

## 06 Aug 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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### B. GS 2 Related

#### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Jaishankar's Tehran trip holds key amid Afghan developments](#)

### Context:

- The **visit of the Indian External Affairs Minister to Tehran** to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

### Background:

#### Strain in India-Iran ties:

- **India had cancelled oil imports from Iran** due to U.S. sanctions.
- There has been very **slow progress in the Chabahar port project** and **Iran has also dropped India from the Port rail link project (Chabahar-Zahedan line).**
- Breaking from its traditional stance, Iran has made **comments on Kashmir** which has not gone down well with India which treats it as an internal issue.

### Significance of the visit:

#### Reset of ties:

- The visit signals the **easing of bilateral tensions between India and Iran.** It could as well mark a milestone in recent attempts by both sides to reset the ties that have been under strain.

#### Fine balancing of India's relations:

- It is also indicative of India's traditional approach to relations with Iran, wherein India has sought to maintain ties with Iran even in the face of opposition from Iran's adversaries, namely the United States, Saudi Arabia and Israel. It will **seek to balance its ties with Iran with that with the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Israel.**
- India will continue to walk its tightrope between its traditional ties with Iran and the growing strategic partnership with Washington.

#### Co-operation on the Afghanistan issue:

- The visits come amidst rapid developments in Afghanistan, with the U.S. completing the pull-out of troops and the **Taliban** increasing its attacks on Afghan cities.
- The developments concern both India and Iran as a Taliban controlled Afghanistan could **pose serious security threats for Iran and India.**
- Also notably India and Iran are the two regional powers that **have been left out of the "Troika plus" meeting** of U.S.-Russia-China and Pakistan scheduled in Doha to discuss Afghanistan's future.
- India and Iran will have to cooperate more closely on Afghanistan to secure their interests.

## 2. 'Britain will not recognise a Taliban govt. that takes power by force'

### Context:

- Excerpts from the interview of U.K.'s Permanent Representative to the UN.

### India-U.K. relations:

- India in recognition of the deepening relationship with the U.K. has awarded it the status of '**Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**'.

Read more on [India – UK relations](#) in the link.

#### U.K. India 2030 Roadmap:

- **Roadmap 2030 for India-UK future relations** was launched during India-UK Virtual Summit in May 2021.
- The 2030 vision is for revitalized and dynamic connections between the people of the two countries; **re-energised trade, investment and technological collaboration**; enhanced **defence and security cooperation** that brings a more secure Indian Ocean Region and Indo-Pacific and **India-UK leadership in climate, clean energy and health**.

#### Co-operation at UN:

- The U.K. has been working closely with India in the [United Nations Security Council](#) on the issues of counterterrorism, maritime security, and peacekeeping.
- The **U.K. supports a permanent seat for India on the Security Council**.

#### On Climate Change:

- Climate action remains a top priority in the U.K.-India relationship.
- **The U.K. is a partner in the Indian-led [International Solar Alliance](#)**.

#### Indo-Pacific strategy:

- The U.K.'s Integrative Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy has indicated a **strong Indo-Pacific 'tilt'**.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Centre moves to redact retrospective tax law

##### Context:

- Union Finance Minister has introduced the **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha** to nullify the retrospective tax clauses that were introduced in 2012.

##### Background:

##### Retrospective tax clause:

- The retrospective tax clauses were introduced in 2012 to **bring past indirect transfer of Indian assets under the ambit of taxation**.
- This provision was invoked against foreign investors such as **Vodafone and Cairn Energy**.
  - Vodafone had in 2007 purchased a 67% stake in Hutchison Whampoa.
  - Cairn Energy had undertaken a corporate reorganisation in 2006-07.

- **Large tax demands** were raised against these companies and upon their failure to pay, their assets were frozen by the Indian authorities.

Read more on the [Cairn Tax Dispute](#) in the linked article.

*Concerns:*

- The retrospective tax and consequent tax demand had been **termed “tax terrorism”** by a few sections and it had become a point of **concern for potential investors**.
- This provision was thought to go **against the principle of tax certainty** and damage India's reputation as an attractive foreign investment destination.

**Steps taken by the affected companies:**

- This move of the Indian government was challenged by the affected companies. Separate **international arbitration tribunal** verdicts in the Vodafone and Cairn cases have ruled against India's retrospective tax demands.
- **Cairn Energy**, which was **awarded \$1.2 billion by an international tribunal**, filed cases in at least ten global jurisdictions, including the U.S., the U.K., Canada and Japan, to seize India's assets in lieu of the award as the government did not abide by the tribunal's decision.
- Cairn Energy has recently secured an order from a French court to freeze India's assets in Paris.

**Details:**

- As per the proposed amendments, any **tax demand made on transactions that took place before May 2012 shall be dropped**, and any taxes already collected shall be repaid, without interest.
- However, to be eligible, the **concerned taxpayers would have to drop all pending cases against the government** and give an undertaking that they would not make any further claims.

**Significance:**

- The new amendment marks the first step towards doing away with the contentious retrospective tax law.
- The proposed change will help **end the spectre of policy uncertainty for potential investors**.
- This would help **restore India's reputation as a fair and predictable regime** apart from helping put an end to unnecessary, prolonged and expensive litigation.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

**Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

**1. India-Nepal flood management needs course correction**

**Context:**

- Floods in Bihar.

### Background:

#### Flood prone Bihar:

- Historically, **Bihar has been known to be India's most flood-prone State.**
- As per the Government of Bihar estimates, around 76% of the population in **north Bihar** faces the recurring threat of flood devastation and **about 73.06% of the land area is flood affected.**
- Bihar has been experiencing an increasing number of floods over the last few years and also the total area affected by floods has increased during these years.

#### Reasons:

##### Geographical reasons:

- A large part of north Bihar, adjoining Nepal's Tarai region, is **drained by a number of rivers** that have their catchments in the steep and geologically nascent Himalayas.
  - About 65% of the catchment area of these rivers falls in Nepal/Tibet and only 35% of the catchment area lies in Bihar.
- These rivers include the Kosi, Gandak, Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla Balan, Mahananda and Adhwara Group.
- The **high discharge and sediment load** in these rivers make them extremely vulnerable to flooding.
- The **deposition of stones, sand, silt and sediment has led to river beds rising and changing their course.**

##### Water management errors:

- The **infrastructural interventions such as building embankments and re-routing streams have disturbed the conventional pattern of slow water flow.** This has led to a faster flow of water leading to a higher potential for damage from the fast-moving water.

##### Indifferent attitude by Nepal:

- **The indifference shown by Nepal on matters of floods and water management** in recent years has added to the risks of flooding in the North Bihar region.
- The **Kosi Treaty of 1954**, under which the embankments in Nepal were established and maintained, does not make enough provisions for the maintenance of embankments.
- Also, the untimely release of water from Nepal has added to India's vulnerability to flooding.

### Concerns:

- The chronic issue of flooding has rendered over five crore people of the north Bihar region in India and Tarai in Nepal vulnerable.
- Despite efforts to mitigate the impact of floods, people continue to suffer from perennial **flooding in north Bihar (the Mithilanchal region).**

- Despite the significant threat posed by flooding, this does not seem to get the attention it deserves by policymakers.

#### Recommendations:

- The annual calamity of floods and their devastating effects on lives and livelihoods **need greater attention among the mainstream political and policy establishments.**
- Apart from the continued emphasis on infrastructure augmentation in the form of dams and reservoirs, detention basins, embankments and channel improvement, **non-structural measures** such as floodplain management, flood forecasting and warning, flood insurance and financial compensation also need to be taken care of adequately.
- There needs to be greater **emphasis on sustainable development.**
- **India and Nepal will need to establish water cooperation as a common cause.** This could take the form of a **dedicated intergovernmental panel** to study, assess and offer solutions to the flooding issue.

### Category: EDUCATION

#### 1. Why are government schools not the first choice?

##### Context:

- In the light of the Patna High Court asking for data on how many IAS and IPS officers have enrolled their wards in government schools, the article analyzes **the state of government schools in India and its impact on education in India.**

##### Background:

##### Government schools in India:

- There are different kinds of government schools in India.
  - The Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and some residential schools run by different State governments are well-resourced, with good infrastructure and good teachers.
  - However, the municipal schools and the government schools run by the different Zilla Panchayats are not always as well resourced.

##### Poor state of government schools:

- Apart from the elite government-run schools, most government schools in India are mainly **characterized by poor infrastructure, lack of well-functioning toilets, drinking water and proper compound walls.**
- **Low Teacher to Pupil Ratio** is a big concern in government schools. Almost half the regular teacher vacancies are filled by guest or ad hoc teachers.
- The **learning outcomes** of children studying in government schools have been generally low.

##### *Contributing factors:*



- **Low public expenditure in the educational sector.**
- **Lack of accountability on the part of teachers** has been a major impediment to the development of government schools in India. That there is no pressure from parents on the quality of education in government schools has led to a severe slide in its quality.
- **Teachers' professional development is a very weak area in government schools.** There is a severe lack of investment in terms of resources or in the planning of institutes.

#### Impact on education:

##### Impact on the children from poor households:

- The public education system is the primary option for millions of students in India especially for children coming from poor families.
  - About **51% of students are in government schools** and nearly 10% in aided schools.
- Also, government schools have become more important as the pandemic takes a toll on the economy, putting fee-charging schools beyond the reach of many and forcing thousands to move to government schools.
- **The poor children who don't have tuition, parents to support them at home, or books are most affected by the poor state of government-run schools.** This leads to 'learning loss' and poor 'learning outcomes'.

##### Gender aspect:

- The lack of adequate capacity at the secondary and higher secondary levels in government schools is a major factor for the **sharp fall in enrolment beyond the primary level, especially in girls.**
- The lack of transportation, location, lack of toilet facilities, etc., may be preventing teenagers, especially girls, from accessing secondary education.

#### Recommendations:

##### Enhancing public investment in the educational sector:

- Government investment in the educational sector needs to be increased.

##### Decentralized approach:

- Instead of the traditional centralized approach, there should be **a micro plan for every school, a larger plan for schools at the district level, and then at the State level.** The local bodies should take the lead in this direction.

##### Ensuring basic facilities:

- Basic facilities like **drinking water, toilet facilities and playgrounds** need to be ensured.
- Improving the infrastructure of government schools will make them more attractive.

##### Teacher development:

- There is a need to create better professional networks for teachers because the best teachers continuously learn from each other. **Sufficient attention needs to be given to the professional development of teachers** as this will be a critical input to improve learning outcomes in children.

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. Earth observation satellite to be launched on Aug. 12

#### Context:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (**ISRO**) will soon launch an **Earth Observation Satellite** from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, at Sriharikota.

#### EOS-03:

- The EOS-03 is a state-of-the-art agile satellite that will enable **real-time monitoring of natural disasters, water bodies, crops, forest cover changes**, among others.
- The satellite will be carried onboard the **GSLV-F10**, and it will be initially placed in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit. The satellite will then reach its final **geostationary orbit** using its onboard propulsion system.

### 2. No plan to house Indian military base on Agalega island: Mauritius

#### **Agalega island:**

- It is a remote **Mauritian island in the south-western Indian Ocean**.
- Agalega, some 12 kilometres long and 1.5 kilometres wide island, is located about 1,100-km from Mauritius' main island.

#### **Chagos island:**

- **The Chagos Archipelago or Chagos Islands is a group of seven atolls** comprising more than 60 islands in the Indian Ocean.
- **The UK had purchased the Chagos Islands from Mauritius**. In 1965 however, U.K. separated the Chagos Islands from Mauritius and set up a **joint military base with the United States on Diego Garcia**, the largest of the isles.

#### Context:

- Amid **reports of an upcoming Indian military base on Agalega**, Mauritius has denied any such agreement between India and Mauritius for a military base.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. HC seeks Centre's response on petition on manual scavenging

- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**, prohibits construction or maintenance of insanitary latrines, and employment of any person for manual scavenging or hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks which could lead to loss of lives due to manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.



- As per the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's own report submitted in February 2021, **more than 340 deaths have been caused due to manual scavenging during the last five years.**

**Context:**

- The Delhi High Court has sought response of the Central government on an application seeking to ensure strict compliance with the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. With reference to EOS-03 satellite, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

- It is the first military communication satellite developed by the ISRO for the Indian defense forces.
- It provides real-time inputs to naval warships, submarines and maritime aircraft and networking capabilities to its naval assets on the high seas.

**Options:**

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both
- None

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- The EOS-03 is a state-of-the-art agile satellite that will enable real-time monitoring of natural disasters, water bodies, crops, forest cover changes, among others.

**Context:**

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will soon launch an Earth Observation Satellite from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, at Sriharikota.

**Q2. Which of the following is/are correctly matched?**

**Islands**

**Country**

- |                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| 1. Assumption Island | Seychelles |
| 2. Agalega Islands   | Maldives   |
| 3. Gaadhoo Island    | Mauritius  |

**Options:**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Agalega Island is a remote Mauritian island in the south-western Indian Ocean.
- Gaadhoo is one of the inhabited islands of Laamu Atoll in the Maldives.

**Q3. Consider the following statements about Surendranath Banerji:**

1. Banerji was the founder of one of India's first political organizations, the Indian National Association.
2. Banerji published the newspaper 'The Bengalee'.
3. Banerji supported the Morley-Minto reforms (1909) but was a critic of the proposed method of civil disobedience advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

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

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3
- d. None

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Banerji was the founder of one of India's first political organizations, the Indian National Association in 1876 in association with Anandmohan Bose.
- Banerji published the newspaper 'The Bengalee'.
- Banerji supported the Morley-Minto reforms in 1909 but was a critic of the proposed method of civil disobedience advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

**Q4. Consider the following pairs:**

**Festivals in News**

**State**

- |                          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|
| 1. Sangai Festival       | Manipur  |
| 2. Behdienkhlam Festival | Mizoram  |
| 3. Hornbill Festival     | Nagaland |

**Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- The most popular festival of the Jaintia tribe, Behdienkhlam is celebrated in the month of July for good health, property and bumper harvest in Meghalaya. Although Behdienkhlam is celebrated all over the Jaintia hills, the main spectacle happens in the town of Jowai.

**Q5. There has been a persistent deficit budget year after year. Which action/actions of the following can be taken by the Government to reduce the deficit? (UPSC-2015)**

- 1. Reducing revenue expenditure
- 2. Introducing new welfare schemes
- 3. Rationalizing subsidies
- 4. Reducing import duty

**Select the correct answer using the code given below.**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Introducing new welfare schemes will entail additional expenditure for the government.
- Reducing import duty will result in the reduction of revenue inflow for the government.
- Hence these two measures will only increase the deficit for the government and not decrease it.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

- 1. Attempts to curb the growth of 'Games of skill', by making it illegal or classifying it as gambling are misdirected. Do you agree? Substantiate. (10 Marks, 250 Words) [GS-2, Polity]
- 2. Floods in Bihar have caused extensive damage. Discuss the possible reasons and suggest structural, non-structural and cooperative measures with Nepal to deal with floods. (15 Marks, 150 Words) [GS-3, Disaster management]