

08 Sep 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: EDUCATION

1. Survey details 'catastrophic' impact of school closure

Context:

- Findings from the '**Emergency Report on School Education**' based on the School Children's Online and Offline Learning (SCHOOL) survey.

Details:

- The report notes the **catastrophic consequences for school students from the prolonged closure of primary and upper primary schools** since the onset of the pandemic.
- Only a small proportion of the school-going population has been able to continue studies online. Thus, the **learning process has been disrupted** to a large extent and this could be **detrimental to the learning outcomes of school education**.
- The impact has been **more severe on the students in rural India**.
 - Only 8% of school students in rural India have been able to access online education, while **at least 37% have stopped studying altogether**. In urban areas around 24% were found to be studying online education regularly.
 - The most important factor has been the **limited reach of online education** owing to the lack of ownership of smartphones, which stands at less than 50% in rural areas. Also, the ownership of smartphones does not guarantee access to online education given the fact that the smartphones are mainly used by working adults who are not always able to share the gadgets with the children at home.
- The survey also found that the **Dalit and Adivasi children were at a greater disadvantage** as a mere 5% of the children from these groups had access to online classes.
- In addition to education, the prolonged school closure has **also affected the level of nutrition among the children in rural schools** where the midday meals have been stopped.

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. More delays on Data Protection Bill

Context:

- The **Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019** has called a meeting to finalise its long-pending report on the bill.

Background:

- The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 seeks to **regulate the use of individual data by the government and private companies** and a **Data Protection Authority** has been envisaged for ensuring the compliance of the law.

For detailed information on the provisions of the bill, refer to the following article:

Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019

Provisions under deliberation:

- The proposed Act states that the Data Protection Authority will take “prompt and appropriate action in response to personal data breach in accordance with the provisions of this Act”. The committee has recommended that the word “personal” be omitted to **enlarge the ambit of the authority to cover personal as well as non-personal data**.
- Also, some members of the committee had moved amendments against the provision in the legislation giving **power to the Central government to exempt any government agency from the application of the Act**.

For more information on concerns regarding the provisions of the bill, refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 12th April 2021](#)

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. ‘Govt. mulls allowing local sales by SEZ units sans import tag’

Context:

- Government measures to support producers in [Special Economic Zones \(SEZs\)](#).

Details:

- The government is considering several proposals to help the producers operating from SEZs.
 - One such proposal is to **allow producers in SEZs to sell their output to the domestic market without treating them as imports**. This will help them widen their market access without having to bear additional duties.
 - The government is also considering the request to **include export-oriented units (EOUs) and SEZs under the recently notified tax refund scheme for exports**.
 - EOU units had not been given benefits under the [Remission of Taxes and Duties on Export Products \(RoDTEP\) scheme](#).

For detailed information on the RoDTEP scheme, refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 18th Aug 2021](#)

- The government would also take appropriate measures to **resolve the massive container shortages and high freight rates** afflicting exports from India. The global markets are extremely price sensitive and even small increases in the selling cost of Indian products could substantially decrease their price competitiveness.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Needed: A tribunal for CAPF

The article talks about the need for a tribunal for [Central Armed Police Forces](#).

Context:

- There have been numerous cases of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officers overstaying leave.
- This has prompted the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to issue orders to the CRPF headquarters to include the provisions of the Security Force Court (SFC) as available in the Acts and Rules of other CAPFs (Central Armed Police Forces).
- This is for initiating disciplinary action against the defaulting officers, so that such cases are finalised within minimum time.

Issues:

- CRPF rules lay down the procedure for the conduct of departmental enquiries against non-gazetted ranks, and the officers are generally well versed with the procedure.
 - As a result, most of the cases that are challenged in the High Courts are upheld.
- In normal circumstances, the departmental enquiries are completed within three to six months.
- However, when gazetted officers are charge-sheeted, the time taken to order the enquiries is longer as other institutions like the Union Public Service Commission, the [Central Vigilance Commission](#), the Department of Personnel and Training, and the MHA are also roped in for their views and legal opinion.
- When personnel overstay their leave for long durations, such officers must be directed to appear before the inquiring authority along with the presenting officer and the defence assistant of the charged official.
 - Even if one of them fails to appear for the hearing, the conduct of enquiry must be postponed.
 - Often, the enquiry is conducted without the presence of the charged official.
 - In such cases, the recorded statements and other documents must be sent to the charged official.
 - Postal delays further aggravate the matter.
 - Since most officers are busy with operational matters, which gain priority over everything else, the enquiries are delayed.
- Additionally, delays occur in providing certain prosecution documents to the charged official who may demand them for preparing his own defence.
- Since most serving officers who are appointed as inquiring authorities are tasked to conduct enquiries in addition to their usual responsibilities, the enquiries are not given due priority.

Way Forward:

- While in the case of non-gazetted ranks, the enquiries are completed within a matter of few months, there can be no reason for undue delay in the case of officers.
- The monitoring system must be very stringent.
- Retired officers must be appointed as inquiring authorities. They can afford to devote their time to the conduct of enquiries.
- The difference between the SFC and the departmental enquiry is that while the SFC is a purely judicial process where the guilt must be proved beyond reasonable doubt and the charged official can engage a legal practitioner to defend him, a departmental enquiry is a quasi-judicial proceeding where the predominance of probability is enough to determine guilt.
- Though the Central Reserve Police Force Act of 1949 provides for conducting judicial trial by a Commandant in his capacity as a Magistrate, it is often not exercised as it gets into the realm of the judicial process. Hence, the conduct of a departmental enquiry is the better option.
- With increasing cases being filed in the High Courts across the country in service matters, it is high time the government considered the setting up of tribunals for the CAPFs on the lines of the [Armed Forces Tribunal](#) for defence services.
- Retired officers of the rank of Inspectors General and Additional Directors General from the CAPFs could be part of these tribunals along with retired judges of High Courts.
- This would ensure speedy delivery of justice and reduce the burden of the High Courts.

Category: HEALTH

1. Nipah amidst a pandemic

Context:

A Nipah virus outbreak has surfaced in Kerala with one confirmed death in Kozhikode.

Read more on this topic covered in [Sep 5th, 2021 CNA](#).

Issue:

- India is still fighting the coronavirus pandemic and now, fears of a [Nipah virus](#) outbreak have surfaced in Kerala. The infection is associated with high fatality.
- Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme shows the diversity of viral or bacterial outbreaks flash by with barely a mention, unless they threaten India's metropolises as outbreaks of dengue, H1N1, chikungunya or malaria sometimes do.
- However, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic draws attention to significant outbreaks that preceded it.

Details:

- Nipah in Kozhikode and Malappuram was the first outbreak that called for quality healthcare.
- Kerala's public health system, earlier commended only for quality primary health care, earned appreciation for its ability to establish links between the infected and their contacts and to isolate them to prevent further spread.

Controlling future viral or bacterial outbreaks:

- Now, there are established protocols at the national level for the three key aspects of a potential pandemic: infection control, treatment and vaccination.
- It is these lessons from the coronavirus pandemic that must inform future outbreaks.
- It had become routine for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, at intervals, to report outbreaks of 'mystery fevers' while they were often easily diagnosable infections.
- India must be heartened that the potential of an outbreak evokes national concern and an anticipatory response, unlike the earlier and purely reactive approach.
- A standardised treatment for Nipah continues to be not available and a spike in cases could spell disaster given the high mortality rate.
- However, some studies suggest that vaccines developed for the coronavirus, if adequately tweaked, may prove effective against the Nipah virus too. Another potential candidate vaccine is in early human trials.
- Vaccination continues to be the best bet against the disease. The quick development of vaccines for tropical infections is a success of the coronavirus era.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Decoding asset monetisation

Context:

The union minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs has launched the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) for Central ministries and public sector entities.

What is National Monetisation Pipeline?

- The NMP is about leasing out 'brownfield' infrastructure assets (such as an already operating inter-State toll highway) under a toll-operate-transfer (TOT) concession agreement.
- In such an arrangement no acquisition of land is involved. Nor does the concessionaire need to take any of the construction risks.
- The process promises to be much simpler and cleaner than what was required in the PPP programme.
- It is also certain to attract a different class of private capital.
- For success under the bidding process of the NMP, what will be required is an operational experience in running a particular class of infrastructure assets and a strong understanding of the potential cash flows generated over the life of the concession. This is certain to attract the largest global pension funds.

This topic has been covered in [Aug 24th, 2021 CNA](#) and [Aug 30th, 2021 CNA](#).

Read more on the challenges and concerns associated with National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) covered in [Aug 27th, 2021 CNA](#) and [Aug 29th, 2021 CNA](#).

2. The economic reforms — looking back to look ahead

Context:

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a debate about fresh thinking and new approaches to managing the economy and the future of humanity.

Details:

- The pandemic has underscored the need for policies to enable resilience in the economy and ensure a robust health system, together with research and development.
- In India, various efforts are underway to enhance economic growth.

History matters in the complex economic system. Therefore, it is important to briefly look at the economic reforms of the last 30 years.

History of Economic Reforms in India:

- Evidence shows that the [economic reforms of 1991](#) and subsequent interjections for liberalisation of the economy and trade have enabled some credible gains for the country.
- Over a period of 30 years, a few indicators have proved to be hallmarks of success. Example:
 - Flourishing foreign exchange reserves
 - Sustained manufacturing contribution in GDP
 - Increased share in global exports (from a mere 0.6% in the early 1990s to 1.8%)
 - Robust information and communication technology software exports
 - Sustained economic growth in the range of 6%-8%.
- The economic reforms, so far, have been more focussed on the technical nature of the economy than the system, process and people.
 - As a result, a few primary drivers of the economy such as human capital, technology readiness, labour productivity, disposable income, capital expenditure, process innovation in setting up businesses, and institutional capacity — have not got enough recognition.

Areas that need attention:

- In the context of a global competitive environment, some basic issues deserve close examination.

Human Capital:

- The human resource capital (HRC) formation is a good determinant of labour productivity.
 - It has been found lacking over the entire period of reforms.
 - The lack of quality education, low skilled manpower and inadequacies in basic health care have resulted in low HRC.
 - As per the Global Human Capital Report, 2017, the HRC rank for India stands at 103; Sri Lanka at 70, China at 34, and South Korea at 27.
- The lack of HRC and low technology readiness have impacted labour productivity adversely.
- In India, labour productivity in manufacturing is less than 10% of the advanced economies including Germany and South Korea, and is about 40% of China, as reflected in a World Bank publication of

2018, The Future of Manufacturing-Led Development. Low productivity has unfavourable consequences for competitiveness, manufacturing growth, exports and economic growth.

Disposable Income:

- As indicated in the World Bank database on GDP for 2019, the low per capita GDP in India has direct links to low per capita family income.
- The Global Manufacturing Competitiveness Index in 2016 (By Deloitte) reflects that the hourly wages in India have been \$1.7; they are \$38, \$24, \$20.7 and \$3.3 for the United States, Japan, South Korea, and China, respectively.
- Low wages have a direct bearing on the disposable income of families and leave little room for the majority of households to have enough disposable income to purchase consumer durables or industrial products. This affects the demand.

Research and development:

- India's R&D expenditure is at 0.8% of GDP, vis-à-vis higher value for other fast-emerging economies such as South Korea (4.5%), China (2.1%) and Taiwan (3.3%).
- This is resulting in lower capacity for innovation in technologies and reduced technology readiness, especially for manufacturing.

Labour productivity:

- The lack of HRC and low technology readiness have impacted labour productivity adversely.
- In India, labour productivity in manufacturing is less than 10% of the advanced economies and is about 40% of China, as reflected in a World Bank publication of 2018, The Future of Manufacturing-Led Development.
- Low productivity has unfavourable consequences for competitiveness, manufacturing growth, exports and economic growth.

Capital Expenditure:

- Due to a lack of capital expenditure and institutional capacity, and inefficiency in business service processes, there are difficulties in acquiring land for businesses, inefficient utilisation of economic infrastructure, and in providing business services, leading to a long time and more cost in setting up enterprises, resulting in a loss of creative energy of entrepreneurs.

These fundamental deficiencies are at the heart of the problem. For years, the economy has been hit internally due to low consumer demand as a result of low household incomes as well as externally on account of lesser competitiveness and inadequacies in integration with global supply chains for trade. A Business as Usual (BAU) approach is resulting in diminishing returns.

Way Forward:

- In order to drive the economy, there needs to be fresh thinking to address the underlying issues comprehensively in an integrated manner.
- The new reforms should be systemic and address structural issues — HRC, skills, research and development (R&D), land management and institutional capacity.

- The focus should be on the quality of business services, technology readiness, labour productivity and per capita income.
- To attract large investment in manufacturing and advanced services, at a basic level, investment in human capital and technology is a prerequisite.
- Industry 4.0 demands enhancing public research and development expenditure to 2% of GDP over the next three years. Consequently, efforts for technology readiness are very essential to stay competitive.
- There is a need to work on strategies to enhance per capita income by more wages for workers through higher skills and enhancing minimum wages, besides improving the social security net.
- Increased cost of labour can be compensated by higher productivity, some tax benefits in the initial period of wage reforms especially for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, besides reducing transaction costs in business and improving infrastructure utilisation efficiency.
- It is necessary to build the capacity of public institutions to create a good environment for business and industry. The process of reforms is equally important.
- The future of the economy should be particularly viewed in the backdrop of a significant and irreversible shift in terms of reliance on global supply.
- Strategies adopted since the 1990s till now may not ensure adequate returns, and call for innovative approaches in public policymaking.
- What is needed is a systemic approach encompassing inter-connected basic factors of the economic system for policy reforms for setting the economic fundamentals right, in order to unlock creativity and innovation in the economic system, raise the total factor productivity (TFP), or a measure of productive efficiency, and to achieve higher growth.

F. Prelims Facts

1. PM urges private sector to help improve quality in govt. Schools

- The recently launched **Vidyanjali 2.0 portal** will help facilitate private donors, corporate social responsibility contributions and volunteering activities towards school education in India. Thus the portal would **help coordinate private contributions for school development**.
- The increased private sector participation will help **increase the quality of education in government schools**.

2. El Salvador adopts bitcoin as legal tender

- **El Salvador became the first country in the world to adopt bitcoin as legal tender.**
- While the adoption of bitcoin as legal tender will help El Salvador lower commission costs for billions of dollars sent home from abroad, the adoption of bitcoin has also raised concerns

G. Tidbits

1. 21.02 lakh unorganised workers registered so far

- According to data on the Labour and Employment Ministry's portal, since its launch, the **government's e-Shram portal** has registered 21 lakh unorganised sector workers.

- The Ministry of Labour and Employment has launched the e-Shram Portal for creating a **National Database of Unorganized Workers (NDUW)**, which will be seeded with Aadhaar.
- It is the **first-ever national database of unorganised workers** including migrant workers, construction workers, gig and platform workers, etc. The registry of unorganised workers would be used to carry out welfare schemes.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Which of the following are the applications of Turmeric?

1. Food colouring agent
2. Flavouring agent
3. Dyeing agent
4. Traditional medicine

Select the correct answer from the code given below:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Turmeric has a warm, bitter taste and is frequently used to flavour or colour curry powders, mustards, butters, and cheeses.
- Turmeric provides a natural dye to colour cloth, leather, silk, palm fibre, wool and cotton.
- Because curcumin and other chemicals in turmeric might decrease swelling, it is often used to treat conditions that involve pain and inflammation. Turmeric is used as a herbal medicine for rheumatoid arthritis, chronic anterior uveitis, conjunctivitis, skin cancer, small pox, chicken pox, wound healing, urinary tract infections, and liver ailments.

Q.2 Which of the following statements are incorrect?

1. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a UN agency mandated to aid and protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people.
2. It was created in 1950 to address the refugee crisis that resulted from World War II.
3. The 1951 Refugee Convention established the scope and legal framework of the agency's work, which initially focused on Europeans uprooted by the war.
4. India is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Options:

- a. 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 4 only
- d. None of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Established in 1950 after the end of WWII, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a UN agency mandated to help and protect refugees, internally displaced and stateless people, and to assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country.
- It was created in 1950 to address the refugee crisis that resulted from World War II.
- The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the key legal documents that form the basis of UNHCR work. With 149 State parties to either or both, they define the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of refugees, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them.
- India is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol and does not have a national refugee protection framework. However, it continues to grant asylum to a large number of refugees from neighbouring States and respects UNHCR's mandate for other nationals, mainly from Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Q.3 Which constitutional provision provides for reservation of seats in Panchayats?

- a. Article 15
- b. Article 239A
- c. Article 243D
- d. Article 280

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Article 243D of the Indian Constitution deals with the reservation of seats in Panchayats.
- It lays down provisions for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women.

Q.4 What does the 'Vidyanjali 2.0 portal' provide for?

- a. Online learning support and study resources to adults and illiterates
- b. Scholarships for Indian students studying in elite universities abroad
- c. Facilitates private donors, CSR contributions and volunteering activities for school development
- d. Creates a platform for teachers to form a community and share best practices

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The recently launched Vidyanjali 2.0 portal will help facilitate private donors, corporate social responsibility contributions and volunteering activities towards school education in India. Thus the portal would help coordinate private contributions for school development.
- The increased private sector participation will help increase the quality of education in government schools.

Q.5 The term 'Base Erosion and Profit Shifting' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of (UPSC-2016)

- a. mining operation by multinational companies in resource-rich but backward areas
- b. curbing of tax evasion by multinational companies
- c. exploitation of genetic resources of a country by multinational companies
- d. lack of consideration of environmental costs in the planning and implementation of developmental projects

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) refers to tax planning strategies used by multinational enterprises that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to avoid paying tax.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Even as India battles the coronavirus pandemic, fears of a Nipah virus outbreak have surfaced again in Kerala. In this context, examine the preventive and containment measures that need to be taken by drawing lessons from the pandemic. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-3, Disaster Management]
2. A law to regulate app store operators is key to check Big Tech's monopolising nature. Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-3, Economy]

Read the previous CNA [here](#).