

# 16 Sep 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. SC gives Centre two weeks to fill all tribunal vacancies

##### Context:

- The Supreme Court has chastised the Central government for the **long delays in making appointments for the various tribunals in India** and warned it of initiating contempt proceedings against it.

##### Background:

##### Large vacancies in tribunals:

- The various tribunals in India are **suffering from a huge backlog of cases being mainly attributable to the long-pending vacancies in them.**
- Over 240 vacancies remain in key tribunals like the National Green Tribunal, Income Tax Appellate Tribunal and Central Administrative Tribunal among others with some tribunals even lacking presiding officers.
- The large vacancies have made the tribunals ineffective and redundant.

For more related information on this issue, refer to the following article:

[SC asks govt. if it wants tribunals closed from UPSC CNA of 7th Aug 2021](#)

##### Details:

- Noting the pitiable state of tribunals and state of litigants waiting for justice from the severely under-resourced tribunals, the Special Bench of the Supreme Court has given the government a **two-week deadline to make appointments to all the tribunals.**
- The bench also observed how the **recommendations to the tribunals by the selection committees have been largely ignored** by the government and it has been “cherry-picking” names for appointments to tribunals even from the waitlist overlooking the names from the final ‘select’ list. **This practice, the CJI noted, goes against the democratic principles of working under a rule of law.**
  - The **search-cum-selection committees, headed by sitting Supreme Court judges** are tasked with interviewing and short-listing suitable candidates for tribunals.

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. U.S., U.K., Australia form new partnership

##### Context:

- The U.S. has announced a **new trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific between Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. (AUKUS).**

##### Background:

#### Recent developments:

- **Australia has felt increasing pressure from an assertive China.** In order to balance this threat, Australia has been trying to strengthen its partnerships with India, the U.S. and the U.K to **strategically balance out China**.
- The **U.S. too has been shifting its focus to the Indo-Pacific region** given the potential of the region and also the increasing assertiveness of the Chinese whom it considers a challenger to its global dominance. In this regard, it has been focussing on strengthening bilateral partnerships with its traditional partners in Asia like Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and new partners like India and Vietnam. It has also been promoting **new formations like the Quad**.
- The U.K. has expressed its vision to engage more deeply with the Indo-Pacific.

#### Details:

- An important aspect of this partnership would involve a trilateral **18-month effort to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines**.
  - Nuclear powered submarines can be deployed for longer periods and need to surface less frequently. They have longer ranges and are more capable compared to the conventional diesel-electric submarines.
- The partnership would also involve a **new architecture of meetings and engagements** between the three countries and also **cooperation across emerging technologies** like AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities.
- **This trilateral grouping would be security-focused**, implying that it would be different from — but complementary to — arrangements such as the Quad.
- The U.S. has announced that the new partnership is aimed at **advancing strategic interests** and upholding the international rules-based order, and promoting peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Lifeline for telcos as govt. offers four-year moratorium on dues

##### Context:

- The Cabinet has approved several **measures for the telecom companies**.

##### Background:

##### Stress in the Indian telecom sector:

- The telecom sector in India has been struggling for many years.
  - The regime of penalty and interest on payment of licence fees, spectrum user charges had **adversely impacted the financial viability of the telecom companies**.
  - The **Supreme Court judgment on the adjusted gross revenue (AGR) issue** had made telcos liable to pay Rs.1.6 lakh crore to the government.

- There is a growing concern over the **telecom industry being reduced to a duopoly**. This would bring with it the attendant consequences for customers, like reduced choices and likely higher costs.

For information on this issue, refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 18th Feb 2020](#)

**Details:**

- The new reforms include nine **structural reforms** and five **procedural reforms** for the sector. Some of the major provisions include the following.
  - The much-litigated concept of **adjusted gross revenue (AGR)** has been redefined to **exclude non-telecom revenue** and all remaining penalties have been scrapped.
  - The government has also offered a **four-year moratorium on players' dues to the government**.
  - The regime of penalty and interest on penalty has been rationalised. Interest on dues has been maintained at a 'reasonable' rate.
  - **Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector has also been allowed up to 100% under the automatic route**, from the existing limit of 49%.
  - There would be a **fixed calendar for spectrum auctions** with an extended tenure of 30 years for future spectrum allocations, and a mechanism to surrender and share spectrum.
  - **No Spectrum Usage Charge (SUC) for spectrum acquired in future spectrum auctions.**

**Significance:**

- The new reforms will go a long way in addressing the telecom industry's long-standing issues like spectrum auctioning and the AGR issue.
- The new reforms will help **extend a much-needed lifeline to the cash-strapped telecom sector**.
  - The new measures will **provide cash flow relief** and help **improve the cash liquidity scenario** of the telecom companies.
  - The moratorium of four years would ease out the stress on the cash flows of the telcos to a great extent and give enough time for the industry to carry out fundamental improvements.
- The easing of liquidity issues in telecom companies will **also help various banks having substantial exposure to the telecom sector**.
- The new measures will also **help attract large scale investments, including for 5G technology deployment**.
- The measures announced will also help **generate more jobs in the Indian economy**.
- Telecom reforms will **boost competition and consumer interests**.
- The telecom sector remains one of the prime movers of the economy and the measures announced by the government would **enable the industry to achieve the goals of Digital India**.

**Lacunae:**

- Some experts have expressed doubts on whether the package would be enough to revive the telecom sector as the moratorium on AGR dues, spectrum dues and interest payments would **only provide temporary relief** with these deferred dues to be payable eventually with interest.
- Other **significant areas like the tariff regime have not been addressed** in the new reform measures announced.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Hardly the India-China century Deng envisioned

##### Context:

Fifteen months after the India-China stand-off at the Galwan Valley, the relations between the two countries are at their lowest.

##### Details:

- There have always been political tensions between the two countries over:
  - each country's territorial claims over land controlled by the other
  - such long-term problems as China's "all-weather" alliance with Pakistan
  - hospitality to the Dalai Lama, who was granted refuge in India as he fled Tibet in 1959
- But neither country had allowed these tensions to overwhelm them.
- China had declared that the border dispute could be left to future generations to resolve, and India had endorsed the One China policy, refusing to support Tibetan secessionism while limiting official reverence for the Dalai Lama to his status as a spiritual leader.

##### Trade Relations:

- India has always made an effort to relegate the border problem to enable trade relations with China to flourish. The bilateral trade is now worth close to \$100 billion.
- India has also made it clear that it was unwilling to join in any United States-led containment of China.
- Ironically, prior to the Galwan stand-off, 2020 was supposed to be a landmark year for the two countries' bilateral relations.
  - In October 2019 in Mahabalipuram, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had pledged to take bilateral relations to greater heights.
  - To mark the 70th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries, they announced they would conduct 70 joint activities, including further improving their growing trade, supporting scholarly research into their ancient civilizational links, and even exchanging military delegations, in a grand show of Sino-Indian cooperation.

- Both the countries had indeed developed multiple avenues of engagement. China had grown to become one of India's largest trading relationships.
- Indian Prime Minister had lifted residual restrictions on bilateral Chinese investment in strategic sectors of the Indian economy (notably ports, airports, power generation and telecoms technology), so that by 2020, Chinese investment (current and planned) stood at about \$26 billion with infrastructure projects accounting for about half the total.

#### **Multilateral Forums:**

- India engages with China diplomatically in the [BRICS](#) (an association of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), as well as conducting annual summits of RIC (Russia-India-China).
- India is an enthusiastic partner in the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the [New Development Bank \(NDB\)](#).

#### **Concerns:**

- The People's Liberation Army has used the situation to repeatedly undertake minor military incursions, inflict small-scale military setbacks on India, take a few square kilometres of territory along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) for local tactical purposes, and then declare peace.
- Mutual disengagements are duly announced, both sides claim the crisis is over, but China establishes and fortifies its new deployment.
- These mini-crises always end with the Chinese in a better position on the ground than before with each incident establishing a new normal on the LAC.

#### **The Chinese strategy:**

- In the Galwan clash, the Chinese troops seem to have been engaged in a tactical move to advance their positions along areas of the LAC that it desires, in order to threaten Indian positions and prohibit patrols.
- China's strategy seems to be to consolidate the LAC where it wants it, so that an eventual border settlement that takes these new realities into account will be in its favour.
- After the recent incursions, the Chinese now reportedly control over 900 square kilometres of area in Ladakh along the LAC.
  - Rather than merely patrolling, they have established a fixed presence in these areas well beyond China's own 'Claim Line'.
  - Occupied the Finger Heights near Pangong Tso Lake.
  - Pitched hundreds of tents, constructed concrete structures and built additional kilometres of road along the LAC.
- The objective seems to be to extend Chinese troop presence to the intersection of the Galwan river and the Shyok river, which would make the Galwan Valley off bounds to India.
- The Chinese have constructed permanent structures in the area of their intrusion and issued statements claiming that sovereignty over the Galwan valley has always belonged to China.

#### **India's options:**



- India has reinforced its military assets on the LAC to prevent deeper incursions and hopes to press China to restore the status quo ante through either diplomatic or military means.
  - Chinese and Indian officials are currently engaged in diplomatic and military-to-military dialogue to ease tensions, but de-escalation has been stalled for months.
- India has responded with largely symbolic acts of economic retaliation, banning Chinese apps in India on grounds of data security.
- It is likely that Chinese companies will be barred from various lucrative opportunities in the vast Indian market.
  - Huawei and ZTE have already been barred from the ongoing trials to build India's 5G telecom infrastructure.
- India has also reimposed tighter limits on Chinese investment in projects such as railways, motorways, public-sector construction projects, and telecoms.
- Yet, India is far too dependent on China for other vital imports such as pharmaceuticals, active ingredients to make them, automotive parts and microchips, all needed by Indian manufacturers.
  - India's dependence on China for its non-consumption economy remains high.
  - Imports from China have become indispensable for India's exports to the rest of the world.
  - Various manufacturing inputs, industrial equipment and components, and even some technological know-how come from China; eliminating them could have a seriously negative effect on India's economic growth.
- There are limits to the effectiveness of any Indian retaliation: trade with China may seem substantial from an Indian perspective, but it only represents 3% of China's exports.

#### **Way Forward:**

This range of considerations seems to leave only two strategic options for India.

- Reconciling itself to playing second to an assertive China in the region.
- Seeking strength and leverage by aligning itself with a broader international coalition against Chinese ambitions.

Also read: [India – China relations](#)

## **Category: EDUCATION**

### **1. TN's case against NEET**

#### **Context:**

- Tamil Nadu Assembly has passed a bill exempting the State from the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate (UG) medical courses and also to prescribe its own admission method for MBBS seats.
- The bill requires presidential assent to become a law.

#### **Background:**

- A similar attempt by the previous government in 2017 was not successful as the Bills sent by the State were returned by the President of India without getting his assent.
- When the Tamil Nadu government issued an order in 2017 providing for the reservation of 85% of the seats for students passed out from the State board and 15% for students from other boards, it was struck down by the Madras High Court.
- An appeal by the State to the Division Bench was also rejected.

#### **A.K Rajan Committee:**

- Before passing the Bill in its current form, the Tamil Nadu government had appointed a committee of experts under Justice A.K. Rajan, a retired Madras High Court judge, to look into the question of the desirability of having the examination as a prerequisite for MBBS admissions.
- The committee was to look into the effects of the examination on the students in the State.
- After having ascertained the views of all the stakeholders, it highlighted that a majority were not in favour of the NEET requirement. However, it did not recommend any legislation.
- It was of the opinion that the examination had not provided any special mechanism for testing the knowledge and aptitude of the students.
- It suggested that the higher secondary examination of the State board itself was an ample basis for the selection of students for MBBS seats.
- It opined that NEET only worked against underprivileged government school students, and had profited coaching centres and affluent students.

#### **Details:**

- The present Bill proceeds on the assumption that medical college admissions fall in the Concurrent List.
- However, the requirement of NEET being a basic requirement for PG and UG medical courses has now been statutorily incorporated under Section 10D of the Indian Medical Council (IMC) Act.
- The question is not whether the State government can amend a law falling under the Concurrent List. The question is whether the State government can exempt Section 10D of the IMC Act, which is a parliamentary law that falls under the Central List (Entry 66). Moreover, the Supreme Court has also upheld NEET as a requirement.

#### **Issue:**

- It is also significant that no other State in India has sought an exemption from NEET and, therefore, exempting Tamil Nadu alone may not be possible.
- Even among the seats allotted to the State, there is no bar for students from other States from competing or selecting colleges in Tamil Nadu.
  - Also, there is no clarity on what would happen to the all-India quota of 15%, which will be filled up by students who write NEET, and what will happen to Tamil Nadu students who do not write the examination.



- The introduction of internal reservations for government school students is under challenge before the Madras High Court. Similarly, NEET as a requirement is also pending in the Supreme Court. Unless these two issues are decided, NEET cannot be removed by a State amendment.

#### **Way Forward:**

- Tamil Nadu has invested heavily in medical education infrastructure aimed to afford easy access to all sections. This has so far preserved the efficiency of its healthcare system.
- The time may also have come to examine whether NEET has met its purposes of improving standards and curbing commercialisation and profiteering.
- Under present norms, one quite low on the merit rank can still buy a medical seat in a private college, while those ranked higher but only good enough to get a government quota seat in a private institution can be priced out of the system.
- The Centre must conceive a better system that will allow a fair admission process while preserving merit and preventing rampant commercialisation.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Mere statistics stating a majority of the stakeholders do not want NEET in Tamil Nadu cannot form the basis for exempting the examination that was introduced by a Central law.
- Data is required only when there is the power to legislate on the subject concerned.
- The Bill would become an Act only after the President's nod and would come into effect only from the next academic year (if the assent is given).
  - Such assent is required as the proposed State law is in conflict with the parliamentary legislation regulating medical admissions.
- Till the courts determine the legality and have a definite solution to the question of medical admissions, students who wrote NEET will fill the seats under the State quota.

## **2. NEP schools: the future**

The pandemic has helped India realise the need for foundational literacy, preventing dropouts, to overcome the digital divide. The article talks about the shift in the physical mode of education to the online mode, facilitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Details:**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has been the greatest disruptor in the education sector bringing future (use of digital technologies in education) sooner than ever imagined.
- Learners are now exposed to a huge variety of innovative content or digital formats of education in their own languages.
- With the shift, the essential role of schools and teachers ensuring the mental/physical/cognitive development of a child has been permanently established.
- The schools of the future and the future of schooling are now both subject to intense debate, in the backdrop of the [National Education Policy 2020](#). But certain broad understandings have emerged that most agree upon.

- There is already a discernible shift in the focus from physical infrastructure towards digital and virtual requirements.
- Skill-building for the requirements of the 21st century has assumed great significance.
- Accelerated and differentiated instructional interventions will be required to overcome and reverse the impact of the pandemic.
- It is likely that there will be more pressure on the government schooling system to expand its intake.
- Students of the future will have to struggle with the new set of capabilities needed, hyper-information becoming disinformation, virtual teams not seeing each other physically, and will constantly experience a swing between super speciality and cross-disciplinary skills.

#### **Qualities that are likely to define the schools of the future:**

- Schools will encourage extended networks rather than remain as closed classroom communities.
  - Future schools will take teaching-learning to informal settings such as topic circles, eco clubs, visits to the neighbourhood, museums or scientific laboratories, etc.
- Schools will be proactive innovators.
  - They will adopt innovative pedagogies and differentiated instructions as per the needs of the learners to enable them to become knowledge creators and job creators.
- Future schools will promote innovation.
  - They will utilise innovative methods of assessment to bring out the unique potential of every child, harness innovative technologies for teaching, learning and administration, and bring about a culture of innovation.
- Future schools will be future-oriented and connected to the job market.
  - They must be capable of empowering and building the skills of learners for jobs that are yet to be created and technologies that are yet to be invented.
- The future schools will forge stronger and more trusting engagement with families and communities.

The future depends on the decisions made in the present. And the future of the country is enrolled in schools today. Future schools must be designed to build the character of the children and set them free to discover the world, shape it and contribute to make it just and equitable.

## **F. Prelims Facts**

### **1. Indian troops in Russia as part of SCO exercise**

#### **Exercise Peaceful Mission:**

- The Exercise is being held between the **member-states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Russia** in the Orenburg region.
- This is **the sixth edition** of the military exercise.
- The **joint counter-terrorism exercise** 'Peaceful Mission' is a multilateral exercise, which is conducted biennially as **part of military diplomacy** between Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states.

## 2. Welcome, Oreo

### Humboldt penguins:

- The Humboldt penguin is a **South American penguin** living mainly in the Humboldt National Reserve in the North of Chile, although its habitat comprises most of coastal Peru.
- In South America, the Humboldt penguin is **found only along the Pacific coast**.
- Humboldt penguins are **medium-sized penguins**.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. Declare offering cash in manifestos as corrupt: plea

- The Delhi High Court while hearing a **petition seeking to declare an offer of cash transfer in manifestos as a corrupt electoral practice** has asked the Election Commission to take action against political parties who are in violation of its guidelines on corrupt practices.

### 2. Debt of households surged between 2012 and '18: NSO

- The All India Debt & Investment Survey conducted by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** notes that the **number of indebted households has risen sharply in rural India**, with the average debt shooting up by 84% between 2012 and 2018.
- Notably, the urban households' average debt increased by 42% in the same period.
- This is indicative of the **significant economic impact of the COVID pandemic on households**.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following statements about Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) is/are correct?

1. It is a sub component of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj
2. Any Rural poor who is willing to be entrepreneurial and self reliant is eligible to be part of this programme.

### Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) is implemented by Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana –National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development, as a sub-scheme since 2016.
- With an objective to support the rural poor come out of poverty, supporting them set up enterprises and provide support till the enterprises stabilize, SVEP focusses on providing self-employment opportunities with financial assistance and training in business management and soft skills while creating local community cadres for promotion of enterprises.
- SVEP addresses three major pillars of rural start-ups namely – finances, incubation and skill ecosystems.
- Any rural poor who is willing to be entrepreneurial and self-reliant is eligible to be part of this programme.

**Q2. Consider the following statements about Geological Survey of India (GSI):**

1. It is headquartered in Mumbai.
2. It is an attached office to the Ministry of Mines.
3. Geological Survey of India has been the sole custodian for all meteorite “falls” or “finds” within Indian Territory.

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

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Geological Survey of India was founded in 1851 by the East India Company. Currently, it functions as an attached office to the Ministry of Mines.
- It is headquartered in Kolkata, West Bengal.
- Geological Survey of India has been the sole custodian for all meteorite “falls” or “finds” within Indian Territory.
- Know more about the Geological Survey of India in [PIB dated Jan 21, 2020](#).

**Q3. With reference to Gold Monetization Scheme, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. All Scheduled Commercial Banks excluding RRBs will be eligible to implement the Scheme.
2. Earnings under the Gold Monetisation Scheme are exempt from capital gains tax and income tax.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Investors can make term deposits of their idle gold under Gold Monetization Scheme (GMS), which provides them safety and interest earnings. With gold deposited in GMS, investors save the storage cost for keeping their precious metal safe, while still benefiting from its capital appreciation. Gold can be deposited in any form — gold bars, coins or jewellery, and the depositor also has the option to either take cash or gold on redemption. Another lucrative benefit comes with interest earned on the gold deposited by investors being exempt from capital gains tax and income tax.
- In the case of medium and long-term deposits, investors can earn up to 2.25 per cent per annum.
- All Scheduled Commercial Banks excluding RRBs will be eligible to implement the Scheme.
- The objective of the Scheme is to mobilise gold held by households and institutions of the country and facilitate its use for productive purposes, and in the long run, to reduce the country's reliance on the import of gold.

**Q4. Exercise PEACEFUL MISSION is a joint military exercise conducted by**

- a. BIMSTEC
- b. Commonwealth Countries
- c. NATO
- d. SCO

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Peaceful Mission Exercise is being held between the member-states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Russia in the Orenburg region.
- This is the sixth edition of the military exercise.
- The joint counter-terrorism exercise 'Peaceful Mission' is a multilateral exercise, which is conducted biennially as part of military diplomacy between Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states.

**Q5. Who of the following organized a march on the Tanjore coast to break the Salt Law in April 1930? (UPSC-2015)**

- a. V. O. Chidambaram Pillai
- b. C. Rajagopalachari

- c. K. Kamaraj
- d. Annie Besant

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha was a march started by Indian statesman C. Rajagopalachari, inspired by the Dandi March. C. Rajagopalachari, a close associate of Gandhi, led the march which had close to 150 volunteers.
- It began at Trichinopoly (now Tiruchirappalli) on 13 April 1930 and proceeded for about 150 miles towards the east before reaching Vedaranyam, a small coastal town in the then Tanjore District (Madras Presidency). By collecting salt directly from the sea the marchers broke the salt law.
- The march along with the ones at Dandi and Dharasana drew worldwide attention to the Indian independence movement.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. For the current Chinese leadership, the 21st century is destined to be China's alone. Where does this leave India? Evaluate. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-2, International relations]
2. Analyse the significance of full-time domain specialists in Professional Military Education (PME) for the Indian armed forces. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-3, Internal security]