

## 18 July 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Concerns remain over anti-trafficking Bill

##### Context:

- The **Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021**, is likely to be tabled in the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament.

##### Details:

- The legislation is aimed at **preventing and countering trafficking in persons**, especially women and children.
- The Bill defines **human trafficking as an organised crime**.
- The **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** shall act as the **national investigating and coordinating agency** responsible for prevention and combating of trafficking in persons.

##### Significance of the bill:

##### Victim centred provisions:

- Apart from helping counter trafficking in persons, the bill also has provisions for **care, protection, and rehabilitation to the victims**.
- Respecting the rights of the victims, it creates a supportive legal, economic and social environment for the victims of human trafficking.
- Significantly, the bill upholds the right of survivors to **rehabilitation and compensation independent of criminal proceedings**.

##### Concerns:

- The **absence of provision for community-based rehabilitation** in the draft bill is a major lacunae given the potential that community based centres hold in the rehabilitation process.
- Sex work and pornography have been added to the definition of exploitation and are considered to be trafficking. This the experts claim leads to unnecessary mixing up of the issue of trafficking and sex work. This **goes against the right to the choice of sex work as a profession**.
- There are doubts over how the NIA as a nodal agency will gather information and intelligence through **anti-human trafficking Units (AHTUs) at the district and State levels**.
  - The Ministry of Home Affairs had mandated the AHTUs for conducting inter-State probe in cases of human trafficking and allocated budgets to them.

#### 2. Live-streaming court proceedings is key: CJ

##### Context:

- The **Chief Justice of India** recently inaugurated live-streaming of proceedings at the Gujarat High Court.

### Significance of live streaming:

- As noted by the CJI, **live-streaming of court proceedings is crucial for dissemination of information** and the spread of information is sacrosanct to free speech.

### Challenges with live streaming:

- As noted by the CJI, with live-streaming **Judges who will have to work under public scrutiny**, is liable to be swayed by multiple public debates and may tend to lose objectivity. Hence the live streaming may be a stressful environment for the judge to work in.
- The live streaming does pose some **challenges for the protection of privacy and security of victims and witnesses**.

## **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **1. U.S., Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan to form quad group**

#### Context:

- **The U.S., Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan** have agreed in principle to establish a new quadrilateral diplomatic platform.

#### Details:

- The diplomatic platform would focus on **building transit links and enhancing regional connectivity** which could help expand interregional trade and strengthen business-to-business ties.

#### Significance of the platform:

#### **Take advantage of the strategic location of Afghanistan:**

- Afghanistan's strategic location functions as a competitive advantage for the country.
  - Afghanistan is bordered by Pakistan to the east and south, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north, and China to the northeast.



- Located at the heart of the historic Silk Road, Afghanistan lies at the **crossroads of commerce between Asian countries and European countries**.
- The diplomatic platform could help leverage Afghanistan's strategic location advantage to its growth and development.

#### Bring peace and stability to Afghanistan:

- The diplomatic effort gains significance in the backdrop of US troop's withdrawal from Afghanistan and the rising violence. Given the **mutually reinforcing nature of peace and regional connectivity**, this diplomatic platform could contribute to bringing long-term peace and stability to Afghanistan.

#### Countering BRI:

- The formation of the new quad group is important amid China's desire to extend its [Belt Road Initiative \(BRI\)](#) to Afghanistan.
  - The BRI aims to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a network of land and sea routes.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

#### 1. Independent defence policy in place now, claims Amit Shah

##### Context:

- Union Home Minister delivering the Rustamji Memorial Lecture at the 18th Investiture Ceremony of the [Border Security Force \(BSF\)](#).

##### Highlights of the speech:

##### Border safety:

- **Border safety was at the core of the national security policy.**
- A pilot project of the **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System** had been implemented for effective surveillance along the border.
- **Development of border areas has been prioritized through infrastructure development work** to provide basic services to the residents. This includes construction of border roads, bridges and important tunnels.

**Challenges to internal security:**

- The major challenges before the BSF would be **infiltration, drugs/weapons trafficking and drones.**
- There is also the need to develop a long-term strategy for countering the possible use of artificial intelligence and robotic technology from across the border.

**Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

**1. Rare Arctic lightning storms strike north of Alaska**

**Context:**

- **Three successive thunderstorms swept across the Arctic region** resulting in unusual lightning bolts.

**Details:**

- **Lightning are a relatively rare phenomenon in the arctic region.**
  - Given that in the arctic region the water is usually covered with ice, the air over the Arctic Ocean lacks the convective heat needed to generate lightning storms.
- However there are indications of a change in this trend with **episodes of summer lightning within the Arctic Circle having tripled since 2010.**
  - This trend could be **attributed to climate change and increasing loss of sea ice** in the region. As sea ice vanishes, more water is able to evaporate, adding moisture to the warming atmosphere.
    - **Notably climate change has been warming the Arctic faster than the rest of the world.**

**Concerns:**

- These lightning threaten boreal forests around the Arctic, as they could spark **forest fires** in remote regions already experiencing high temperatures due to global warming.
- On the water, **the lightning is an increasing hazard to mariners** as the vessel traffic has been increasing with retreating sea ice.

**D. GS 4 Related**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

**E. Editorials**

## Category: ECONOMY

### 1. Curbs on Mastercard

#### Context:

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has banned Mastercard from issuing new debit and credit cards to customers in India.

#### Background:

##### RBI's data localisation policy:

- In 2018, the Reserve Bank of India had issued a circular ordering card companies such as Visa, Mastercard, and American Express to **store all Indian customer data locally**.
- The underlying reasons for this were stated as follows:
  - Local storage of consumer data is necessary to **protect the privacy of Indian users** and to **address national security concerns**.
  - Regulator could have necessary supervisory access over the card companies.

##### RBI strict implementation of the guidelines.

- **Earlier, American Express and Diners Club International were banned by the RBI** from issuing new cards after they failed to comply with the 2018 circular.

#### Details:

- According to the RBI, **Mastercard has failed to comply with the local data storage rules** announced in 2018.

#### Concerns:

- The move to ban Mastercard would **impact the operation of banks** operating in India that use Mastercard's services to issue cards to their customers.
- Given that Mastercard accounts for almost one third of the card market in India, **new card registrations might take a hit**.
- Some believe the data localisation rules are being used by governments as **tools of economic protectionism**. This sort of economic protectionism could affect the business of foreign card companies. Thus, the card payments sector may end up being restricted to a few domestic companies, which in turn **can lead to reduced competition**. This could mean **higher costs and lower quality services for customers**.

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. Mercury's iron heart

#### Context:

- New study by researchers from the University of Maryland on the structure of Mercury.



### Details:

- **Mercury has a big-sized core relative to its mantle.**
- The new research reveals that **Sun's magnetism is the reason for this**. The researchers developed a model showing that the density, mass and iron content of a rocky planet's core are influenced by its distance from the Sun's magnetic field
- The new model shows that during the early formation of the solar system, when the young Sun was surrounded by a swirling cloud of dust and gas, **grains of iron were drawn toward the centre by the Sun's magnetic field**. When the planets began to form from clumps of that dust and gas, planets closer to the sun incorporated more iron into their cores than those further away.

### 2. Volcanoes on Venus

- Cornell University researchers have suggested the **presence of explosive volcanoes on the surface of Venus that emit phosphides** which forms the phosphine.
- This study suggests that the previously detected traces of phosphine in Venus's atmosphere may not necessarily imply the presence of life on Venus.

For related information refer to:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 16th Sep 2020](#)

## G. Tidbits

### 1. AI tool developed to study cancer-causing mutations

- Researchers at IIT Madras have developed an **AI tool called NBDriver** (neighbourhood driver) for **use in analysing cancer-causing mutations in cells**.
- By looking at the genomic neighbourhood of a mutation in the genome, the new tool can look at harmful cancer **“driver” mutations** and distinguish them from **neutral “passenger” mutations**.
  - The “driver” mutations enable the cancer cells to grow while the “passenger” mutations do not have any effect on the progression of the disease.

### 2. Is Twitter acceding to takedown requests?

- As per the Social media platform **Twitter's latest Transparency Report**, **India was the single largest source of government information requests** and it was also one of the prominent sources of legal demands for removal of content.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the given statement/s with respect to pressure swing adsorption (PSA) is/are incorrect?

1. It is a process that separates single gases from a gas mixture through a cryogenic air separation process.
2. It takes place at very low temperatures.

3. It is mostly used in the chemical industry and the petrochemical industry.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Pressure swing adsorption (PSA) is a process that separates single gases from a gas mixture through a non-cryogenic air separation process.
- It takes place at near ambient temperatures.
- It is mostly used in the chemical industry and the petrochemical industry.

**Q2. Which of the given statements with respect to Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is/are correct?**

1. The fund comes from the Universal Service Levy (USL) charged from all the telecom operators on their Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR).
2. The fund is deposited in the Consolidated Fund of India.
3. USOF is funding the Bharatmala and Sagarmala projects.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) was established in 2002.
- The fund comes from the Universal Service Levy (USL) charged from all the telecom operators on their Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) and is deposited in the Consolidated Fund of India.
- USOF is funding the BharatNet project.

**Q3. Which of the following dam/s is/are built/being built in Afghanistan in partnership with India?**



1. Salma Dam
2. Sokhtuk Dam
3. Shahtoot Dam
4. Band-e Sardeh Dam

**Options:**

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 4 only
- d. 1 and 2 only

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Salma Dam (Afghan-India Friendship Dam) inaugurated in 2016 was built in partnership with India.
- Shahtoot dam is another major dam being built by India in Afghanistan.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. The cores of Mercury, Venus and Earth are about one-third of their mass.
2. Both Mercury and Venus do not have moon or rings.
3. Mercury is the hottest planet in the solar system due to its proximity to the Sun.

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

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- While the cores of Venus and Earth are about one-third of their mass Mercury's core is 85 percent by volume.
- Both Mercury and Venus do not have a moon. Both the planets do not have rings because the powerful solar wind blasts destroy icy rings around the planets.
- Despite being further from the Sun than Mercury, Venus experiences higher temperatures. Venus is the hottest planet in the solar system.

Q5. Which one of the following is not the most likely measure the Government/RBI takes to stop the slide of Indian rupee? (UPSC 2019)

- a. Curbing imports of non-essential goods and promoting exports
- b. Encouraging Indian borrowers to issue rupee denominated Masala bonds
- c. Easing conditions relating to external commercial borrowing
- d. Following an expansionary monetary policy

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

An expansionary monetary policy results in increased money supply in the economy resulting in stronger dollar. Such a policy might lead to a fall in the value of Indian Rupee.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) can be an effective substitute to the litigation process. In the light of the statement, examine how ADR can decrease the pending and future disputes, thereby reducing the burden on courts in India. ( 15 Marks, 250 Words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]
2. Write a note on Constitutional Provisions that protect and safeguard the rights of civil servants in Government service. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]