peace accord**.

- The **setting up of a new legislative body** was part of an accord signed in September 2018 between the President Mr. Kiir and Vice-President Riek Machar, for years on opposite sides during the **five-year civil war** that left 3,80,000 people dead and four million displaced.
- In accordance with the 2018 accord, the **new assembly will number 550 lawmakers**, the majority from Mr. Kiir's governing SPLM party.
- The parliamentarians will be nominated by the different parties.

2. Back in the shortage economy

India in mid 1960s:

- India in the mid-1960s with **two consecutive years of drought** had witnessed a **severe shortage of food**.
- India had to turn to the U.S. for assistance.
- During the 1960s, India was the largest importer of food aid, mainly under the **PL480 programme of the U.S.** This allowed India to procure wheat on rupee payment — and at relatively low prices because the country had no foreign exchange to buy food in the world market.
- The leadership at the time including the Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi and their cabinet colleagues had stirred the scientific and bureaucratic communities to bring about a quantum leap in food production, leading to what is popularly hailed as **Green Revolution in India**. **India today is a food surplus nation**.

Health crisis of 2020:

- The unfolding health crisis brought out by the second wave of the pandemic calls for similar resolve and intelligence to address it, as observed in the 1960s.
- **On average, states spend only around 5% of their total expenditure on health.**
 - The inter-state variation in the death rate in India is directly related to the extent of health spending in relation to the state domestic product. It is also to some extent related to health infrastructure.
- The states would have to **raise the level of spending on health** very substantially. There is a need for an urgent ramping up of the health infrastructure. Measures are needed to **strengthen the capacity of the health system**.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1: Which of the following is/are correct regarding Gopal Krishna Gokhale?

1. He became Congress president at its Banaras session in 1905.
2. He was regarded by Mahatma Gandhi as his political guru.
3. He started a weekly newspaper, 'The Hitavada', in Marathi.

Select the correct option from below:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- He became Congress president at its Banaras session in 1905.
- He was regarded by Mahatma Gandhi as his political guru.
- He started a weekly newspaper 'Hitavada' in English.

Q2: Which of the following is/are incorrect regarding 'Dharmatma Gokhale'?

1. It was a book written by Bal Gangadhar Tilak as a tribute to Gopal Krishna Gokhale.
2. It was written in Sanskrit.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- ‘Dharmatma Gokhale’ is a book written by Gandhiji in Gujarati, as a tribute to Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

Q3: Which of the following is incorrect regarding Rabindranath Tagore?

- a. Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for Gitanjali.
- b. In 1874, Tagore's poem Abhilaash was published anonymously in a magazine called Tattobodhini.
- c. In 1905, following the partition of Bengal, Tagore renounced his knighthood.
- d. In 1921, Rabindranath Tagore established Viswabharati University.

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for Gitanjali.
- In 1874, Tagore's poem Abhilaash (Desire) was published in a magazine called Tattobodhini.
- Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood in 1919 following the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in 1919.
- In 1921, Rabindranath Tagore established Viswabharati University.

Q4: Which of the following amendments were made to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) in 2020?

1. Foreign contribution must be received only in an account designated by the bank as an “FCRA account” in the Delhi branch of the State Bank of India.
2. The government may conduct an inquiry before renewing the FCRA certificate to ensure that the person making the application is not indulging in activities aimed at religious conversion.
3. A person who receives foreign contribution must not use more than 20% of the contribution for meeting administrative expenses.

Select the correct option from below:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020 was passed in the Parliament in September 2020. As per the amendments:
- Foreign contribution must be received only in an account designated by the bank as an “FCRA account” in the Delhi branch of the State Bank of India.
 - The Home Ministry had directed all NGOs seeking foreign donations to open a designated FCRA account at the State Bank of India’s New Delhi branch by March 31, 2021.
- The government may conduct an inquiry before renewing the FCRA certificate to ensure that the person making the application is not indulging in activities aimed at religious conversion.
- A person who receives foreign contribution must not use more than 20% of the contribution for meeting administrative expenses.

Q5. Consider the following areas: (UPSC 2012)

- 1. Bandipur
- 2. Bhitarkanika
- 3. Manas
- 4. Sunderbans

Which of the above are Tiger Reserves?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Bhitarkanika National Park is a national park in northeast Kendrapara district in Odisha. It obtained the status of a Ramsar site in 2002. It is surrounded by Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. It is not a Tiger Reserve.
- Bandipur in Karnataka, Manas in Assam and Sunderbans in West Bengal are all Tiger Reserves.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Has the Judiciary usurped the powers of the Executive by constituting the 12-member National Task Force (NTF) to ensure oxygen supply? Examine. (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS 2 Polity and Governance)
2. TRIPS waiver is not a magic pill as there are non-IP challenges in making vaccines and drugs accessible to the world population. Illustrate with relevant examples. (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS 3 Economy)