

28 Sep 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. PM launches health ID for every citizen

Context:

The Prime Minister launched the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

The mission's nationwide deployment coincides with the National Health Authority's (NHA) third anniversary of the [Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana \(AB PM-JAY\)](#).

Details:

- Under the mission, every citizen would get a digital health ID and their health records would be digitally protected.
- The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission would connect the digital health solutions of hospitals across the country with each other.
- It will create a seamless online platform by providing a wide range of data, information, and infrastructure services while leveraging open, interoperable, standards-based digital systems.
- It is expected to bring about a revolutionary change in India's health facilities.
- The mission would not only make the processes of hospitals simplified but also increase ease of living.

Read more on this topic covered in [Sep 27th, 2021 CNA](#).

2. Right to govt. aid not fundamental right: SC

Context:

Supreme Court ruling stating that the right to government aid is not a [Fundamental Right](#).

Details:

- In a ruling, the SC held that the right of an institution, whether run by a majority or minority community, to receive government aid is not a fundamental right.
- It said that all conditions that have relevance to the proper utilisation of the grant-in-aid by an educational institution can be imposed by the government. It also asserted an institution receiving aid is bound by the conditions imposed and therefore expected to comply with the rules.
- The Bench said that if the government made a policy call to withdraw aid, an institution cannot question the decision as a matter of right.
- The court added that an institution can never be allowed to say that the grant of aid should be on its own terms.

- It added that when an institution is not satisfied with the government's aid, it can deny the grant and move forward on its own. But, it is not allowed to ask for a grant of aid on its own terms.

3. Karnataka directed to release 'some quantity' of water to T.N.

Context:

The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) has directed Karnataka to immediately release some quantity of water towards making good the shortfall in the realisation of Tamil Nadu's share of Cauvery water.

Details:

- Cauvery dispute is the longest and most bitter [inter-state water dispute](#) that has been fought post-independence.
- It has been more than three decades since the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted.
- The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CMA) was constituted on the directions of the Supreme Court to address the dispute over sharing of river water among Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.
- The release should be as per the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's decision of 2007, which was modified by the Supreme Court in 2018.

Mandate of Cauvery Water Management Authority

- To monitor the storage, apportion shares, supervise operation of reservoirs and regulate water releases with assistance of the regulating authority.
- The authority has also been tasked to advise the states to take suitable measures to improve water use efficiency, by way of promoting micro-irrigation (drip and sprinkler), change in cropping pattern, improved agronomic practices, system deficiency correction and command area development.
- Cauvery Water Management Authority also looks at regulated release of water by Karnataka, at the inter-state contact point located on the common border of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: **ECONOMY**

1. Jobs up 29% since 2013, says survey

Context:

Labour and Employment Minister released the report of the first quarter of the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES).

Details:

- It is a report of the All-India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey (AQEES) prepared by the Labour Bureau.
 - There are two components under AQEES, Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) and Area Frame Establishment Survey (AFES).
- The QES report covers about 10,500 firms that employed more than 10 workers and were spread over nine sectors that account for 85% of the total employment in such establishments.
 - Nine selected sectors: Manufacturing, Construction, Trade, Transport, Education, Health, Accommodation and Restaurant, IT/BPO and Financial Services.
 - These sectors altogether account for a majority of the total employment in the non-farm establishments.
- The AQEES has been taken up by the Labour Bureau to provide frequent (quarterly) updates about the employment and related variables of establishments, in both organised and unorganised segments of nine selected sectors.

Key Highlights:

Sector-wise jobs | In comparison to key employment-generating sectors, the trade and accommodation & restaurants sectors recorded sharp dips in jobs between April and June 2021

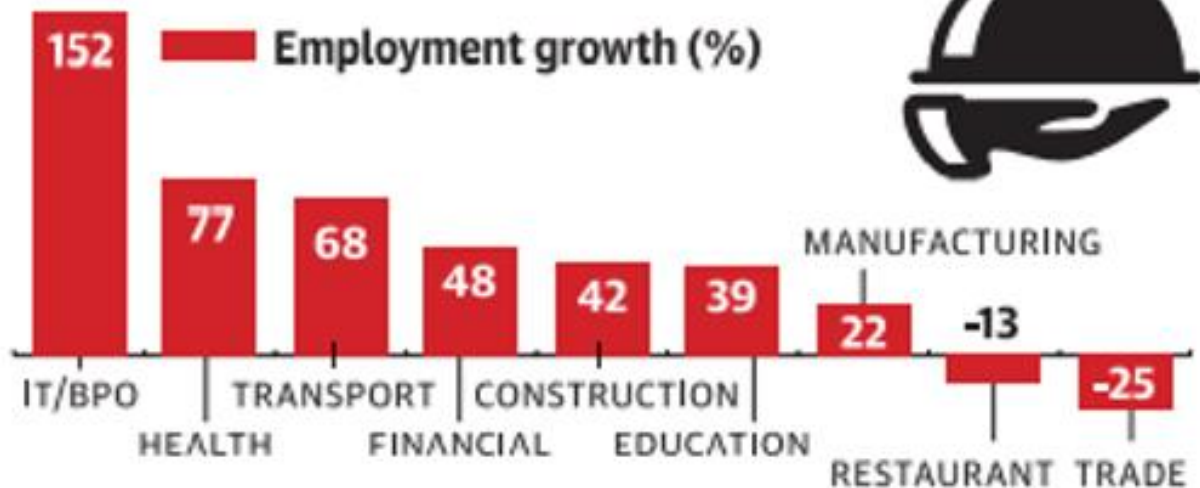


Image source: The Hindu

- The report says that the overall employment numbers had increased by 29% from the base year of 2013-14.
- In the first quarter of this fiscal (April-June 2021), 27% of the establishments surveyed reported pandemic-related retrenchment.
- Overall, employment stood at 3.08 crore in the first quarter, up from 2.37 crore as reported in the Sixth Economic Census (2013-2014).
- All but two sectors — trade and accommodation & restaurants — saw an increase in employment over the period.
- The number of female workers showed a decline too, from 31% in the Sixth Economic Survey to 29% as of the first quarter of the quarterly employment survey.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The Quad could end up running out of steam

Issue:

- With the announcement of the new Australia-U.K.-U.S. (AUKUS) trilateral security partnership, Quad faces the danger of becoming irrelevant if it does not shape up.
- The announcement of the AUKUS and the recent outcome of the [Quad](#) summit indicate that AUKUS will go on to form a key security arrangement of the Indo-Pacific region.
- This might potentially push the Quad to the background in a struggle for attention, political will, and resources.

AUKUS:

- The U.S. President announced the new Australia-U.S.-Britain (AUKUS) defence alliance, extending U.S. nuclear submarine technology to Australia as well as cyber defence, applied artificial intelligence and undersea capabilities.
- AUKUS is a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- The United States and the United Kingdom will help Australia to develop and deploy nuclear-powered submarines, adding to the Western military presence in the Pacific region.

This issue has been covered in [Sep 17th, 2021 CNA](#).

Implications of AUKUS on the Quad:

- AUKUS may not replace the Quad and yet it appears that AUKUS has ventured where the Quad has been reluctant to make forays into — the military domain.
- AUKUS also exposes the inherent, also self-imposed, limits of the Quad, i.e., its inability and lack of desire to give itself any military role.
- The focus of the recently-held Washington summit, on challenges ranging from COVID-19 to climate, shows that the Quad is unlikely to take a security-dominated turn.
 - This is precisely the vacuum AUKUS seeks to fill.
- AUKUS seems to have taken the focus away from the Quad.

This issue has been covered in [Sep 26th, 2021 CNA](#).

Is QUAD losing its steam?

- AUKUS may have further shrunk the potential space available for the Quad, and India, to play a serious role in the region's security architecture.
- Quad seems to offer no clear purpose which, as a result, leads to too many items crowding the agenda.
- It neither has a secretariat or a charter, like the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#), nor a clear set of activities such as AUKUS.
- The ever-growing list of focal areas of the Quad will eventually make it a less than useful deliberative forum.
- While the Quad members have security/military considerations in mind vis-à-vis China while engaging the Quad platform, no one seems to be keen on framing it in such a manner.
- There is little interest in properly institutionalising the Quad nor has the objective for 'Quad Plus' been purposefully pursued.

Given this context, if AUKUS potentially overshadows the enthusiasm around the Quad, it would be disadvantageous to India's interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

Way Forward:

- Indo-Pacific is of great importance to India.
- Given the continental challenges it faces including from the new developments in Afghanistan, India should focus on shifting some attention to the maritime sphere as well.
- At a time when India is continentally in a difficult situation, an opportunity has presented itself for India — in the form of growing global interest in the Indo-Pacific — to be at the centre of a new geopolitical churning which it must make use of for its own security and prosperity.
- QUAD is a major way of bringing together like-minded states to check Chinese hegemony in the region.
 - Other Quad countries are either on the AUKUS or are alliance partners; India is neither.
- It is possible to explore military utility for the Quad without making it a formal military alliance. More so, exploring mutually beneficial military and security cooperation within the Quad framework need not contradict the principles of strategic autonomy.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. High water

Context:

Cyclone Gulab hit Andhra Pradesh near Kalingapatnam and has ravaged two districts.

Cyclone Gulab:

- The deep depression over the Bay of Bengal intensified into [cyclone Gulab](#).
- Cyclone Gulab crossed the north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha coast triggering widespread rain in the region.
- This is the third cyclone of 2021 after Tauktae and Yaas.
- Gulab however, appears to have been less intimidating than cyclones [Yaas](#) and Tauktae, although it continued to keep the seas unsafe for fishermen all along the coastline north of Andhra Pradesh, after moving overland.

Issue:

- Tropical cyclones have the propensity to inflict heavy damage to lives and property.
- They are laden with moisture and with accumulated energy, they pose a growing challenge to India.
- There have been some distressing deaths and inevitable material losses for many.
- Financial arrangements to insure the population against material losses also remain weak.
- Earlier experiences have shown that relief measures can easily fall victim to corruption.
- In the recovery phase of COVID-19, cyclones have upended life for many, disrupting key inter-State road links and leading to the cancellation or diversion of several trains.
- The northern Indian Ocean, of which the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal are a part, experiences only a minority of tropical storms annually (about 7% of worldwide events).
 - However, their destructive impact on the subcontinent is severe due to a dense population and poor capacity to absorb large quantities of rainfall dumped in a short period over cities and towns.
- Research evidence shows more cyclones forming over the Arabian Sea when compared to the Bay of Bengal.
 - Overall there were eight storms of concern to India in 2019, and five in 2021, [Amphan](#) being a super cyclone.
- The influence of climate change on cyclone characteristics in a world that is heating up due to the accumulation of greenhouse gases is an ongoing topic of study.
- The IPCC, in its scientific report on 1.5° C warming, said with a high degree of confidence that changes in the climate system, including the proportion of [tropical cyclones](#), would experience a larger impact from increasing warming.

Way Forward:

- The focus must now be on relief and rehabilitation.
- The imperative is to reach out to those affected by Gulab with food, shelter and healthcare support.

- There is an immediate need for deploying the many administrative capabilities acquired during the pandemic with the same speed.
- The welcome concern for public health and economic security must lead to stronger institutional responses to natural disasters too.
- The Centre and all States cannot afford to allow large-scale losses to communities to continue each year.
- Going beyond disaster response, the government must put in place institutional structures and insurance systems for financial protection.
- Cities must prepare to harvest every flood that brings vast quantities of water, which is vital to sustaining mass populations.
- In a nutshell, India must create a social safety net to manage the fallout of cyclonic storms.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Revitalising PM-KUSUM

Context:

The Union Minister of Power, New and Renewable Energy recently reviewed the progress of the [PM-KUSUM scheme](#) and reaffirmed the government's commitment to accelerating solar pump adoption.

Details:

PM-KUSUM:

- The Central Government announced the Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan or KUSUM scheme in 2019.
- This scheme was launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) for the installation of solar pumps and other renewable power plants across the nation.
- It aims at furthering the production of solar power in India and also gives the benefits of solar farming to farmers.
- It aims to help farmers access reliable day-time solar power for irrigation, reduce power subsidies, and decarbonise agriculture.
- PM-KUSUM provides farmers with incentives to install solar power pumps and plants in their fields. They can use one of three deployment models:
 - off-grid solar pumps
 - solarised agricultural feeders
 - grid-connected pumps

Issue:

- Pandemic-induced disruptions, limited buy-in from States, and implementation challenges have all affected the scheme's roll-out.
- Off-grid pumps have been the most popular, but the nearly 2,80,000 systems deployed fall far short of the scheme's target of two million by 2022.
- Barriers to adoption include limited awareness about solar pumps and farmers' inability to pay their upfront contribution.
- Progress on the other two models has been rather poor due to regulatory, financial, operational and technical challenges.
- Only a handful of states have initiated tenders or commissioned projects for solar feeders or grid-connected pumps.

How to Revitalise the PM KUSUM Scheme?

- The scheme's timeline must be extended.
 - Most Indian discoms have a surplus of contracted generation capacity and are cautious of procuring more power in the short term.
 - Extending PM-KUSUM's timelines beyond 2022 would allow discoms to align the scheme with their power purchase planning.
- A level playing field must be created for distributed solar plants.
 - Selling surplus power to discoms is one of the main attractions of grid-connected models. Yet, discoms often find utility-scale solar cheaper than distributed solar due to the latter's higher costs and the loss of locational advantage due to waived inter-State transmission system (ISTS) charges.
 - To tackle the bias against distributed solar, there is a need to:
 - address counter-party risks and grid-unavailability risks at distribution substations.
 - standardise tariff determination to reflect the higher costs of distributed power plants.
 - do away with the waiver of ISTS charges for solar plants.
 - Land regulations must be streamlined through inter-departmental coordination.
 - Doing so will help reduce delays in leasing or converting agricultural lands for non-agricultural purposes such as solar power generation.
 - There is a need to support innovative solutions for financing farmers' contributions.
 - Many farmers struggle to pay 30-40% of upfront costs in compliance with scheme requirements.
 - They cannot access bank loans without collateral.

- Out-of-the-box solutions like Karnataka’s pilot of a farmer-developer special-purpose vehicle to help farmers install solar power plants on their farms are needed.
- Extensively experiment grid-connected solar pumps.
 - Current obstacles to the adoption of grid-connected solar pumps include concerns about their economic viability in the presence of high farm subsidies and farmers’ unwillingness to feed in surplus power when selling water or irrigating extra land are much attractive prospects.
 - Also, the grid-connected model requires pumps to be metered and billed for accounting purposes but suffers from a lack of trust between farmers and discoms.
- Adopting solutions like smart meters and smart transformers and engaging with farmers can build trust.
 - However, testing the model under different agro-economic contexts will be critical to developing a strategy to scale it up.

The scheme, if implemented successfully, can generate thousands of jobs, reduce the carbon footprint of agriculture, and result in oil import savings.

F. Prelims Facts

1. DRDO tests Akash Prime missile

What’s in News?

The Defence Research and Development Organisation ([DRDO](#)) successfully tested a new version of the Akash surface-to-air missile Akash Prime from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, Odisha.

Details:

- The missile intercepted and destroyed an unmanned aerial target mimicking an enemy aircraft in its maiden flight test.
- In comparison to the existing Akash System, Akash Prime is equipped with an indigenous active Radio Frequency (RF) seeker for improved accuracy.
- Other improvements also ensure more reliable performance under low-temperature environments at higher altitudes.
- The Akash system already inducted is getting improved with more lethal missiles.

Note:

The Indian Army deployed the Akash air defence system along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh as tension rose between India and China in 2020.

Akash Missile:

- It is a medium range multi-target engagement capable missile.
- It was developed as part of the Integrated Guided-Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) other than Nag, Agni, Trishul, and Prithvi missiles.
- The supersonic missile has a range of around 25 km and up to the altitude of 18,000 metres.
- The missile uses high-energy solid propellant for the booster and ramjet-rocket propulsion for the sustained phase.

2. Army trying to fix issues with indigenous guns

What's in News?

Director-General of Artillery has said that the army is working with Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on indigenous artillery gun programmes.

- A lot of hand-holding has been done by the Army, both for ATAGS and Dhanush.

Advanced Towed Array Gun System (ATAGS):

- The ATAGS is a 155mm, 52-calibre heavy artillery gun jointly developed by the DRDO in partnership with Bharat Forge and the Tata Group.

Dhanush artillery gun:

- The Dhanush artillery gun is being developed by the OFB based on the original drawings of the Swedish Bofors guns. It is an upgrade of the Bofor Guns.
- It is a 155 mm, 45-calibre towed artillery gun with a range of 36 km and has demonstrated a range of 38 km with specialised ammunition.
- It is an upgrade of the existing 155m, 39-calibre Bofors FH 77 gun.
- It is compatible with all North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) 155 mm ammunition systems.

Note:

- Under the Field Artillery Rationalisation Programme (FARP) promulgated after the Kargil conflict in 1999, the Army envisaged procuring close to 3,000 guns of various types.
- Under this the towed guns will be the mainstay of the Army and artillery is being standardised to 155mm standard.

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Article 30 of the Constitution of India deals with the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.
2. It applies to both religious and linguistic minorities.
3. The right of such educational institutions to receive government aid is a fundamental right.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Article 30 of the Constitution of India deals with the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions. It applies to both religious and linguistic minorities.
- In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court made it clear that the right of educational institutions whether run by a majority or minority community to receive government aid is not a fundamental right.
- It said that if the government made a policy call to withdraw aid, an institution cannot question the decision as a matter of right.

Q.2 Recently the term 'Akash Prime' was seen in the news. What does it refer to?

- a. A collaboration between Amazon Prime and the Education Ministry to run online classes
- b. A new version of the Akash surface-to-air missile developed by the DRDO

- c. A weather monitoring system deployed by India Meteorological Department
- d. An earth-observation satellite launched by ISRO for military applications

Answer: b

Explanation:

- 'Akash Prime' is a new version of the Akash surface-to-air missile developed by the DRDO.

Q.3 Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Cauvery river dispute is between Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.
2. The sharing of the waters should be as per the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's decision of 2007, which was modified by the Supreme Court in 2018.
3. The Central Government has notified the Cauvery Water Management Scheme which constitutes the 'Cauvery Water Management Authority' and the 'Cauvery Water Regulation Committee' to give effect to the court's decision.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Cauvery river dispute is a water-sharing dispute between Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.
- The sharing of the waters should be as per the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's decision of 2007, which was modified by the Supreme Court in 2018.
- The Central Government has notified the Cauvery Water Management Scheme which constitutes the 'Cauvery Water Management Authority' and the 'Cauvery Water Regulation Committee' to give effect to the court's decision.

Q.4 The Taiwan Strait connects –

- a. Strait of Malacca with Gulf of Thailand
- b. South China Sea with East China Sea

- c. Andaman Sea with Gulf of Thailand
- d. Indian Ocean with Pacific Ocean

Answer: b

Explanation:

The Taiwan Strait connects the South China Sea with the East China Sea.

Q5. Which of the following are the reasons/factors for exposure to benzene pollution?

- 1. Automobile exhaust
- 2. Tobacco smoke
- 3. Wood burning
- 4. Using varnished wooden furniture
- 5. Using products made of polyurethane

Select the correct answer using the given code below – [UPSC 2020]

- a. 1, 2 and 3 only
- b. 2 and 4 only
- c. 1, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: d

Explanation:

Benzene is an organic chemical compound (C_6H_6). Benzene is formed from both natural processes and human activities. Natural sources of benzene include volcanoes and forest fires.

Following are the reasons/factors for exposure to benzene pollution:

- Automobile exhaust
- Tobacco smoke
- Wood burning
- Using varnished wooden furniture
- Using products made of polyurethane

1. The QUAD has too many items on its agenda, and with the announcement of AUKUS, faces the danger of becoming a talk shop. Critically examine. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS 2 International Relations)
2. India must create a social safety net to manage the fallout of cyclonic storms. Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS 3 Disaster Management)

