

# 14 Sep 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. India, U.S. to tie up on green energy

#### Context:

- Official visit of the **U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate** to India for the launch of the Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD).
  - **Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD)** is one of the main tracks of the **U.S.-India Agenda 2030 Partnership**. The U.S.-India Agenda 2030 Partnership was announced at the Leaders Summit on Climate in April 2021.

#### Details:

- Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD) would be based on the following three pillars.
  - **Climate action:** It would consist of joint proposals looking at ways to reduce greenhouse gases emissions in the next decade.
  - **Renewable energy:** It would set out a roadmap to **achieve the 450GW renewable energy target in transportation, buildings and industry**.
  - **Finance:** This would involve collaborating on attracting finance for renewable energy projects. It will focus on delivering climate finances primarily as **grants and concessional finance** as envisaged under the [Paris Agreement](#).

#### Significance of CAFMD:

##### Speed up clean energy transition:

- The United States will collaborate with India to work towards installing 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030 by **helping in bringing finance, technology** and other elements needed to achieve the goal.
- This will help **speed India's clean energy transition**.

##### Raise global climate action:

- The visit of the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate to India is aimed at helping raise global climate ambition with support from the developed countries to developing countries in the form of finance and technology transfer. The CAFMD is a step in this direction.
- A key mission for the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate is to build **global support for 'Net Zero' or carbon neutrality by 2050**.
  - A major theme building ahead of the climate talks is Carbon Neutrality. The goal of carbon neutrality will be critical to ensuring that the earth does not heat up an additional half a degree by 2100 and will be in line with the temperature targets envisaged under the Paris climate agreement.
  - As of now a little over 120 countries have committed, with varying degrees of firmness, to reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. India however has not committed to a 2050 plan for Carbon Neutrality.

For related information on the topic of carbon neutrality, refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 8th Apr 2021](#)

**Additional information:**

- Currently, India's installed power capacity is projected to be 476 GW by 2021-22, and is expected to rise to at least **817 GW by 2030**.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Inflation dips marginally to 5.3% in August

**Context:**

- Inflation figures for the month of August released by the [National Statistical Office \(NSO\)](#).

**Details:**

- India's retail [inflation](#) has witnessed a downward trend with it falling to 5.3% in August from 5.6% in July.
- **Core-CPI inflation has eased** to 5.5% in August 2021 from 5.7% in July.
  - Core-CPI inflation is an inflation measure that excludes transitory or temporary price volatility as in the case of some commodities such as food items, energy products, etc. Core inflation is calculated using the [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\)](#) by excluding such commodities.
- The fall in the inflation rate is being **attributed to the fall in food price and the effect of a high base last August**.
  - CPI inflation was at 6.7% in August 2020, with the Consumer Food Price Index rising 9.05%.

**Significance:**

- This marks the second month of marginal moderation in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), keeping **retail inflation below the central bank's upper tolerance threshold of 6%** after hitting 6.3% in May and June this year.
  - India has set an inflation target of 4 per cent (with the upper tolerance level of 6 per cent and the lower tolerance level of 2 per cent) for the 5-year period April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2026.
  - Inflation control is a legitimate objective of economic policy given the correlation between inflation and macro-economic stability.
- This drop in inflation is a welcome relief given the fact that the RBI has been maintaining an accommodative stance to bring about an economic revival in the post-pandemic phase. The **rising inflation rates had given rise to concerns of stagflation and the lack of further monetary tools to revive growth**.
- Inflation for clothing and footwear has risen to 6.8% in August 2021, which may be a **signal of a demand recovery** in the Indian economy.

**Concerns:**

- Despite a marginal dip in inflation, economists have warned that the **inflationary risks will continue to persist in the Indian economy**. They point out that the comfort level from the lower CPI inflation is not commensurate with the level of decline.
- The inflationary pressure in transport and communication, fuel and light segments could **dampen the fervour for festive spending** which would be critical to economic revival in the post-pandemic phase.
- The pace of **inflation in protein sources (eggs, meat and fish and pulses) and oils** remains a concern. This would dent the **nutritional security of the poor and vulnerable**.

## Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### 1. Climate change could cause 216 mn to migrate: World Bank

#### Context:

- The second part of the **Groundswell report**.

#### Details:

- The report warns that the impact of **slow-onset climate change, such as water scarcity, decreasing crop productivity and rising sea levels**, could lead to millions of “**climate migrants**” by 2050.
  - Under the most pessimistic scenario of climate change, with a high level of emissions and unequal development, the **report forecasts up to 216 million people to leave their homes in the next three decades**.
  - In the most climate-friendly scenario, with a low level of emissions and inclusive, sustainable development, the world could still see 44 million people being forced to leave their homes.
- The report analysed six regions – Latin America; North Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; Eastern Europe and Central Asia; South Asia; and East Asia and the Pacific.
  - **Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most vulnerable region** due to desertification, fragile coastlines and the population’s dependence on agriculture.
  - **North Africa** is predicted to have the largest proportion of climate migrants, with 19 million people moving, equivalent to roughly 9% of its population.
  - **In South Asia, Bangladesh remains the most vulnerable**.
- The findings of the report indicate the potency of climate to induce migration within countries.
- The report also calls for **urgent action to reduce global emissions and bridge the development gap** to reduce the vulnerability of the poor.

#### Additional information:

- Notably, **India is ranked at the 7th position in the [Global Climate Risk Index 2021](#)**. India’s score and position improved in comparison to the 2020 report.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. In Manipur, a case for asymmetric federalism

The article talks about asymmetric federalism and how institutionally accommodating tribal distinctiveness will promote the State's (Manipur) integrity.

#### What is Asymmetrical Federalism?

- Asymmetric federalism or asymmetrical federalism is found in a federation in which different constituent states possess different powers.
- One or more of the sub-states has/have considerably more autonomy than the other sub-states, although they have the same constitutional status.

#### Examples:

- [Article 370](#) that gave Jammu and Kashmir a special constitutional status (which was abrogated in 2019).
- Article 371 which, among others, gives expansive constitutional powers to Nagas over land and resources (Article 371A), and to Manipur's Hill Areas Committee (Article 371C) over tribal identity, culture, development and local administration.

#### Issue:

- Antagonists of asymmetric federalism increasingly rally around the idea of a monolith, homogenous nation.
- As a normative idea and an institutional arrangement that supports the recognition and provision of an expansive 'self-rule' for territorially concentrated minority groups, asymmetric federalism has recently received negative media coverage in India.
- This is driven by the argument that giving distinctive constitutional status to territorially concentrated minorities would promote centrifugal tendencies (moving or tending to move away from a centre).
- It is argued that it would over time inhibit national/state integration, development, and peace.

#### Destabilising Potential of Asymmetric Federalism:

- Charles Tarlton, the American political scientist who developed the idea of asymmetric federalism, was mindful about the destabilising potential it has, if not properly harnessed.
- For instance, the unsuccessful experience of east European communist states to hold together in the 1990s gave rise to deep suspicion about asymmetric federalism.
- The argument that asymmetric federalism fosters subversive institutions, political instability and breakup of States had also informed the minds of some of the founding fathers of the nation, when they participated in India's [Constituent Assembly debates](#).
- For some, the question of envisioning distinctive rights and asymmetric constitutional provisions is considered inconsequential given that India has become a 'homogenous Hindu nation' after Partition.

- Such a majoritarian standpoint sits uneasy with the idea of 'autonomous' district councils proposed by the Gopinath Bordoloi Committee.
  - Gopinath Bordoloi Committee was a sub-committee of the Constituent Assembly that sought to accommodate the distinctive identity, culture and way of life of tribal groups in the Northeast by envisioning self-rule.

#### **An integrationist approach:**

- While members like Jaipal Singh and [B.R. Ambedkar](#) recognised tribal distinctiveness and underscored the need for separate institutional accommodation, Kuladhar Chaliha, a prominent member from Assam, brought in an integrationist approach when he openly advocated assimilation of tribal groups.
- Chaliha reinforced his integrationist push by contending that tribal self-rule would leverage "tribalstan" or "communistan" and would be detrimental to India's territorial integrity and security.
- This integrationist approach has been invoked to delegitimise continuing demand for constitutional asymmetry in Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and in various other places in Northeast India.

#### **Recent Developments in Manipur:**

- The Manipur government recently took steps to:
  - stop the introduction and passage of the Manipur (Hill Areas) Autonomous District Council (Amendment) Bill, 2021, and
  - induct nine Assembly members from the valley areas into the Hill Areas Committee.
- This points towards the Manipur government following the integrationist approach.
- While the Manipur government says that the Bill is a sensitive matter requiring legal approval by the Department of Law and Advocate General of the State, the Speaker's order to induct nine Assembly members from the valley areas is seen as a direct assault on the Hill Areas Committee and the constitutional protection accorded to the Hill Areas of Manipur under Article 371C. It amounted to a transgression of a domain exclusively reserved for the [President of India](#) under the Manipur Legislative Assembly (Hill Areas Committee) Order, 1972.
- This project is increasingly seen as the majoritarian state's attempt to transgress and snatch away tribal lands through legal manipulation and sacralisation projects.

#### **Conclusion:**

- The attempt to increase membership of the six district councils to 31 members each and secure more powers to the councils by giving more developmental mandate is welcome.
- However, the reservation of one-fourth of the seats to socio-economically backward communities may complicate the delimitation of constituencies.
- Besides, reserving merely three nominated members for unrepresented tribes/women is also simply not enough.
- How the Hill Areas Committee and various tribal groups strategically navigate their politics to offset the majoritarian impulse to manipulate the legal and political process to dilute the existing constitutional asymmetry remains to be seen.

- There is a lack of sincere commitment to promote tribal development, identity and culture that Article 371C seeks to bridge.
- Recognising and institutionally accommodating tribal distinctiveness not just as a matter of political convenience, but as a valuable and enduring good will be key to promote the State's integrity, stability and peace in the long run.

## 2. Archakas of all hues

### Context:

In a historic decision, the Tamil Nadu government appointed several non-Brahmin priests to perform rituals in Vedic temples. 24 trained archakas (priests) were appointed in temples across the State which come under the control of the Department of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE).

### Issue:

- Calls to water down the scope and authority of the HR&CE Act have not stopped.
- In recent years, there has been a campaign seeking to liberate temples from the clutches of government.
- A series of writ petitions have been filed before the Madras High Court condemning these recent appointments.

### State and temple:

- The Tamil Nadu HR&CE Act, 1959, is the governing law on the administration of Hindu temples and religious institutions.
- In 1971, Section 55 of the HR&CE Act was amended to abolish hereditary priesthood.
- In 2006, the amendment provided for the appointment of trained Hindus irrespective of their caste as priests to Hindu temples by the government.
- Both the amendments were challenged in the Supreme Court (SC). But the SC upheld the law, as amended.
- Various challenges have been made in the court over a period of time with respect to the HR&CE Act.
  - In *Seshammal v. Union* (1972), the SC observed that the amendment to the HR&CE Act abolishing hereditary priesthood did not mean that the government intended to bring about any change in the rituals and ceremonies.
  - In *Adi Saiva Sivachariyargal v. Govt. of Tamil Nadu* (2015), SC observed that the constitutional legitimacy, naturally, must supersede all religious beliefs or practices. The Court further went on to state that appointments should be tested on a case-by-case basis and any appointment that is not in line with the Agamas will be against the constitutional freedoms enshrined under [Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution](#).
    - *The Agamas are a collection of several Tantric literature and scriptures of Hindu schools.*

- Articles 25 & 26 protect **only those practices that are essential and integral to that religion**. The **State can regulate secular or temporal matters associated with religion** but **not essential religious practices**.
- Also, the court has consistently held that any contention of violation of Agamas must be tested on a case-by-case basis.

### Evolving jurisprudence:

- The evolution of rights-based jurisprudence over the last three years is of relevance.
- In *Indian Young Lawyers' Association v. State of Kerala (the Sabarimala case)* and *Joseph Shine v. Union of India (2018)*, the Supreme Court reiterated the need to eliminate:
  - historical discrimination which has pervaded certain identities,
  - systemic discrimination against disadvantaged groups
  - and rejected stereotypical notions used to justify such discrimination.
- In all these cases, the Court prioritised judicial balancing of various constitutional rights.
- In the [Sabarimala case](#), it made it clear that though the Constitution protects religious freedom and consequent rights and practices essential to religion, the Supreme Court will be guided by the pursuit to uphold the values of the Constitution based on dignity, liberty and equality.

### Way Forward:

- The Supreme Court, in *Navej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)*, interpreted Article 15 as being wide, progressive and intersectional.
  - The Court explained the intersectional nature of sex discrimination.
  - These multiple layers of discrimination combine and increase the vulnerability of women.
- While most of the debate at present is around whether men from all caste groups can become archakas, gender bias inherent in these discussions have not been recognised.
- The present cases before the Madras High Court provide an opportunity to delve into questions such as why women and trans persons should not be appointed as archakas.
- At once, caste orthodoxy and patriarchy ingrained within the HR&CE Act can be eliminated and replaced with a vision of a just, equal and dignified society.

### Conclusion:

The constitutional courts will now be called upon to build on the gains of the Sabarimala case when it comes to the administration of temples, insofar as it concerns matters that are not essentially religious. While doing so, they must be guided by principles of constitutional morality and substantive equality.

## **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **1. Talking amid conflict**

#### Issue:

Ties between China and the US have been strained over the past five years by a bruising trade war launched by former U.S President Donald Trump.



- Relations between the world's two biggest powers have been in a state of free fall despite the change in administration in Washington.
- The longstanding resentment continues even after meetings between top officials, in Alaska and then in Tianjin.

#### **Recent Development:**

- Recently, the presidents of both countries engaged in a conversation with a view to resolve the perilous state of ties.
- The Biden administration's broader approach is competing with China where required but cooperating where possible.
  - As a part of this, the U.S. has sought Chinese cooperation in Afghanistan after its disastrous exit and also on climate change.

#### **Concerns:**

- While Mr. Biden wanted to ensure competition does not veer into conflict, Mr. Xi agreed both sides needed to "get the relationship right", but underlined the repeated Chinese view that the troubles were due to the U.S. policy on China.
- Also, both sides have clashed on issues including human rights in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South China Sea actions.
- The contentious inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 has also been a topic of clash between the countries.

#### **China's Stand:**

- China has made clear that it seeks concessions on some of the thorny issues before it will agree to discuss working together on others.
- In the July 2021 talks in Tianjin, Chinese officials presented two "lists" of demands to the U.S., including:
  - unconditionally revoking visa restrictions on Communist Party members.
  - withdrawing an extradition request for Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of tech firm Huawei who is on trial in Canada.
  - changing its stance on the COVID-19 inquiry, where the US has led calls for a more transparent investigation.

#### **Way Forward:**

- With the U.S. unlikely to agree to China's preconditions, the present state of relations is likely to continue.
- If the Chinese argument is that it is unrealistic to insulate points of discord from a broader relationship with the US, it is notable that Beijing's officials have rejected that precise argument with regard to India, when India said cooperation on trade and other fronts cannot continue while the Line of Actual Control (LAC) remains in crisis.

- If cooperating while in conflict appears an unreasonable proposition for China when it comes to ties with the U.S., it is inappropriate for it to expect India to take a very different stand on bilateral relations.

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

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. Braving all odds for a trek to Siachen

- A team of eight persons with disabilities created a new world record for the largest number of people with disabilities to scale the **world's highest battlefield, Siachen Glacier**.
- This is the land world record expedition part of **Operation Blue Freedom** being undertaken by CLAW Global.
- The team with disabilities was trained and led by **CLAW Global**, a team of Special Forces veterans who had left the service due to disabilities.
  - CLAW Global was set up in January 2019 with the aim of teaching life skills to adventurers and people with disabilities.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. Israeli firm unveils armed robot to patrol borders

- State-owned Israel Aerospace Industries has unveiled a **four-wheel-drive remote-controlled armed robot- "REX MKII"** which is capable of patrolling battle zones, tracking infiltrators and opening fire.
- The unmanned vehicle is the latest addition to the world of **drone technology**, which is rapidly reshaping the modern battlefield.
- While proponents argue that such semi-autonomous machines would **allow armies to protect their soldiers**, critics fear this marks another dangerous step toward **robots making life-or-death decisions**. They fear that any **radio frequency interference, resulting in loss of control could lead to unnecessary fatalities**.

### 2. Return to fiscal rectitude a must: Singh

- **15th Finance Commission Chairman N.K. Singh** has stated that India should take credible steps to **return to the path of fiscal rectitude** once the COVID pandemic is over.
  - Fiscal rectitude is when a government works responsibly to keep the [fiscal deficit](#) under control by handling taxes and revenues well, spending money cautiously and sensibly in various departmental funds and in any other possible way.
- This statement comes **amid calls for more fiscal stimulus** and concerns over India's current debt profile and fiscal deficit figures.
  - The high **debt-to-GDP ratio of around 90 per cent** has been flagged by various rating agencies.

- India's fiscal deficit in 2020-21 fiscal stood at 9.3 per cent of GDP while the target set was 3.5 per cent of GDP. The Budget has pegged fiscal deficit at 6.8 per cent for the current fiscal.
  - As per the glide path for fiscal consolidation announced in [Budget 2021-22](#), the government plans to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025-26 fiscal.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. With reference to Siachen Glacier, which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

1. Siachen Glacier is located in the eastern Karakoram Range in the Himalayas.
2. It is the longest glacier in the world's non-polar areas.
3. Operation Vijay was the codename for the Indian Armed Forces' operation to seize control of the Siachen Glacier.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Siachen Glacier is located in the Eastern Karakoram range in the Himalayas, just northeast of Point NJ9842 where the Line of Control between India and Pakistan ends.
- It is the second-longest glacier in the world's non-polar areas.
- Operation Meghdoot was the codename for the Indian Armed Forces' operation to seize control of the Siachen Glacier.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Office of Economic Advisor (OEA), Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry calculates the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
2. The Base Year of the CPI is 2012.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Consumer Price Index (CPI) in India comprises multiple series classified based on different economic groups. There are four series, viz the CPI UNME (Urban Non-Manual Employee), CPI AL (Agricultural Labourer), CPI RL (Rural Labourer) and CPI IW (Industrial Worker). While the CPI UNME series is published by the Central Statistical Organisation, the others are published by the Department of Labour.

### Types of CPI

<b>CPI for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It tries to measure the alterations over a time period on the prices of a fixed basket of goods and services utilised by Industrial Workers.</li> <li>• The target group would be an average working-class family from any of these seven sectors of the economy ranging from factories, mines, plantation, motor transport, port, railways to electricity generation and distribution.</li> <li>• Compiled by the Labour Bureau.</li> </ul>
<b>CPI for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Labour Bureau compiles this data to revise minimum wages for agricultural labour in different States.</li> </ul>
<b>CPI for Rural Labourer (CPI-RL)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also compiled by the Labour Bureau.</li> </ul>
<b>CPI ( Urban Non-Manual Employees) (CPI-UNME)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>Central Statistics Office (CSO)</i> which is now the <i>National Statistical Office (NSO)</i> compiles this data</li> </ul> <p>CSO is under the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation</p>

- The Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has revised the Base Year of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from 2010 to 2012 with effect from the month of January 2015.

Q3. Which of the following statements about SVAMITVA Scheme is/are incorrect?

1. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
2. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for creating accurate land records.

Options:

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) scheme is a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- The scheme is a reformative step towards the establishment of clear ownership of property in rural inhabited (Abadi) areas, by mapping of land parcels using drone technology and providing 'Record of Rights' to village household owners with the issuance of legal ownership cards (Property cards/Title deeds) to the property owners.

**Q4. Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD) recently seen in news, was launched by India and**

- a. UK
- b. France
- c. Germany
- d. USA

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- The Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD) which is one of the main tracks of the U.S.-India Agenda 2030 Partnership, was initiated during the recently concluded official visit of the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate to India.
- Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD) would be based on the following three pillars.
  - Climate action: It would consist of joint proposals looking at ways to reduce greenhouse gases emissions in the next decade.
  - Renewable energy: It would set out a roadmap to achieve the 450GW renewable energy target in transportation, buildings and industry.
  - Finance: This would involve collaborating on attracting finance for renewable energy projects. It will focus on delivering climate finances primarily as grants and concessional finance as envisaged under the Paris Agreement.

**Q5. Who of the following founded a new city on the south bank of a tributary to river Krishna and undertook to rule his new kingdom as the agent of a deity to whom all the land south of the river Krishna was supposed to belong? (UPSC- 2015)**

- a. Amoghavarsha I
- b. Ballala II
- c. Harihara I
- d. Prataparudra II

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Harihara I was the founder of the Vijayanagara Empire.
- He founded a new city on the south bank of a tributary to river Krishna and undertook to rule his new kingdom as the agent of a deity to whom all the land south of the river Krishna was supposed to belong.
- He initially established his control over the valley of Tungabhadra River and gradually he expanded his control to certain regions of Konkan and Malabar Coast.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. What do you understand by Asymmetric Federalism? How is it different from Symmetric federalism? Discuss the significance of Asymmetric Federalism in India. (15 Marks, 250 Words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]
2. Essential Religious Practices doctrine allows the State to intervene in matters of religion without infringing the principle of state neutrality in religious affairs. Substantiate. (15 Marks, 250 Words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]