

19 May 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. High Court seeks govt.'s stand on GNCTD Act plea

Context:

The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre to respond to a **plea seeking to strike down** the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (**GNCTD**) **Amendment Act** that **increases powers of the Lieutenant-Governor**.

Details:

- The petition has argued that the Act would lead to **confusion among the residents** as to who would be taking decisions for the Capital.
- It argued that vesting of powers in the L-G **would not be in harmony with the republican system of government**.
- It is argued that the **L-G already had overriding powers in the matters of land, police and services** and by the latest amendment to the GNCTD Act, he would **have authority over all legislations passed by the Delhi Assembly**.

For an in-depth understanding of the GNCTD Act, read the **Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021**

2. Manipur scribe, activist booked under NSA

Context:

The police in Imphal have booked journalist Kishorchandra Wangkhem and political activist Erendro Leichombam under the National Security Act (NSA) of 1980 over their Facebook posts.

National Security Act:

The National Security Act is an act **that empowers the government to detain a person** if the authorities are satisfied that **he/she is a threat to national security or to prevent him/her from disrupting public order**.

- The National Security Act of 1980 provides for the provision of **preventive detention in certain cases**.
- The Act empowers the Central Government and State Governments to detain a person to prevent him/her from acting in any manner prejudicial to the **national security of India**, the **relations of India with foreign countries**, the **maintenance of law and order**, or the **maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community**.
- The act also gives **power to the governments to detain a foreigner** in a view to regulate his/her presence or **expel from the country**.
- A person can be detained for **up to 12 months without a charge**.
- The detained person is **not entitled to any legal aid**.

3. Justice Gavai will not hear Param Bir Singh's plea

Context:

Supreme Court judge Justice B.R. Gavai, one of the two judges on the Vacation Bench scheduled to hear a plea by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh challenging the internal enquiries instituted against him, **recused himself from hearing the case.**

Recusal:

- Recusal is to **remove oneself as a judge in a particular proceeding**, usually because of **conflict of interest** or **having a prior association with the parties in the case.**

Read more on this topic covered under the Editorial “When can a judge opt out of a case?” in **16th February** **2020** **Comprehensive** **News** **Analysis.**

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Sri Lanka's China-backed tax haven clears final hurdle

Context:

The Supreme Court in Colombo ruled that the Chinese-funded **tax-free enclave** – the Colombo Port City project could go ahead with only minor tweaks.

- The largest single foreign investment in Sri Lanka is one of several **massive Asian infrastructure projects funded by China** as Beijing **increases its regional footprint.**
- Under the proposed legislation, the Port City will be **administered by a commission with unprecedented powers to fast track investment approvals.**
- Transactions within the Port City will be **denominated in foreign currency** and all **salaries earned by any worker will be tax-exempt.**

Background:

Opposition parties, civil society groups, and labour unions had **challenged the “Colombo Port City Economic Commission” Bill** in Sri Lanka’s Supreme Court.

This issue has been covered in **April 16th, 2021 CNA.**

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Stormy start

Context:

- **Cyclone Tauktae** which has made landfall on the western coast of India has caused loss of life and destruction of infrastructure in Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

For more related information refer to:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 16th Mar 2021](#)

Background:

- Storms are common in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea in May, ahead of the monsoon onset.

Changing trend in cyclone frequency and intensity:

- However, notably in the recent past, an **increase in frequency has been observed in the formation of cyclones in the North Indian Ocean**. The annual average number of cyclones in the region has increased over time.
- Another notable trend has been that as against the historical trend wherein, Bay of Bengal has been the hotbed of cyclones in the region, there has been an **increase in the number of cyclones in the Arabian Sea in recent years**.
 - Cyclone Tauktae continues the trend of strong cyclones developing in the Arabian Sea more frequently than earlier.
 - **Cyclone Tauktae is the fourth cyclone in consecutive years to develop in cyclone shy Arabian Sea in the pre-monsoon months**. Cyclone Nisarga (2020), Cyclone Vayu (2019) and Cyclone Mekanu (2018) are the other cyclones that have originated in the Arabian Sea in the recent past.
- The Arabian Sea is not only seeing more frequent cyclonic activity but the **intensity of these cyclones have also grown over time**.
 - Arabian Sea cyclones since 2018 have been categorized as either 'severe cyclone' or above.
 - The latest **cyclone Tauktae has intensified very rapidly**. As against the previous cyclones which took around 4-5 days to intensify into a **very severe cyclonic storm (VSCS)**, the current cyclone Tauktae has taken just two days to develop into a VSCS.

Linkage between climate change and cyclones:

- The changing trend in frequency and intensity of cyclones in the region is being attributed to **a rise in average sea surface temperatures** driven by global warming.
 - Scientists have observed that Arabian Sea temperature has increased between 1.2-1.4 degree Celsius in the recent four decades.

Details:

- Given the fact that it is very likely that India will see more frequent cyclones every year due to global warming, India should work towards mitigating the damage to life and property from these adverse climatic phenomena. The following measures will help in this direction.

Disaster Response:

- The impact of the storm can be considerably mitigated by **specialized disaster response forces**, who are well trained and equipped and are adequately supported by the defence forces in rescue and relief work.

Forecasting:

- India needs to develop **greater expertise in forecasting** which will help in the issuance of **precise early warnings**.
- Given the rapid intensification of cyclones, there is very little time available to take immediate measures for evacuation at the ground. State-of-the-art cyclone models are unable to pick this rapid intensification because they do not incorporate the ocean dynamics accurately. This is a forecasting challenge that needs to be addressed.
- There is the need to closely monitor at **higher resolution and accuracy using on-site platforms such as buoys and moorings**. Improving the Indian Ocean Observing System and incorporating the global warming signals in the weather models can help us tackle the challenges of intense cyclones in the future.

Risk assessment:

- The available data and updated weather and climate models incorporating the impact of global warming must be used to understand how the cyclones might change in the coming decades and how that might impact the coastline of India. **A risk assessment** based on this can definitely help save lives and property by **ground mapping vulnerabilities**.
- In 2020, the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** launched an **impact-based cyclone warning system** from the October-December season designed to reduce economic losses by focusing on districts and specific locations, and incorporating such factors as population, infrastructure, land use and settlements.

Disaster mitigation and resilience building:

- The government must work towards crafting policies to improve disaster mitigation abilities and to increase resilience among communities.
- **Climate-proofing lives and dwellings** must be a high priority for vulnerable areas. This would warrant a multi-sectoral approach that would involve **building sturdy homes of suitable design, creating adequate storm shelters and ensuring financial protection against calamities** through insurance for property and assets.

Category: HEALTH

1. Planning for future waves of the pandemic

Context:

- The **second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India** and the probability of more such waves in the coming times.
 - The COVID-19 trajectory in other countries shows the possibility of multiple waves of the pandemic. **Japan is experiencing the fourth wave.**

Details:

- The article discusses some of the measures that could be necessary to mitigate the impact of future waves in India.

Surveillance:

- There is a lack of clear data relating to the pandemic. There has been some degree of unreliable testing and under-reporting and manipulation of data relating to cases and deaths. This will impair the modellers and result in faulty projections.
- **Identifying impending waves** is very important in mitigating the impact of the pandemic given that it serves as an early warning for the governments, which could then take appropriate measures such as localized lockdowns and other mitigative measures.
- **A strong surveillance system reporting will provide reliable early markers of an impending wave.** The detection of an outbreak in the initial stages can help contain it before the pandemic spreads to other areas.
- The Central and State government should use real-time data by encouraging reliable reporting.
- Also, **concurrent genomic sequencing in real-time in the fixed proportion of samples** will help identify any new variants causing several outbreaks. In case of such a scenario, the administration could impose local lockdowns in high-burden areas to stop the wide spread of the variant.

Vaccination:

- Vaccination continues to remain the major intervention that could help in the fight against the pandemic. The administration should take all measures to **ensure vaccine production at pace and scale to vaccinate the entire population at the earliest.**
- The Central government should proactively reach out to all the vaccine manufacturing firms in the west and invite them to collaborate with Indian firms under the '[Make in India](#)' programme. This will not only increase its domestic production but also help India emerge as the world's biggest exporter of vaccines and furthermore provide an impetus to the soft power image of India in the global community.
- With newer variants of concern emerging, it is also important to **update the vaccines depending on how the virus changes.**

Public health infrastructure and workforce:

- The pandemic has brought to light the importance of timely and efficient public health responses. The lack of sufficient public health infrastructure to cater to the population and the depleted public health workforce has weakened India's fight against the pandemic. The front-line public health workforce is particularly absent in urban areas, while critical care capacity (oxygenated beds, ICUs) is limited in rural areas.
- The need for robust **public health infrastructure and a trained public health workforce** is a bare minimum necessity in this regard.
- The administration needs to reconfigure the health systems to ensure that adequate public health workers and public health infrastructure are available as per global norms.

- The administration will have to hire front-line workers in public health who can engage in surveillance and contact-tracing, and mobilise people for primary healthcare services, including vaccination.

Robust pandemic preparedness plan:

- India has to have a system that can respond to newer pandemics in the making. Rather than building reactive systems for each wave and each pandemic, India should develop robust pandemic preparedness plans. Such a **proactive approach** will help reduce the impact of such an outbreak.

One Health approach:

- **India needs to adopt the 'One Health' agenda and ensure that environmental health and animal health are given similar priority as human health.**
 - Nearly 60% of known infectious diseases and up to 75% of new or emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin.
- Hence, **preserving the ecosystem in its natural form** is important in order to prevent future pandemics.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Electoral bonds worth ₹695 cr. sold during the recent elections

What's in News?

According to an RTI reply, electoral bonds worth ₹695 cr. sold during the recent elections.

- The **amount sold was the highest-ever for any Assembly elections since the scheme started in 2018**, according to the numbers provided in the reply.

Electoral Bonds Scheme:

- The **scheme allows any Indian citizen or company to purchase the bonds sold by the SBI in denominations of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1 lakh, ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore and give them to political parties anonymously.**

Read more on the [Electoral Bonds Scheme](#).

2. Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)

- [Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems \(CCTNS\)](#) is a **secure application that links over 97% of police stations in the country.**
- The project was initiated in June 2009.
- CCTNS has been developed by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) under the Union Home Ministry.**
- It aims to create a **comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing at the Police Station level.** This will be done through:
 - Adoption of principles of e-Governance.
 - Creation of a **nationwide networked infrastructure for the evolution of IT-enabled state-of-the-art tracking system** around the investigation of crime and detection of criminals.

- It not only automates police functions at Police station and higher levels but also creates facilities and mechanism to provide public services like registration of online complaints, ascertaining the status of a case registered at the police station, verification of persons, etc.

Note:

- CCTNS is being used for antecedent **verification for Global Entry**.
- The Global Entry is **a facility run by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)**, an agency that works under the Department of Homeland Security that fast tracks movement of pre-approved, low-risk travellers upon arrival after a rigorous background check through designated kiosks.
- Though the **Global Entry pilot project started in 2008, India became a member** in 2017 only.

3. Compulsory Retirement:

What's in News?

The Ministry of Home Affairs has revealed that 13 officers have been retired in public interest.

Compulsory Retirement:

- An order of compulsory retirement is **not a punishment**.
- It **does not imply any stigma** or any suggestion of misbehaviour.
- The order has to be passed by the government on forming the opinion that **it is in the public interest to retire a government servant compulsorily**.
- The Supreme Court issued important principles regarding compulsory retirement **in the Baikunth Nath v Chief Medical Officer (1992) case**.
- The SC said, Principles of natural justice have no place in the context of an order of compulsory retirement.
 - However, this does not mean that judicial scrutiny is excluded altogether.
 - While the High Court or the Court would not examine the matter as an appellate **Court, they may interfere** if they are satisfied that the **order passed is:**
 - mala fide
 - based on no evidence
 - arbitrary – in the sense that no reasonable person would form the requisite opinion on the given material.

4. The czar of brinkmanship must seek peace

Context:

- The recent **stand-off between Russia and Ukraine**
 - Russia has been criticised for its involvement in the **Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine**, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting with Ukrainian troops.

- Russia has allegedly deployed thousands of troops as well as tanks and artillery near Ukraine's eastern border and has also mobilized troops in the annexed Black Sea region of Crimea.
- Ukraine has appealed to the U.S. and NATO for help.

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which one of the following statements is the best description of Minsk agreement?

- It is an agreement between Ukraine and Russia to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine
- It is an agreement between England and France to resolve the dispute over access to waters around the Jersey island
- It is an agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
- It is a collective defense treaty between Russia and seven other countries in Central and Eastern Europe

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Minsk agreement is an agreement between Ukraine and Russia to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine.
- It is an agreement to halt the war in the Donbass region of Ukraine.
- It was drawn-up by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine, which comprised of representatives from Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE.

Q2. Which of the following is/are correctly matched?

- Kerch Strait -Black Sea with the Sea of Azov
- Strait of Messina- Tyrrhenian Sea with the Ionian Sea
- Strait of Dover- North Sea with English Channel

Options:

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Kerch Strait connects Black Sea with the Sea of Azov.
- Strait of Messina connects Tyrrhenian Sea with the Ionian Sea.
- Strait of Dover connects North Sea with English Channel.



Q3. Consider the following statements about Competition Commission of India (CCI):

1. Commission has suo moto power to enquire whether an anti-competitive agreement or abuse of dominant position causes or is likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition.
2. It is a quasi-judicial body.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

Both the statements are correct.

- Competition Commission of India is the competition regulator in India.
- It is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing the Competition Act, 2002 and promoting competition throughout India and to prevent activities that have an appreciable adverse effect on competition in India.
- It has suo moto power to enquire whether an anti-competitive agreement or abuse of dominant position causes or is likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition.
- It is a quasi-judicial body.

Q4. With reference to Right to Information Act, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. An applicant making request for information shall not be required to give any reason for requesting the information or any other personal details.
2. Intelligence and security organizations specified in the 2nd schedule of the Act are exempted from providing information in all the cases

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- An applicant making an RTI request for information is not be required to give any reason for requesting the information or any other personal details.
- Intelligence and security organizations specified in the 2nd schedule of the Right To Information Act are exempted from providing information in all the cases except information pertaining to the allegations of corruption and human rights violations.
- For issues relating to allegations of corruption and human rights violations, such organisations are required to provide information.

Q5. A rapid increase in the rate of inflation is sometimes attributed to the “base effect”. What is “base effect”? (UPSC 2011)

- a. It is the impact of drastic deficiency in supply due to failure of crops
- b. It is the impact of the surge in demand due to rapid economic growth
- c. It is the impact of the price levels of previous year on the calculation of inflation rate
- d. None of the statements (a), (b) and (c) given above is correct in this context

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The base effect refers to the impact of the rise in price level (i.e. last year's inflation) in the previous year over the corresponding rise in price levels in the current year.
- If the inflation rate was too low in the corresponding period of the previous year, even a smaller rise in the Price Index will arithmetically give a high rate of inflation. This is referred to as inflation due to base effect.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Examine how India's rural areas have been hit hard by the pandemic and what in your opinion are the upcoming challenges? (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-2, Governance]
2. Accurate forecasts and resilience building hold the key to handling severe cyclones. Evaluate. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Disaster Management]