

23 Sep 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

C. GS 3 Related

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [WHO tightens global air quality norms](#)

INTERNAL SECURITY

1. [Drug haul: role of Pakistani elements being examined](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [This judicial selection needs more than a tweak](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Sea level rise is certain](#)

ECONOMY

1. [Improving the economic game](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [Goyal unveils single window for businesses](#)
2. [WHO thanks India for restart of vaccine export](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [Greater automation may lead to slack in the labour market: Das](#)
2. [Activist writes to CJI on MP, MLA defections](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. WHO tightens global air quality norms

Context:

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has updated the global air pollution standards and set stricter standards.

Background:

Air pollution:

- Air pollution is a **severe health crisis**.
- Every year, exposure to air pollution is estimated to cause **7 million premature deaths** and result in the **loss of millions more healthy years of life**.
 - Long-term exposure to outdoor and household air pollution leads to stroke, heart attack, diabetes, lung cancer, chronic lung diseases and neonatal diseases.

Indian scenario:

- Major cities in India **experience annual PM2.5 and PM10 trends much higher than the WHO's air quality guidelines**.
 - In fact, in 2020, the annual average level of PM2.5 in Delhi was 98 micrograms per cubic metre, against the national standard of 40.
- According to the **State of Global Air 2020**, air pollution is the largest risk factor for death among all health risks in India.

Efforts being taken in India:

- India has a dedicated **National Clean Air Programme** that aims for a **20% to 30% reduction in particulate matter concentrations by 2024 in 122 cities**, keeping **2017 as the base year** for the comparison of concentration.
 - The selected 122 cities do not meet the **National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)** when calculated from 2011 to 2015.
 - NAAQS sets limits for SO₂, NO₂, particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), Ozone, Lead, Carbon Monoxide, Ammonia, Benzene, Benzo Pyrene, Arsenic, Nickel.

Details:

- The update by WHO is the **first such update since 2005**.
- Notably, the WHO's air quality norms are not legally binding on countries, but rather a general guide for what nations should set as goals.
- The WHO has tightened the upper limits for both PM2.5 and PM10 levels.

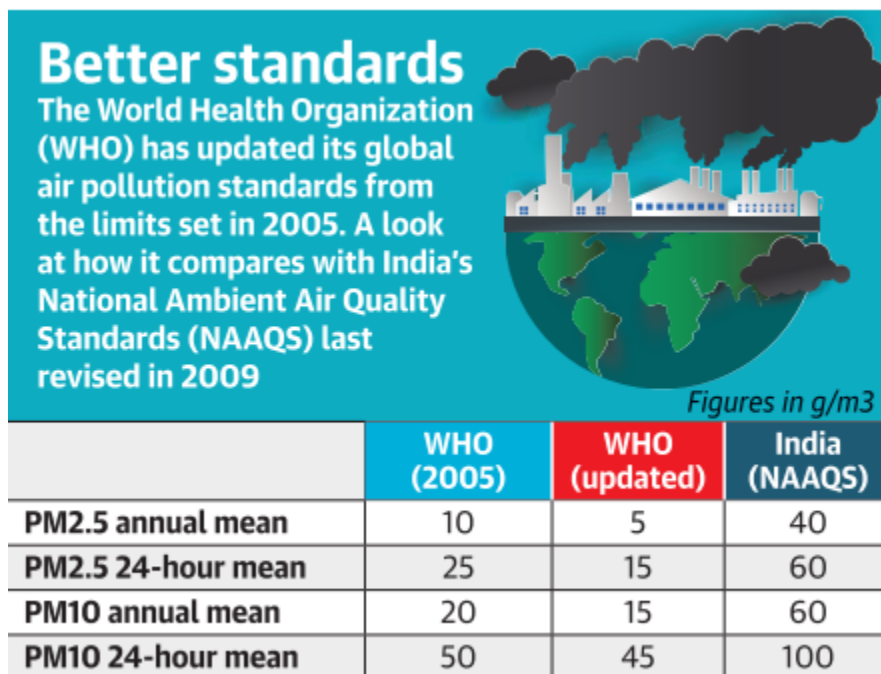


Image Courtesy: The Hindu

- This update is in recognition of the emerging science that the impact of air pollution on health is much more serious than earlier envisaged.
- The move does not have an immediate effect in India as the **National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) do not meet the WHO's existing standards**. However, the WHO update sets the stage for eventual shifts in policy towards evolving stricter national standards and it will put more pressure on the government to form policies to achieve stricter standards of air pollution.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Drug haul: role of Pakistani elements being examined

Context:

- **3,000 kilograms of heroin** were seized by the Indian law enforcement agencies at Gujarat's Mundra Port.
- The drugs were **shipped from Afghanistan**. The seized heroin was exported by a Kandahar-based Hassan Hussain Limited and imported by Vijayawada-based trading company via Bandar Abbas Port, Iran to Gujarat's Mundra Port.

Role of Afghanistan in drug trafficking:

- The seizure of this large haul of heroin raises **serious questions about the Taliban's promise to stop drug production and its trade using the soil of Afghanistan** given the fact that drug trafficking remains one of the biggest sources of income and funding for the Taliban.
- Notably, after the Taliban announced a ban on the production and supply of narcotics, the rate of heroin and opium almost doubled within a few days in the local and international markets.

- **Afghanistan controls 80 to 90 per cent of opium and heroin supply in the world**, according to the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#).

For more related information refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 17th Aug 2021](#)

Security threat to India:

- The Indian investigators are still trying to find out the purpose of the import of such a huge quantity of heroin in India. **Narcotics trade has been used for decades to fund terrorist activities inside India**. On regular basis, consignments of drugs are seized at the Punjab and Jammu borders which are sent from Pakistan to fund terrorist organisations.
- A **possible role of Pakistan-based elements** is also being examined. The syndicate had roped in several local people to facilitate the smuggling.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. This judicial selection needs more than a tweak

Context:

New judges have been appointed to the Court on the collegium's advice and long overdue vacancies have been filled up.

This topic has been covered in [Sep 18th, 2021 CNA](#).

Details:

- Now, the collegium has made proposals to alter the existing composition of various High Courts.
- When these recommendations are notified:
 - New Chief Justices will be appointed to as many as eight different courts
 - Five existing Chief Justices will swap positions with others
 - A slew of puisne judges will be moved to new courts
- These recommendations are seen as reflective of a new and proactive collegium.
- Filling up vacancies is a minimal requirement of a functioning system.

Judicial Appointments:

- The question of how to strike a balance between the sovereign function of making appointments and the need to ensure an independent judiciary has long plagued India.
- The Constitution's framers ultimately adopted what Dr. B.R. Ambedkar described as a "middle course".
- That path stipulates the following:

- Judges to the Supreme Court are to be appointed by the President of India in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and such other judges that he deems fit.
- Judges to the High Courts are to be appointed by the President in consultation with the CJI, the Governor of the State and the Chief Justice of that court.
- In the case of transfers, the President may move a judge from one High Court to another, after consulting the CJI.
- In this design, there is no mention of a collegium.
- But in 1993, when the [Supreme Court](#) rendered a ruling in the Second Judges Case, the word consultation has been interpreted to mean concurrence.
- The court held that concurrence must be secured not from the CJI alone, but from a body of judges that the judgment described as a collegium.

Memorandum of Procedure:

- The collegium for appointments to the Supreme Court and for transfers between High Courts now comprises the CJI and his four senior-most colleagues, and for appointments to the High Courts comprises the CJI and his two senior-most colleagues.
- When appointing judges to the High Courts, the collegium must also consult other senior judges on the Supreme Court who had previously served as judges of the High Court under consideration.
- All of this is contained in a “Memorandum of Procedure” (MoP).
- But there is, in fact, no actual guidance on how judges are to be selected.

The NJAC and after:

- In 2015, Parliament passed the 99th Constitutional Amendment and created the [National Judicial Appointments Commission \(NJAC\)](#).
- It comprised members from the judiciary, the executive, and the lay public.
- But the Court undid the efforts to replace the collegium and it held in the Fourth Judges Case that judicial primacy in making appointments and transfers was an essential feature of the Constitution.
 - It held that a body that found no mention in the actual text of the Constitution had assumed a position so sacrosanct that it could not be touched even by a constitutional amendment.
- The collegium system was then restored.

Issues with the Collegium:

- The long-standing apprehensions about the collegium’s operation remain unaddressed.
 - Concerns have been raised specifically, with respect to its opacity and a lack of independent scrutiny of its decisions.
- Even without express constitutional sanction, the collegium effectively exercises a power of supervision over each of the High Courts.

Way Forward:

- Separation of powers is a bedrock principle of Indian constitutionalism. Inherent in that idea is the guarantee of an autonomous judiciary. The process of appointing and transferring judges assumes significance.
- Until a proper alternative is framed, the collegium represents the best solution.
 - Allowing senior judges of the Supreme Court primacy in matters of appointments and transfers is the only practical way to guarantee the independence of the judiciary.
- But when the Court struck down the NJAC, it also promised to reform the existing system.
- Efforts must be made to draft a new memorandum of procedure.
- The considerations that must go into the procedure for selecting judges must be explained.
- “Merit” and “diversity” must get the right consideration during appointments.

Restoring High Courts to that position of prestige is essential to the process of building trust in the Constitution. It would take more than just a tweak in the process of appointments. However, there is an urgent need to replace the present system and the mysteries underlining the decision-making that only further dilute the High Courts’ prominence. The task of reforming the existing scheme is essential as the status quo is ultimately corrosive of the very institutions that it seeks to protect.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Sea level rise is certain

The article talks about the inevitable rise in sea levels owing to climate change and its implications for the future, despite a reduction in emissions.

Context:

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)) Assessment Report from Working Group I — ‘Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis’ provides one of the most expansive scientific reviews on the science and impacts of climate change.

It is a major part of their Sixth Assessment Report. Read more on the Sixth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) covered in [Aug 10th, 2021 CNA](#).

- The report discusses five different shared socio-economic pathways for the future with varying levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Even in the intermediate scenario, it is extremely likely that average warming will exceed 2°C near mid-century.

Sea Level Rise – A Major Concern:

- Sea level rise will continue after emissions no longer increase, because oceans respond slowly to warming.
- The centennial-scale irreversibility of sea-level rise has implications for the future even under the low emissions scenarios.
- Sea level rise occurs mainly due to the expansion of warm ocean waters, the melting of glaciers on land, and the melting of ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica.
 - The global mean sea level (GMSL) rose by 0.2m between 1901 and 2018.

- Projections based on structured expert judgments indicate that sea-level rise as high as 2.3m by 2100 cannot be ruled out.
- According to the UN Environment Programme Emissions Gap Report, the world is heading for a temperature rise above 3°C this century (double the [Paris Agreement](#) aspiration). And there is deep uncertainty in sea-level projections for warming above 3°C.
- Understanding the risks involved from climate change and sea-level rise in the 21st and 22nd centuries is crucial.
 - Close to 700 million people worldwide live along the coast.

Issues:

- Scientists rely on ice sheet models to estimate future [glacier](#) melt.
 - While these models have improved over the years, there are shortcomings in the knowledge and representation of the physical processes.
 - Ice sheets can destabilise rapidly as the water gets warm. Such changes are difficult to model and marine ice cliff instability (MICI) events are not included in the sea-level projections.
 - The models do not capture the abrupt and non-linear dynamics of changes that take place.
- Besides, changes in ice-ocean interactions can cause extensive and rapid sea-level rise.
 - This happens from the mass loss of ice shelves (ice that flows into cold oceans while attached to the land), which may disintegrate suddenly.
- Therefore, using ice sheet models coupled with ocean models to create probabilistic scenarios for the future is tricky.

Vulnerability in India:

- Communities along the coast in India are vulnerable to sea-level rise and storms.
- With climate change, storms will become more intense and frequent. They will be accompanied by storm surges, heavy rain and flooding.
- Even the 0.1m to 0.2m rise expected along India in the next few decades can cause frequent coastal flooding.

Way Forward:

- The uncertainty regarding a metre or more of sea-level rise before 2100 is related to a lack of knowledge and inability to run models with the accuracy needed. Ignoring the unknowns can prove dangerous.
- Adaptation to sea-level rise must include a range of measures, along with coastal regulation, which should be stricter.
- Coastal communities should be alerted in advance and protected during severe weather events.
- Natural and other barriers should be considered in a limited manner to protect certain vulnerable areas.
- Retreat should be part of the adaptation strategies for some very low-lying areas.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Improving the economic game

Context:

The Quad (Australia, Japan, India and the U.S.) will meet in a landmark physical summit at the White House, hosted by US President Joe Biden.

Agenda:

- The agenda for the Quad has widened.
- So far, its goal was focused largely on strengthening strategic and defence pillars.
- The earlier virtual meet captured the spirit of the Quad, stressing democratic values, while pledging to strengthen cooperation on the defining challenges of the times.
- On the economic side, challenges were identified as the economic and health impacts of COVID-19, cyberspace, critical technologies, and quality infrastructure investment.
- Working groups were set up on vaccines, critical and emerging technologies, and climate action.
- It is believed that “industry” would also be brought into the present dialogue process in order to advance the desired outcomes.

India and QUAD's economic engagement:

- The QUAD nations are vibrant democracies and open economies. Three are developed countries and one is an emerging market (India).
- For India, each of the other three countries is a strategic partner, and bilateral and multilateral initiatives have been taken across multiple areas in different fora.
 - The Quad is in line with India's other regional programmes such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative and the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI).
 - The SCRI with India, Australia and Japan aims to address vulnerabilities in existing supply chains that were exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- India's total trade with the three Quad partners was over \$108 billion in 2020-21, accounting for almost 16% of its total merchandise exports and imports.
- On the investment side, the U.S. is India's second-largest source of foreign direct investments, while Japan has a significant footprint in India's major infrastructure projects.
- While inflows from Australia amount to less than a billion dollars, it has outlined a long-term strategy for economic engagement with India.

Way Forward:

- The first piece of the economic pillar is trade and investment.
 - Joint efforts by all Quad countries can help to establish alternative manufacturing hubs and make regional supply chains more diversified.
- In order to advance their goals for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific, the Quad members must activate business partnerships with definitive measures.
 - This will help the participant countries align their economic and strategic objectives.

- The Quad could consider adding a trade ministers' interaction to its agenda.
 - It can facilitate lowering trade barriers and boosting trade linkages among the partner countries as well as in the Indo-Pacific region.
- With India as a natural option for a China-Plus strategy, domestic policies to promote manufacturing and ease of doing business would help in the long-term success of trade cooperation.
- Innovative financing and public-private partnership models can enlarge the space for private industry and support public funds.
- Climate change is also a priority for the QUAD and a working group has been set up.
 - Cooperation on multiple dimensions of the climate challenge is proposed, including finance, emissions reduction, technology and capacity-building.
 - The involvement of industry to support governmental efforts would be critical.

Conclusion:

The QUAD is a formidable economic force that can deliver many gains on the identified pillars for the members as well as the region. By adding businesses to its agenda, its initiatives can be further fortified and expanded. The governments must consider a forum for private sector engagement.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Goyal unveils single window for businesses

National Single Window System (NSWS):

- The National Single Window System (NSWS) portal will serve as a one-stop shop **for investors for approvals and clearances.**
- NSWS will provide **end-to-end facilitation and support to investors**, facilitate clearances at the Centre and State levels, provide pre-investment advisory to new businesses, and share information related to land banks.
- The portal, as of today, hosts approvals across 18 Central Departments and nine States, and another 14 Central Departments and five States will be added by December 2021.
- By bringing transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the ecosystem, it will help **promote the ease of doing business.**

Context:

- Commerce and Industry Minister soft-launched the National Single Window System (NSWS) for investors and businesses.

Know more about the NSWS in [PIB dated Sept 22, 2021](#).

2. WHO thanks India for restart of vaccine export

COVAX:

- **COVAX is one of three pillars of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator**, which was launched in response to the COVID pandemic.

- ACT accelerator aims at bringing together governments, global health organisations, manufacturers, scientists, private sector, civil society and philanthropy, with the aim of providing innovative and equitable access to COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments and vaccines.
- COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access) aims to **accelerate the development and manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines, and guarantee fair and equitable access for every country**. COVAX is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi and WHO, with UNICEF as a key delivery partner.

Know more about [COVAX](#) in the linked article.

Context:

- World Health Organisation (WHO) chief recently thanked Indian Union Health Minister for announcing the **resumption of COVID-19 vaccine shipments to the COVAX global pool** which will help address the vaccine inequity issue.

G. Tidbits

1. Greater automation may lead to slack in the labour market: Das

- There has been a **fillip to automation in industries during the pandemic**. This was necessitated due to the lockdowns and limitations on mobility.
- Reserve Bank of India Governor has noted that greater automation, though would lead to overall productivity gain, may also **lead to slack in the labour market**. This poses serious **challenges to inclusive growth** in the post-pandemic phase.
 - Labour market slack is the shortfall in employers' demand for labour relative to the available supply of workers. The headline measure of slack reflects the deviation of the unemployment rate from its normal or "natural" level.
- To counter this challenge posed by the pandemic, **significant skilling of the workforce might become a priority**.
- Another challenge would be the **emergence of a 'digital divide'** as digitisation gains speed after the pandemic.

2. Activist writes to CJI on MP, MLA defections

- **In the light of the increasing practice among the political leaders to change their parties just after being elected**, an Assam-based activist has written to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) asking why MPs and MLAs cannot be booked under **Section 420 of the [Indian Penal Code](#)** for cheating people who voted for them.
 - Section 420 deals with cheating or misleading.
- The activist claims that the act of switching parties by the elected representatives **amounts to the betrayal of the voters of a constituency**.
- The activist has also requested the CJI to ensure that **certain restrictions are imposed on elected representatives**, such as preventing them from joining any other political party for four years after the date of winning an election and a 10-year ban on contesting any kind of election after defection.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following committees are associated with preserving the ecology and conservation of Western Ghats?

1. Dr. K. Kasturirangan Committee
2. Pitamber Committee
3. Madhav Gadgil Committee
4. BP Jeevan Reddy Committee

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- K. Kasturirangan committee and Madhav Gadgil committee are related to preserving the ecology and conservation of Western Ghats.
- In November 2004, the Central government appointed a five-member committee headed by Justice B P Jeevan Reddy to review the provisions of the AFSPA in the northeastern states.
- On the eve of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in 1972, popularly called the Stockholm Conference, the Pitamber Committee was set up to make a report on the state of the environment in India.

Q2. Which of the following statements with respect to the Swadeshi Movement is/are INCORRECT?

1. It is also known as the Vande Mataram Movement.
2. The movement spread to Madras under Chidambaram Pillai.
3. It remained confined to the upper and middle classes and zamindars, and failed to reach masses especially the peasantry.

Options:

- a. 2 and 3 only
- b. 1 only
- c. 3 only
- d. None of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Swadeshi movement was part of the Indian independence movement. After the partition of Bengal, the Swadeshi movement was formally started in August 1905 to curb foreign goods by relying on domestic production.
- It is also known as the Vande Mataram Movement.
- The movement spread to Madras under Chidambaram Pillai.
- It remained confined to the upper and middle classes and zamindars, and failed to reach masses especially the peasantry.

Q3. Which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?

Strait	Joining Seas/Water Bodies
1. Hormuz Strait	The Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf
2. Bab-el-Mandeb	The Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea
3. Sunda Strait	The South China Sea and the East China Sea

Options:

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

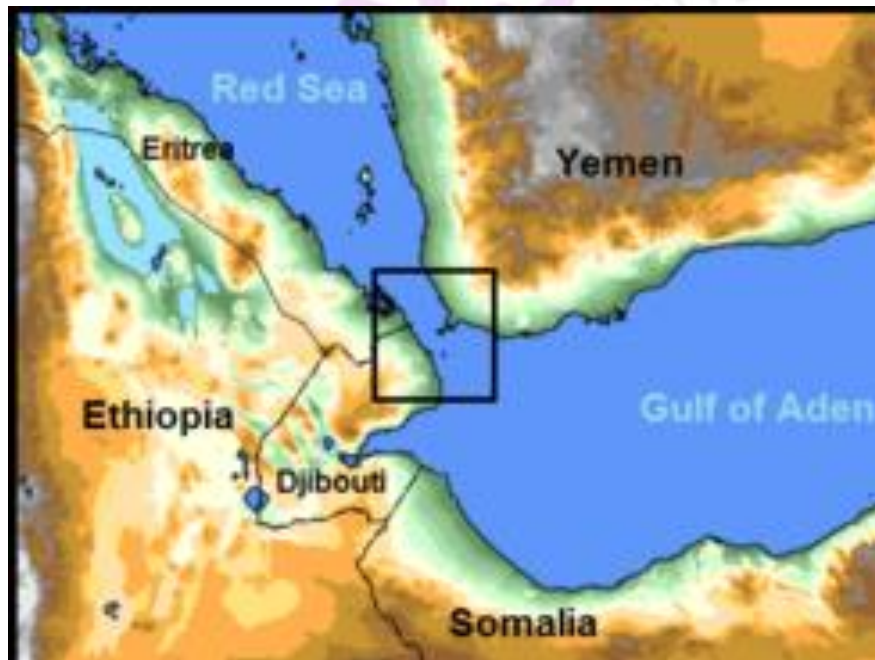
Answer: b

Explanation:

- Hormuz strait connects the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.



- The Bab-el-Mandeb strait connects the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.



- The Sunda Strait is the strait between the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra. It connects the Java Sea to the Indian Ocean.



Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, frequently in news:

1. It defines the punishment for sending offensive messages through a computer or any other communication device.
2. The Supreme Court struck down this section declaring it as violative of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

Which of the given statements is/are INCORRECT?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 made it a punishable offence for any person to send 'grossly offensive' or 'menacing' information using a computer resource or communication device.
- The Supreme Court in the Shreya Singhal case struck down this section declaring it as violative of the freedom of speech guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India.

Q5. What was the main reason for the split in the Indian National Congress at Surat in 1907?

- a. Introduction of communalism into Indian politics by Lord Minto
- b. Extremists' lack of faith in the capacity of the moderates to negotiate with the British Government
- c. Foundation of Muslim League
- d. Aurobindo Ghosh's inability to be elected as the President of the Indian National Congress

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Surat Split was a turning point in the history of the Nationalist Movement in India. The main reason for the split in the Indian National Congress at Surat was the lack of faith that Extremists had in the capacity of the moderates to negotiate with the British Government.
- The two main demands placed by the extremists were:
 - Demand for the resolution of Swaraj
 - Lala Lajpat Rai to be made the President of the INC
- These two demands were not acceptable to the moderates. Thus, instead of Lala Lajpat Rai, the moderates supported the idea of Rash Behari Ghosh as the President.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The rise in sea-level is bound to have long-term implications. In the light of the statement, is India ready to deal with the same? Discuss.[GS-1, Geography]
2. The current official inflation rate measurement is plagued with loopholes. Critically analyse.[GS-3, Economic]