

30 June 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Ensure that no migrant worker goes hungry, SC instructs govt.

Context:

The Supreme Court has directed the government to ensure that **none of the estimated 38 crore migrant workers goes hungry during the pandemic.**

Issue:

- Migrant workers form **one-fourth of India's population.**
- They are not able to get jobs that may satisfy their basic needs.
- There is a large number of such migrants who **do not possess any card.** This is **because of poverty and lack of education.**
- The work on the **National Database for Unorganised Workers (NDUW) portal** has **not been completed.** It was **ordered to be completed in 2018.**
 - NDUW portal is a ₹45.39 crore project to **register and identify migrant workers and unorganised labourers to ensure their rights, welfare and food security.**

Supreme Court's Directions:

- The SC judgement said that a **government cannot abdicate its duties to feed migrant workers**, especially during a pandemic, merely because they **did not have ration cards.**
- It asserted that the **Right to food is an intrinsic part of the right to live with dignity.**
- It has set **July 31, 2021, as the deadline** for the Centre and the States to ensure that **none among migrant workers goes hungry** during the pandemic.
 - The court ordered the State governments to frame **schemes to distribute dry rations** to migrant workers.
- All the states must fully implement the **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme** by July 31, 2021.
 - With ONORC labourers covered under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**, a person can **access food at any fair price shop** with his or her ration card in any part of the country.
- The **Centre has to supply whatever additional quantity of food grains a State demands.**
- The **allocation of additional food grains** and the running of **community kitchens** in prominent places to feed workers should **continue throughout the pandemic.**
- The Bench directed the States/Union Territories to **register establishments and license contractors under the InterState Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979** and ensure that they provided the authorities complete details of the workers employed with them.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. 'OPEC risks forcing India to tap Iran for oil if prices stay high'

Context:

The [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries](#) and its allies (OPEC+) are expected to discuss a possible easing of supply cuts.

Background:

- When the **demand dropped in the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic** and crude prices briefly turned negative in 2020, the club led by Saudi Arabia and Russia (OPEC+) **imposed sharp production cuts in order to raise prices.**
- However, considering the success of this strategy the group is currently following a policy of **cautiously increasing production.**

Details:

- India is the **third-largest consumer of crude oil.** It has been forced to **phase out crude output cuts to lessen the effects of rising inflationary pressures.**
- Inflation is a major challenge for the Indian economy. Read more on inflation [here](#).
- Besides, over the last few months, India has exhausted the strategic petroleum reserves it had built up by taking advantage of lower oil prices in 2020.
- India is working to persuade oil-exporting countries to **moderate surging oil prices.**
- If prices were to increase, India has warned that **it would consider tapping alternative import sources** such as **Iran** (if the sanctions imposed on it by the U.S. were lifted).
 - If current negotiations on a US return to the [2015 Iran nuclear deal](#) are successful, the country may be able to resume exporting oil at levels prior to 2018.
 - In 2018, former US President Donald Trump dramatically withdrew from the deal and **imposed sanctions.**
 - The **sanctions hurt India**, who **relied on Iran in particular for a sizeable chunk of its crude oil.**
- If prices remain high, it would eat into consumers' disposable incomes and **potentially choke economic growth.**

OPEC+ Meeting:

- Since December 2020, the OPEC+ countries have been meeting every month in order to calibrate their strategy as closely as possible to the latest developments.
- It is expected that they would agree to **boost production** in August 2021 in order to **meet demand and dampen recent price rises.**

2. Lanka 'banking on' \$1 bn India swap deal

Context:

Sri Lanka is depending on a **\$1 billion currency swap from India.**

Details:

- **Sri Lanka** has to meet its daunting debt repayment obligations for 2021 and is facing an **economic crisis**, due to the pandemic.

- It has already **serviced part of its debt** and is preparing to repay the remaining more than \$3 billion over the next six months.
- With an international sovereign bond maturing, a \$1 billion repayment is due.
- Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had **in 2020 requested the Prime Minister of India for a special \$1.1-billion currency swap** to help the country boost its foreign reserves.
- Sri Lanka is already expecting a **\$400 million swap from the Reserve Bank of India** in a couple of months through the **SAARC facility**. However, an additional \$1 billion it says is going to be crucial for the country.

China's Assistance:

- In addition to sanctioning loans and a **currency swap facility worth more than \$2 billion** since the pandemic struck, China has announced a **\$90 million grant to Sri Lanka in October 2020**.
- **China's rapidly growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** and specifically in **Sri Lanka is a cause of concern for India**.

Assistance from other countries:

- In May 2021, **Bangladesh** cleared a **\$200 million currency swap facility for Sri Lanka**.
- Sri Lanka has inked a **\$500 million loan agreement with the EXIM Bank of Korea**.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. 'Chamoli disaster due to avalanche'

Context:

In February 2021, the **glacial burst on Nanda Devi** had triggered an **avalanche and caused flash floods** in the **Rishiganga and Dhauliganga rivers** in the Chamoli district of **Uttarakhand**.

- It was **described as a "glacial burst"** by the Centre's **National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)**.

This issue has been covered in **February 8th, 2021 CNA** and **February 12th, 2021 CNA**.

Details:

- According to a **report by the Geological Survey of India (GSI)**, the **flash flood was due to a large mass of snow, ice and rock avalanche along with a hanging mass of rock** crashing into the Raunthi Garh valley floor.
- GSI called it an **example of multi-hazard phenomena that occurred during the winter time**.
- The contributory factor is believed to be **unusually warm weather in the region**.
- It noted that **there was no evidence of a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)** having caused the event.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

1. A vague and wanting statement

Context:

- The **Carbis Bay Declaration** made during the recently held Group of Seven summit in Cornwall, England.
 - The ‘Carbis Bay Declaration’ is a **landmark global health declaration aimed at preventing future pandemics under** which **G7** leaders have committed to use all their resources.

For more information on this topic refer to:

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

Background:

Devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- The COVID-19 pandemic apart from being one of the biggest health challenges to mankind has also resulted in devastating economic impact.
- Millions have lost their lives and many more have lost their livelihoods thus being pushed into acute poverty and the challenges thereof.

Threat of future pandemics:

- COVID-19 is not going to be the last pandemic that the earth faces. **The threat of future pandemics remains high** due to the following reasons:
 - The **increasing proximity between humans and animals** due to deforestation, population growth, and the search for wild food. This represents an ideal setup for pathogens to be easily transmitted from animals to humans (zoonotic spillover).
 - A report by the **Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR)** notes that most of the new pathogens’ origins are zoonotic.
 - The **increasing movement of people** across countries owing to the availability of transport facilities will aid the faster spread of the disease.
 - **Global warming** has led to the melting of permafrost in arctic regions. This could lead to the **revival of dormant or unknown pathogens and organisms**.
 - Example – **bdelloid rotifers**, a microscopic creature was unearthed from the permafrost.
 - Climate change could aid the **spurt in vectors of deadly infections**.

Concerns:

- Though the declaration marks a welcome relief amid the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the article expresses concerns over the fact that the participating leaders **failed to adopt any substantive measures** towards the prevention of future pandemics.

- The G7 merely acknowledged the recommendations of the IPPPR and the other committees and stated that it will work with other countries and organizations towards preparing for future pandemics **without giving any roadmap** for such collaboration.
- The G7 failed to provide any material support to the already suffering countries and offered only **vague commitments of support for vulnerable countries**. Its claim of striving for fairness, inclusion and equity is not backed by the allocation of requisite resources.

Recommendations:

Global treaty:

- The G7 should strive towards building consensus on a potential global **treaty to deal with such future pandemics**, under the framework of the WHO. Any such treaty should incorporate the IPPPR's recommendations.
- A treaty is needed to plug holes in the current system and strengthen national capacities and resilience.

Hand holding the most vulnerable countries:

- Given that **a pandemic anywhere is a pandemic everywhere**, there should be ample focus on strengthening the developing countries' capacities to deal with future pandemics. This could be in the form of the supply of requisite resources for the developing countries.

Holistic approach:

- The world needs to adopt a holistic approach for the prevention of future pandemics.
- Human interventions to prevent future pandemics can be classified under three broad stages – **upstream, midstream, and downstream stages of intervention**.
 - Downstream intervention refers to steps taken on the public health front, like prevention of disease spread.
 - **Upstream intervention would focus on the 'One Health' approach**, which acknowledges the interconnection between humans, animals, plants, and the shared ecosystem.
 - Midstream intervention would involve setting up a science and policy panel to ensure that science informs the law. This would also involve **pre-emptively detecting pathogens of concern, and identifying potential hotspots for an outbreak** and setting up a mechanism for regular inspection and appropriate international oversight.
- The countries will have to **focus on deep prevention which prioritizes upstream and midstream interventions**.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Flying terror

Context:

- In the first such instance in India, **drones were used to attack an Indian Air Force base in Jammu**. Explosive devices were dropped from drones triggering blasts.
- There have been reports of at least two more subsequent attempts to use drones to attack military targets.

History of use of drones in warfare:

- In 2018, Syrian rebels used homemade drones to attack Russian military bases in Syria.
- There has been an assassination attempt on the Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro using an explosive-laden drone.
- In 2019, Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for bombing Saudi oil installations using drones.

Concerns:

Technology backed terrorism:

- The use of drones represents a new mode of terrorism characterized by the increasing use of technology. This helps **reduce costs and the risk of identification for terrorists while increasing their efficacy**. The exponential proliferation of new technologies and Artificial Intelligence will only make the threat posed by drones increase exponentially.

Redundancy of available tools to counter drones:

- The conventionally available tools would be redundant in combating the threat posed by drones. **Since drones fly very low it is extremely difficult to detect them using radars and they also leave little by way of reaction time** once detected.

Easy accessibility:

- The fact that drones are **available in open markets for very cheap prices** makes them easily accessible for terrorists to procure. This could enable even individuals with sufficient motivation and skills to carry out drone attacks without the threat of being identified by intelligence agencies.
- Thus drones offer the non-state actors **cheap and affordable ways of targeting the security agencies**.

Increased capacity of drones:

- Drones have developed significantly and acquired massive leaps in capability. **The increased speed, range, manoeuvrability and load-carrying capacity** have turned them into potential weapons that could be used to target adversaries. Such drones can hit strategic targets and cause huge damage.
- **Small size, stealth drones pose a lethal threat to strategic installations.**

No comprehensive regulation:

- The existing international framework for controlling the proliferation of technology that can be weaponized, such as the **Wassenaar Arrangement and Missile Technology Control Regime**, may be termed ineffective in addressing the threat posed by drones.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement aims to **promote transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies**. The aim is also to prevent the acquisition of these items by terrorists.

Recommendations:

- Requisite measures in terms of **anti-drone capabilities**, as well as **policy measures**, should be put in place to counter the threat posed by drones.

- Requisite Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems capability must be developed and made available. There is an urgent need for an **anti-drone system shielding critical installations in the country**. This could involve anti-drone techniques like **drone jammers, Directed Energy Weapons such as lasers and the use of suitable guns, missiles and other hard kill options**.
- Enhanced **international cooperation and consensus on the development and deployment of technologies** are required to combat such new methods of terror attacks.
- **Tighter regulation of drones sales and operations** needs to be implemented to prevent their use for terrorist activities.

For more information on this refer to:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 28th June 2021](#)

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 29th June 2021](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. Atlas of glacial lakes in Ganga basin released

What's in News?

The Ministry of Jal Shakti has released an updated atlas of **glacial lakes that are part of the Ganga river basin**.

- **Resourcesat-2 Linear Imaging Self Scanning Sensor-IV** satellite data was used for mapping the glacial lakes.

Read more on this topic covered in [PIB Summary & Analysis for 29th June 2021](#).

2. Monsoon session likely from July 19 to August 13

What's in News?

The **monsoon session of Parliament** is likely to begin on July 19 and go on till August 13, 2021.

- A session of the Indian Parliament is the period during which a House meets almost every day uninterruptedly to manage the business.

Typically, the sessions are carried out in the following manner, each year.

The sessions are as follows:

- Budget session (February to May)
- Monsoon session (July to September)
- Winter session (November to December)

Read more on [Sessions of Indian Parliament \(Monsoon, Winter, Budget\)](#)

3. Méndez's anti-torture vision is still distant for India

- The 'Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering', are also called the 'Méndez Principles'.

- It proposes practical measures to **replace torture and coercive interrogation with rapport-based interviews**, reinforced through legal and procedural safeguards at every step.
- The Méndez Principles thus represent a new standard for effective interviewing by police and others, while **respecting human rights**.

G. Tidbits

1. Israel's Lapid opens Embassy in UAE

What's in News?

Israel's new Foreign Minister **inaugurated the country's Embassy in the United Arab Emirates**.

Background:

- Israel **did not have diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states** owing to its **long-standing conflict with Palestinians**. Read more on the [Israel-Palestine conflict](#) in the link.
 - However, it had signed peace agreements with Egypt in 1979 and with Jordan in 1994.
- In 2020, the US, Israel and the UAE, the leaders of the three countries agreed to the **full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates**.
- It also refers to the agreement reached between **Israel, Bahrain and the UAE to normalise relations between the three**.
- It was believed to be a **historic diplomatic breakthrough** that would advance **peace in the Middle East region**.
- The agreement, called the 'Abraham Accord', was **brokered by US President Donald Trump**.

Abraham Accords:

- The Abraham Accords are a **joint statement made between Israel, the United States and the United Arab Emirates** on August 13, 2020.

Read more on [Abraham Accords](#).

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q 1: Consider the following statements:

1. The One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme is aimed at enabling migrant workers and their family members to buy subsidised ration from any fair price shop anywhere in the country under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
2. Implementation of ONORC is a precondition for additional borrowing by states.
3. Non-NFSA ration cardholders are also covered under the ONORC.

Which of the above statements is/are INCORRECT?

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 & 3 only

- c. Only 3
- d. All of the above

Answer: c

Explanation:

- One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme allows all beneficiaries under the [National Food Security Act, 2013](#), particularly migrant beneficiaries, to claim either full or part foodgrains from any Fair Price Shop (FPS) in the country through existing ration card. The system also allows their family members back home, if any, to claim the balance foodgrains on the same ration card.
- In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre set the implementation of ONORC as a precondition for additional borrowing by states.
- Non-NFSA ration card holders are not covered under the ONORC.

Q 2: Consider the following statements regarding the distribution of subsidised ration:

1. Annavitaran portal maintains a record of inter-state transactions.
2. Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS) portal records the intra-state transactions.

Which of the above statements is/are INCORRECT?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- One Nation One Ration Card scheme is based on technology that involves details of the beneficiary's ration card, Aadhaar number, and electronic Points of Sale (ePoS).
- The system identifies a beneficiary through biometric authentication on ePoS devices at fair price shops.
- The system runs with the support of two portals — Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS) and Annavitaran, which host all the relevant data.
- Annavitaran Portal – maintains a record of intra-state transactions — inter-district and intra-district.
- Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS) – records the inter-state transactions.

Q 3: Consider the following statements:

1. The Constitution of India provides for three sessions of Parliament in a year.
2. It is mandatory to convene the Parliament at least twice every year.
3. Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs has no role in convening the sessions of the Indian Parliament.

Which of the above statements is/are **INCORRECT**?

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 1 & 3 only
- c. 2 & 3 only
- d. All of the above

Answer: b

Explanation:

- As per the Constitution of India, it is mandatory to convene at least two sessions per year.
- In practice, the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, comprising senior ministers, decides on the dates for Parliament's sitting and it is then conveyed to the President.
- President from time to time summons each House of Parliament to meet.
- The Constitution of India does not provide for three sessions of Parliament in a year. However, by convention, the Indian Parliament conducts three sessions each year.
- The Budget session: February to May, the Monsoon session: July to September and the Winter session: November to December.

Q 4: Consider the following statements:

1. India is yet to ratify the 1987 UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).
2. The Méndez Principles aim to provide a cohesive blueprint of practical measures to replace torture and coercive interrogation.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (**UNCAT**) is an international human rights treaty, under the review of the United Nations, that aims to prevent torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.
- India is one of only five countries that have yet to ratify the 1987 UNCAT. The others include Sudan, Brunei, Palau and Haiti.
- Recognizing the widespread use of torture during investigations, Juan E. Méndez, submitted a report in 2016 to the United Nations General Assembly as outgoing Special Rapporteur on Torture.

- It called for the development of a universal set of standards for non-coercive interviewing and associated procedural safeguards during investigations to ensure that no person — including suspects, witnesses, victims, and other persons being interviewed is subjected to torture, ill-treatment, or coercion while being questioned.
- The Méndez Principles aim to provide a cohesive blueprint of practical measures to replace torture and coercive interrogation.

Q 5: In the Parliament of India, the purpose of an adjournment motion is (2012)

- a. to allow a discussion on a definite matter of urgent public importance
- b. to let opposition members collect information from the ministers
- c. to allow a reduction of specific amount in demand for grant
- d. to postpone the proceedings to check the inappropriate or violent behaviour on the part of some members

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Adjournment motion is the procedure for adjournment of the business of the House to draw the attention of Lok Sabha to a recent matter of urgent public importance having serious consequences and in regard to which a motion or a resolution with proper notice will be too late.
- The purpose of the Adjournment Motion is to allow discussion on a definite matter of urgent public importance.
- It is followed only in the Lok Sabha.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Anti-terror laws in the country have led to an era of over-criminalisation. Do you agree? Justify. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Polity and Governance].
2. Evaluate India's progress in eradicating torture from its criminal system. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Polity and Governance].