

15 June 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [G7 accommodates Indian stand on need for Internet curbs](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [‘ONORC is tailor-made for migrants’](#)

HEALTH

1. [Govt. report flags ‘lapses’ in Nagaland bat study](#)

C. GS 3 Related

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

HEALTH

1. [A policy difficult to defend](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [An elite club](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [EU resolution puts spotlight on Sri Lanka’s rights situation](#)
2. [Unlocking war histories with a purpose](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [Rajasthan govt. to set up Vedic Education Board](#)
2. [Centre lists food schemes for migrants labourers](#)
3. [‘China, India, Pak. expanding nuclear arsenal’](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. G7 accommodates Indian stand on need for Internet curbs

Context:

India signed off on a joint statement by G-7 and guest countries on “open societies” after making its reservations known to the negotiators from G-7 countries.

Note:

47th edition of the “Group of Seven (G7)” summit was held at Carbis Bay, southwest England.

Read more on this topic covered in [June 13th, 2021 CNA](#).

Details:

- The ‘**Open Societies Statement**’ was adopted at the end of a G7 outreach session titled ‘**Building Back Together—Open Societies and Economies**’ where India’s Prime Minister was invited as a lead speaker.
- The joint statement was signed by the G-7 countries, and **India, South Korea, Australia and South Africa**.
 - The British Prime Minister Boris Johnson termed them “**Democracies 11**”.
- While the statement is directed at China and Russia, **India has been under scrutiny** over
 - **Internet curbs in Jammu and Kashmir**.
 - **Face-off over its new IT rules** with tech giants such as Twitter.
- The ‘**Open Societies Statement**’ reaffirm and encourage the values of “freedom of expression, both online and offline, as a freedom that safeguards democracy and helps people live free from fear and oppression”.
- The statement also refers to “**politically motivated internet shutdowns**” as one of the **threats to freedom and democracy**.

India’s Stand:

- India has been a special guest to the G-7/G-8 since 2003.
- However, **it has also maintained its independent course**, especially on political issues.
- India voiced concerns about some clauses in the **joint communiqué on Open Societies** which condemned rising authoritarianism, net shutdowns, manipulation of information, and rights violations.
 - These are the areas where the Indian government has often been criticised.
- India’s External Affairs Minister who had participated in the G-7 Foreign Ministers meeting had said that “**open societies and personal freedoms require careful nurturing. Must be on guard against fake news and digital manipulation.**”
- India signed off on the statement **after making its reservations known** to the negotiators from the G-7 count.

- Government sources said that India's tough negotiations on the joint communique had ensured that the original language criticising Internet shutdown was amended to include India's concerns.
 - "politically motivated Internet shutdowns" clarified that **national security and public order concerns are an exception to the need for Internet freedoms.**
- It is significant that the **G-7 outreach communiqués that included the guest countries, did not make the same references to China as the main document.**
 - Chinese aggression was not raised at the outreaches.

Conclusion:

India had the largest number of Internet shutdowns in 2020. In the present, the Indian Government will be expected to walk the talk on its commitments at the G-7 outreach, especially in the areas of information clampdowns.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. 'ONORC is tailor-made for migrants'

Details:

One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme.

Details:

- The centre has told the Supreme Court that the **ONORC scheme makes food security portable and is tailor-made for migrant labourers.**
- One Nation One Ration Card plan aims to **empower all National Food Security Act migrant beneficiaries to access foodgrains from any Fair Price Shop [FPS] of their choice anywhere in the country** by using their same/existing ration card with biometric authentication.
- A total of 32 States/UTs covering around 69 crore NFSA beneficiaries, i.e., **86% NFSA population in the country, were brought under the ONORC plan by December 2020.**

Read more on [One Nation One Ration Card Scheme \(ONORC\) – Nationwide Portability of Food Grains](#)

Category: HEALTH

1. Govt. report flags 'lapses' in Nagaland bat study

Context:

The government has concluded that there had been **concerning lapses in the conduct and protocols followed for the Nagaland bat study.**

Background:

- It was a probe into a filovirus study of bats in Nagaland by the Bengaluru-based National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR).

Read more on this issue covered in [February 5th, 2020 CNA.](#)

Issue:

- Earlier, an enquiry was initiated into **whether adequate permissions had been sought for the study that had listed two scientists at the Wuhan Institute of Virology as co-authors, and was partially funded by the U.S. Department of Defense** through its Defence Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).
- Besides, there is an **inter-department disagreement over where the bat samples should be stored.**
- Both the **foreign funding of the study**, which cost an estimated ₹1.9 crore, as well as **concerns over the storage of the bat samples** collected have come up for scrutiny.
- According to the Health Ministry report, the **study didn't have the requisite approval of ICMR.** And the **facility at NCBS was not equipped in terms of biosafety and biosecurity to undertake such testing.**
- The Health Ministry wants the samples of nucleic acid extract stored at the Bio Safety Level-4 (BSL-4) standard facility at the National Institute of Virology laboratory in Pune, rather than NCBS's Bengaluru facilities, which are rated BSL-3 at present.

The findings of the report are significant in the backdrop of the debate over the origins of COVID-19 worldwide, and the handling of bat samples at the Wuhan Institute laboratory.

Note:

However, scientific experts and officials have made it clear that the **Nagaland bat study on filoviruses (Ebola and Marburg) was in no way related to the coronavirus (SARS) studies at Wuhan.**

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E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

1. A policy difficult to defend

Context:

- India's new vaccination policy.

Liberalized vaccination policy:

- Under the new vaccination policy, States will no longer have to bear the responsibility or expenses of procuring vaccines; the **Centre will procure vaccines on behalf of the States as the single purchaser and provide them to states free of cost.**
- Of the total domestic production of vaccines in India, 75% has been reserved for exclusive government purchase while **25% of the total vaccines have been opened up for private sector procurement.**

Concerns:

- The article expresses concerns over the provision to reserve 25% of the vaccines for the private sector based on the following arguments.

Demand supply mismatch:

- The private sector's share of total manufactured vaccines is not proportional with the private sector's share of total vaccination centres, which are much lesser than the number of government vaccination centres.
- The demand for free vaccines at the government centres continues to be high and the proposed share for the private sector might result in a demand-supply mismatch between government and private centres.

Doubts over ability to pay:

- The allocation of a 25% share for private vaccination entails an implicit assumption that 25% of the population is willing and able to pay for the vaccine. This goes against available evidence which notes that the **affluent form only a small fraction of the uppermost 25% of India's population based on income.**

Depress vaccine demand generation:

- The move to divert 25% of the vaccines through the private health sector could **disincentivize vaccine uptake and depress vaccine demand generation.**

Crowding out effect:

- With the need for online registration for free vaccination, the affluent class with greater digital awareness is more likely to block slots for free vaccination. This can lead to a **'crowding out' effect for the poorer sections.**

Policy incoherence:

- A large chunk of the proposed self-payers for vaccination are likely to be younger, productive individuals, who are at lesser risk of severe disease and mortality than the elderly.
- Hence the new policy fails to **consider the age structure into vaccination policy and its possible implications.**

Improbability of achieving herd immunity:

- Though some may argue that the new vaccination policy is driven by herd immunity considerations, which estimate that **vaccination of 60% to 80% of the population can help limit the spread of the infection**, the resultant disparities along geographic and socioeconomic lines which could result from the new policy would not be consistent with the notion of herd immunity.
- It is critical to note that vaccinating the poorer and marginalised sections, even if it is free of charge, is much more challenging than vaccinating the easily accessible better-off sections.

Inequity:

- An inadvertent consequence of the new policy is that it would result in **higher out-of-pocket expenditure**. This would amount to deepening the already existing inequities in India.

Way forward:

Increase share of government's uptake of vaccines:

- Given that **vaccine as a commodity has much higher social benefits than private benefit**, there is the urgent need to increase the government's share of total vaccines.

Engagement with private sector:

- **The private sector is marked by greater reach, innovative processes, and efficiency.** These strengths of the private sector need to be sufficiently exploited as part of a **strategic purchasing framework** which could also reduce the cost of vaccines for the private sector and thus help vaccine uptake.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. An elite club

- In the light of the recently held **G7 summit**, the article discusses the **highlights of the summit** and some of the **challenges facing the G7 grouping**.

For information on this topic refer to the following articles:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 13th June 2021](#)

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 14th June 2021](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. EU resolution puts spotlight on Sri Lanka's rights situation

What's in News?

European Parliament has **adopted a resolution** urging the EU Commission to consider a **temporary withdrawal of the GSP+ status given to Sri Lanka**.

Details:

- The resolution notes the continuing discrimination against and violence towards religious and ethnic minorities while voicing serious concern about the 20th Amendment passed in 2020, and the resulting decline in judiciary independence, the reduction of parliamentary control, and the excessive accumulation of power with the presidency.
- This has put the **spotlight back on Sri Lanka's human rights situation**.
- **Sri Lanka regained the GSP+** in 2017, on Colombo's **commitment to implement 27 international conventions on human rights, labour conditions, protection of the environment and good governance**.
- The status effectively removes import duties on goods from Sri Lanka entering the EU.

Generalized System of Preferences Plus (GSP Plus):

- The European Union's "Generalized Scheme of Preferences" (GSP) allows developing country exporters to pay lower duties on their exports to the EU.
- This gives them vital access to EU markets and contributes to their economic growth.
- EU's GSP removes import duties from products coming into the EU market from vulnerable developing countries. This helps developing countries to alleviate poverty and create jobs based on international values and principles, including labour and human rights.
- There are three main variants (arrangements) or tiers of the EU GSP Scheme:
 - **General GSP arrangement** offers tariff reductions or elimination on identified products exported from beneficiary developing countries.
 - **The "GSP+" enhanced preference** means full removal of tariffs on essentially the same product categories as those covered by the general arrangement. These are granted to countries that ratify and implement international conventions relating to **human and labour rights, environment and good governance**.
 - **"Everything but Arms" (EBA) arrangement** for least developed countries (LDCs), which grants duty-free quota-free access to all products, except for arms and ammunitions.

2. Unlocking war histories with a purpose

- In the light of the recent **announcement by the Defence Minister on archiving, declassifying and compiling war histories**, here is a compilation of a few operations of significance in Indian history.

Exercise Brasstacks (1986-87):

- Operation Brasstacks was a **major combined arms military exercise of the Indian Armed Forces in the Rajasthan state of India** to simulate the operational capabilities of the Indian armed forces. It was one of the biggest mobilization of Indian forces on the Indian subcontinent.
- The military exercise heralded the transformation of Indian warfighting doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures in conventional warfighting, particularly in the plains and the desert.

Operation Meghdoot:

- Operation Meghdoot (1984) was the codename for the Indian Armed Forces' operation to **seize control of the Siachen Glacier** in Kashmir.

Operation Falcon:

- Operation Falcon (1986) was launched along the borders of Arunachal Pradesh to counter the Chinese army. MI 26 helicopters were used to airlift an entire Brigade south of the Indo-China border.
- Indian Army took up positions along the ridges they had lost in 1962 and overlooked the entire **Sumdorong Chu range**.

Operation Pawan:

- Operation Pawan (1987) was the code name assigned to the **operation by the Indian Peace Keeping Force** to take control of Jaffna from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

3. The Tilak Swaraja Fund

- The Tilak Swarajya Fund was started to **finance the Non-Cooperation Movement**.
- A year into the [Non-Cooperation Movement](#), Mahatma Gandhi announced the Tilak Swaraj Fund. The Fund, a homage to Bal Gangadhar Tilak on his first death anniversary, aimed at collecting Rs 1 crore to aid India's freedom struggle and resistance to British rule.

G. Tidbits

1. Rajasthan govt. to set up Vedic Education Board

What's in News?

The Rajasthan government will set up a **Vedic Education and Sanskar Board**.

- The move is aimed at **reviving the knowledge of ancient Sanskrit scriptures and connecting the learnings of the Vedas with science and yoga**.
- It is believed that the board would encourage the students to carry out research on the Vedas and enable them to assimilate the country's traditions.

2. Centre lists food schemes for migrants labourers

What's in News?

The Centre informed the Supreme Court that the **States and the Union Territories have purchased nearly 3.7 lakh tonnes of foodgrains** from the [Food Corporation of India](#).

- The purchases have been made to **supply to migrants without ration cards and others outside the protective cover of the National Food Security Act (NFSA)**.
- Through this, the centre has sought to debunk apprehensions raised in court that those without ration cards may not get foodgrains.

3. 'China, India, Pak. expanding nuclear arsenal'

What's in News?

Swedish think tank **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Year Book 2021** has been released.

Highlights:

- The overall number of warheads in global military stockpiles appears to be increasing.
 - It signals that the declining trend that characterised global nuclear arsenals since the end of the Cold War has come to a halt.
- China is in the middle of significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear weapon inventory. India and Pakistan also appear to be expanding their nuclear arsenals.
 - India and Pakistan are seeking new technologies and capabilities that dangerously undermine each other's defence under the nuclear threshold.
 - China's evolving profile as a nuclear weapons state is compounding India's security challenges.

- The nine nuclear-armed states — the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea — together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021.

Russia and the U.S. together possessed over **90% of global nuclear weapons.**

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Tilak Swaraj Fund was started to fund which of the following movements?

- Civil Disobedience Movement
- Swadeshi Movement
- Non-Cooperation Movement
- Quit India Movement

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Tilak Swarajya Fund was started to fund the non-cooperation movement.
- It gathered over 1 crore rupees and was a part of the constructive agenda of the non-cooperation movement.

Q.2 Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is a constitutional body.
2. It is mandated to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
3. It has the powers to take suo-moto cognisance of serious cases of violation of child rights.

Options:-

- 1 only
- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is a statutory body established in 2007 under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.

- It is mandated to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- For the Commission, the protection of all children in the 0 to 18 years age group is of equal importance.
- It has the powers to take suo-moto cognisance of serious cases of violation of child rights.

Read more: [National Commission for Protection of Child Rights – NCPCR](#)

Q.3 Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Floating raft agriculture is a way of utilising areas that are waterlogged for long periods of time in the production of food.
2. The approach employs a floating raft set up on bamboo frames and held together by coir geotextile with a bed of degraded water hyacinth or beds of rotting vegetation, which act as compost for crop growth.
3. Floating raft farming is taken up as a measure of improving adaptability and resilience in the background of climate change.

Options:-

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Floating raft agriculture is a way of utilising areas that are waterlogged for long periods of time in the production of food.
- It employs an approach where a floating raft set up on bamboo frames and held together by coir geotextile with a bed of degraded water hyacinth or beds of rotting vegetation, which act as compost for crop growth.
- This form of farming is taken up as a measure of improving adaptability and resilience in the background of climate change.

Note:

An enterprising farmer in the Vembanad backwaters in Alappuzha in Kerala has taken up a floating raft farming experiment for the cultivation of marigold.

Q.4 what is the best description of the 'Karman Line'?

- a. Marks the boundary between EEZ and international waters.

- b. Defines a boundary between Earth's atmosphere and outer space.
- c. It is a reference line along the equator for navigation.
- d. None of the above

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Karman Line is an attempt to define a boundary between Earth's atmosphere and outer space.
- It is an internationally recognised boundary of space.
- According to the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI), it is at an altitude of 100 kilometres, or 62 miles, above sea level.
- The definition is based on a calculation by physicist Theodore von Karman that shows that around this point the atmosphere becomes too thin to support flight.

Q5. Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement? (UPSC 2018)

- a. Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.
- b. Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV.
- c. Article 21 and freedom guaranteed in Part III.
- d. Article 24 and provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution.

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Article 21 and freedom guaranteed in Part III implies that the Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the Right to Life and Personal Liberty.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. G7, an exclusive club comprising the world's advanced economies slowly eclipsed by emerging markets, is an outdated grouping. Do you agree? Justify. (15 Marks, 250 Words) [GS-2, International Relations].
2. Galwan is a reminder that India cannot let its guard down on its northern borders. Analyse. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [GS-2, International Relations].