

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs 24 May 2021

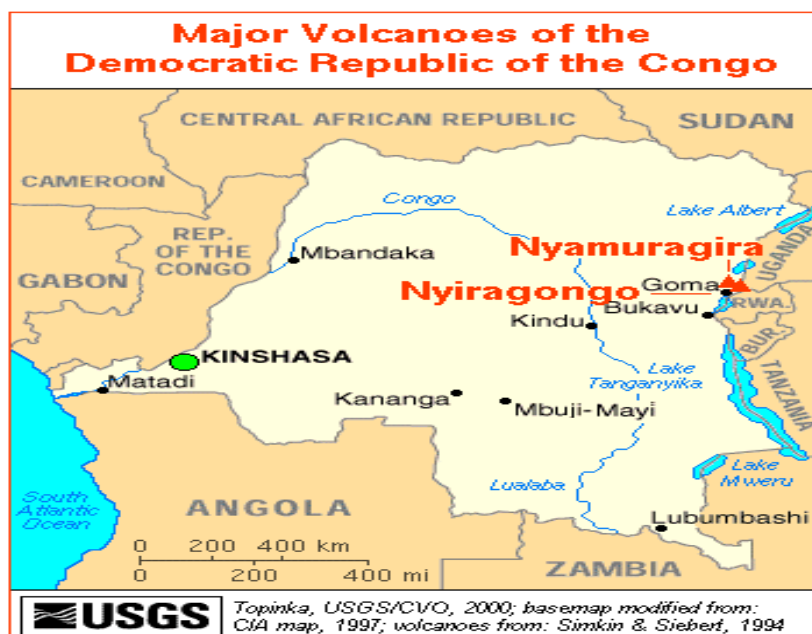
### 1. Mount Nyiragongo

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently the active volcano in Congo, Mount Nyaragongo has been erupted.
- The Indian Army contingent under the United Nations peace keeping mission (MONUSCO) assisted in protecting civilians and U.N. officials as well as assets during the evacuation.

About Mount Nyiragongo



- It is an active stratovolcano with an elevation of 3,470 m in the Virunga Mountains associated with the Albertine Rift.
- It is located inside Virunga National Park, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, about 12 km north of the town of Goma and Lake Kivu.
- **Mount Goma, the highest elevation point.**
- Nyiragongo and nearby Nyamuragira are together responsible for 40 per cent of Africa's historical volcanic eruptions.

About Goma

- Goma is a regional hub for many humanitarian agencies in the region, as well as the UN peacekeeping mission.

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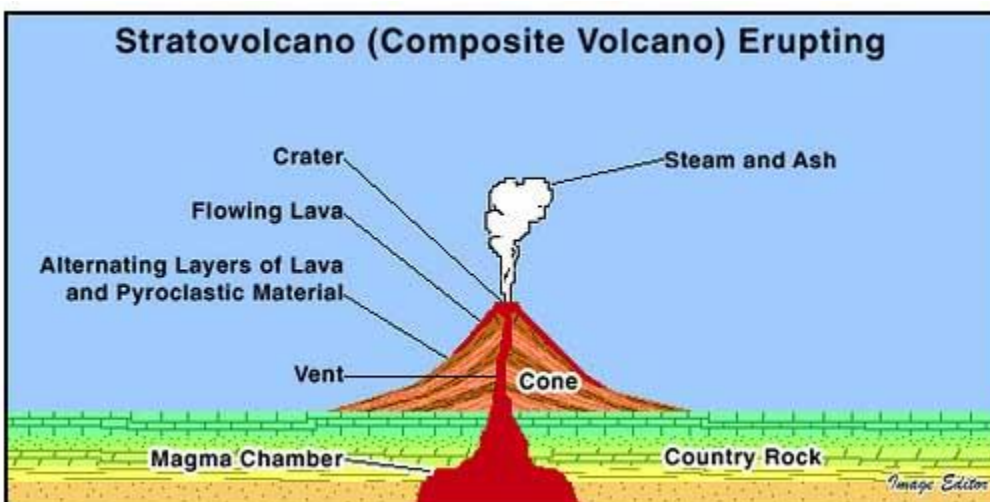
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- Goma is home to many UN peacekeepers and aid workers, much of surrounding eastern Congo is under threat from myriad armed groups vying for control of the region's mineral resources.

## Related Information

### About Stratovolcano



- It is a tall, conical volcano composed of one layer of hardened lava, tephra, and volcanic ash.
- These volcanoes are characterized by a steep profile and periodic, explosive eruptions.
- The lava that flows from them is highly viscous, and cools and hardens before spreading very far.

## 2. Iran and JCPOA

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has recently said that it remains unclear whether Tehran is willing to take steps to return to compliance with the Iran nuclear deal.

### More on the news

- The State Secretary said that the indirect talks between Washington and Tehran in Vienna had clarified what each side needs to do to come back into compliance with the Iran nuclear deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).
- The United States and the remaining parties to the JCPOA -- Iran, Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia -- will reconvene next week for the fifth-round talks in Vienna, in a bid to revive the nuclear deal.

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### About the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

- The JCPOA was the result of prolonged negotiations from 2013 and 2015 between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union, or the EU).
- It was signed between Iran and the P5, plus Germany and the EU in 2015.
- The P5 is the 5 permanent members of the UNSC (US, China, France, Russia, and UK).
- The deal aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear programme.

### Under the deal:

- most of Iran's enriched uranium was shipped out of the country
- a heavy water facility was rendered inoperable
- operational nuclear facilities were brought under international inspection
- In return, the deal involved lifting of international sanctions on Iran.

### Why has US pulled out of the deal?

- The Trump administration had pulled out of the deal in 2018.
- Trump and opponents to the deal say it is flawed because it gives Iran access to billions of dollars but does not address Iran's support for groups the U.S. considers terrorists, like Hamas and Hezbollah.
- They note it also doesn't curb Iran's development of ballistic missiles and that the deal phases out by 2030.
- They said Iran has lied about its nuclear program in the past.

### 3. UK plans fully digital border to provide accurate immigration numbers

#### (Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, Britain has decided to that it will fully digitise its border, allowing accurate counting of people entering and leaving the country.

#### More on the news

- The move means those coming to Britain without a visa or immigration status will need an Electronic Travel Authorisation - similar to that used in the United States.
- It will be implemented by the end of 2025.

#### Significance

- Digital identity checks will also be used to reduce the need to visit visa application centres.

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- It will help the government to count who is coming in and out of the country and whether they have permission to be here."
- UK Government has been unable to accurately measure levels of immigration and the number of people entering or leaving the country.

#### 4. Guantanamo Bay detention camp

(Topic- GS Paper II + 1 –International Relation + Geography, Source- The Hindu)

##### Why in the news?

- Recently the approved release of three detainees locked up in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for nearly two decades has raised expectations that President Joe Biden might try to close the notorious US military prison.

##### About Guantánamo Bay detention camp



- It is also called Gitmo which is a U.S. detention facility on the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, located on the coast of Guantánamo Bay in southeastern Cuba.
- It has been constructed in stages starting in 2002.
- The Guantánamo Bay detention camp was used to house Muslim militants and suspected terrorists captured by U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere (see also Iraq War).

##### Violation of Legal Rights

- The facility became the focus of worldwide controversy over alleged violations of the legal rights of detainees under the **Geneva Conventions** and accusations of torture or abusive treatment of detainees by U.S. authorities.

## 5. National Mobile Monitoring Software) app and Area Officer Monitoring App.

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- The Union Minister of Rural Development has recently launched the NMMS (National Mobile Monitoring Software) app and Area Officer Monitoring App.

### About NMMS (National Mobile Monitoring Software) app

- It will permits taking real-time attendance of workers at Mahatma Gandhi NREGA worksites along with geotagged photographs.

### Significance

- This will increase citizen oversight of the programme.
- It also enables the potential processing of payments faster.

### About Area Officer Monitoring App

- Area Officer Monitoring App facilitates area officers to record their findings online and even put a time stamp on them.
- The app can also enable the coordination of tagged photographs for all the schemes of the Department of Rural Development such as MGNREGA, PMAYG, PMGSY.

### Significance

- This would enable the government to record the inspections by officials.
- It will also facilitate analysis of the findings for better programme implementation.

### About MGNREGA

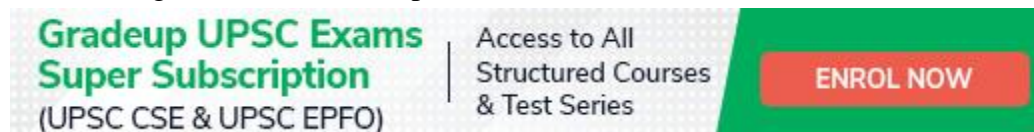
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an employment guarantee act.
- It was introduced in 2005 through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005.
- Under the scheme, every rural household whose adult member volunteers to do unskilled manual work is entitled to get at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year.

### Implementation

- Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) in association with state governments monitors the implementation of the scheme.

### The objective of the MGNREGA Scheme

- It aims at addressing the causes of chronic poverty through the works that are undertaken and ensuring sustainable development.



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- The Act was introduced with the aim of improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or un-skilled work to people living below the poverty line in rural India.
- It also aims to strengthen the process of decentralization and empowers Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for the planning and implementation of these works.

## 6. Galwan valley standoff in first week of May

(Topic- GS Paper III –Defense, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently Army denies any face-off took place between Indian and Chinese troops in the no-patrolling zone at Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh in the first week of May.

### More on the news

#### No-patrolling zone

- It was created after the June 15, 2020 incident when 20 Indian army personnel were killed in violent clashes with the Chinese.
- It is extending to around 3 kilometres, around 1.5 km each, on either side of the clash site near the Y-junction of the Galwan Valley.
- The patrols are sent at different times.
- On the particular day, the Indian and Chinese patrols reached the area at the same time, a minor face-off happened but they returned quickly.

### Recent development

- China still has camps beyond the no-patrolling zone and there has not been any reduction in troop deployment since last year.

### New Disengagement Agreement in Eastern Ladakh

- Recently, the China's Defence Ministry announced that Chinese and Indian troops on the southern and northern shores of Pangong Tso began "synchronized and organized disengagement".

### What is the new disengagement plan in eastern Ladakh?

- According to the statement from India and China, troops from both sides have started disengaging from the Pangong Tso area in eastern Ladakh.
- Currently, the disengagement process seems restricted to the north and south banks of Pangong Tso.

### What does new disengagement process entail?

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- The Union Defence Ministry of India has stated that both sides will remove the forward deployment in a phased, coordinated and verified manner.
- China will pull its troops on the north bank towards the east of Finger 8 and India will also position its forces at its permanent base at the Dhan Singh Thapa post near Finger 3.
- It also provides that all the construction done by both sides on the north and south banks of the lake since April 2020 will be removed.



### Significance

- It is the first major breakthrough in talks to resolve the nine-month military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.
- Both sides have also agreed that the area between Finger 3 and Finger 8 will become a no-patrolling zone temporarily, till both sides reach an agreement.
- It is important to note that the process will send Indian and Chinese troops back to their traditional bases on the north bank.

### About Pangong Lake

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- It is an **endorheic lake (landlocked)** that is partly in India's Ladakh region and partly in Tibet.
- It is a brackish water lake.
- The Karakoram Mountain range, which crosses Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and India, ends at the north bank of Pangong Tso.
- Its southern bank too has high broken mountains sloping towards Spangur Lake in the South.

#### Tactical significance of the lake:

- It lies in the path of the Chushul approach, one of the main approaches that China can use for an offensive into Indian-held territory.

#### Fingers in the lake





- The barren mountain called Chang Chenmo has palm like formations called ‘fingers’.
- India claims that the LAC is coterminous with Finger 8, but China claims that it starts from Line 2.
- **India physically controls area only up to Finger 4.**

### 7. UK is testing sewage to detect the presence of Covid-19

(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- Indian Express)

**Why in the news ?**

- Recently the UK government is expanding its testing of wastewater to detect the presence of coronavirus and its emerging variants.

**Why test wastewater?**

- Over a year ago, researchers in Australia developed an early warning surveillance system to track the community transmission of COVID-19 by tracing the presence of the virus’s genes in raw sewage.
- This was possible because some infected individuals may shed the virus in their stool or urine.
- This method is especially useful in identifying the scale of spread of the disease in a community.
- By detecting and quantifying the amount of virus found in the samples gives an indication of how widespread the virus is in an area, information that can be used by

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decision-makers to put restrictions on movement for certain people or start testing in an area more aggressively.

- Even in areas where widespread testing may not be feasible, adopting this method can point out the efficacy of containment measures.

## 8. RBI approves transfer of Rs 99,122 crore as surplus to Centre

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Reserve Bank of India Central Board has approved transfer of Rs 99,122 crore as surplus to the central government.
- The decision has been taken during its 589th meeting of the Central Board of Directors of Reserve Bank of India .

### More on the news

- The RBI also decided to maintain a Contingency Risk Buffer at 5.50% in line with recommendations of the Bimal Jalan Committee report.

### Background

#### Bimal Jalan Committee

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

➤ To propose a suitable profits distribution policy after looking at all likely scenarios of the RBI

➤ To determine whether the RBI is holding

enough provisions, reserves and buffers

➤ Review global best practices for central banks in making assessment and provisions for risks

### MEMBERS

Bimal Jalan

Rakesh Mohan

Bharat Doshi

Sudhir Mankad

S C Garg

N S Vishwanathan

“ We must continue to ensure that the quantum of reserves in the long-run is in line with the growth of the economy, the size of risk-adjusted capital flows and national security requirements

—BIMAL JALAN IN APRIL 2002 MONETARY POLICY



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- The RBI had formed a committee chaired by former Governor Bimal Jalan to review its economic capital framework and suggest the quantum of excess provision to be transferred to the government.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations of Bimal Jalan committee**

- The panel recommended a clear distinction between the two components of the economic capital of RBI i.e. Realized equity and Revaluation balances.
  - a. Revaluation reserves comprise of periodic marked-to-market unrealized/notional gains/losses in values of foreign currencies and gold, foreign securities and rupee securities, and a contingency fund.
  - b. Realized equity, which is a form of a contingency fund for meeting all risks/losses primarily built up from retained earnings. It is also called the Contingent Risk Buffer (CBR).
- The Surplus Distribution Policy of RBI that was finalized is in line with the recommendations of the Bimal Jalan committee.
- The committee has given a range of 5.5-6.5% of RBI's balance sheet for Contingent Risk Buffer.
- Adhering to the recommendations, the RBI has decided to set the CBR level at 5.5% of the balance sheet, while transferring the remaining excess reserves worth ₹52,637 crore to the government.
- If CBR is below the lower bound of requirement, risk provisioning will be made to the extent necessary and only the residual net income (if any) transferred to the Government.
- However keeping CBR at a lower range of 5.5%, will reduce RBI's space to manoeuvre monetary policy.

### **About Economic Capital Framework (ECF)**

- Economic capital framework refers to the capital requirement by the central bank while taking into account different risks.
- 27 per cent of ECF reserves holding by RBI.
- At the time of economic depression in the country, this ECF amount can be used which can increase more liquidity in the market to tackle capital requirement issues.

## **9. DIPCOVAN kit**

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)**

### **Why in the news?**

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) have recently developed an antibody detection kit called 'DIPCOVAN kit' for spotting SARS-CoV-2 virus.

### **About DIPCOVAN kit**

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- DIPCOVAN was intended for the qualitative detection of IgG antibodies in human serum or plasma, targeting SARS-CoV-2 related antigens.

### Timing

- It offers a significantly faster turnaround time as it required just 75 minutes conducting the test without any cross-reactivity with other diseases.

### Sensitivity and Specificity

- It is a high sensitivity of 97% and specificity of 99%.
- The kit has a shelf life of 18 months.
- The kit would be very useful for understanding COVID-19 epidemiology and assessing an individual's previous SARS-CoV-2 exposure.