

09 Feb 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Telangana to implement 10% reservation for EWS](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Sri Lanka clears Chinese energy project, 50 km off Tamil Nadu](#)
2. [Myanmar issues crackdown warning](#)
3. [U.S. to rejoin UN human rights forum](#)

C. GS 3 Related

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. [171 still missing as death toll in Himalayan tragedy rises to 26](#)

ECONOMY

1. [Panel slams DoT for delay in 5G trials](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

HEALTH

1. [First steps in the journey to universal health care](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Law and compassion](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Troubled mountains](#)
2. [A Budget not for the environment](#)

F. Tidbits

1. [New labour codes to allow four-day work week](#)

G. Prelims Facts

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Telangana to implement 10% reservation for EWS

Context:

The Telangana government will henceforth implement 10% reservation to economically weaker sections (EWS) in education and employment.

Background:

- The 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019, granted 10% reservation to the EWS category in government jobs and educational institutions.

For In-depth understanding of the Reservation System in India, watch Explained: **103rd Constitutional Amendment Act.**

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Sri Lanka clears Chinese energy project, 50 km off Tamil Nadu

Context:

Sri Lanka cleared a Chinese energy project in three islands off Jaffna peninsula that are barely 50 km from the Tamil Nadu coast.

Details:

- Sri Lanka recently decided to pull out of the East Container Terminal (ECT) deal with India and Japan.
 - This is not the only challenge to New Delhi's interests.

Read more on this topic covered in **3rd February 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis.**

- Sri Lanka's Cabinet approved a proposal to involve Sinosoar-Etechwin Joint Venture in China to install 'hybrid renewable energy systems' in Nainativu, Delft or Neduntheevu, and Analaitivu, located in the Palk Bay.
 - The islands are connected to the Jaffna peninsula by a limited ferry service, managed mostly by the Sri Lankan Navy.
- Concerns have been raised on the project site's proximity to the Indian coastline.
 - Delft Island is one of the closest points to India from northern Sri Lanka.
- Sri Lanka's former High Commissioner to India said the Sri Lankan government cannot be blamed for this decision, because the project is backed by the [Asian Development Bank](#), which has its own procurement guidelines that should be followed by the borrower.

2. Myanmar issues crackdown warning

Context:

Myanmar's Generals issued a stern warning against further protests as an uprising against their coup.

This topic has been covered in **3rd February 2021** and **5th February 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis**.

3. U.S. to rejoin UN human rights forum

Context:

The U.S. announced plans to reengage with the UN Human Rights Council that former President Donald Trump withdrew from almost three years ago.

Details:

- United States of America walked out of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) citing the reason that human rights violators continue to serve on the council and its continued bias in the Israel and Palestine issue.

Read more on this topic covered in **RSTV Big Picture: UNHRC: America v/s United Nations**.

- President Joe Biden's administration is taking measures to reverse the Trump-era decisions to move away from multilateral organisations and agreements.

UN Human Rights Council:

- The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.
- It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. It meets at the UN Office at Geneva.
- Its members are elected by the members of the [General Assembly](#).
- The UNHRC has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis.
- No member may occupy a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. 171 still missing as death toll in Himalayan tragedy rises to 26

Context:

Glacial burst on Nanda Devi triggered an avalanche and caused flash floods in Rishiganga and Dhauliganga rivers in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.

This topic has been covered in **8th February 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis**.

Latest development:

- Glaciologists and experts in rock sciences are converging on the view that the cause of the Chamoli deluge was most probably a landslide and not a glacial lake burst.
- A glacial lake outburst flooding (GLOF) occurs when a breach in the glacial lake causes a sudden surge downstream.
 - Such lakes are formed when glaciers erode land, melt and over time become a large mass of water in the depression formed, and these can be breached, causing floods downstream.
- However, based on an analysis of satellite images, scientists have failed to spot any such lakes.
- The [Central Water Commission \(CWC\)](#) monitors and prepares monthly reports on the state of glacial lakes and waterbodies measuring 10 hectares and above via satellite.
 - Nothing out of the ordinary was observed.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Panel slams DoT for delay in 5G trials

Context:

A Parliamentary Panel has said that sufficient preparatory work had not been undertaken for introducing 5G services in India.

Details:

- The panel slammed the government for its 'laid-back approach' and delay in conducting 5G trials.
- It highlighted that the 5G trials have not yet been permitted.
- The committee condemned the Department of Telecom's unconscionably long delay in auctioning of spectrum.
- The committee was of the view that the issue of allocating the right amount of spectrum as demanded by the industry needed to be addressed if India were to realise the benefits of 5G.

Factors coming in the way of a 5G services roll-out in India:

- Inadequate availability of spectrum
- High spectrum prices
- Poor development of use cases
- Low status of fiberisation
- Non-uniform right-of-way issues
- Deficient backhaul capacity

Recommendations and Way Forward:

- It suggested that time-bound action be taken in areas where governmental intervention was required.
- It recommends that spectrum auction including auctioning of 3300 MHz to 3600 MHz be conducted at the earliest.

- It recommends that the DoT needs to have fruitful deliberation with the Department of Space and Ministry of Defence and an understanding must be reached for identification of adequate spectrum for 5G services.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

1. First steps in the journey to universal health care

Context:

For India, the lesson from COVID-19 demands setting forth on a steady and incremental path to universal health coverage.

Budgetary allocations:

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare budget for 2021-22 saw a 10.2% increase over the Budget estimate (BE) of 2020-21.
- A corpus of ₹64,180 crore over six years has been set aside under the PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana (PMANSBY) for strengthening health institutions
- ₹13,192 crore have been allocated as a Finance Commission grant.

These could make the first steps of a journey that steadily builds towards sustainable universal health coverage through the incremental strengthening of grass-root-level institutions and processes.

Universal Health Coverage through Insurance:

- Large expenditure projections and time constraints involved in the input-based strengthening of public health care have inspired the shift to the insurance route for achieving universal health coverage.
- However, insurance does not provide a magic formula for expanding health care with measly levels of public spending.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):

- The BE for the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) has stagnated at ₹6,400 crore for the current and the preceding couple of years. This should be a cause of concern.
 - PM-JAY covers over 50 crore poor Indians for hospital expenses up to ₹5 lakh per annum.
 - Available estimates have pegged the costs to be between ₹62,000 crore and ₹1,08,000 crore for 2021, if PM-JAY is to meet its stated commitments.

Comprehensive primary care:

- About 1.5 lakh Health and Wellness Centres offering a comprehensive range of primary health-care services are to be operationalised until December 2022.

- Of these, about 1.2 lakh would be upgraded as sub-health centres and the remaining would be primary health centres and urban primary health centres.
- Initially, most States prioritised primary health centres/urban primary health centres for upgradation over sub-health centres, since the former required fewer additional investments.
- However, now, this offers huge cost projections — as per early (conservative) estimates, turning a sub-health centre into a health and wellness centre would require around ₹17.5 lakh, and around ₹8 lakh annually to run it thereafter.

Concerns:

- Since 2018-19, when the health and wellness centre initiative began, allocations have not kept pace with the rising targets each year.
- Making do with meagre spending year after year means that the scheme benefits are being spread out too narrowly or too thin.
- This implies the inability to afford enough protection against catastrophic health expenses to the poor.
- Beyond low allocations, poor budget reliability calls for attention.
- Continuing the expansion of health and wellness centres without enough funding would mean that the full range of promised services will not be available, thus rendering the mission to be more of a re-branding exercise.
- Under-funding would waste an opportunity for the health and wellness centre initiative to at least partially redress the traditional rural-urban dichotomy by strengthening curative primary care in rural areas.
- Another related issue is the persistent and large discrepancies between official coverage figures and survey figures across Indian States, indicating that official public health insurance coverage fails to translate into actual coverage on the ground.
 - This is particularly intriguing for forward States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka, where state-level public health insurance schemes have been operational for around a decade.
- Also, high actual coverage cannot be equated with effective financial protection.
 - For example, Andhra Pradesh has among the highest public health insurance coverage scores but still has an out-of-pocket spending share much above the national average.
 - In contrast, Himachal Pradesh (H.P.) with a much lower public health insurance coverage has a lower out-of-pocket expenditure.

Way forward:

- Additional funding under the PMANSBY and Finance Commission grants are reassuring, but a greater focus on rural health and wellness centres is a must.
- Robust research into the implementational issues responsible for discrepancies and addressing them is warranted.
- Alongside the availability of funds, there is a need for robust institutional capacity to assimilate those funds.

- India must not attempt a sudden and giant leap.
 - This is important because enough evidence exists on weak fund-absorbing capacities particularly in the backward States.
 - At times, such unused funds have been to the tune of over half of the State's public health expenditure.
- It demands investing gradually but steadily in public health infrastructure and manpower.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Law and compassion

Context:

Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit has decided that only the President can decide the issue of granting remission to the seven life convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

Is the Governor correct in putting the ball in the President's court, contrary to the State Cabinet's advice?

- It has often been stressed by the Supreme Court that the clemency powers of the President, under [Article 72](#), and the Governor, under Article 161, stand on an equal footing, and are exercised solely on Cabinet advice.
- The only limitation in Article 161 is that it should relate to "the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends".
- It may be that the Governor decided that it is beyond the State's executive power because the Rajiv Gandhi case was tried under a central anti-terrorism law and under CBI probe.
- In a situation arising from the State government's attempt in 2014 to remit their sentences under the Cr.P.C., the apex court had ruled in 2015 that such remission would require the Centre's concurrence.
- However, the same judgment made it clear that its opinion was limited to the Cr.P.C. and would not bind the sovereign power conferred on the President or the Governor under the Constitution.
- As the only surviving sentences are under the IPC, there seems to be nothing in law that bars the Governor's jurisdiction.

Conclusion:

- The decision is debatable for the unusual delay in the Governor reaching his conclusion as much for its legal correctness.
- It took the governor more than two years since the State Cabinet advised him to order the convicts' release — to decide the question.
- It is speculated that the delay reflected the Centre's concern about releasing those involved in the plot to assassinate a former Prime Minister, and its ramifications for its policy of 'zero tolerance' towards terror.
- The convicts' continuing incarceration for nearly 30 years, notwithstanding the gravity of their crime, has acquired a humanitarian dimension to many.

- It is vital that law and compassion, rather than politics and electoral considerations, form the basis for any decision on their release.

This issue has been covered in 6th February 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Troubled mountains

The article discusses the need for a review of how the Himalayas are treated, in the backdrop of the Uttarakhand glacier burst.

Details:

- The glacier burst comes as a deadly reminder that the Himalayas – the fragile, geologically dynamic region can never be taken for granted.
- A significant slice of the glacier, dislodged by a landslide, according to some satellite images, produced roaring torrents in the Rishiganga and Dhauliganga rivers in Chamoli district.
- The state's increasing frailty in the face of environmental shocks cannot be ignored.

Concerns:

- The State's deep gorges and canyons have attracted many hydroelectric projects and dams, with little concern for earthquake risk.
- Red flags have been raised repeatedly pointing to the threat from seismicity, dam-induced microseismicity, landslides and floods from a variety of causes, including unstable glacial lakes and climate change.
 - There was a moderate quake in 1991 in the region where the Tehri dam was built.
 - The 2013 floods devastated Kedarnath.
- India is heavily invested in dam development and growth of hydropower, largely in the Himalaya region — especially to cut carbon emissions.
- By one estimate, if the national plan to construct dams in 28 river valleys in the hills is realised in a few decades, the Indian Himalayas will have one dam for every 32 km, among the world's highest densities.

Way forward:

- Heavily investing in dam development may be a miscalculation for reasons including potential earthquake impacts, monsoonal aberrations, severe biodiversity loss and, importantly, extreme danger to communities downstream.
- There is also some evidence that the life of dams is often exaggerated, and siltation, which reduces it, is grossly underestimated.
 - For instance, in the Bhakra dam in Himachal Pradesh, siltation was higher by 140% than calculated.
- The need is to rigorously study the impact of policy on the Himalayas and confine hydro projects to those with the least impact, while relying more on low impact run-of-the-river power projects that need no destructive large dams and reservoirs.

2. A Budget not for the environment

The article talks about the allocations towards significant items relating to the environment in the [Union Budget 2021-22](#).

Concerns:

- There has been a steady increase in the levels of pollution, biodiversity loss, decline in forest health and destruction of wetlands.
- Despite this, the budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) have consistently fallen as a percentage of total allocations.
- It is argued that the governments have not put in the substantial new financial resources raised through rapid growth into environmental protection.
- Even when there are increased allocations, such as for cleaning up the Ganga, their usage is ridden with such design flaws, inefficiencies and corruption that the environment is no better off than before.

2021 Budget:

- On several significant items relating to the environment, and taking inflation and needs into account, allocations have remained stagnant or fallen.
- It includes the MoEFCC and crucial institutions such as the Wildlife Institute of India and the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education.
- This follows an earlier recommendation by the Ministry of Finance that the government should disengage with many such institutions.
- One consequence of this is that these institutions are having to raise funds through the private corporate sector.
 - This inevitably compromises their ability to speak up when the private corporate sector indulges in ecologically damaging activities.

Examining the allocations to environment-related sectors:

- There are substantial allocations to sectors that have a positive environmental impact. The 2021 Budget has allocated:
 - ₹3,500 crore for wind and solar energy
 - ₹4,000 crore for a 'Deep Ocean Mission'
 - ₹50,011 crore for urban drinking water
- India's major push for renewable energy (RE) has earned it global appreciation.
 - However, there is no intention to phase out fossil fuels; on the contrary, coal mining and thermal power are being promoted under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package.
 - Large hydropower is being promoted as RE, though its massive ecological and social impacts are well documented.
 - Massive energy parks that generate solar and wind energy take up huge areas of land, displacing people and wildlife.

- Potentially, an allocation of ₹18,000 crore for public transport could have significant benefits for people and the environment if it helps to reduce private vehicle density in cities.

Challenges:

- Without controlling demand, even a complete shift to RE will be unsustainable.
- There is no focus on incentivising responsible consumption, restraining luxury uses, and redistributing water more equitably, without which no amount of infrastructure will be enough.

Allocations to non-environmental sectors that have a negative impact on the environment:

- The budget proposes 11,000 km more of national highway corridors.
- In the last few years, massive road and dam construction has fragmented fragile ecosystems and disrupted local community life in the Himalaya, Western Ghats, north-east India and elsewhere.

Conclusion:

- India must consider climbing into a green, nature-and-land based livelihoods recovery that could create tens of millions of jobs as also regenerate India's depleted environment.
- There is a dire need to put environmental regeneration and conservation, and self-reliance built on this, at the core of development.

F. Tidbits

1. New labour codes to allow four-day work week

What's in News?

Draft rules under the [labour codes](#) are being finalised.

- The new labour codes set to be implemented would allow the companies to:
 - Provide flexibility in reducing the number of working days to four days a week.
 - Provide free medical check-ups to workers through the Employees State Insurance Corporation.
- Concerns about the working hours going up from 10.5 hours to 12 hours, with one hour of rest, arose during consultations. This has been addressed.
 - Under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 draft rules, the limit of working hours for a week were 48 hours.
 - It is said that this limit is sacrosanct and the employers and workers would have to agree to a change in working days and it cannot be forced.

G. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to UN Human Rights Council:

1. Its members are elected by the members of the General Assembly.
2. The members are elected for staggered three-year terms.
3. No member may occupy a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.
- It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. It meets at the UN Office at Geneva.
- Its members are elected by the members of the General Assembly.
- The UNHRC has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis.
- No member may occupy a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

Q2 Consider the following statements:

1. Article 341 of the Constitution of India defines who would be Scheduled Castes with respect to any State or Union Territory.
2. 103rd Constitutional Amendment granted 10% reservation to the EWS category in government jobs and educational institutions.
3. 103rd Constitutional Amendment aims to fulfil the commitments of the directive principles of state policy under Article 46.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Article 341 of the Constitution of India defines who would be Scheduled Castes with respect to any State or Union Territory.
- 103rd Constitutional Amendment granted 10% reservation to the EWS category in government jobs and educational institutions.
- The amendment aims to fulfil the commitments of the directive principles of state policy under Article 46, to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the society.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. 'Water' subject falls under the concurrent list mentioned in the Indian Constitution.
2. The Central Water Commission (CWC) monitors and prepares monthly reports on the state of glacial lakes and waterbodies measuring 10 hectares and above via satellite.
3. The CWC is headed by a Chairman, with the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India.

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

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- In the Constitution of India, water is a matter included in Entry 17 of List-II i.e. State List.
- Central Water Commission is a premier Technical Organisation in the country in the field of water resources.
- CWC is headed by a Chairman, with the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India. The work of the Commission is divided among 3 wings namely, Designs and Research (D&R) Wing, River Management (RM) Wing and Water Planning and Projects (WP&P) Wing.
- The Central Water Commission (CWC) monitors and prepares monthly reports on the state of glacial lakes and waterbodies measuring 10 hectares and above via satellite.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Dhauliganga originates from Chemayungdung Glacier.
2. Dhauliganaga flows through the Nanda Devi National Park and meets Alaknanda river at Vishnu Prayag.
3. Tapovan Vishnugad power plant is a run-of-river project being constructed on Dhauliganga River.

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

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

Answer:

Explanation:b

- Dhauliganga originates from Vasudhara Tal.
- The Dhauliganga flows in a meandering course, which takes it through the Nanda Devi National Park.
- It meets Alaknanda river at Vishnu Prayag at the base of Joshimath Mountains.
- Tapovan Vishnugad power plant is a run-of-river project being constructed on Dhauliganga River in Chamoli District of Uttarakhand.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. COVID-19 has prodded nations to make a stout effort in terms of investing in health. In light of this statement, discuss the challenges in India's journey towards universal health care and also suggest a suitable framework in this direction. (15 Marks, 250 Words)[GS-2, Health]
2. The question of remission should not be a matter of politics and electoral considerations but should be based on law and compassion. Comment. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]