

# 13 July 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Losses forced closure of dairy farms, Lakshadweep tells HC

##### Background:

Policies introduced by Lakshadweep Administrator Praful Khoda Patel through the **Draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021 (LDAR)** in the Union Territory had evoked criticisms from various quarters and also had sparked protests in the union territory.

Read more on Draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021 (LDAR) covered in [May 28th, 2021 CNA](#).

##### Details:

- The affidavit was filed by the Lakshadweep administration in response to a [public interest litigation](#) petition challenging the reforms proposed in the islands.
- The Lakshadweep administration has told the Kerala High Court that:
  - After a detailed analysis, it was felt imprudent to continue the dairy farms, **suffering a huge loss of more than ₹90 lakh per year.**
  - The decision to shut them had **no relation to the proposed Animal Preservation Regulation.**
- The affidavit said the decision to disengage excess casual employees from various establishments was to **prevent loss to the exchequer.**

The draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation (LDAR), 2021 will **require ratification from the Union Home Ministry and the Cabinet before it is implemented.**

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. China says it 'drove away' U.S. warship

##### Context:

China's military said it "drove away" a U.S. warship that **illegally entered Chinese waters near the Paracel Islands.**

##### Background:

- On July 12, 2016, the [Permanent Court of Arbitration](#) in the Hague ruled that **China had no historic title over the South China Sea.**
- In its 2016 ruling, it had also said **China had interfered with traditional Philippine fishing rights at Scarborough Shoal** and breached the country's sovereign rights by exploring for oil and gas near the Reed Bank.
- However, **Beijing has not accepted the ruling.**

- The date of the recent event marks the anniversary of an international court ruling that held Beijing had no claim over the South China Sea.

#### Details:

- The islands are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam, which require either permission or advance notification before a military vessel passes through.
- Hundreds of other islands, reefs and atolls in the resource-rich waterway are **contested by Brunei, China, Malaysia and the Philippines**, with **China claiming rights to resources within its so-called nine-dash line, or most of the region.**
- It is a critical global sea route **and China continues to coerce and intimidate Southeast Asian coastal states, threatening freedom of navigation** in the throughway.

Read more on [South China Sea Dispute – Countries Involved, Causes, Effects & Resolution](#)

#### US response:

- The US Navy has said that it **asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands consistent with international law.**
- It said that, under international law, the **ships of all states enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea.**
- It said that by engaging in **innocent passage** without giving prior notification, the **U.S. challenged these unlawful restrictions imposed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam.**

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: **ECONOMY**

#### 1. Inflation remains above 6% in June

##### Context:

Retail inflation has been recorded at above 6%.

##### Details:

- According to data released by the **Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation**, retail inflation had touched a six-month high in May 2021. It has remained at **6.3% in June 2021.**

##### Issue:

- Inflation has exceeded the [Monetary Policy Committee's](#) **target of 4 (+/-2)%**, for the second straight month.
  - At present, the RBI has a target for **retail inflation or CPI of 4% with a margin of 2 percent on either side.**
- This has led to questions over whether the panel can continue with its **accommodative stance to help revive growth.**

- An **accommodative stance** means RBI will cut rates to **inject money into the financial system** whenever needed.
- A change in the stance to '**neutral**' means RBI **will alter rates in any direction to control the money supply in the system**.
- If the RBI cuts the interest rate, it may further lead to an increase in retail inflation. For **containing inflation**, RBI **should raise interest rates**. But raising interest rates at this stage would be **catastrophic for India's GDP growth**.
- Economists have stressed that the lack of **fiscal policy action to cool prices could cause a faster unwinding of RBI's growth-supporting approach to interest rates**.

### Conclusion:

Growth impulses remain fragile with the second COVID-19 wave hurting the recovery momentum. Economists opine that the tussle between supporting the **nascent, incomplete revival in growth** and **preserving the anchoring of inflationary expectations** will continue.

## Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

### 1. 68 killed in lightning strikes in 3 States; experts issue warning

#### Context:

With the monsoon making a slow revival over several parts of India there is a **rise in lightning-linked deaths**.

#### Details:

- The Home Ministry's statistics consistently cited **lightning as the biggest natural disaster-linked killer in India**.
- Nearly 68 were reportedly struck dead by lightning on a single day in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

#### What is lightning, and how does it strike?

- Lightning is a very **rapid and massive discharge of electricity in the atmosphere**, some of which is directed towards the Earth's surface.
- These **discharges are generated in giant moisture-bearing clouds that are 10-12 km tall**.

#### How does this current reach the Earth from the cloud?

- While the Earth is a good conductor of electricity, it is electrically neutral. However, **in comparison to the middle layer of the cloud, it becomes positively charged**.
- As a result, about 15%-20% of the current gets directed towards the Earth as well. It is this flow of current that results in **damage to life and property on Earth**.

#### How common are deaths by lightning?

- Lightning is the **biggest contributor to accidental deaths due to natural causes**.

- In 2019, an analysis by Skymet reported that **five States accounted for half the lightning strikes that year, led by Odisha** with 9,37,462 strikes or about **16% of the cloud-to-ground strikes**. There were **20 million lightning strikes in that period** with over **72% of them being instances of “in-cloud” lightning**.

#### Issue:

- Several thousand thunderstorms occur over India every year. Each can involve several — sometimes more than a hundred — lightning strikes.
- **Occurrences of lightning are not tracked in India.**
- **Just one group of scientists**, at the Indian Institute of Tropical Management (IITM) in Pune, **works full-time on thunderstorms and lightning.**
- There is **simply not enough data for scientists to work with.**

Often, **safety measures and precautions against lightning strikes do not receive as much publicity as other natural disasters such as earthquakes.**

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: EDUCATION

#### 1. Prioritising school reopening on the road to recovery

##### Background:

- Most **schools in India have been closed since the national lockdown started in March 2020**. With the decline in caseload, while one section has been calling for reopening of schools, some have argued against such a move over fears of impending waves of the pandemic.
- In this context, the article analyzes the concerns associated with the continued closure of schools while also weighing in on the risks of school reopening.

##### Impact of school closure:

- **In India, more than 32 crore students have been affected by the shutdown of schools** due to the pandemic induced lockdowns. It has **impeded the learning process** of the students and would hence have a **negative impact on the learning outcomes of the children.**
- Education is often considered a great empowerment mechanism and people often make considerable investments in their children's education, as a way toward a better future and a better living standard. **The inequitable access to digital devices and the internet would only further deepen the existing inequalities in society.**
- The prolonged closures could accentuate the **issue of school dropouts**, especially in rural areas.
- Prolonged school shutdown could severely set back India's fight against ills such as **child labour and child marriage.**

- India has registered an alarming **rise in the early marriage of girls** during the pandemic.

For more information on the aspect of child labour and child marriage concerns, refer to the following articles:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 2nd June 2021](#)

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

- Due to the shutdown of schools, **mid-day meal schemes** have been disrupted and this would have an adverse impact on the **nutritional security of children** dependent on this scheme.
- Schools are not merely about education. The school environment provides an important avenue for the children to socialize among his/her peers and is an important aspect of the **social development of the child**. The prolonged closure of schools can impact this process.
- Extended school closure is having a severe **impact on children's mental health** due to anxiety and depression during the pandemic.

#### **Risks associated with school reopening:**

- Given the closed school environments and the difficulty in ensuring social distancing norms between students, there are legitimate concerns over the **schools acting as super spreader regions for the future pandemic waves**.
- There are also concerns that a **possible third wave involving newer variants** could affect children.
- However, the article argues against the above risks based on the following aspects.
  - Several careful scientific studies across various regions in Europe/U.S., measuring the role of in-person classes in COVID-19 spread have pointed out that the risk of COVID-19 spread in schools is minimal compared to other locations.
  - The available studies have pointed out the **risk of COVID-19 for children being much lower than adults** and lesser than those compared to other risks to child's health like seasonal influenza and unintentional injury. The COVID-19 induced child mortality has been very low.
  - There is no scientific basis for the fears associated with the third wave of the pandemic and the article points out the findings of the Public Health England's June 2021 report noting the newer variant Delta as less dangerous than the original virus and could be an indication of the expected evolutionary path of the virus.

#### **Scenario in other countries:**

- While schools in India have remained shut throughout the pandemic, various regions around the world which have been worse hit by the pandemic than India, have kept their schools, especially primary schools, mostly open.
- This includes various European countries such as Portugal, France, the Netherlands, etc. and some states in the U.S. which have kept their schools open for in-person classes even through their second wave.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Opening of schools:**



- The administration should balance the risks of transmission through children with the harm of prolonged school closures and **plan for a gradual re-opening of schools with appropriate precautions in place.**

#### **Vaccination of teachers:**

- Given that teachers are at high risk of catching COVID-19 if schools reopen, the government must **treat teachers on a par with essential workers**, and offer them prioritised vaccination.

#### **Vaccines for children:**

- There have been calls to ensure full vaccination of children before considering the option of school reopening. The development of COVID-19 vaccines for children should be a priority for the world.
- The article argues against any unnecessary haste given the reports of side effects of vaccines and calls for a **careful risk-benefit analysis** before any such intervention in children.

#### **Providing differentiated options:**

- Given that a “one-size-fits-all” approach may not be suitable, as each individual’s risk-benefit analysis could be different, the article suggests providing sufficient avenues for all.
- This could involve providing a **hybrid model. Opening schools with a mix of online and offline options** could be an important step in this direction.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Children have long borne the costs of prolonged school closure and evidence-based decisions toward reopening are a necessity.

## **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **1. Tracing the decline of U.S. power**

#### **Context:**

- The article analyzes the **change in U.S. foreign policy approach over the years** and its impact on the U.S.’ standing in global affairs.

#### **Background:**

##### **Phase of pragmatism in US foreign policy:**

- Between the **period of 1970 to 1990s**, U.S. foreign policy was guided by the philosophy of realist pragmatism.
- Through **Henry Kissinger’s visit to China in July 1971**, the U.S. chose to ignore the huge human rights violations in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and **chose to engage with China** in a bid to counter the Soviet Union. This came despite the large deviations in their respective world views and ideologies.

##### **Phase of liberal idealism in US foreign policy:**

- In the **post-Cold War era**, US foreign policy seems to be guided by the philosophy of liberal idealism.
- This phase has witnessed **U.S. intervention in many countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.** guided by its **paternalistic responsibility to world peace and stability**. US has also taken great measures to **expand NATO** into the former Soviet bloc.

#### Analysis of the foreign policy approach:

- The article laments the switch from realist pragmatism to liberal idealism in the U.S. foreign policy approach based on the following arguments.

#### **Success of the moral pragmatism phase:**

- Kissinger's visit to Beijing in July 1971 is widely regarded as a major move that swung the 'correlation of forces' in America's favour and led to the ultimate **victory over the Soviet Union**.
- Despite the overwhelming pragmatism in its foreign approach during the pre-1991 phase, there was **scope for liberalism too** as witnessed in US support to democratic struggles.

#### **Failures of the liberal idealism phase:**

- The article argues that the abandonment of Kissingerian realist pragmatism has **weakened the U.S. both domestically and externally**.
- The lack of focus on its own domestic development due to an excessive focus on global affairs has resulted in a scenario where its own **economic global dominance is at stake**.
- The U.S. military interventions in different nations have not only resulted in huge civilian casualties in these countries, but have also **resulted in the loss of life of U.S. army personnel and cost trillions of dollars to the American exchequer**.

#### Conclusion:

- Pointing to the adverse impact of abandoning realist pragmatism and switching to liberal idealism, the article suggests a **return to Kissingerian realist pragmatism to manage and counter the threat posed by a rising China**.

## **Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

### **1. The power of scrutiny**

#### Context:

- The Supreme Court of India has upheld the authority of a committee of the Delhi Assembly to summon a senior official of Facebook.

#### Background:

- Facebook's India vice-president was repeatedly summoned by the Delhi Assembly's **Committee on Peace and Harmony** on the **subject of the Delhi riots of 2020**.



- Facebook had argued before the Supreme Court that this was a **case of overreach** given that **Delhi's law and order came under the central government** and also because Facebook was governed by the **IT Act of Parliament** on which the State government has no power.

#### Details:

- Despite the constraints of the powers of the Delhi Assembly on the subject of law and order, the Court found that its committee still could summon the Facebook India official without encroaching upon the turf of the Centre.

#### Significance:

##### **Recognition of the power of state assemblies:**

- The judgement is an extremely nuanced recognition of the **extent of powers of State Assemblies in matters regulated by an Act of Parliament**.

##### **Role to be played by state assemblies:**

- The Supreme Court ruling supports the notion that an assembly should not be restricted to the passage of new laws but could also **play an important role in other aspects of governance as well**. The SC judgement held that the **"inquisitorial" and "recommendatory" powers of a House can be used for better governance**.

##### **Recognition of the risk posed by unregulated social media operations:**

- Recognizing the potential risk associated with the **spread of misinformation on social media**, the Court has rightly recognized **the impact of social media on law and order**, a subject matter which ultimately affects the governance of States. The judgment could pave the way for scrutiny of social media platforms by other States.

#### Concerns:

- This development could further intensify the discordance over legislative turf between the central government and the Delhi government and the SC rightly cautions the committee from transgressing into any fields reserved for the Union Government.

## **F. Prelims Facts**

### **1. Red sanders worth ₹6.2 crore seized, 1 held**

#### What's in News?

The Andhra Pradesh police raided red sanders dump in Tamil Nadu.

#### Red Sanders:

- Pterocarpus santalinus* or Red Sanders is a tree **endemic to South India**.
- They are found in the **Tropical Dry Deciduous forest of the Palakonda and Seshachalam hill ranges of Andhra Pradesh and also found in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka**.

- It is used for various purposes such as immunity medicine; it is used in Ayurveda and Siddha medicine.
- The [IUCN](#) has classified red sanders as endangered (Assessment year: 2020).

**Note:**

- Earlier, while farmers could grow red sanders, they required permits to fell and transport the wood.
- The [Directorate General of Foreign Trade \(DGFT\)](#) revised its export policy in 2019 to **permit the export of red sanders if it is obtained from cultivated land.**

## 2. G-secs: RBI unveils retail direct scheme

**What's in News?**

The RBI announced the unveiling of a scheme under which **retail investors will be allowed to open retail direct gilt accounts (RDG) directly with the central bank.**

- **RDG** account can be opened through a dedicated online portal, which will provide registered users access to the **primary issuance of government securities** and to **NDS-OM**.
  - NDS-OM is a **screen based electronic anonymous order matching system** for **secondary market trading in government securities owned by RBI.**
- The scheme aims at **facilitating investment in government securities (G-secs) by individual investors.**

## G. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Consider the following statements about Contempt of Court:**

1. There is no limit on the time period for initiating contempt.
2. The Supreme Court can take the cognizance of criminal contempt on its own motion or on a motion made by the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General.
3. Truth can be a valid defence in any contempt proceedings if such a defence is in the public interest and the request for invoking the defence is bona fide.

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

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Contempt of court is the offence of being defiant or disrespectful to the court.
- Section 20 of the Contempt of Court Act, 1971 states that “No court shall initiate any proceedings of contempt, either on its own motion or otherwise, after the expiry of a period of one year from the date on which the contempt is alleged to have been committed”.
- The Supreme Court or High Court can take the cognizance of criminal contempt on its own motion or on a motion made by the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General.
- Truth can be a valid defence in any contempt proceedings if such a defence is in the public interest and the request for invoking the defence is bona fide.

**Q2. With reference to Red sanders, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. It is endemic to the Western Ghats.
2. It is put under the category of endangered species in the IUCN Red List due to overexploitation.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Red Sanders is a tree endemic to South India.
- They are found in the Tropical Dry Deciduous forest of the Palakonda and Seshachalam hill ranges of Andhra Pradesh and also found in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- IUCN has classified red sanders as endangered (Assessment year: 2020).

# Red Sanders

*Pterocarpus santalinus*

## CITATION

Ahmedullah, M. 2021. *Pterocarpus santalinus*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2021: e.T32104A187622484. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-1.RLTS.T32104A187622484.en>. Downloaded on 13 July 2021.



Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Cloudburst is extreme precipitation, which lasts only for a short period of time and is extremely local in nature.
2. Cloudbursts usually occur in connection with a thunderstorm.
3. Cloudbursts happen only in the mountains and hilly areas.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Cloudburst is extreme precipitation, which lasts only for a short period of time and is extremely local in nature.

- Cloudbursts usually occur in connection with a thunderstorm.
- While there is a greater probability of cloudbursts occurring in the mountains and hilly areas, cloudbursts can also occur in plains.

**Q4. Which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. The Cool Temperate Continental (Siberian) Climate is experienced only in the northern hemisphere.
2. The Cool Temperate Western Margin (British Type) regions are under the influence of Westerlies all round the year.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- The Cool Temperate Continental (Siberian) Climate is experienced only in the northern hemisphere. Southern Hemisphere is typically more temperate and warmer than the various landmasses in the Northern Hemisphere because of the effect of the oceans. Oceans absorb and store huge amounts of energy.
- The Cool Temperate Western Margin regions are under the influence of Westerlies all-round the year. They are also regions of much cyclonic activity, typical of Britain, and therefore, they are said to experience the British type of climate.

**Q5. Kalamkari painting refers to (UPSC 2015)**

- a. A hand-painted cotton textile in South India
- b. A handmade drawing on bamboo handicrafts in North-East India
- c. A block-painted woollen cloth in Western Himalayan region of India
- d. A hand-painted decorative silk cloth in North-Western India

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

Kalamkari is a type of hand-painted or block-printed cotton textile produced in Andhra Pradesh. Only natural dyes are used in Kalamkari.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The legislative assembly does not only perform the function of legislating. There are many other aspects of governance which can form part of its essential functions, such as “inquisitorial” and “recommendatory” powers, which can be used for better governance. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Polity and Governance].
2. Examine the ‘realist pragmatism’ and ‘liberal idealism’ schools of thought in international relations. Consequently, trace how the switch in US foreign policy from the former to the latter has led to its power decline in global geopolitics. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, International Relations].

