

28 Apr 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [SC refuses to interfere in work of HCs](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ECONOMY

1. [ADB sees India grow by 11%, adds caveat](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [A ceaseless plight](#)
2. [Marking the beginning of a green era](#)

ECONOMY

1. [A patently wrong regime](#)

F. Prelims Facts

G. Tidbits

1. [RBI sets norms for appointing bank auditors](#)
2. [HRW: Israel is committing 'apartheid'](#)

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. [SC refuses to interfere in work of HCs](#)

Context:

A special bench of the Supreme Court questioned the Centre, the States and the authorities on the various aspects of COVID management in a suo motu hearing called, 'In re: distribution of essential supplies and services during COVID-19'.

Details:

- The Supreme Court said that it would not interfere in the work done by the various High Courts to monitor life-saving COVID-19 management amid a second wave of the pandemic.
- It asserted that the High Courts are best suited to make an assessment of ground realities in each State and find flexible solutions for problems faced by citizens.
- However, it said that it would examine issues that travel beyond the boundaries of States and have national repercussions.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. ADB sees India grow by 11%, adds caveat

Context:

The Asian Development Bank has raised its forecast for India's growth in 2021-22 to 11%, from 8% earlier.

Details:

- ADB said that more targeted containment measures compared with large-scale national lockdown would prove less costly to the economy, which had seen a strong rebound in recent months' economic indicators after last year's 'big recession'.
- It said government capex and accommodative financial policies, along with the vaccine roll-out programme would help.
- Inflation is projected to moderate as good harvests and supply chain recovery contain domestic food inflation even as global food prices rise, though oil prices may exert some inflationary pressure.

Concerns:

- ADB has warned that failure to control the resurgence of COVID-19 cases poses a considerable downside risk to the recovery.
- Tightening of global financial conditions would apply pressure on India's market interest rates and could affect economic normalisation.
- Likely pick-up in private investment could be dented as rising bad loans could discourage India's banks from undertaking fresh lending.

Read more on [Asian Development Bank](#).

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A ceaseless plight

The article throws light upon the lives of hundreds of fishermen who have been languishing in Pakistan's prisons for years with no end in sight.

Issue:

- Fishermen from India end up in Pakistani waters and are arrested by authorities for illegally entering their territory.
- The problem is aggravated due to the failure in agreement over the maritime boundary and the dispute over Sir Creek in Kutch.

Details:

- An inhuman and skewed system involves India and Pakistan, in which the **mortal remains of prisoners are not repatriated for months**.
- It highlights the underlying issue of **basic human rights**.
- **Fishermen from the Saurashtra region of Gujarat often get arrested when they unintentionally cross over into Pakistani waters.**
- More than 300 Indian fishermen remain in Pakistan's custody in Malir jail.
- Ideally, prisoners should be released and repatriated the day they complete their prison sentence. But this has happened in just one case.

Agreement between India and Pakistan – Attempts to resolve the issue:

- India and Pakistan signed the **Agreement on Consular Access in 2008**. Despite some lacunae, it was significant.
 - Section 4 of the agreement said, "**Each government shall provide consular access within three months to nationals of one country**, under arrest, detention or imprisonment in the other country."
 - Section 5 of the agreement stated, "Both governments agree to **release and repatriate persons within one month of confirmation of their national status and completion of sentences.**"
- Consular access is an exception. Without it, the nationality of the person is not confirmed and the repatriation process cannot begin. Though the agreement does not state a time limit, there are numerous instances in which both countries have not confirmed nationality for as long as 18 months, during which the arrested men languish in jails.
- Also, in 2007, **India and Pakistan set up a joint judicial committee on prisoners comprising four retired judges from each side.**

- The committee used to convene twice a year to meet prisoners. It made unanimous recommendations, including on the release and repatriation of fishermen and women prisoners.
- Its last meeting was held in 2013, after which it was discontinued.
- In 2018, efforts were made to revive it, but Pakistan is yet to nominate judges or call for a meeting. The delay is costing lives.

Way Forward:

- The fishing community has ended up paying a huge price over the years.
- The **confiscated boats are seldom returned**. The **livelihood of the fishermen is dependent on the boats**. Hence, when they are captured, entire families suffer the brunt.
- The **lack of clear boundaries or demarcation for the disputed territory** adds to the difficulty of steering clear of the troubled area.
- Installing **tracking devices in the boats** can help in sending out disaster alerts or when the boat is seized by another country.
- **Identification cards** can help in verifying the identification of arrested fishermen.

2. Marking the beginning of a green era

Context:

Two new initiatives the ‘**Saudi Green Initiative**’ and the ‘**Middle East Green Initiative**’ have been launched by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to combat the threat of climate change.

Details:

- Saudi Arabia is committed to lead regional efforts to address climate change and has been making steady progress in this direction.
- One of the main pillars of the Saudi **G20** presidency was to “safeguard the planet”.
 - The G20 introduced initiatives like establishing a **Global Coral Reef Research and Development Accelerator Platform** to accelerate scientific knowledge and technology development in support of coral reef survival, conservation, resilience, adaptation and restoration.
 - G20 leaders also acknowledged the **Circular Carbon Economy (CCE) Platform** as a **tool towards affordable, reliable, and secure energy and economic growth**.

Saudi Green Initiative:

- It aims to **raise the vegetation cover, reduce carbon emissions, combat pollution and land degradation, and preserve marine life**. 10 billion trees will be planted in the Kingdom.
- Saudi Arabia is working towards **raising the percentage of its protected areas to more than 30% of its total land area exceeding the global target of 17%**.

Middle East Green initiative:

- As part of this initiative, Saudi Arabia will work with the **Gulf Cooperation Council countries and regional partners** to plant an additional 40 billion trees in the West Asian region.
- It represents **5% of the global target of planting one trillion trees and reducing 2.5% of global carbon levels.**

India and Saudi Arabia efforts in tackling climate change:

- Saudi Arabia has joined the [International Solar Alliance](#), hence promoting cooperation in the renewable energy sector.
- **Several MoUs and agreements in key sectors including renewable energy have been signed.**

Working towards Vision 2030:

- In 2016, the Crown Prince unveiled Vision 2030, a comprehensive road map to improve the quality of life of the citizens of the country.
 - As part of this, Saudi Arabia carried out a **comprehensive restructuring of the environmental sector and established the Environmental Special Forces in 2019.**
 - With the **NEOM project** and **The Line**, Saudi Arabia has already redefined the idea of sustainable habitats.
- The pandemic has only strengthened Saudi Arabia's resolve to realise the goals of Vision 2030 and become one of the major producers of renewable energy with a capacity to generate 9.5 GW by 2023.

Note:

- Saudi Arabia currently operates the **largest carbon capture and utilisation plant in the world**, turning half a million tonnes of CO₂ annually into products such as fertilizers and methanol.
- It also **operates one of the region's most advanced CO₂-enhanced oil recovery plants that captures and stores 8,00,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually.**
- India has made remarkable commitments to tackle climate change and is on track to achieve its [Paris Agreement](#) targets.
- India's renewable energy capacity is the **fourth largest in the world.**
- India has an ambitious target of achieving **450 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030.**

Category: ECONOMY

1. A patently wrong regime

The **reaffirmation of intellectual property rules** has served as a lethal **barrier to the right to access healthcare** over the last few decades. The article throws light upon how over the last few decades, intellectual property rules have served as a lethal barrier to the right to access healthcare.

Context:

- India and South Africa had submitted a joint petition to the WTO, requesting a **temporary suspension of rules under the 1995 Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).**

Details:

- A waiver was sought to the extent that the **TRIPS rules impinged on the containment** and treatment of COVID-19. The request for the waiver has, since, found support from more than 100 nations.
- But a **small group of states including the U.S., the European Union, the U.K. and Canada continue to block the move.**
- Their reluctance comes despite these countries having already secured the majority of available vaccines, with the stocks that they hold far exceeding the amounts necessary to inoculate the whole of their populations.
- A patent is an **exclusive right to make, use and sell an inventive product or process**, and is **conferred by the state**.
- Patent laws are usually **justified on three distinct grounds**:
 - On the idea that **people have something of a natural and moral right to claim control over their inventions.**
 - On the utilitarian premise that **exclusive licenses promote invention and therefore benefit society as a whole.**
 - On the belief that **individuals must be allowed to benefit from the fruits of their labour and merit**, that when a person toils to produce an object, the toil and the object become inseparable.

Issue:

- Each of these justifications for patents has long been a **matter of contest**, especially in the application of claims of monopoly over pharmaceutical drugs and technologies.
- In India, the question of connecting the idea of promoting invention and offering exclusive rights over medicines on the one hand with the state's obligation of ensuring that every person has equal access to basic healthcare on the other has been a source of constant tension.
- The colonial-era laws that the country inherited expressly allowed for pharmaceutical patents.
- But, in 1959, a committee chaired by Justice N. Rajagopala Ayyangar objected to this on ethical grounds.
 - The Parliament put this into law through the Patents Act, 1970, that monopolies over pharmaceutical drugs be altogether removed, with protections offered only over claims to processes. This change in rule allowed generic manufacturers in India to grow.
 - As a result, life-saving drugs were made available to people at more affordable prices.
- With the advent of the TRIPS agreement in 1995, and compelling signatories to introduce intellectual property laws, drugs that reduced AIDS deaths in developed nations were placed out of reach for the rest of the world.

Way Forward:

- **Two common arguments are made in response to objections against the prevailing patent regime.** However, they have been debunked time and again.
 - Unless corporations are rewarded for their inventions, they would be unable to recoup amounts invested by them in research and development.
 - Without the right to monopolise production there will be no incentive to innovate. Both of these claims have been refuted time and again.
- The claim that the removal of **patents would somehow invade a company's ability to recover costs is untrue.**
 - Big pharma has never been forthright about the quantum of monies directed by it into research and development.
 - Its research is usually driven towards diseases that afflict people in the developed world.
- The idea that patents are the only means available to promote innovation has become something of a dogma. Proposals have been made for a **prize fund for medical research in place of patents.**
- There is a need for **global collective action.** If nation-states are to act as a force of good, they must each attend to the **demands of global justice.**
- **Rules granting monopolies** that place the **right to access basic healthcare in a position of constant peril must end.**

Conclusion:

- Reports suggest that for **most poor countries it would take until at least 2024 before widespread vaccination is achieved.** Quick and efficient **vaccination is the surest route to achieving global herd immunity** against the virus.
- The waiver will allow countries to **facilitate a free exchange of know-how and technology** surrounding the production of vaccines.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. RBI sets norms for appointing bank auditors

What's in News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued guidelines for the appointment of bank auditors.

- Guidelines included statutory central auditors (SCAs) and statutory auditors (SAs) of commercial banks (excluding regional rural banks), urban co-operative banks and non-banking financial companies.
- Guidelines provide instructions for the appointment of SCAs/SAs, the number of auditors, eligibility criteria, tenure and rotation while ensuring the independence of auditors.
- The guidelines were issued with a view to improve the quality of financial reporting and to harmonise guidelines on the appointment of SAs.

Note:

- As the **guidelines are being implemented for the first time for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) and NBFCs** from 2021-22, they have the flexibility to adopt the guidelines from the second half of FY 2021-22.

2. HRW: Israel is committing 'apartheid'

What's in News?

Human Rights Watch said that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid by seeking to maintain Jewish domination over Palestinians and its own Arab population.

Details:

- Human Rights Watch pointed to measures, including movement restrictions, land confiscation, forcible population transfer, denial of residency rights and suspension of civil rights.
- It details how Israel has sought to maintain Jewish-Israeli hegemony over the Palestinian people from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.
- Israel is currently under investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged war crimes.
 - The investigation looks at events in the territories from 2014 onwards.
 - It focuses on the Gaza war fought between Israel and Hamas in the summer of 2014, actions by the Israeli army during hostilities along the Gaza fence in 2018, as well as Israel's settlement activities in the West Bank.
- The HRW report recommended that the international community must adopt a rights-based and accountability approach regarding engagement with Israel instead of relying on the peace process.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO) was the very first iron and steel company in India.
2. Steel is a regulated sector, the Government sets annual targets for steel production.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO) was the very first iron and steel company in India.

- Steel sector is not regulated by the government.

Top 5 Crude steel producers in the world: 2018, 2019*					
2018			2019*		
Rank	Country	Qty (mt)	Rank	Country	Qty (mt)
1	China	920.0	1	China	996.3
2	India	109.3	2	India	111.2
3	Japan	104.3	3	Japan	99.3
4	USA	86.6	4	USA	87.9
5	South Korea	72.5	5	Russia	71.6

Q2. With reference to Asian Development Bank (ADB), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is a regional development bank which is headquartered in Tokyo, Japan.
2. ADB is modeled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
3. South Asia Economic Focus Report released by ADB analyzes economic and development issues in developing countries in Asia.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank headquartered in Mandaluyong, Philippines.
- ADB is modeled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
- South Asia Economic Focus Report is released by World Bank.

Q3. Which of the following is/are correctly matched?

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. Meghdoot App | warn people about lightning |
| 2. Damini App | provide forecast to farmers |
| 3. Mausam App | communicate the weather information and forecasts in a lucid manner |

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Meghdoot App was launched to provide the location, and crop and livestock-specific weather-based agro advisories to farmers in local languages.
- Damini Lightning Alert app is designed for giving warning to the user about lightning on the basis of user location.
- Mausam App is designed to communicate the weather information and forecasts in a lucid manner.

Q4. Jaivik Kheti Portal is a unique initiative by the Government of India:

- a. to assist corporates and farmers for contract farming
- b. to create awareness about the latest technological developments in the agriculture and allied sectors
- c. to promote organic farming
- d. to integrate regulated markets in the country through a common e-platform

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Jaivik kheti portal is a unique initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Department of Agriculture (DAC) to promote organic farming globally.

Q5. What is the use of Biochar in farming? [UPSC 2020]

- 1. Biochar can be used as a part of the growing medium in the vertical farming
- 2. When biochar is a part of the growing medium, it promotes the growth of nitrogen fixing microorganisms.
- 3. When biochar is a part of the growing medium, it enables the medium to retain water for a longer time.

Which of the above-given statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Biochar is charcoal that is produced by pyrolysis of biomass, in the absence of oxygen and is used as a soil ameliorant for both carbon sequestration and soil health benefits.
- Biochar can be used as a part of the growing medium in vertical farming.
- When biochar is a part of the growing medium, it promotes the growth of nitrogen-fixing microorganisms.
- When biochar is a part of the growing medium, it enables the growing medium to retain water for a longer time.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. With a fast-moving pandemic, no one is safe, unless everyone is safe. In the light of the statement, discuss how a temporary TRIPS waiver benefits the society at large. (15 marks, 250 Words) [GS-3, Economy]
2. Explain the need for India and Pakistan to evolve a policy to ensure that the prisoners are guaranteed their rights and are repatriated at the earliest. (10 marks, 150 Words) [GS-2, International Relations]