

19 July 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Midday meals leave a long-lasting impact: study](#)

C. GS 3 Related

SECURITY

1. [Pegasus spyware used to 'snoop' on journalists](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [China denies politics behind UNESCO move on Barrier Reef](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

ECONOMY

1. [Time to build a valuable economy](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Sensitive and precise](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [Lokpal yet to get director of inquiry](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [SC mulls limit to role as policy watchdog](#)

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. [Midday meals leave a long-lasting impact: study](#)

Context:

A study on the **inter-generational benefits of the midday meal scheme** published in Nature Communications.

Midday meals scheme:

- The scheme **guarantees one meal to all children in government and aided schools and madrasas supported under Samagra Shiksha.**
- It was **launched in the year 1995** as the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP – NSPE). In **2004, the scheme was relaunched** as the Mid Day Meal Scheme.
- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme**, hence cost is shared between the centre and the states.

Read more on [Mid Day Meal Scheme \(MDMS\)](#)

Issue:

- In India, **more than one in three Indian children are stunted**, or too short for their age, reflecting **chronic undernutrition**.
 - Stunting i.e, **low height for age**, is **caused by long-term insufficient nutrient intake and frequent infections**.
 - Stunting generally **occurs before age two**, and **effects are largely irreversible**.
- While nutritionists argue that **maternal health and well-being is the key** to reducing stunting in their offspring, the **focus has been on boosting nutrition for young children**.

Key Findings:

- By 2016, the prevalence of stunting was significantly lower in areas where the scheme was implemented in 2005.
- The scheme was associated with **13-32% of the improvement** in the **height-for-age** z-scores in India between 2006 and 2016.
- Girls who had access to free lunches provided at government schools had **children with a higher height-to-age ratio than those who did not**.
- The study noted that interventions to improve maternal height and education must be implemented years before those girls and young women become mothers.
- The linkages between midday meals and lower stunting in the next generation were **stronger in the lower socio-economic strata** and likely work through women's education, fertility, and the use of health services.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. Pegasus spyware used to ‘snoop’ on journalists

Context:

It has been reported that some **40 Indian journalists** are a part of the leaked list of **potential targets for surveillance** by an unidentified agency using **Pegasus software**.

Issue:

- **Indian Ministers, government officials and Opposition leaders** also figure in the list of people whose phones may have been compromised by the spyware.
- The **spyware Pegasus** is sold to governments around the world by **NSO Group, an Israeli company**.
- It can be used to **track, extract messages and information from the phones** that run on Android and iOS systems.

Read more on Pegasus Spyware covered in [July 8th, 2021 CNA](#).

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. China denies politics behind UNESCO move on Barrier Reef

Context:

The Great Barrier Reef has been **put on a list of World Heritage sites** that could be put on the **in-danger list** after losing half of its corals since 1995.

Details:

- Australia has criticised the move, **blaming global warming for the loss**.
- It also suspected that **China had a role to play** in recommending the Barrier Reef to be listed as endangered.
- However, [UNESCO](#) experts argued that **pollution run-off has contributed to the loss**.
- A top Chinese official has said that political tensions between Beijing and Australia were not behind the UNESCO recommendation.

Read more on this topic covered in [June 27th, 2021 CNA](#).

Note:

- The List of World Heritage in Danger is **compiled by UNESCO**.
- The list is intended to **increase international awareness of the threats and to encourage counteractive measures**.
- Two UNESCO world heritage sites in India that were earlier included in the World Heritage in Danger list but now have been delisted include:
 - **Group of Monuments at Hampi**
 - **Manas Wildlife sanctuary, Assam**

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Time to build a valuable economy

Context:

- In the context of the **30th anniversary of the economic reforms launched by India in 1991**, the article carries out an assessment of the economic policy changes of 1991.

Background:

Economic reforms of 1991:

- **Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization** were the major features of the reforms.
- It involved lessening of government control over the economy, allowing higher participation of the private sector in the Indian economy and opening up of the economy to international trade and capital flows.

Also read: [Difference between liberalization and globalization.](#)

For detailed information on the pre-reform era challenges and major features of the economic reforms taken in 1991, refer to the following article:

Economic reforms of 1991

Assessment of the economic reforms:

Positives:

Impact on the balance of payment:

- As against the low foreign exchange reserves that India had in mid-1991, **the post-reform era has witnessed India's foreign exchange reserves growing to record levels.**
- As against the frequent balance of payment crisis that India had witnessed in the pre-reform era, **the three decades since 1991 has seen India witness no such balance of payments crisis.**

Impetus to the rate of economic growth:

- The economic reforms have aided in the **high rate of growth of the Indian economy.**
- Though there has been a lag between the economic reforms and the subsequent acceleration in the economic growth rate, the rate of growth of the Indian economy has been high after 2001.

Shortcomings:

Foreign exchange reserve growth based on capital flow:

- Despite impressive improvement in the foreign exchange reserves of India, a close analysis of it reveals that **this increase is mainly attributable to financial inflows rather than export surpluses**, as was expected from the reforms introduced.
- The balance of payments has been **shored up by portfolio capital**. Such capital can flow out just as easily, leaving reserves to deplete rapidly.

Failure to increase competitiveness of Indian industries:

- The economic reforms which were based on the premise of reducing government control over the private sector have failed to increase the competitiveness of the Indian industries adequately.
- Indian goods continue to remain highly uncompetitive in the international market and this has resulted in a scenario where the **attainment of the envisaged trade surplus status has remained a distant dream.**

Trend of economic growth:

- The Indian economy of late has been exhibiting a slowdown, dropping to less than pre-reform levels even before we were struck by the pandemic.

- Even considering the long-term growth trend, the economic acceleration after the reforms of 1991 was not the first time it happened and also, there have been higher degrees of economic acceleration in the early 1950s and the late 1970s.

Absence of certain crucial services:

- COVID-19 has brought to light the absence from the economy of certain crucial services and the underlying assets that enable their production.
- The **acute inadequacy of the Indian health system, sanitation, transportation, urban governance and the producer services, from power supply to waste management**, needed to undertake economic activity, are all inadequately available.
- The economic reforms of 1991 failed to provide for these crucial services.

Recommendations:

- **Publicly provided infrastructure, private R&D and facilitating government machinery** are crucial for a country's export competitiveness. Appropriate measures are required in this direction.
- India should acknowledge the importance of **ensuring adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of the general public** and allocate sufficient funds towards it. This should be followed up by the effective management of the infrastructure to supply the stream of services expected by the citizens.

For related information on successes and lacunae of the economic reforms of 1991, refer to the following articles:

[CNA dated July 1, 2021: India's 1991 liberalisation leap and lessons for today.](#)

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Sensitive and precise

Context:

- **The Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021**, is likely to be tabled in the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament.
 - The Bill aims at **preventing and countering trafficking in persons** and has provisions for care, protection and rehabilitation to the victims. It envisages the creation of a supportive legal, economic and social environment for the victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking:

- Human Trafficking is the **illegal trade in human beings** for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution or forced labour.

Constitutional provision:

- **Article 23 of the Indian Constitution** deals with the aspect of **prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour**.
 - Article 23 of the Indian Constitution deals with the **Right against Exploitation**.
- As per clause (1) of Article 23, traffic in human beings and begar and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with the law.

Measures taken so far:

- As per the provisions enshrined in the Constitution, the government had passed the **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act** in 1956, which continues to be the main legislation for the prevention of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.
- **India has also ratified the [United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime \(UNTOC\)](#)** which has as one of its Protocols, Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children. Various actions have been taken to implement the convention and as per Protocol, Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 has been enacted wherein human trafficking has specifically been defined.

Notable aspects of the bill:

- The Bill has expanded the area under coverage to **include offences taking place, not only within India but also outside it**.
- The draft legislation envisages **the setting up of anti-trafficking committees at the State and national levels** to implement the proposed provisions.

Concerns associated with the proposed legislation:

Powers envisaged for the NIA:

- The proposal to hand the **responsibility of investigation in trafficking crimes to the [NIA](#)** has been criticized for the following two reasons:
 - This could further **burden the already stretched NIA**.

- This also amounts to an **attack on federalism**, given that this will only decrease the power of local enforcement agencies with respect to the implementation of the proposed provisions.

Very broad definition of human trafficking:

- Another key criticism of the Bill has been its broad definitions of victims and **failure to distinguish consensual sexual activity for commerce from human trafficking**. This would end up criminalising sex work and victimisation of the already exploited.

Overzealous provisions:

- Various civil society activists and legal experts have criticised some overzealous provisions adopted by the draft legislation to counter human trafficking.
 - **Reporting of offences has been made mandatory** with penalties for non-reporting.
 - The **proposal of the death penalty** for various forms of aggravated trafficking offences.
- Though societies and governments must have zero tolerance for human trafficking, the use of overzealous provisions as those proposed risks **the adoption of a purely legal and punitive approach to solve what is essentially a socio-economic problem**.

Failure to acknowledge root causes:

- In its current form, the draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021 seems to be inadequate to stamp out human trafficking given its failure to acknowledge the contributing factors to human trafficking, including **vicious poverty, debt, lack of opportunity, and ineffectiveness/inefficiency of the development schemes**.

For more related information on the proposed legislation, refer to the following article:

[CNA date July 18, 2021: Concerns remain over anti-trafficking Bill](#)

Conclusion:

- **Tackling human trafficking needs a wholesome approach** that is cognizant of the causative factors.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Lokpal yet to get director of inquiry

What's in News?

The Centre is yet to appoint a **director of inquiry** as prescribed by the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**.

- According to the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**, there shall be a director of inquiry.
- He/she shall **not be below the rank of Joint Secretary** to the Government of India.
- The director of inquiry shall be **appointed by the Central government** for conducting preliminary inquiries referred to the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** by the Lokpal.

Read more on [Lokpal and Lokayukta Act 2013 - Background and Features](#)

G. Tidbits

1. SC mulls limit to role as policy watchdog

What's in News?

A Division Bench of the Supreme Court has voiced its **resolve to examine the extent to which the judiciary can question the government's COVID-19 policies**.

Issue:

- The recent remark is contrary to SC's three-judge Bench judgment which held that **courts cannot be "silent spectators when constitutional rights of citizens are infringed by executive policies"**.
- The division bench remarked that the **judiciary should not undermine the executive at a time when a collective effort was required to overcome the public health crisis**.
- Earlier, Justice Chandrachud had said "Our Constitution does not envisage courts to be silent spectators when constitutional rights of citizens are infringed by executive policies. Judicial review and soliciting constitutional justification for policies formulated by the executive is an essential function, which the courts are entrusted to perform,".
 - The judgment highlighted that **courts across the globe have responded to constitutional challenges to executive policies which violate the rights and liberties of citizens**.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Lokpal:

1. The administrative expenses of the Lokpal shall be charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.
2. The salary, allowances of the Chairperson shall be the same as those of the Chief Justice of India.
3. There is a limitation period of 7 years to file complaints.
4. It can initiate a probe suo motu into any corruption case against any Public Servant.
5. Anonymous complaints can be accepted.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1, 2 and 3 only
- c. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The administrative expenses (salaries, allowances, pensions, etc.) of the Lokpal shall be charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.
- The salary, allowances of the Chairperson shall be the same as those of the Chief Justice of India. The salaries and allowances of the other members of the Lokpal are equal to that of a Judge of the Supreme Court.
- There is a limitation period of 7 years from the date of occurrence of the crime to file complaints.
- Lokpal cannot take up a probe suo motu into any corruption case against any Public Servant, neither can it accept anonymous complaints.

Q2. With reference to Tipu Sultan, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. He took the help of the French to set up an arms factory at Dindigul.
2. The Third Anglo-Mysore War fought by Tipu ended with the Treaty of Madras.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan's father took the help of the French to set up an arms factory at Dindigul.
- The Third Anglo-Mysore War fought by Tipu ended with the Treaty of Seringapatnam.

Q3. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system located in the Gulf of Carpentaria.
2. Australia is the world's largest coral reef nation.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system located in the Coral Sea on the North-Eastern side of Australia.
- Indonesia is the world's largest coral reef nation.

Q4. Which one of the following statements best describes Moon Wobble?

- a. It is an intense geological activity on the largest moon in the solar system
- b. When there are two full moons within a month, the second full moon is called a Moon Wobble
- c. It is a cyclical shift in the moon's orbit that happens every 18.6 years
- d. None of the above

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The moon wobble is a regular swaying/cyclical shift in the moon's orbit. It was first documented in 1728.
- This wobble takes over an 18.6-year period to complete and continues to occur in a cyclic fashion.

- One half of the 18.6-year cycle suppresses the tides, which means that the high tides get lower, while the low tides get higher than normal. Once this cycle completes, the situation flips with high tides getting higher and low tides, lower.

Q5. The mind of the makers of the Constitution of India is reflected in which of the following? (UPSC 2017)

- a. The Preamble
- b. The Fundamental Rights
- c. The Directive Principles of State Policy
- d. The Fundamental Duties

Answer: a

Explanation:

The mind of the makers of the Constitution is reflected in the Preamble. It contains a summary or the essence of the Constitution. The Preamble to the Constitution of India comprises the aims and vision of the Constituent Assembly as well as makes a mention of the source of authority of the Constitution.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The recent internal developments in Nepal have opened a new chapter in the country's quest for political stability. What lessons does it offer for Indian diplomacy towards Nepal? Examine. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS 2 International Relations)
2. The draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021 intends to stamp out exploitative trafficking. Critically discuss. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS 2 Polity and Governance)