

16 Oct 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India's share of river water will no more go to Pakistan: Modi

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said India would put to use its share of water from the rivers flowing to Pakistan and ensure that every single drop was used for the country's farmers.

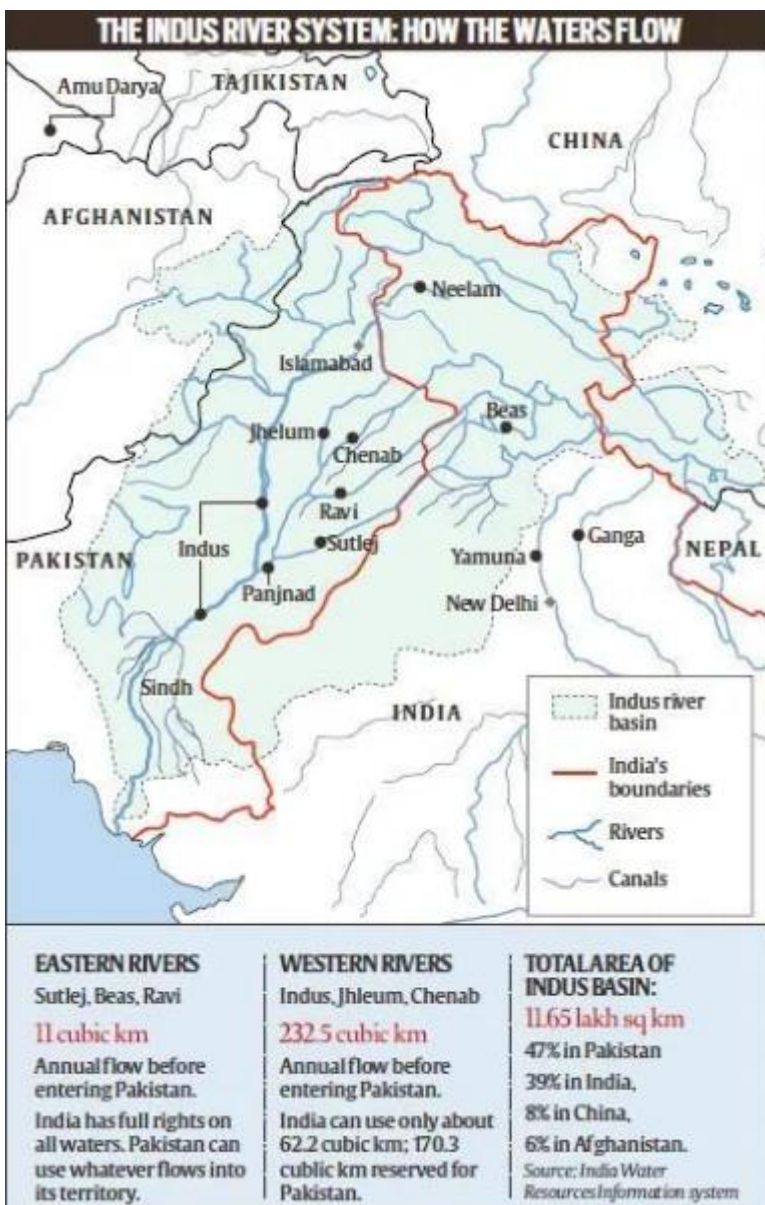
Details:

- India shares its water with Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty.

Indus Water Treaty:

- The six rivers of the Indus basin originate in Tibet and flow across the Himalayan ranges to end in the Arabian sea south of Karachi.

- Preceding partition, it was one common network for both India and Pakistan. However, while partition managed to draw terrestrial borders, the question of how to divide the Indus waters was something that needed to be worked out.
- Since the rivers flowed from India to Pakistan, Pakistan was unsurprisingly threatened by the prospect of being fed by India.
- In 1960, the two countries reached a decisive step with the intervention of the World Bank wherein precise details were laid out regarding the way in which the waters would be distributed.
- The components of the treaty were fairly simple.
 - The three western rivers (Jhelum, Chenab and Indus) were allocated to Pakistan while India was given control over the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej).
 - While India could use the western rivers for consumption purpose, restrictions were placed on building of storage systems.
 - The treaty states that aside of certain specific cases, no storage and irrigation systems can be built by India on the western rivers.



What is the issue?

- Historically, India has never made full use of its rights, neither on the Eastern nor on the Western rivers.

- On the Western rivers specifically, there has been no pressing demand for creation of new infrastructure on the Indus rivers, either for hydroelectricity or irrigation.
- With a large proportion of farmers in Jammu and Kashmir having moved to horticulture from traditional crops, the demand for irrigation has gone down over the years.
- After the devastating floods of 2014, it was argued that storage infrastructure could have been built on these rivers as a flood-control measure.
- As a result of India's under-utilisation of its share of waters, Pakistan has over the years benefited more than it is entitled to under the Treaty.
- Pakistan's dependence on the waters of the Indus basin cannot be overstated. More than 95% of Pakistan's irrigation infrastructure is in the Indus basin — about 15 million hectares of land. It has now become the world's largest contiguous irrigation system, comprising over 60,000 km of canals. Three of Pakistan's biggest dams, including Mangla, which is one of the largest in the world, is built on the Jhelum river. These dams produce a substantial proportion of Pakistan's electricity.

Conclusion:

- For many decades, India has allowed its share of water also to go to its hostile neighbour.
- The Indian government is now keen to reclaim its share.

2. Russia moves to fill void left by U.S. withdrawal in north Syria

Context:

Russia has moved to fill the void left by the United States in northern Syria, deploying troops to keep apart advancing Syrian government forces and Turkish troops, underscoring the sudden loss of U.S. influence in the area and illustrating how the power balance in the region has shifted rapidly.

Background:

- Turkish and Syrian troops are racing to control large parts of northern Syria that were run by an autonomous Syrian Kurdish regional government until a Turkish-led invasion began October 9, under the protection of U.S. troops stationed in the region.

The issue has been comprehensively covered on 10th October 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click Here](#) to read.

Details:

- The announcement that Russian forces were now patrolling an area where the U.S. had maintained two military bases appeared to signal that Moscow was moving to fill a security void left by the withdrawal of both the U.S. military and its partners in an international counterterrorism mission.
- Russia and Turkey will shortly be the only international armies in the area.
- The battle highlights the fluctuating nature of the Turkish incursion, which began after President Donald Trump ordered the evacuation of U.S. troops from the Turkish-Syrian border, opening the door for Turkish troops and their Syrian Arab proxies to enter Kurdish-held territory in northern Syria.
- Abandoned by the Americans, and quickly losing land to the Turkish force, Kurdish authorities sought protection from the Syrian government and its largest backer, Russia.
- Since Kurdish authorities asked the government of President Bashar Assad for assistance, thousands of Syrian troops have flooded into northern Syria for the first time since the government lost control of the region a few years ago.

Category: HEALTH

1. Gujarat, Tamil Nadu top performers under PM-JAY health scheme

Context:

Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh have emerged as the top-performing States under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY),

Details:

- Free secondary and tertiary treatment worth nearly Rs.7,901 crore has been availed under the flagship health assurance scheme of the Government in just over a year, across 32 States and Union Territories.
- The scheme has crossed the 50-lakh treatment mark.
- More than 60% of the amount spent has been on tertiary care.
- Cardiology, Orthopaedics, Radiation Oncology, Cardio-thoracic and Vascular Surgery, and Urology have emerged as the top tertiary specialities.
- Data suggests that there were 9 hospital admissions every minute across India in the first year.

Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY):

- Launched in September 2018, the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) scheme remains one of India's most ambitious health schemes ever.
- It was launched as recommended by the **National Health Policy 2017**, to achieve the vision of Universal Health Coverage.
- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme having central sector component under Ayushman Bharat Mission anchored in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives, namely Health and wellness Centres and National Health Protection Scheme.
 - 5 lakh existing sub-centers will bring health care system closer to the homes of people in the form of Health and wellness centres. These centres will provide comprehensive health care, including for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services.
 - The government aims to provide a health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh to 500 million Indians free of cost. This includes families from lower-income groups that fall under the socio-economic caste census (SECC) data of 2011.
- States can implement PMJAY either through the insurance route or the trust route or both.
 - The states implementing the scheme through the insurance mode select the insurance companies through an open tender process.
 - The states implementing the scheme through the trust mode may engage Third-Party Administrators (TPAs) and Implement Support Agencies (ISAs) through an open tender process for implementing the scheme.

Conclusion:

According to the National Health Authority (NHA), the scheme will continue to focus on reducing catastrophic out-of-pocket health expenditure, improving access to quality health care and meeting the unmet need of the population for hospitalisation care, so that India can move towards the vision of Universal Health Coverage.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE


1. Govt. to probe 'irregularities' in M.P. Swachh survey

Context:

The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has initiated an inquiry into alleged irregularities during the Swachh Survekshan 2019 for Madhya Pradesh — declared the best in solid waste management, and boasting eight cities in the top 25, the most for any State.

Details:

- The inquiry is based on a complaint filed by a Gwalior resident with the Prime Minister's Office in September which alleges:
 - Fudging of data by urban local bodies (ULBs)
 - Overestimation of performance during field surveys by third-party assessors
 - Arbitrary award of ranks despite similar declarations by ULBs
 - Conflict of interest with regard to the role of the Quality Council of India (QCI).
- Though Gwalior, Singrauli and Pithampur had applied for just an open defecation-free (ODF) + certification, the latter two secured an ODF++ tag. This is despite their application and advertisement for just an ODF+ tag in newspapers, according to the complaint.
 - The ODF++ tag, the highest category, is accorded to a ULB if not a single person defecates/urinates in the open, all public toilets are functional and faecal sludge and sewage is treated there.
 - A third-party agency carries out observations at randomised sampled locations to verify claims.
- It is said that the third-party agencies didn't accurately represent the true picture and overestimated some ULBs.
- The survey, whose results were declared in March, was undertaken in four parts worth 1,250 marks each.

Cleanliness watch The performance of Madhya Pradesh in the Swachh Survekshan 2019:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Bhopal is the cleanest State capital▪ Ujjain is the cleanest 'medium city' (3-10 lakh population)▪ Dewas is the best small city in 'Innovation and Best Practices' (1-3 lakh population)▪ Madhya Pradesh has 20 cities among the 100 best performing cities, and eight cities in the top 25
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Fourth best performing State overall▪ Best performing State in solid waste management▪ Indore is the cleanest city	SOURCE: SWACHH SURVEKSHAN 2019

Read more about Swachh Survekshan. [Click Here](#)

C. GS3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Another grim reminder – On Economic Slowdown

Context:

The World Bank International Monetary Fund (IMF) annual meetings kicked off on a sombre note, with the IMF downgrading global growth in 2019 to 3%, the slowest since the financial crisis.

Details:

- This is a serious climb-down from 3.8% in 2017.
- World output is projected to increase to a modest 3.4% in 2020 — still lower by 0.2% than the April projection.
- Unlike the slowdown, this recovery is expected to be “uncertain” and “not broad based” as per the IMF.

What are the reasons for the global economic slowdown?

According to IMF, as per **the World Economic Outlook (WEO) report, 2019 — Global Manufacturing Downturn, Rising Trade Barriers**, following are the causes of a “synchronised slowdown”:

- Rising trade barriers
- Heightened uncertainty around trade and geopolitics
- Idiosyncratic factors straining emerging markets
- Structural factors, such as an ageing population in advanced economies, were the causes of a “synchronised slowdown”, the IMF said in its 2019 World Economic Outlook (WEO) report — Global Manufacturing Downturn, Rising Trade Barriers.

The report calls for defusing trade tensions, reinvigorating multilateral cooperation and providing timely support to economic activity where needed.

India's Growth Projections:

- While the IMF cut its July projection for real GDP growth by a substantial 0.9 percentage point to 6.1%, the bank slashed the estimate by as much as 1.5 percentage points to 6%.
- These magnitudes of reduction underscore the severity of the ongoing slowdown and affirm the confusion of grim data and predictions from other forecasters, both global and domestic.

What are the concerns?

- In the case of India, there has been a negative impact on growth that's come from financial vulnerabilities in the non-bank financial sector and the impact that's had on consumer borrowing and borrowing of small and medium enterprises.
- The projected growth in India's case will be supported by lagged effects of monetary policy easing, cuts to corporate tax, measures to address environmental and corporate uncertainty, and government programs to boost rural consumption, as per the WEO.
- Asserting that the weak financial sector is becoming a drag on momentum, with the country's banks yet to regain vigour from the depressing burden of bad loans, the World Bank warned that non-banking financial companies' significant share in total credit and their linkages with banks pose broad-based contagion risks.
- Observing that a sharper-than-expected slowdown in major economies such as the U.S. and Eurozone could have severe spillover impacts, the bank noted that India was vulnerable to being affected immediately and over a longer duration by real GDP shocks in these advanced economies.
- In the case of a Chinese GDP shock, the onset of the impact on India would likely be delayed but substantially more pronounced.

What is the way ahead for India?

- First of all, there has to be an accurate diagnosis. The importance of an accurate diagnosis cannot be overemphasised since policy interventions to address the serious problem must be targeted appropriately to ensure enduring outcomes.
- World Bank suggests that the financial sector reforms is the need of the hour, as it would not only help resolve the sectoral infirmities but would also help put India back on a rapid growth path.
- While the IMF has urged structural reforms in labour and land laws to boost job and infrastructure creation, popular opinion is that becalmed domestic consumption demand is the biggest drag on momentum. India must, therefore, heed to Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee's prescription and put more money in the hands of consumers, especially those in the rural hinterland, to reinvigorate demand.

2. For a wider food menu

Context:

September, 2019 was observed as 'Rashtriya Poshan Maah' (National Nutrition Month), with the theme "Complimentary Feeding". The purpose of the initiative was to take the message of nutrition to every nook and corner of the country and to focus on complimentary food, treatment and prevention from infections in children.

POSHAN Abhiyaan:

- Poshan Abhiyaan is India's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescents, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- It is an amalgamation of scientific principles, political fortitude and technical ingenuity.
- The key nutrition interventions and strategies, which form the core of it, contribute to the targets of the World Health Assembly for nutrition and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the goal of "zero hunger".
- Achieving zero hunger requires not only addressing hunger, but also the associated aspect of malnutrition.
- World Food Day is observed annually on October 16 to address the problem of global hunger. The theme this year is 'Our Actions are our Future; Healthy Diets for a #ZeroHunger World'.

Concerns:

- Both poor and affluent families are affected by malnutrition due to lack of awareness.
- Concerted efforts by the government have led to a decline in malnutrition by two percentage points per annum. However, according to the 2017 Global Burden of Disease Study by the University of Washington, malnutrition is among the leading causes of death and disability in India, followed by dietary risks including poor diet choices.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 194.4 million people in India, about 14.5% of the total population, are undernourished.
- The Global Hunger Index 2018 ranks India 103 out of 119 countries on the basis of three leading indicators:
 - The prevalence of wasting and stunting in children under five years of age
 - Child mortality rate under five years of age
 - The proportion of undernourished in the population

Consumption patterns:

- Healthy diets are an integral element of food and nutrition security.
- Food consumption patterns have changed substantially in India over the past few decades leading to the disappearance of many nutritious native foods such as millets.
- While foodgrain production has increased over five times since Independence, it has not sufficiently addressed the issue of malnutrition.
- For long, the agriculture sector focused on increasing food production, particularly staples, which led to lower production and consumption of indigenous traditional crops/grains, fruits and other vegetables, impacting food and nutrition security in the process.

Agricultural biodiversity:

- Overreliance on a few staple crops coupled with low dietary diversity is a leading cause of persistent malnutrition.
- Intensive, monoculture agricultural practices can perpetuate the food and nutrition security problem by degrading the quality of land, water and the food derived through them.

Way forward:

- FAO's work has demonstrated that dependence on a few crops has negative consequences for ecosystems, food diversity and health. Food monotony increases the risk of micronutrient deficiency. There is a need to make food and agriculture more nutrition-sensitive and climate-resilient.
- Those who have the capacity to make active food choices will have to be more conscious of their choice of food and its traceability.
- Those who cannot choose must be enabled to exercise that choice.
- Lifestyles in cities pose other dietary problems. Urban food planning needs to incorporate nutritional security.

Conclusion:

Agricultural biodiversity ensures a wider food menu to choose from. Small farmers, livestock and seed keepers in India are on the front-line of conserving the unique agrobiodiversity of the country. The loss of globally significant species and genetic diversity will have adverse impact on diets. India must take efforts to synergise biodiversity conservation, agricultural production and local development for healthy diets and a healthy planet.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. A cost-effective way to power generation

India aims to have a renewables capacity of 175 GW by 2022 and 500 GW by 2030. The editorial analyses how India can achieve these targets in a cost-effective manner.

Renewable energy generation capacity of India:

- India has been aggressively expanding its power generation capacity.
- Currently installed capacity of 358 GW is about four times of what it was in 1997-98, which shows a doubling of capacity in each of the past two decades — or about 75 MW per day. By India's historical standards, these are astonishing numbers.
- In recent years, the major growth drivers have been renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power, and investment from the private sector.
- The private sector accounts for almost half the installed generation capacity.
- For the last three years, growth in generation from renewables has been close to 25%.

Concerns:

- At present, thermal generation capacity accounts for about two-thirds of the installed generation capacity in the country.
- This shows that though there is increasing awareness about the environmental impact of fossil fuels, the reliance on thermal plants is unlikely to end any time soon.
- Thermal plant capacities are large and therefore targeted capacity additions can be achieved by constructing fewer such plants.
- On average, it would take 18 solar or wind projects to generate the same quantity of power as one thermal plant.
- For the same reason, switching from fossil fuel to renewables will remain challenging as the administrative overheads that would have to be incurred in setting up the multiple projects could significantly add to the cost.
- The average cost per MW for a thermal plant is about 25% lower than that of a solar plant.

What would be a cost-effective way to enhance the renewable energy generation capacity of India?

Project size and cost:

- Infrastructure projects have an inverse relationship between size and unit cost, indicating economies of scale.
- In order to surmount the cost advantages that large thermal plants enjoy today, focus must be laid on developing larger solar and wind power plants that can also exploit economies of scale.

Project ownership:

- Over the last two decades, 63% of the total planned generation capacity has come from the private sector. Private investment has been even more pronounced in renewables, accounting for almost 90% of investment in wind and solar projects.
- If India is able to create additional capacity at lower cost, then it will play a big role in keeping electricity tariffs low.
- Private investment in the power sector not only helps in augmenting capacity but has also helps in lowering cost.

Marginal capacity costs:

- Even as total capacity in generation has been growing, the cost of installing additional capacity has fallen.
- The reasons for the decline could be as follows:
 - Advances in technology have resulted in the construction of larger power plants.
 - Compared to the 15-year period before 2013, power plants installed in the past six years have on average been significantly bigger, even twice as large in the case of hydel power.
 - The economies of scale in power generation appear to have been dramatic.
 - Increasing share of private sector investment. The share of private sector in capacity creation has been 70% in the last decade as compared to 46% in the decade before that. Private sector capacity has lower costs.
- Falling marginal costs suggest that retiring some existing high-cost capacity plants with newer plants could be explored.

Conclusion:

- With economic growth, the demand for power in India is only going to increase further.
- As India continues to ramp up capacity, it is imperative to create generation assets with the lowest unit cost by optimising plant capacities and encouraging private sector investment.
- Declining marginal cost for capacity provides opportunities for replacing existing capacity with newer capacity that are more efficient.

F. Tidbits

1. Shutdown in parts of Manipur against 1949 merger with India

- The proscribed Alliance for Socialist Unity Kangleipak (ASUK) and National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) has called a total shutdown in the state of Manipur and Tripura, as a mark of protest against the ‘forced merger’ of the two states in the Union of India on 15th October 1949.
- ASUK is a conglomerate of several militant outfits operating in Manipur while NLFT is a militant outfit based in Tripura.
- A joint statement signed by the top leaders of the outfits appealed to the general public of both the states to remember the “dark period of history”.
- The statement opined that India has been occupying the two states since October 15, 1949, after two “infamous” merger agreements of 1949 which were alleged to have signed under duress by the two incompetent authorities of the two kingdoms.

What happened in 1949?

Tripura:

- Representatives of the Kingdom of Tripura and the government of India signed the Tripura Merger Agreement on September 9, 1949.
- Tripura was officially annexed by India on October 15, 1949.

Manipur:

- During the days of the British Indian Empire, the Kingdom of Manipur was one of the princely states.
- Between 1917 and 1939, some people of Manipur pressed the princely rulers for democracy.
- By the late 1930s, the princely state of Manipur negotiated with the British administration its

preference to continue to be part of the Indian Empire, rather than part of Burma, which was being separated from India.

- These negotiations were cut short with the outbreak of World War II in 1939.
- On 11 August 1947, Maharaja Budhachandra signed an Instrument of Accession, joining India.
- Later, on 21 September 1949, he signed a Merger Agreement, merging the kingdom into India.
- This merger was later disputed by groups in Manipur, as having been completed without consensus and under duress.

G. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. RFID technology uses electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags containing electronically-stored information.
2. RFID communication is the same as two way radio communication.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology uses electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags containing electronically-stored information. It uses radio waves to communicate between two objects: a reader and a tag. RFID communication is the same as two way radio communication in the sense that information is transmitted or received via a radio wave at a specific frequency.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Right to Information Act, 2005:

1. NGOs funded by the Government do not come under the ambit of RTI Act.
2. Private bodies which perform public services or which receive funds or concession from the government are included under the ambit of RTI.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) “substantially” financed by the government fall within the ambit of the Right to Information Act. Private bodies which perform public services or which receive funds or concession from the government do not come under the ambit of RTI Act.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Rafale is a twin-engine, multirole combat aircraft.
2. France, Egypt, Russia and Qatar currently operate the Rafale.

Which of the given statement/s is/are INCORRECT?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

Rafale is a French word meaning “gust of wind” and is a French-origin Delta winged, twin-engine multirole fighter aircraft manufactured and designed by Dassault Aviation. The Rafale fighter jets are being produced for both the French Air Force and for carrier-based operations in the French Navy. It has been marketed for export to several countries and was selected for purchase by the Indian Air Force, the Egyptian Air Force, and the Qatar Air Force. India will only be the fourth country, after France, Egypt and Qatar, to fly the Rafale.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. A Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is a set of stratified actions taken to control the pollution levels.
2. The plan includes action to be taken by the state governments throughout the year to tackle industrial, vehicular and combustion emissions.

Choose the correct answer:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

A Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is a set of stratified actions that are taken once the pollution level reaches a certain specified limit. Approved by the Supreme Court in 2016, the plan was formulated after several meetings that the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) held with state government representatives and experts. The result was a plan that institutionalised measures to be taken when air quality deteriorates. GRAP works only as an emergency measure. As such, the plan does not include action by various state governments to be taken throughout the year to tackle industrial, vehicular

and combustion emissions. When the air quality shifts from poor to very poor, the measures listed under both sections have to be followed since the plan is incremental in nature.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. What is Indus Water Treaty? What are India's concerns with respect to the Treaty? (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. Critically comment on the performance of India's most ambitious health scheme - Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. (15 Marks, 250 Words)

