

18 Oct 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: NUTRITION

1. '76% of rural Indians can't afford nutritious diet'

Context:

- The recently published paper, titled “**Affordability of nutritious diets in rural India**”, by an economist of the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Details:

Methodology of the study:

- The study used the wages of unskilled workers, and dietary items such as dairy, fruit and dark green leafy vegetables as the reference baseline for the study.
 - **Unskilled workers account for a larger proportion of the total workers in the rural areas.** The industrial workers are in a much smaller proportion.
 - The **National Institute for Nutrition's guidelines for a nutritionally adequate diet** call for adult women to eat 330 gm of cereals and 75 gm of pulses a day, along with 300 gm of dairy, 100 gm of fruit, and 300 gm of vegetables, which should include at least 100 gm of dark green leafy vegetables.
- The study used the latest available food price and wage information from the National Sample Survey's 2011 dataset.
- Selecting the cheapest options from actual Indian diets the study calculated that a day's meals would cost ₹45 for a women and ₹51 for an adult man.

Salient observations:

- As per the benchmarks of the study, **even if a person spent all his/her income on food, 63.3% of the rural population or more than 52 crore Indians would still not be able to afford a nutritious meal.**
- If a person sets aside just a third of his/her income for non-food expenses, in such a scenario around 76% of rural Indians would not be able to afford the recommended diet.
- On indicators that simply measure calorie intake, India performs relatively better, but this metric does not account for the nutrition value of those calories, which provides a more comprehensive view of the **nutrition quality**.

Concerns:

- Notably, the study does not account for the meals of non-earning members of a household, such as children or older adults implying that a larger number would be facing the issue of non-affordability of nutritious diet in rural areas.

- The observations made in the study go against the observations made in the recent Economic Survey. This year's [Economic Survey](#)'s 'Thalinomics', had noted that the affordability of meals had increased in India.
- The findings seem to reiterate the fact that India performs abysmally on many nutrition indicators even while the country claims to have achieved food security.
 - The recently released [Global Hunger Index](#) showed that **India has the world's highest prevalence of child wasting**, reflecting acute under-nutrition.

For more information on this topic refer to: [CNA 17th Oct 2020](#).

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A work-in-progress campaign for rights

Context:

- The recent **elections to the UN Human Rights Council for the (2021-23) term**.

For more information on this development refer to: [CNA 15th Oct 2020](#).

Background:

UN Human Rights Council:

- The UNHRC is a [United Nations](#) **body** whose mission is to promote and protect human rights across the world.
 - Apart from the UNHRC, the UN has also set up a number of treaty-based organisations to monitor compliance with human rights standards and international human rights treaties such as the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- The UNHRC was reconstituted from its predecessor organisation, the UN Commission on Human Rights to help overcome the "credibility deficit" of the previous organisation.
- The UNHRC is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Functions:

- The UNHRC passes **non-binding resolutions on human rights issues** through a periodic review of all 193 UN member states called the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**, besides overseeing expert investigation of violations in specific countries (Special Procedures).
 - Human rights breaches that are investigated by the UNHRC relate to themes such as freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women's rights, LGBT rights and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.

Structure and membership:

- The council has representatives drawn from the General Assembly.

- The UNHRC has **47 members** serving at any time with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions across the world to ensure geographical representation.
- Each elected member serves for a **term of three years**. Countries are disallowed from occupying a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

Major interventions by the UNHRC:

- Countries such as Israel, Syria, Iran, North Korea, Myanmar, Sudan, Cambodia, Belarus, Burundi and Eritrea have been investigated and strongly condemned by the UNHRC for violating various human rights.
- The UNHRC in June 2020, ordered a report on “systematic racism” against people of African descent following the murder of the African-American George Floyd in the U.S.

Positive aspects of the UNHRC:

Primary human rights body:

- The council serves as a **central structure in the global human rights architecture**.

Fairly representative body:

- The UNHRC’s structure and election procedure via a “**one state, one vote**” principle has allowed the organisation to be fairly representative without special privileges for the more developed Western countries. This sets it apart from other multilateral institutions such as the IMF or the World Bank.

Improved functioning:

- **The mechanism of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) gives some degree of power to the UNHRC.** The UPR is basically a national report from the state under review which also includes a summary of information from civil society actors.
- This unique arrangement of representation, review and collaboration (with civil society groups over and above nation-states) has certainly improved the functioning of the UNHRC in comparison with its predecessor Commission.

Challenges:

- The UNHRC is having to face the **following external challenges and internal contradictions** in its global fight for human rights.

Internal contradictions:

Human rights record of member nations:

- Countries like Saudi Arabia have succeeded in earning representation twice (2014-16, followed by 2017-2019) despite a known reputation for several human rights violations, like the assassination of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the detention of several women rights’ activists, among others.
- The **human rights record of the member-states** such as China and Russia in the council has also not been in line with the aims and mission of the UNHRC, which has led to critics questioning its relevance.

- For example, the one-party systems of China and Cuba that have a controversial record on freedom of expression or the anti-gay policies of Russia.

Differing stand on the concept of human rights:

- Despite the continued participation of several western countries in the UNHRC, they continue to harbour misgivings on the **understanding of Human rights**.
- There has always been an inherent tension between countries from the West that promote an individualist notion of human rights that lays emphasis on political and civic rights and those from the developing world who lay greater emphasis on socio-economic and cultural rights. While, other rising powers such as Brazil and India have committed to hold states to account for human rights issues.

External challenges:

Non-participation of powerful nations:

- Powerful countries such as the **S. have refused to participate in the UNHRC**.

Non-compliance:

- Non-compliance has been a serious issue with respect to the UNHRC's functioning.
 - For example, in 2015, Sri Lanka had provided commitments to the council to promote reconciliation, accountability and human rights, following the end of the civil war in 2009. However, in 2020, the newly elected government withdrew the country from these commitments.

Worsening human rights condition:

- There seems to be an **unfolding of a human rights crisis in much of the developing world, and backsliding in some of the world's major democracies**. Human rights violations seem to have become too commonplace in all parts of the world.

Conclusion:

- Despite the improvement over its predecessor organization, the UNHRC has still many challenges to overcome. The UNHCR is still a work in progress.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. How global warming might affect food security

Context:

- The article analyzes the **impact of global warming on the plant growth and subsequently on the food security of humans**.

Background:

Global warming:

- Between the year 1870 (the first industrial revolution) and 2020, the **carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels have increased from 280 ppm to 400 ppm** mainly attributable to the increased fossil fuel burning (oil, natural gas, coal). Also, emissions of methane and nitrogen dioxide have also increased.
- Given the greenhouse warming effect of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrogen dioxide, the **global temperature has risen by almost 2 degrees Celsius**.

Click here to read more about [Climate Change in India](#).

Mixed impact on plants:

- The rise in CO₂ levels has **both positive and negative effects** on the plants.

Positive effect:

- The higher temperature is found to aid in the photosynthesis of plants, **making them grow more**.
- The higher temperature would help expand agricultural activity to even the sub-polar regions, would help **expand the agricultural growing season in some areas**.
- The higher concentration of carbon dioxide is also found to lead to an effect known as **carbon fertilization**.
 - The Carbon fertilization effect is the **increased rate of photosynthesis in plants that results from increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere**.
 - However, it has to be noted that the Carbon fertilization varies depending on the plant species, the temperature, and the availability of water and nutrients.
 - **The C4 plant varieties have been found to thrive under increased carbon dioxide levels and temperatures**. It was found that there was **improved heat tolerance, and suppressed heat-induced damages** in such varieties. Examples of C4 species are the economically important crops corn or maize, sugarcane, sorghum and millets, as well as the switchgrass which has been utilized as a source of biofuel.

Negative effects:

- Some studies have pointed out that the higher temperatures during the 'growing season' in the tropics and sub-tropic regions will greatly affect plant growth and crop productivity.
- The higher temperature is found to **restrict the plant's ability to absorb nitrogen**, thus restricting crop growth.

Study by ICRISAT:

- One study by the **Hyderabad Centre of the international agency ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics)** on the impact of different concentration of CO₂ levels on the growth and yield of chickpea found a noted increase in the root and shoot (plant height) lengths with higher CO₂ levels leading to higher growth rates.
- However, the **number of nodules in the roots (where nitrogen-fixing bacteria live) decreased at high CO₂ levels**.

- The decrease in chlorophyll synthesis **hastened leaves turning yellow and plant ageing (senescence)**.
- Notably, the above impacts were different for different species of the legumes.

Way forward:

- Given the possible impact of CO₂ level and its heating effect on food security there is an urgent need for the following steps.

Better understanding of the plant's response:

- There is a need for **more laboratory experiments** to study the impact of increased temperatures and CO₂ levels on plant growth and yields. These studies must concentrate on plant varieties like beans and legumes (plant meat) and food grains (C₃ variety plants), which would have a more direct impact on human food security.
 - The **difference between the C₄ plants and the C₃ plants is the way in which photosynthesis is done in the plants**. The difference occurs due to different metabolic pathways in the two varieties, mainly involved in sugar/starch metabolism, chlorophyll and secondary metabolite biosynthesis.

Evidence-based planning for climate change risks:

- The understanding of the different metabolic pathways in different plants could lead to a better understanding of the molecules or agents that can promote or inhibit specific pathways.
- These findings can help **identify plant varieties that are best suited for the given local conditions**.

Use of biotechnology:

- Biotechnology and the recent advances made in this field like **CRISPR-Cas9** can allow us to genetically modify the plants in order to ensure adequate growth and yields of the plants even in an increased temperature and CO₂ level scenario.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Jagan vs. judges

Context:

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister (CM) Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's letter to the Chief Justice of India complaining about the functioning of a few judges.

Background:

The allegations:

- The complaint is with respect to [Supreme Court](#) Justice N.V. Ramana's alleged influencing of posting of cases in the State High Court.
- The complaint also alleges the hostile attitude of some High Court judges towards the current state government of Andhra Pradesh and their deliberate and unsubstantiated striking down of the state government's decisions and orders.
- This amounts to an **accusation of misconduct, corruption and the political bias among the judges.**

Unprecedented situation:

- Though there have been previous instances of such allegations against certain judges, the current situation is unprecedented given that the current allegations have been made by a constitutional body, The Chief Minister of a state.
- This marks an **open conflict between the judiciary and a Chief Minister.**

How are allegations of misconduct against judges dealt with?

- There are two broad alternatives when it comes to complaints against sitting judges.

Impeachment:

- The Constitution protects the independence of judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court by making them **removable only through a process of impeachment.**

Grounds of impeachment:

- The Constitution lays down a rigorous procedure for removal of a judge of the Supreme Court or high court and can be initiated only on **grounds of proved misbehaviour or incapacity.**

Relevant articles and acts:

- **Article 124 (4) of the [Indian Constitution](#)** and the provisions of the **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968** and corresponding rules deal with the impeachment process.

Procedure:

- For initiating the impeachment process, a motion has to be moved by either 100 Lok Sabha members or 50 Rajya Sabha MPs.
- If the motion is admitted, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or Chairman of the Rajya Sabha will constitute an **inquiry committee**. This **inquiry committee will comprise three members — a Supreme Court judge, a high court chief justice and an eminent jurist**. The committee will frame charges and ask the judge to give a written response. The judge also has the right to examine witnesses.
- After the inquiry, the committee will determine whether the charges are valid or not and then submits its report. If the inquiry committee finds that the judge is not guilty, then there is no further action. If it finds him guilty, then the House of Parliament which initiated the motion, may consider continuing with the motion.

- The motion will be then debated and the judge (or his representative) will have the right to represent his case. After that, the motion will be voted upon. If there is **two-thirds support of those present and voting, and majority support of the total strength of the House**, it will be considered to have been passed. The process will then be repeated in the other House.
- After that, the Houses will send an address to the President asking that the judge be removed from office.
- As per Article 124(4) the above **process must be completed in one session of the parliament**.
- Given the procedure involved, it is not surprising that **no judge has been impeached till date in independent India**.

In-house procedure:

- Not all forms of misconduct or impropriety would warrant impeachment.
- Since 1997, the judiciary has adopted an **'in-house procedure' for inquiring into complaints received against sitting judges**.

History:

- After Justice J.S. Verma took over as Chief Justice of India (CJI) in 1997, he circulated among judges a document called **'Restatement of Values of Judicial life'**. This was a set of principles containing the essential elements of ideal behaviour for judges.
- This was followed by a resolution that an 'in-house procedure' would be adopted for action against judges for acts of commission or omission that go against these values.
 - The in-house procedure was **expected to maintain the primacy of the judiciary in its functioning** and avoid the need for interference by the other organs of the state like the legislature or executive.

Procedure:

CJI's preliminary analysis: [CNA 13th Oct 2020](#).

- When a complaint is received against a High Court judge, the CJI should decide on the authenticity of the complaint and decide whether it is frivolous or it involves serious misconduct and impropriety.
- The CJI would ask for the concerned judge's response if he feels the complaint is serious, The CJI may close the matter if he is satisfied with the response.

Three-member committee:

- If the CJI feels that a deeper probe is necessary, **the CJI forms a three-member committee consisting of only the judiciary members**.
 - The composition of this three-member committee depends on the position of the judge against whom the complaint has been filed.
- The inquiry it holds is of the nature of a fact-finding mission and is not a formal judicial inquiry involving examination of witnesses.

- The committee can give two kinds of recommendations, one where it deems the misconduct as serious enough to require removal from office, or that it is not serious enough to warrant removal.

Actions taken on the recommendations of the committee:

- If the committee deems the charges against the judge as genuine, the concerned judge will be urged to resign or seek voluntary retirement.
 - If the judge is unwilling to quit, the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned would be asked to withdraw judicial work from him. The executive i.e, the President and the Prime Minister are informed of the situation and are expected to begin the process of impeachment.
- If the misconduct does not warrant removal, the judge would be advised accordingly.

Conclusion:

- In the current situation, the complaint by the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister will have to be examined by the CJI to ascertain whether the allegations are genuine or frivolous and consider the need for a deeper investigation.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Reinventing auctions for the real world

Context:

- **American economists Paul R. Milgrom and Robert B. Wilson have been announced as the winners of the 2020 economics Nobel Prize** (Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences).

For information on this topic refer to:

Background:

Auction theory:

- All economies have to figure out **the allocation of the limited supply of resources to satisfy the unlimited human needs.**
- **Auctions** are important because they are the most widely used and also the **most efficient mechanism to allocate scarce resources in an economy.**
 - Auctions help ensure that scarce resources are allocated to people who value it the most.
 - From the seller's point of view, selling goods to the highest bidder helps the seller maximise his or her revenues.
- Auctions happen almost everywhere in the modern world, some explicit like the auction of mining and spectrum licences and some implicit like the sale of goods and services.
- Auction theory is a branch of economics that deals with auctions. Auction theory aims to improve seller revenues, increase benefits to consumers, or even achieve both these goals at the same time.

Criticisms of auctions:

- The most common criticism of auctions is that it can lead buyers to overpay for resources whose value is uncertain to them. This is popularly known as the ‘**winner’s curse**’.

Details:

- The award recognizes the duo’s contributions for improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats and also their implementation.
- Milgrom and Dr. Wilson, are most popular for their contribution towards devising new, real-world auction formats. **The combinatorial auctions** designed by the duo, has been used to sell complex goods such as spectrum as bundles, instead of as individual units.
- The contributions of Dr. Milgrom and Dr. Wilson have **helped governments and private companies design their auctions better**. This has, in turn, helped in the better allocation of scarce resources and has also **allowed the sellers to maximize their revenues while still ensuring that the buyers also stand to benefit**. This has proved to be an incentive for sellers to produce complex goods and has thus proved to be **providing an impetus to the whole economy**.

F. Tidbits

1. Dr.Reddy’s gets nod for Sputnik V trials

- The **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)** has provided an approval for **phase 3 clinical trial of Sputnik V in India**.
- Developed by Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, Russia, Sputnik V vaccine is based on the **human adenoviral vectors platform**.

2. IISER Pune uses smell to identify asymptomatic cases

- Loss of smell is one of the symptoms that people infected with the [novel coronavirus](#) show.
- A novel method has been developed by researchers at IISER Pune to quickly and accurately identify people infected with the virus but have no typical symptoms such as fever, fatigue etc.
- This method uses a **custom-built olfactory action meter**, which determines how well one can smell.

G. Prelims Facts

1. A ‘Zero Rajdhani’ skirts Guwahati, cuts travel short

- **Bogibeel is India’s longest rail-and-road bridge**.
- It is built **across the Brahmaputra** in the north-eastern Indian state of Assam between Dhemaji district and Dibrugarh district.
- It is **India’s first bridge to have fully welded steel-concrete support beams** that can withstand earthquakes of magnitudes up to 7 on the Richter Scale.

2. New Superconductor

- Superconductivity is a set of physical properties observed in certain materials where **electrical resistance vanishes and magnetic flux fields are expelled from the material (Meissner effect)**.
- Any material exhibiting these properties is a superconductor.
- A superconductor conducts such behaviour when it becomes colder than a **“critical temperature.”**

Context:

- As per a recently published study, new material has shown signs of superconductivity at room temperature. It conducts electricity without resistance up to 15 degrees Celsius. However, this superconductivity property survives only under high pressures, pressures such as those found at the centre of the Earth.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to Carbon fertilization effect?

1. It is the increased rate of photosynthesis in plants that results from increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
2. It is witnessed in all types of plants except in C4 variety of plants.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Carbon fertilization effect is the increased rate of photosynthesis in plants that results from increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
- However, it has to be noted that the Carbon fertilization varies depending on the plant species, the temperature, and the availability of water and nutrients.
- The C4 plant varieties have been found to thrive under increased carbon dioxide levels and temperatures. It was found that there was improved heat tolerance, and suppressed heat-induced damages in such varieties.

- Examples of C4 species are the economically important crops corn or maize, sugarcane, sorghum and millets, as well as the switchgrass which has been utilized as a source of biofuel.

Q2. Which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect with respect to the UN Human Rights Council?

1. The UNHRC was reconstituted from its predecessor organisation, the UN Commission on Human Rights.
2. The members are elected from the UN general assembly for a term of 2 years.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

UN Human Rights Council:

- The UNHRC is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights across the world.
- Apart from the UNHRC, the UN has also set up a number of treaty-based organisations to monitor compliance with human rights standards and international human rights treaties such as the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- The UNHRC was reconstituted from its predecessor organisation, the UN Commission on Human Rights to help overcome the “credibility deficit” of the previous organisation.
- The UNHRC is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The council has representatives drawn from the General Assembly.
- The UNHRC has **47 members** serving at any time with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions across the world to ensure geographical representation.
- Each elected member serves for a **term of three years**. Countries are disallowed from occupying a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

Q3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to superconductivity?

1. Superconductivity is exhibited in certain materials when its temperature becomes lower than a “critical temperature.”
2. During superconductivity, the magnetic flux fields are expelled from the material and is referred to as the Meissner effect.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Superconductivity is a set of physical properties observed in certain materials where electrical resistance vanishes and magnetic flux fields are expelled from the material (Meissner effect).
- Any material exhibiting these properties is a superconductor.
- A superconductor conducts such behaviour when it becomes colder than a “critical temperature.”

Q4. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan?

1. He founded The Mohammedan Literary Society in 1875.
2. He is considered a revivalist.
3. He was a strong supporter of the work of the Indian National Congress.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. None of the above

Answer: D

Explanation:

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was an Islamic reformer and philosopher of nineteenth century British India.
- He is considered a reformist rather than a revivalist. He opposed ignorance, superstitions and evil customs prevalent in Indian Muslim society. His advocacy of Islam's rationalist (Mu'tazila) tradition, and at broader, radical reinterpretation of the Quran to make it compatible with science and modernity, continues to influence the global Islamic reformation.
- Believing that the future of Muslims was threatened by the rigidity of their orthodox outlook, Sir Ahmad began promoting Western-style scientific education by founding modern schools and journals.
- In 1875, he founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, the first Muslim university in Southern Asia which later became the Aligarh Muslim University.
- During his career, Syed repeatedly called upon Muslims to loyally serve the British Raj and promoted the adoption of Urdu as the lingua franca of all Indian Muslims. Syed criticized the Indian National Congress.
- In 1878, Sir Syed was nominated to the Viceroy's Legislative Council.
- Social reforms in the Muslim society were initiated by Abdul Latif who founded "The Mohammedan Literary Society" in Bengal.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Given the unprecedented scenario of a Chief Minister accusing the sitting judges of misconduct, corruption and political bias, discuss the established procedures to deal with such complaints against sitting judges. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS Paper 2/Polity and Governance)
2. Despite the commendable improvement over its predecessor organization, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) still faces many external challenges and internal contradictions in its global fight for human rights. Comment. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS Paper 2/International Relations)