

## 26 Sep 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS 1 Related

**Category: GEOGRAPHY**

## 1. Rainy Septembers point to monsoon shifts

### Background:

- Over the years, there has been the **increasing trend of September monsoon rainfall in India exceeding the average rainfall for the month.**
  - Usually, July and August are the rainiest months of Indian monsoon while September marks lower rainfall among the 4 monsoon months- June to September. **September marks the beginning of the withdrawal of monsoons from the Indian subcontinent.** The monsoon normally starts to withdraw by the 1st of September and completely exits by October.

### Details:

- A study by scientists at the Central Water Commission on the changes in monsoon patterns noted that the **monthly variability of the summer rainfall was due to changing patterns of low pressure over the Indian landmass as well as fluctuations in moisture distribution.**
- Though overall **global warming** is increasing moisture levels during the monsoon period, this is also **affecting the distribution of the rain.**
- The **delay in withdrawal of the monsoons** is contributing to more September rainfall.
- Experts say that this is a sign of a **change in monsoon patterns** but it is difficult to demonstrably prove this as a lasting consequence of global warming.

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Quad to counter Afghan-origin terror

##### Context:

- The **Quad Leaders Summit** met in person for the first time in Washington.

##### Details:

- The grouping has announced a wide range of deliverables and announced new avenues for co-operation and collaboration.

##### COVID-19 co-operation:

- Quad plans to **produce at least 1 billion India manufactured vaccines by the end of 2022** in addition to pledging more than 1.2 billion vaccines globally.
- The group will also **prepare for future pandemics** and conduct at least one preparedness tabletop or exercise in 2022.

##### Climate action:

- The Quad countries intend to **update or announce ambitious NDCs (Nationally Defined Contributions)**. The joint statement stated that the member countries would work with the “intent” to get to net zero emissions “preferably” by 2050 “taking into account national circumstances”.

- Notably, India has not yet made any formal commitments for achieving net zero by 2050.

#### **Infrastructure partnership:**

- The grouping launched a new infrastructure partnership which would involve **mapping the region's infrastructure needs and providing technical assistance and evaluation tools** for projects.
- This initiative would **work with the Blue Dot Network**.
  - The [Blue Dot Network](#) is an initiative formed by the United States, Japan and Australia to provide assessment and certification of infrastructure development projects worldwide on measures of financial transparency, environmental sustainability, and impact on economic development, with the goal of mobilizing private capital to invest abroad.

#### **Afghanistan issue:**

- The Quad would **coordinate diplomatically on the Afghanistan issue**. The major aspects of this co-ordination would be **based on counter-terrorism and humanitarian aid** in accordance with United Nations Security Council 2593 (a resolution passed under the Indian presidency of the [UNSC](#)).
- The resolution issued at the end of the Quad summit called for a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan.

#### **Tech partnership:**

- The member countries have expressed their intentions to **work more closely together in developing common standards for critical technologies**.
  - Notably, the Quad had earlier set up a **new critical and emerging technologies working group**, focusing on technical standards, 5G diversification and deployment and technology supply chains.
- Quad will establish **contact groups on Advanced Communications and [Artificial Intelligence](#)**. The grouping is also planning to launch a **semiconductor supply chain initiative** to map capacity, identify vulnerabilities and bolster supply-chain security for semiconductors and their vital components.
- The member countries have come out with the first **Quad “Principles on Technology Design, Development, Governance, and Use” document**. This envisages the ethical use of technology shaped by shared democratic values and respect for universal human rights and emphasizes that the technology should not be misused or abused for malicious activities such as authoritarian surveillance and oppression, for terrorist purposes, or to disseminate disinformation.

## **2. India, U.S. find alignment on Indo-Pacific, fighting terrorism**

#### **Context:**

- The **joint statement titled, ‘A Partnership for Global Good’**, issued by India and the U.S. following the bilateral discussions between Indian Prime Minister and U.S. President.

#### **Details:**

- The two countries have expressed their intentions to further **deepen their ‘Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership’** in domains such as regional groupings, defence manufacturing, and climate action.
- The two countries would work with **regional groups like ASEAN and with Quad members** to promote shared interests in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.
- The U.S. reaffirmed the strength of the defense relationship between the United States and India and the unwavering commitment to **India as a Major Defense Partner** through close defense engagements in information sharing, sharing of logistics and military-to-military interactions, strengthening cooperation in advanced military technologies, and expanding engagements in a multilateral framework including with regional partners. The Leaders welcomed the deepening of **advanced industrial cooperation under the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative**, and encouraged more such joint efforts.
- The two countries would work towards **galvanizing global efforts to scale up climate action**.
  - The U.S. expressed support for India’s target to achieve a domestic goal of installing 450 GW of renewable power by 2030 and acknowledged the importance of **mobilizing finance for investments in renewables, storage, and grid infrastructure** that will guarantee clean, reliable power for millions of Indian households.
  - Through the two main tracks of the **Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP)** and the **Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD)** under the **U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership**, the United States and India will accelerate clean energy development and deployment of critical technologies to advance a clean energy transition.
- The two countries reaffirmed their commitment to fight terror and also denounced the use of “terrorist proxies” in a veiled reference to the use of terrorism as a state policy by Pakistan.
- The two countries would **develop a trade and investment partnership** that would help increase prosperity for working families in both countries. Notably, the joint statement did not announce any major deliverables on trade.

## C. GS 3 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Status quo on petrol

##### Context:

- The **Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council meeting** held recently has decided to let petrol and diesel remain out of the ambit of the GST for the time being.

### Arguments against bringing petrol and diesel under the GST:

#### Major source of revenue:

- Petrol and diesel bring in huge revenues to both the Central and State governments. **Fuel taxes were projected to contribute almost Rs. 6 lakh crore to the Central and State exchequers combined in 2020-21.**
- Bringing in petrol and diesel under GST which would tax at lower levels could invariably **affect the financial position of the government.** This could adversely impact the ability of the governments to fund social programmes.

#### Reluctance of the states:

- Bringing petrol and diesel under GST would mean that the **states would have to give up their powers to impose a value added tax on petrol and diesel.**
- The States are wary of losing even more of their already curtailed independent power to raise tax revenue by allowing petrol and diesel to be brought under the ambit of the GST since it **would make them further dependent on the Centre** to receive their share of the taxes.

### Arguments in favour of bringing petrol and diesel under the GST:

#### In line with the principle of GST system:

- GST envisages one nation one tax system. The exclusion of items such as petrol and diesel from GST goes against this principle. The move to bring in Petrol and diesel within the ambit of the GST system is thus a step to **further simplify the tax system in India and streamlining it.**

#### Help rationalize prices of the fuels:

- The record increase in the cost of petrol and diesel has increased pressure on the government to reduce taxes on the fuels.
- High taxes on the fuels are seen as a major reason for the rise in fuel prices. It should be noted that more than half of the money paid by the consumer to purchase fuels goes towards some tax or the other.
  - The share of the final price of petrol that goes towards taxes has increased from approximately 30% in 2014 to about 60% now.
- **Bringing Petrol and diesel under the GST would effectively mean reducing taxes on them.** The highest tax slab under the GST is 28%, while the fuels such as petrol and diesel are taxed at more than 100% currently.
- Such a move would **help ease the inflationary pressures on the economy** given the fact that diesel is the main fuel used by road freight operators, and its high price pushes up transport costs.
- A major argument against the government's policy of imposing high fuel taxes is that these **high taxes act as a drag on the economy.** The reduction of the taxes on petrol and diesel will help increase the disposable income in the hands of the people which could likely be diverted to other parts of consumption spending, thus boosting economic growth. Also the lower prices of petrol and diesel might lead to a scenario where more petrol and diesel may be consumed. This could give rise

to a scenario where the governments could end up actually collecting more revenue than under the current high fuel tax regime.

**Additional information:**

- India imports more than 80% of its oil supplies.

**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**1. Will AUKUS upset the Indo-Pacific balance?**

**Context:**

- Recently, U.S. President Joe Biden, along with Prime Ministers Scott Morrison and Boris Johnson of Australia and the U.K. respectively, announced the formation of a **new trilateral security partnership called AUKUS (Australia-U.K.-U.S.)**.

For detailed information on the provisions of the security partnership refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 16th Sep 2021](#)

**Impact of the development:**

- The AUKUS alliance will have a **profound impact on the various stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region** and will also result in the reshaping of relations in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

For detailed information on this topic refer to the following article:

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

**Concerns/Challenges:**

- The article expresses **doubts over the actual effectiveness of the AUKUS**. It argues that the newly announced trilateral security arrangement is unlikely to be a game changer in the Indo-Pacific region as envisaged by the member countries.
  - Given the formidable military presence of U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region and its collaboration with like-minded countries via platforms such as the **Quad, Five Eyes– an intelligence-sharing alliance**, it is unclear what AUKUS will help achieve for the U.S.
  - There are **doubts over whether the AUKUS will be effective in deterring China's strategic calculus across the region, particularly relating to its maritime ambitions and territorial expansionism**. In fact AUKUS has the potential to cause a recalibration of China's plans with respect to nuclear-powered submarines. It could heighten Beijing's anxiety over its nuclear-powered submarine fleet and **push it towards building more such platforms giving rise to an arms race in the region**.
  - It is very likely that it would be well over a decade before the submarine construction plans come to fruition and Australia operationalises a nuclear-powered fleet. This **large time frame** could as well witness drastic changes in the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.

**India's perspective:**

- **India has distanced itself from the AUKUS grouping.** The Foreign Secretary of India has stated that the new partnership is neither relevant to the Quad, nor will it have any impact on its functioning.
- Despite the professed indifference towards AUKUS, **India may derive secondary benefits from the AUKUS arrangement** having three advanced nations with arguably the most sophisticated military know-how in the world coming together to support a free and open Indo-Pacific in the light of the increasingly assertive attitude of China in the region. This could provide **some degree of deterrence to China.**
- Also **India's concerns regarding 'encirclement' by China** may be partially mitigated by AUKUS.
  - China has made massive inroads in India's neighbourhood in terms of infrastructure development projects and presence.

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. Alert sounded in Odisha over Cyclone Gulab

#### Cyclonic storm Gulab:

- Following the formation of the deep depression over northwest and adjoining west central Bay of Bengal and its westward movement, the Odisha state government has issued a warning for the cyclonic storm Gulab (pronounced as Gul-Aab), which is expected to cross the Indian coast between its southern districts and north Andhra Pradesh.
- The associated heavy rain is likely to cause landslips and floods.

### 2. Dance of the Lamas

#### Cham dance form:

- The cham dance is a masked and costumed dance associated with some sects of Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhist festivals.
- The Cham traces its origins to the Yogachara School of Buddhism founded in Kashmir in the 4th century by Asanga and Vasubandhu. Yogachara School developed into the Vajrayana form of Buddhism, which incorporated the Cham dance.
- Cham is a unique and important cultural tradition. The Lamas celebrate the victory of good over evil with two days of the monastic dance..
- The costumes and masks are an integral part of the dance.
- All sounds in the Cham are sacred mantras.
- Once a great tradition that was practised in Ladakh, Lahaul, Spiti, Kinnaur, Tibet, southern China, and Mongolia, today Cham has been kept alive at annual celebrations in parts of Ladakh and Spiti.

### 3. BJP's tribute to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya

#### Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya:

- Deendayal Upadhyaya was an Indian politician and thinker.

- Deendayal Upadhyay is best remembered for his **principle of “integral humanism”** which is defined as “a classless, casteless and conflict-free social order”. It talks about the integration of indigenous “Indian culture” with the social, political and economic idea of human welfare.
- Pandit Upadhyay is one of those thinkers in India who exercised on ‘**Swaraj of ideas**’– means decolonisation of ideas, i.e. decolonisation of Indian minds.

**Context:**

- 105th birth anniversary of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. MPEDA

- The **Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)** is a **statutory body** that was established in 1972 **under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry** for promotion of export of marine products from India.
- The main focus is on Market Promotion, Capture Fisheries, Culture Fisheries, Processing Infrastructure & Value addition, Quality Control, Research and Development.
- MPEDA seeks to regulate exports of marine products and take all measures required for ensuring sustained, quality seafood exports from the country.

**Context:**

- MPEDA as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is conducting a nationwide event on **Responsible Fishing for Sustainable Future** in association with state Fisheries departments.
- This event aims to create awareness among fishers on the need to practice responsible fishing to protect the marine ecosystem for future generations.

### 2. EC mulls deregistering inactive political parties

- The Election Commission has recently notified the updated list of registered political parties.
  - Currently there are **eight national recognised parties and 54 recognised State parties**.
- There are 2,796 registered unrecognised parties, and the panel has sought the power to **deregister inactive parties over fears of such entities misusing income tax exemption law**.
  - Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961 deals with tax provisions relating to political parties. Section 13A has given 100% exemption to political parties on its income from house property, income from other sources, capital gains and voluntary contributions received from any person however, subject to certain conditions. This provision is **liable to misuse for activities like money laundering**.

### 3. How will Covishield nod impact travel to U.K.?

- India had expressed deep concerns over the move of the United Kingdom to mandate discriminatory regulations for Indians travelling to the U.K by mandating stricter quarantine rules despite being vaccinated.
- This could damage the otherwise **fledgling bilateral relationship between India and the U.K.**



- India and the U.K. are in the process of talks on upgrading ties, including their **strategic partnership**, negotiating a **trade agreement**, and discussing **cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to COVAX:**

1. It is a global science initiative established in 2008 that provides open-access to genomic data of influenza viruses and the coronavirus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. It is co-led by Gavi, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and WHO.
3. COVAX is one of three pillars of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator.

**Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- 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.
- GISAID is a global science initiative and primary source established in 2008 that provides open-access to genomic data of influenza viruses and the coronavirus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Q2. This region is an evergreen low-land forest located between the branches of River Periyar. It was the first bird sanctuary in Kerala. The sanctuary was notified in 1983 based on a recommendation made by Dr. Salim Ali.**

**The Bird Sanctuary being talked about is:**

- a. Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary

- b. Thattekad Bird Sanctuary
- c. Pathiramanal Bird Sanctuary
- d. Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary was the first bird sanctuary in Kerala.
- Salim Ali, one of the best known ornithologists, described this sanctuary as the richest bird habitat on peninsular India.
- Thattekkad literally means flat forest, and the region is an evergreen low-land forest located between the branches of the Periyar River, the longest river in Kerala.

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

**Helicopter**

- 1. Chinook
- 2. AH 64 Apache
- 3. KA-226T Utility Helicopters

**Procured from**

- United States of America
- Russia
- Israel

**Options:**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- AH 64 Apache is being procured from the U.S., while KA-226T Utility Helicopters is being procured from Russia.
  - Apache is the most advanced multi-role heavy attack helicopter in the world. Alongside the capability to shoot fire and forget anti-tank guided missiles, air-to-air missiles, rockets and other ammunitions, it also has modern Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities to provide versatility to helicopters in a network-centric aerial warfare.
  - In 2015, India and Russia concluded an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for around 200 Ka-226T twin engine utility helicopters, with 60 helicopters to be directly imported and remaining 140 manufactured locally. The helicopters would be manufactured by India Russia Helicopters Limited (IRHL) — a joint venture between HAL and Russian Helicopters with Transfer of Technology (ToT) from Russia. The Ka-226T is meant to replace the ageing and obsolete Cheetah and Chetak fleet of the Army and Air Force.

**Q4. Hamboting La, recently seen in News is located in:**

- a. Sikkim
- b. Arunachal Pradesh
- c. Ladakh
- d. Himachal Pradesh

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Hamboting La is a high mountain pass located in Ladakh region.

**Q5. Which of the following statements best describes the term 'Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A)', recently seen in the news? (UPSC-2017)**

- a. It is a procedure for considering ecological costs of developmental schemes formulated by the Government.
- b. It is a scheme of RBI for reworking the financial structure of big corporate entities facing genuine difficulties.
- c. It is a disinvestment plan of the Government regarding Central Public Sector Undertakings.
- d. It is an important provision in 'The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code' recently implemented by the Government

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets also known as S4A Scheme was launched in 2016 by the Reserve Bank of India as an initiative to address and resolve the debt issues of the corporate sector along with strengthening the ability of the lender to deal with stressed assets.
- As per the S4A scheme, the debt of a company is bifurcated into two parts namely sustainable and unsustainable debt based on the cash flows of the company's project. The sustainable debt of a company should not be less than 50% of the existing debt and the unsustainable debt can be converted into optionally convertible debentures.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Examine the possible reasons for rise of fuel prices in India and discuss why it is not under the ambit of GST. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-3, Economy]
2. Is it possible to end China's control of the global supply chain? Critically Analyse. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, International Relations]