

22 July 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. HC stays Arunachal's entry permit notification

Background:

- Arunachal Pradesh had recently issued a notification allowing temporary entry permits for “developmental works in public and private sectors” only to those vaccinated against COVID-19.
- This provision the government claimed was to check the spread of the pandemic in the state amid the rising cases of COVID-19.

Inner Line Permit:

- Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document issued by the concerned state government **to allow the inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area** for a limited period. It is obligatory for Indian citizens from outside those states to obtain a permit for entering into the protected state.
- **Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram are protected by the Inner Line, and lately, Manipur was added.** The concept originates from the **Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act (BEFR), 1873.**
- The document is an effort by the government to regulate movement to certain areas located near the international border of India.

Details:

- The Itanagar Bench of the Gauhati High Court has stayed the Arunachal Pradesh government's notification mandating vaccination for temporary entry permits.
- The bench held that the notification classifying people into vaccinated and unvaccinated for the purpose of issuance of temporary permits **violates Articles 14, 19 (1) (d) and 21 of the Constitution of India.**
 - **Article 14 deals with equality before law.** As per the article, the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. It prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
 - **Article 19(1)(d) notes that all citizens shall have the right to move freely throughout the territory of India.**
 - **Article 21** of the Constitution of India states that no person shall be deprived of his **life or personal liberty except** according to procedures established by law.
- The bench noted that there is no evidence available in the public domain that COVID-19 vaccinated persons cannot be infected with the COVID-19 virus, or he/she cannot be a carrier of COVID-19 virus and consequently a spreader of the COVID-19 virus.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. U.K. wants new trade deal for N. Ireland

Context:

- After rioting and business disruption hit the province of Northern Ireland, the **U.K. has demanded the European Union to renegotiate the Northern Ireland Protocol** – post-Brexit trading arrangements for Northern Ireland.

Background:

Northern Ireland Protocol:

- The protocol aimed to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland, which remains part of the EU, by effectively **keeping Northern Ireland in the EU's single market.**

Details:

Britain's concerns:

- The Northern Ireland Protocol requires **checks on goods arriving from mainland Britain.** Many pro-U.K. supporters see it as creating a **de facto border in the Irish Sea with mainland Britain.**
- Faced with all the new bureaucracy, some **British companies have stopped supplying stores in Northern Ireland,** saying they simply can't handle the added paperwork now needed.

EU's response:

- The EU has rejected the offer and **ruled out any renegotiation.** It has instead offered to seek creative solutions, within the framework of the Protocol.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. India signed 26 pacts to fight drug menace

Context:

- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reply in the Lok Sabha on the **measures taken to combat drug trafficking in India.**

Measures taken:

International level:

- India is a signatory to the UN Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971 and **the Convention on Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988** which prescribe various forms of control aimed to achieve the dual objective of limiting the use of narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes as well as preventing the abuse of the same.
- India has signed 26 **bilateral pacts**, 15 memoranda of understanding and two **agreements on security cooperation** with different countries for combating illicit trafficking of narcotics, drugs, psychotropic substances and even their chemical precursors.

- The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** has been coordinating with various international organisations for sharing information and intelligence on transnational drug trafficking.

Domestic level:

- The basic legislative instrument in this regard is the **Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985**.
- For better coordination among various Central and State agencies, the **Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism** was set up. The NCORD system has been further extended into a four-tier scheme up to the district level for better coordination. This has ensured more effective drug law enforcement.
- A **Joint Coordination Committee** was set up to monitor the investigation into cases involving large seizures.
- The MHA has launched an e-portal called '**SIMS**' (**Seizure Information Management System**) for digitisation of pan-India drug seizure data.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India must directly engage with Taliban 2.0

Increasing clout of the Taliban in Afghanistan:

- Given the **increasing violence in Afghanistan** India has been ramping down its civilian presence in Afghanistan. India has 'temporarily' closed its consulates in Kandahar, Jalalabad and Herat and has evacuated its diplomats.
- This has been described by security experts as India's acknowledgement of the **threat the Taliban poses to Indian assets and presence in Afghanistan**.
- The current situation represents a **major crossroad for India's Afghan policy** which has so far been mostly characterized by engagement with the democratically elected government of Afghanistan through investments and developmental aid while maintaining a distance from the Taliban.

India's recent outreach to the Taliban:

- In late 2018, **India sent a 'non-official delegation' of two retired diplomats to a conference in Moscow** which was also being attended by the Taliban and members of the Afghan High Peace Council.
- In September 2020, India's External Affairs Minister joined the inaugural session of the **intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha**.
- More recently, there have been reports of India reaching out to the Taliban.

Rationale for the indirect talks approach with the Taliban:

- Following are some of the reasons why India has adopted **slow and behind closed doors talks with the Taliban**.
 - Any direct engagement with the Taliban risks **unsettling India's trusted partner, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani**. This could even nudge him to look towards China and the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#) for national security and personal political survival.
 - Given the **decentralized structure of the Taliban and its internal divisions**, India is faced with the challenge of whom to engage with. Given India enjoys little access to the members of the Quetta Shura or the fighters on the ground in Afghanistan, India is having to engage with the Doha-based Taliban negotiators.
 - Given the **lack of clarity on the Taliban's long term intentions and strategies**, India might not want to court the Taliban very soon. Hence the need for a calibrated and gradual engagement with the Taliban.
 - There is also the **threat of Pakistan acting out against India in Kashmir** if India were to establish deeper links with the Taliban.

Arguments in favour of a more proactive and open engagement with the Taliban:

- The Taliban has been making rapid gains in Afghanistan. Over a third of Afghanistan's more than 400 districts are under Taliban control. It seems **inevitable that the Taliban, one way or another, is going to be part of the political scheme of things in Afghanistan**.
- Unlike in 1996, a large number of players in the international community are going to recognise/negotiate/do business with the Taliban. India cannot be the odd one out in this regard.
- The less proactive the Indian engagement with the Taliban, the **stronger Pakistan-Taliban relations** would become which would not be in India's strategic interests.
- Given the **substantial investments India has made in Afghanistan (over \$3 billion)**, it makes both strategic and economic sense for India to court all stakeholders in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, to ensure the security of its civilian assets.
- Lack of a proactive approach from India will **leave the space open for other countries like Russia, Iran, Pakistan and China** to emerge as prominent shapers of Afghanistan's political and geopolitical destiny, which would prove to be detrimental to Indian interests in Afghanistan.
- Also, a proactive approach to Afghanistan will **help India open up the congested north-western frontier to give way for India's continental strategy**. This would be in line with other measures like backchannel talks with Pakistan and a consequent ceasefire on the Line of Control, political dialogue with the mainstream Kashmiri leadership.

Recommendations:

- Though India's engagement with the Taliban may or may not achieve much, non-engagement will definitely hurt Indian interests. The talk-to-the-Taliban option is indeed the best of the many less than perfect options available to India.
- In this regard, **India should shed its inhibitions and replace the hesitant, backchannel parleys with the Taliban and indulge in open talks and engagement with the Taliban 2.0** given the **strategic necessity** of such a move.

- This fundamental reset in India's Afghanistan policy is a necessity to safeguard its civilian assets in Afghanistan as well as to stay relevant in the unfolding 'great game' in and around Afghanistan.
- Given that the Taliban too is looking for regional and global partners for recognition and legitimacy especially in the neighbourhood, it too would be welcoming of any approach by India to engage.

For related information refer to:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 25th June 2021](#)

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Water as woe

Context:

- **Extensive flooding in the city of Mumbai** has led to the loss of life and property.

Background:

Urban floods:

- Urban flooding has been a **recurrent phenomenon in Indian cities like Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad**.
- Mumbai has been especially witnessing such floods with high frequency and intensity over the recent past.

For more information refer to:

[Urban Flooding](#)

Factors contributing to urban floods:

Impact of climate change:

- The **volume and duration of monsoonal rain are turning unpredictable**, due to climate change.
- Such intermittent torrents will only become more frequent, influenced by a warming climate. Such intermittent torrents contribute to floods in the cities.

Lack of required infrastructure:

- **Basic infrastructure including drainage is absent or highly inadequate in most cities**. The available infrastructure is not capable of accommodating intense monsoons.
- **The lack of regular maintenance** of even this limited infrastructure reduces their capability to handle even the designed quantity of flows.

Unplanned urbanization:

- Unplanned urbanization results in the **development of slums**. Such areas are **more prone to urban flooding and landslides**.

Encroachments:

- The **city's rivers and lakes which act as natural water sinks are being encroached upon**. This impacts their ability to absorb the rainwater runoff and thus contributes to urban flooding.

Measures taken up by the government:

- An **urban flood management plan** has been drawn up by the [National Disaster Management Authority](#) for the cities to implement.
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has also released the **first dedicated stormwater drainage manual** for effective flow management of stormwater.
- **Sponge Cities Mission** is an important intervention to decrease the vulnerability of cities to urban flooding.

For more information on sponge cities mission refer to the following article:

[Sponge Cities Mission In India](#)

Recommendations:

- There is a need for a **strict law to regulate the encroachment of river and lake beds** in urban areas. Also, the existing encroachments must be removed from the city's rivers and lakes.
- The cities should also focus on **developing the existing lakes apart from creating fresh holding lakes for excess waters from rains**.
- The government should **rehabilitate those who live in risky locations** as this will help decrease the vulnerability to urban floods.
- Given the risks posed by the unplanned growth of cities, cities should focus on **planned urban growth and adequate infrastructure** in the form of drainage and housing.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Lightweight anti-tank missile tested by DRDO

Context:

- A new generation of Akash [surface-to-air missile](#) and indigenously developed Anti-Tank Missiles were successfully flight-tested by the DRDO from an integrated test range off the Odisha coast.

Akash missile:

- **Akash is a medium-range mobile surface-to-air missile system** developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation and produced by Bharat Dynamics Limited.
- The **new variant of the Akash missile (Akash-NG)** has a slightly better range compared to the original version that can strike targets at a distance of around 25 km. This will help boost the air defence capabilities of the IAF.

Anti Tank missile:

- **The MPATGM, or Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile**, is an Indian third-generation **fire-and-forget** anti-tank guided missile derived from **Nag ATGM**.
- It has been indigenously developed.

2. A leaping Tequila fish

Kakapo:

- The kakapo, also called **owl parrot**, is a species of **large, flightless, nocturnal, ground-dwelling parrot endemic to New Zealand**.
- It is the world's only flightless parrot.

3. Ain't no mountain high enough

- **Gei-ü (pronounced Jee-uh)** is a **three-stringed musical instrument** invented by Naga folk musician-luthier Atso Chasie.
- The Gei-Ü has three strings, one for plucking and two for bowing. It is **made from bamboo and local wood**.

G. Tidbits

1. Climate cooperation depends on overall ties, China tells U.S.

- **China, the largest emitter of Green House Gases in the world, aims to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.**
- The U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry, has warned that China's commitment to peak emissions by 2030 was not sufficient to ensure a **1.5 degree Celsius global warming target**.

2. 25 killed, dams damaged in record flooding in central China

- **Record rains in central China** have resulted in extensive **flooding** in the region.
 - **Zhengzhou, the capital city of Henan province**, received 87% of annual precipitation in 24 hours.
- At least 25 people were reported killed and tens of thousands relocated.
- The flooding has caused **extensive damage, including to dams** that officials fear are on the verge of bursting.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the given statements best describes the "Kafala System"?

- a. A system for monitoring the migrant labourers followed in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.
- b. An informal and illegal method of transferring money without any physical money actually moving.
- c. The common systematic law on the administrative procedure adopted by governments of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- d. Sharia-compliant interest-free banking system.

Answer: a

Explanation:

Kafala System is a system used to monitor migrant labourers, working primarily in the construction and domestic sectors in Gulf Cooperation Council member states and a few neighbouring countries, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The system requires all unskilled labourers to have an in-country sponsor, usually their employer, who is responsible for their visa and legal status.

Q2. Which of the given statements with respect to Nehru-Liaquat Pact is/are correct?

1. It was a bilateral agreement signed between India and Pakistan in 1950.
2. Its aim was to resolve the issue of protection of the minorities.
3. It did not recognise forced conversions in the respective countries.
4. It is also known as the Lahore Declaration.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Nehru-Liaquat Pact (Delhi Pact) was a bilateral agreement signed between India and Pakistan in 1950 to resolve the issue of protection of the minorities in the backdrop of communal violence during the partition.
- It did not recognise forced conversions in the respective countries.

Q3. The unique alder-based Jhum cultivation is practised in which of these states?

- a. Meghalaya
- b. Nagaland
- c. Manipur
- d. Arunachal Pradesh

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Angami tribes from village Khonoma of Kohima district in Nagaland devised Alder based Jhum cultivation which is sustainable and eco-friendly.
- Alder-based Jhum cultivation is unique to Nagaland.

Q4. Which of the given pairs is/are correctly matched?

Missile	Type
1. Akash	Surface to surface
2. Barak-8	Surface to Air
3. ASTRA	Air to Air

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Akash is a medium-range mobile surface-to-air missile system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation.
- Barak 8 is an Indo-Israeli surface-to-air missile (SAM).
- ASTRA is an Indian all weather beyond-visual-range active radar homing air-to-air missile, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation.

Q5. Mycorrhizal biotechnology has been used in rehabilitating degraded sites because mycorrhiza enables the plants to (UPSC 2013)

1. resist drought and increase absorptive area
2. tolerate extremes of PH
3. Resist disease infestation

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Mycorrhiza refers to the role of the fungus in the host plant's root system. It is a symbiotic relationship between the two.
- Mycorrhizal fungi help the host plant to resist drought and increase its absorptive area, tolerate extreme levels of PH in the soil, protects it from root diseases.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India's engagement with the Taliban may or may not achieve much, but non-engagement will definitely hurt Indian interests. Substantiate. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [GS-2, International Relations]
2. Indian cities are not able to withstand extreme rainfall resulting in loss of lives and disruption in economic activities. Discuss the possible causes and suggest an innovative plan to overcome the negative consequences. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-3, Disaster Management]

