

30 Sep 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. [GS 1 Related](#)

B. [GS 2 Related](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Plea in HC seeks removal of verdict from Net](#)
2. [24 lakh pre-primary students to get meals](#)

HEALTH

1. [Nipah antibodies found in bat samples in Kerala](#)
2. [‘High levels of maternal, child undernutrition continue to plague India’](#)

C. [GS 3 Related](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Probe shows use of toxic material in firecrackers: SC](#)

DEFENCE

1. [Army to get 25 advanced light helicopters at ₹3,850 crore](#)

D. [GS 4 Related](#)

E. [Editorials](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [A fund without a care for the RTI](#)
2. [A scheme before its time](#)

ECONOMY

1. [A lesson from China on gig workers’ rights](#)

F. [Prelims Facts](#)

1. [India, Australia sign ‘Terms of Reference’ for navy to navy talks](#)

G. [Tidbits](#)

1. [Cabinet approves ECGC listing, ₹6,000 crore for export cover](#)

H. [UPSC Prelims Practice Questions](#)

I. [UPSC Mains Practice Questions](#)

A. GS 1 Related

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Plea in HC seeks removal of verdict from Net

Context:

The Delhi High Court sought replies from the Centre, Google and India Kanoon on a plea seeking removal of a judgment and an order in connection with a seven-year-old FIR under 'Right to be Forgotten'.

Right to be Forgotten:

- The Right to be Forgotten falls under the purview of an individual's [right to privacy](#).
- In 2017, the court said that the right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under [Article 21](#) and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution.
- Both the right to be left alone as well as the right to be forgotten are components of the right to privacy.
- Broadly, under the Right to be forgotten, users can de-link, limit, delete or correct the disclosure of their personal information held by data fiduciaries.
 - A data fiduciary means any person, including the State, a company, any juristic entity or any individual who alone or in conjunction with others determines the purpose and means of processing of personal data.

The right to privacy is also governed by the [Personal Data Protection Bill](#) that is yet to be passed by Parliament. The bill exclusively talks about the "Right to be Forgotten."

2. 24 lakh pre-primary students to get meals

Context:

The Cabinet has approved a proposal to rename the 26-year-old national [mid-day meal scheme](#) as the PM POSHAN (Poshan Shakti Nirman) scheme.

Details:

- The scheme aims to give a hot cooked meal to 11.8 crore government school students from Classes I to VIII.
- From FY 2022-23 it will also cover the 24 lakh children studying in balvatikas, the pre-primary section of government schools.
 - The balvatikas offer one year of pre-school classes.
- The PM POSHAN scheme has been approved for the next five-year period until 2025-26, with a collective outlay of ₹1.31 lakh crore, including ₹31,733 crore as the share to be borne by the State governments.

- It has been rebranded to provide a new shape to the policy “to enhance the nutrition levels of schoolchildren”.
- It is expected to improve nutritional status, encourage education and learning and increase enrolments in government schools.
- The extension of mid-day meals to pre-primary students, who are to be incorporated into the formal education system, was a key recommendation of the [National Education Policy \(NEP\), 2020](#).
- However, there has been no progress on the NEP’s other recommendation to start offering breakfasts to school students.

Category: HEALTH

1. Nipah antibodies found in bat samples in Kerala

Context:

Nipah virus antibodies (IgG antibodies) were detected in bat samples collected by the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, from two districts in Kerala where a Nipah infection was confirmed.

Why is Nipah a cause of concern?

- Nipah virus is a zoonotic virus (it is transmitted from animals to humans – such as bats or pigs) and can also be transmitted through contaminated food or directly between people.
- Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family are the natural hosts of the [Nipah virus](#).
- The Nipah virus (NiV) is classified as a “highly pathogenic paramyxovirus”.
- Although the Nipah virus has caused only a few known outbreaks in Asia, it infects a wide range of animals and causes severe disease and death in people, making it a public health concern.
- In infected people, it causes a range of illnesses from asymptomatic (subclinical) infection to acute respiratory illness and fatal encephalitis. The case fatality rate is estimated at 40% to 75%.
- There is no treatment or vaccine available for either people or animals. The primary treatment for humans is supportive care.

Given the current evidence, it has been logically concluded that the Nipah outbreak in Kozhikode did originate from bats, even though the authorities are still in the dark as to the route of virus transmission from bats to humans.

2. ‘High levels of maternal, child undernutrition continue to plague India’

Context:

UNICEF’s head of nutrition’s comments on high levels of maternal and child undernutrition In India.

Observation/Comments:

- According to Arjan De Wagt, head of nutrition, [UNICEF](#), COVID-19 has heightened the risk of increasing malnutrition.
- While India has made impressive gains in economic and human development in recent decades, high levels of maternal and child undernutrition continue to plague the country.

- The future of children in India, controlling COVID-19 and ending malnutrition are equally important and urgent.

Data on Malnutrition:

- The Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS) and National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS), show that about:
 - One-third of children under five years of age in India are stunted.
 - One-third of them are underweight.
 - Almost two out of 10 children are nutritionally wasted.
- Many of the children suffer from multiple anthropometric deficits.
- The CNNS also highlights the emerging problems of overweight, obesity and micro-nutrient deficiencies.

Impact of COVID-19:

- Health and social services, such as anganwadi centres, nutrition rehabilitation centres, and village health sanitation and nutrition days (VHSND), were disrupted.
- The distribution of iron and folic acid tablets to children in schools was significantly reduced, and awareness campaigns in schools on nutrition were suspended.
- The launch of the [Poshan Abhiyan](#) in March 2018 refocused the national development agenda on nutrition. However, with the pandemic, there is a heightened risk of increasing malnutrition, and parts of progress made in the past may get undone.
- As the period of pandemic prolongs, food insecurities and nutritional challenges will intensify too.
- Food insecurity arising out of the pandemic may cause families to shift to cheap food with low nutritive value, causing long-term adverse impacts on the cognitive development of children.
- COVID-19 related priorities could threaten the delivery and financing of nutrition and nutrition security responses.

Way Forward:

These are the areas that need immediate attention.

- Strong leadership at all levels, from national to the district is essential to bring back focus to address food, income and nutritional security.
- Uninterrupted, universal, timely and high-quality coverage of essential evidence-based nutritional services must be ensured, with a special focus on children below two years of age, pregnant women and adolescent girls, which are critical development periods.
- Pandemic calls for strategies adapting to COVID-19 guidelines and innovations in the service delivery mechanism.
- Adequate financing is needed to ensure the delivery of high-impact interventions, and additional financing will be required for ensuring food and nutritional security, especially for the vulnerable population groups.

- Multisectoral interventions that directly or indirectly impact nutrition like health, nutrition and social protection schemes need to be delivered effectively. Migrant labourers and urban poor need special focus.
- Nutrition needs to be retained as a key indicator for development.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Probe shows use of toxic material in firecrackers: SC

Context:

The Supreme Court has said that a preliminary enquiry by the CBI into the firecracker industry revealed rampant violation of its ban on the use of toxic ingredients like barium and its salts.

Details:

- In March 2020, the court ordered the CBI Joint Director in Chennai to conduct a detailed probe into allegations of violation of the court ban in 2018.
- A chemical analysis of the samples of finished and semi-finished firecrackers and raw materials taken from the manufacturers showed barium content.
- Firecracker covers did not show the manufacture or expiry dates.

Read more on this topic covered in [Sep 29th, 2021 CNA](#).

Category: DEFENCE

1. Army to get 25 advanced light helicopters at ₹3,850 crore

Context:

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has accorded approval to capital acquisition proposals of the three Services.

Details:

- The capital acquisition proposals have been estimated at approximately ₹13,165 crore.
- Of these, procurements for ₹11,486 crore were from domestic sources.
- The key proposals include helicopters, guided munitions and rocket ammunition.
- The DAC accorded acceptance of necessity (AoN) for procurement of 25 advanced light helicopters (ALH)-Mark III helicopters from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) under Buy Indian-IDDM (Indian Designed, Developed and Manufactured).
 - The ALH Mk III is fitted with a state-of-the-art glass cockpit and a powerful Shakti engine.
- To give a boost to the indigenous design and development of ammunition, the DAC approved the procurement of terminally guided munition (TGM) and rocket ammunition under the buy (Indian-IDDM) category.

- The DAC also approved a few amendments to the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), 2020, as part of business process re-engineering to ensure further ease of doing business for the industry as well as measures to enhance procurement efficiency and reduce the timelines, the statement added.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. A fund without a care for the RTI

The article talks about the PM CARES Fund and argues that the Government's claim that the PM CARES Fund is not a public authority is unacceptable.

Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund:

- PM CARES Fund is a public charitable trust set up by the government in the wake of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Prime Minister is the chairman of the trust and its members include the defence minister, the home minister and the finance minister.
- It is said that this Fund will also cater to similar distressing situations if they occur in the times ahead.

Know more about the [PM CARES Fund](#) in the link.

The other funds:

National Disaster Response Fund:

- The DM Act provided for a Disaster Response Fund — state and district level funds (besides the national level) and also to collect and use the donations at the local level, with mandatory transparency and audit provisions.
- The National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) was statutorily constituted and was established under the [Disaster Management \(DM\) Act of 2005](#).
- The NDRF is mandated to be accountable, and answerable under the RTI Act, being a public authority, and auditable by the [Comptroller and Auditor General of India](#).

Prime Minister's National Relief Fund:

- In 1948, the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) was established with public contributions. It was aimed to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.
- The resources are now utilised primarily to render immediate relief to families of those killed in natural calamities and to the victims of the major accidents and riots.
- Assistance from the PMNRF is also rendered, to partially clear the expenses for medical treatment.
- The fund is recognised as a Trust under the Income-Tax Act and the same is managed by the Prime Minister or multiple delegates for national causes.

- The PMNRF has the President of India and the Leader of Opposition also as trustees.

Also read [Differences between PMNRF and PM CARES Fund in India | Comparisons and Similarities](#)

Issues with PM CARES Fund:

- Despite the existence of the NDRF and the PMNRF, the newly launched PM CARES Fund is in the limelight.
- It has been created by the creation of a webpage. Concerns are raised about it not being created by law or even a notification.
- The PM CARES Fund was neither created by the Constitution of India nor by any statute.
- Critics argue that the newly created fund is a controversial, unanswerable, and 'non-accountable' vehicle as its character has not yet been spelt out.
- The PM CARES Fund centralises the collection of donations and its utility, which is not only against the federal character but also practically inconvenient.
- Besides, in a recent affidavit, the Delhi High Court was informed that the PM CARES Fund is not a Government of India fund and that the amount collected by it does not go to the Consolidated Fund of India.
 - The affidavit was filed by an Under-Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), who added that the trust functions with transparency.
- While the Government said that it is a public charitable trust, it still maintains that it is not a 'public authority'.

Way Forward:

- The claim that the PM CARES Fund is not a public authority would be absurd.
- The PM CARES Fund should be declared as 'a Public Authority' under the [RTI Act](#), and all RTI queries answered truthfully.
- It should be transparent when it comes to its sources and fund disbursement.
- If the amount received by the fund goes to the Consolidated Fund of India, it could have been audited by the CAG. Because this Fund is not audited by CAG, the Government has to ensure that it is answerable and foreclose any possibility of corruption.
- Section 19 of the Indian Trusts Act mandates the trustees to present full and accurate information of the amount and state of the trust property to the beneficiaries. Because of this statutory access, all information about the PM CARES Fund should be accessible as per Section 2(f) of the RTI Act.

2. A scheme before its time

Context:

The Prime Minister launched the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

Read more on this topic covered in [Sep 28th, 2021 CNA](#).

Details:

- The Prime Minister has announced the National Digital Health Mission.

- Its most salient aspect is that all citizens will have the option to voluntarily opt for a Health ID.

Digital Health ID:

- The Health ID is a 14-digit health identification number that will uniquely identify every citizen and will be a repository of their medical history.
- It will contain details of every test, every disease, the doctors visited, the medicines taken and the diagnosis.
- This id can be created by using a person's basic details and mobile number or Aadhaar number, and there will likely be an app acting as a convenient interface.
- The portability this offers implies a person will never have to carry around their reports.
- The doctor who is examining the patient can give more well-informed advice because it is possible that patients may not consider aspects of their medical history relevant to share with a doctor, or sometimes may forget about them, but which may be valuable for a better diagnosis.

Issue:

- There is no clear justification that the immobility of medical records is an obstacle to providing affordable, high-quality health care in India.
- The challenge of health care in India can be expressed quite simply.
 - There are too few hospitals with trained staff to cater to all Indians. But expanding the healthcare system will not be easy.
 - India's size of its population, a large rural population means that the cost of researching, finding and buying appropriate drugs and treatment, competing systems of medicine is challenging.
- The graver problem is the absence of a privacy law and little public awareness and control over their data.
- With the health ID storing personal data, concerns are being raised that it could be open to misuse.
- There is the danger that any large private insurance company could use sophisticated algorithms across the health and other databases to construct risk profiles for people and make access to affordable insurance difficult.
- Data mining can prioritise certain rich demographics for their services and direct public and private resources to people who can afford a high premium for their services rather than to the poor who need them.

Way Forward:

- For a digital health ecosystem to work, it is important for a strong foundation.
- There is a need for strong legal provisions to check the misuse of a large amount of personal data stored in the health IDs.
- A digital health mission needs to get all the fundamentals of the ecosystem right.

Category: ECONOMY

1. A lesson from China on gig workers' rights

Context:

Recently, the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers, on behalf of gig workers, filed a [public interest litigation](#) in the Supreme Court demanding that the Union government provide aid to workers affected by the pandemic.

Gig workers:

- Gig workers are those engaged in hourly or part-time jobs in everything from catering events to software development.
- They have a non-standard work arrangement with their employers and share a non-traditional employer-employee relationship.
- The work is usually temporary and completed within a stipulated time.

Read more [Gig and Platform Workers – Meaning, Significance, Legal Framework Explained](#)

Details:

- The petition has asked for 'gig workers' and 'platform workers' to be declared as 'unorganised workers'.
 - Doing so would help them come under the purview of the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008.
 - In short, the petition demands social security benefits for gig workers.
- The pandemic has helped make the services of delivery workers evident and visible. The media aided this transformation.
 - Through 2020, China, India, the U.S. and Europe saw these invisible workers being propelled to frontline workers.

Recent Development in China:

- In early 2021, in successive strikes spanning over two months, delivery workers protested against poor working conditions.
- A weak civil society and the absence of independent labour unions leaves gig workers in China with very little option but to go on strike or protest, despite the risks, to affect change.
- China, owing to public pressure committed to ending the practice of forcing workers to register as independent businesses, which has helped food delivery platforms evade responsibilities as employers.
- Many of the government initiatives have lately been public-driven.
- In China, where the government is now focused on common prosperity, which seeks to narrow a widening wealth gap that threatens the country's economic rise, the government's scrutiny over food delivery platforms has also increased.
- It was in the government's interest to intervene when it realised that there was growing discontent not only among the delivery workers but also the public about their plight.

The Indian context:

- The situation is different in India. Any reform in this sector is led wholly by delivery workers, not the public.
- For 27 days in 2020, close to 3,000 delivery workers from Swiggy went on strike in Hyderabad to protest the slash in remuneration.
- The strikes disbanded after the Joint Commissioner of the Labour Department called a hearing with the platform's operations manager and the workers' union.
 - It was the first time in India that such a negotiation was taking place.
- In the lead up to Zomato's IPO in 2021, several Tweets called customers' attention to exploitative practices employed by platforms.
- The PIL in the Supreme Court is another major step in this regard.

Conclusion:

- The biggest lesson from China is that public opinion has partly led to government regulation and change in company policy.
- To combat disparities caused by their status as independent contractors and mistreatment by app companies, food app delivery workers in New York City have been fighting for better working conditions.
 - The New York City Council finally passed a bill package that recognizes the rights of these essential workers.
- Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic began, food delivery has become an essential part of daily life. Indians could also make an effort to be better informed about the way platforms work by seeking out delivery workers and asking about their work conditions and the pressures they face.

F. Prelims Facts

1. India, Australia sign 'Terms of Reference' for navy to navy talks

What's in News?

The Indian Navy and the Australian Navy signed the 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) for the conduct of the navy to navy talks under the framework of the 'Joint Guidance for the India-Australia Navy to Navy Relationship' document.

- This is the first such document signed by the Indian Navy with any country.
- The document set the navy to navy talks as the principal medium for guiding bilateral cooperation.
- The document would be pivotal in consolidating the shared commitment to promoting peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The highlights of the document included close cooperation in regional and multilateral fora, including the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) and [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#).

G. Tidbits

1. Cabinet approves ECGC listing, ₹6,000 crore for export cover

- The Cabinet has approved an infusion of more than ₹6,000 crore into entities providing export insurance cover to facilitate additional exports worth in excess of ₹5.6 lakh crore over the next five years.
- The Cabinet has decided to give the ECGC ₹4,400 crore as capital, which will enable it to provide insurance policies worth ₹88,000 crore.
- It also approved the listing of state-run Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) on the stock exchanges.

Significance:

- Apart from spurring exports, these decisions will also create close to 62 lakh more jobs.

Note:

- ECGC Limited is a wholly-owned Central Public Sector Enterprise of the government of India.
- It provides insurance covers to banks against risks in export credit lending to the exporter borrowers.
- It was set up with the objective of improving the competitiveness of the exports by providing credit risk insurance and related services for exports.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. With reference to National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. NPPA is an independent body of experts under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
2. NPPA is required to monitor the prices of drugs and take corrective measures where warranted and has the power to fix and regulate such prices.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority is a government regulatory agency that controls the prices of pharmaceutical drugs in India.
- It was constituted by a Resolution in 1997 as an attached office of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers as an independent Regulator for pricing of drugs and to ensure availability and accessibility of medicines at affordable prices.
- NPPA is required to monitor the prices of drugs and take corrective measures where necessary and has the power to fix and regulate such prices.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Jahanpanah City:

1. It was the last medieval city of Delhi.
2. It was built by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Jahanpanah was the fourth medieval city of Delhi established in 1326–1327 to address the constant threat of the Mongols.
- It was established by Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325–51) of the Delhi Sultanate.
- Muhammad bin Tughlaq wanted to unify the scattered urban settlements and that was the reason he built the fortified city. The areas included Lal Kot, Siri, and Tughlaqabad Fort.

Q3. With respect to Rabindranath Tagore, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Tagore renounced his Knighthood in protest of the Bengal famine.
2. He became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.
3. The national anthem of Bangladesh was composed by Tagore.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood in condemnation of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919.
- He was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- Bangladesh's national anthem, "Amar Shonar Bangla" was penned by Rabindranath Tagore in 1905.

Q4. Recently the term 'Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)' was seen in the news. What does it refer to?

- a. PCA is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI.
- b. A weather monitoring system deployed by India Meteorological Department
- c. A new strategy against Maoists
- d. An initiative in the National Education Policy to revamp the elementary education

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI.
- It is a framework designed and invoked by RBI when banks breach certain key risk thresholds including asset quality, profitability and capital.

Q5. With reference to 'dugong', a mammal found in India, which of the following statements is/are correct? (2015)

- 1. It is a herbivorous marine animal.
- 2. It is found along the entire coast of India.
- 3. It is given legal protection under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The dugong is a marine mammal.
- Dugongs are generally found in warm waters around the coast with large numbers concentrated in wide and shallow protected bays.
- Dugongs are protected in India and occur in the Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, Gulf of Kutch and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- It is given legal protection under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. PM CARES Fund should come under the Public Authority. Examine. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]
2. Despite the claims of the National Digital Health Mission supporting universal health coverage digitally, the overall fundamentals of the health ecosystem have to be set right to achieve better outcomes. Analyze. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]

