

01 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. [Monsoon may withdraw from next week](#)

Context:

- Monsoon rainfall for the year 2021.

Details:

Average rainfall:

- India has recorded an **average of nearly 87 cm of rainfall across subdivisions**, just short of the nearly 88 cm it normally receives during the monsoon.
- At the start of the monsoon, the **IMD had forecast monsoon rainfall to be “above normal”** or around 101% of the Long Period Average (88 cm).
 - LPA is the average rainfall recorded over India between 1961 and 2010 and is considered the normal rainfall. Its value is 88 cm of rainfall.

Temporal distribution of monsoons:

- Notably, **September** which marks the beginning of the end of the monsoon’s four-month journey over India and marks the withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent **has witnessed heavier rainfalls than usual**.
- The last two years have also witnessed similar trends.
- Higher September rainfall is being attributed to transitioning temperatures in the Central Pacific Ocean where a **La Nina — characterised by colder than normal sea surface temperatures** — has been taking shape. Other factors that contributed to strong September rains were favourable conditions in the Indian Ocean as well as a **rain-bearing system in the Bay of Bengal that resulted in Cyclone Gulab**.
 - Sea surface temperature (SST) conditions over the Pacific and the Indian Oceans are known to have a strong influence on the Indian monsoon.

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

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 26th Sep 2021](#)

Spatial distribution of monsoons:

- Across the regions, central **India saw 83% more rain than normal, northwest India 40% and southern India 24% above normal**. However, **northeastern and eastern India saw a 30% reduction**.
- Typically, heavy rains in central India correspond to weaker rains in the northeast because of the movement of the monsoon system.

Conclusion:

- Experts have pointed out that though **variability within the monsoon and the rainfall is a characteristic of the Indian monsoon**, it could also be indicative of the impact of **climate change** on the monsoonal rainfall in India.
- However, this could be only substantiated by observing the long term trends.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Hidden debt rising for partners of China’s BRI plan

Context:

- Study on the **increasing debt among countries borrowing from China**.

Details:

- A new study by AidData, a development research lab at the College of William & Mary in the U.S., has found that the **Chinese debt burdens among many countries under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are substantially larger than previously estimated.**
- Notably, **most of this debt remains hidden** from the country's accounts as an increasing number of the project deals are being struck not directly between governments but structured through often opaque arrangements with a range of financing institutions. Hence they remain systematically under-reported to the World Bank's Debtor Reporting System (DRS).
 - Currently, nearly 70% of China's overseas lending is now directed to state-owned companies, state-owned banks, special purpose vehicles, joint ventures, and private sector institutions. This leads to what experts have termed as **opaque lending practices of China.**
- The study estimates that the average government is under-reporting its actual and potential repayment obligations to China by an amount that is equivalent to 5.8% of its GDP and collectively, these **under-reported debts are worth approximately \$385 billion.**
- **42 countries now have debt exposure to China in excess of 10% of GDP.**
 - India ranked 23rd in the list of top recipients of Chinese loans from 2000 to 2017, receiving \$8.86 billion.

Debt trap diplomacy:

- There has been a **surge in lending from Chinese institutions over the past two decades.**
- There are reports about China using **relatively high valued interest loans with short maturity lengths to fund mostly non-viable projects.** This invariably impacts the ability of the borrowing nations to repay the debt back to China. This sort of predatory lending has resulted in **debt distress** in many borrowing countries.
- Chinese institutions use collateralisation to mitigate repayment risk and have been able to **take over strategic assets** in some countries. Also in some cases, the borrowing countries have been forced into accepting **economic concessions in exchange for debt relief.**
 - Sri Lanka has had to hand over the Hambantota port to China over a 99-year lease due to the inability to repay back the Chinese loans.
 - China has also secured a large swathe of land in the strategic Pamir mountains from Tajikistan in exchange for debt forgiveness.
- China has thus been able to use debt to establish a dominant position in the international development finance market.
- The financial and economic dominance may also be converted into **political leverage** which can be used to **influence domestic and foreign policy decisions** of indebted countries.

Factors contributing to debt trap:

- **Lack of adequate financing options** for infrastructure projects for middle and low-income countries
- **Predatory lending practices of China**
- **Scandals and corruption**

- A high proportion of the BRI infrastructure project portfolio has encountered major implementation problems, such as corruption scandals or labour violations.

Implications for India:

- Debt distress and coercive tactics from China may help China increase its political influence among India's neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal. This could **strain the bilateral relations** with such countries.
- Also, the commercial assets being taken over by China in exchange for debt relief could be used by China for military purposes. This poses serious **security risks** for India.

Way forward:

- The international community must provide alternatives to Chinese infrastructure financing.
- Initiatives like the **Asia-Africa Growth corridor (India-Japan collaboration)**, **Global Infrastructure facility (G-20)** and **Build Back Better World Partnership (G-7)** should be expanded to meet the infrastructural needs of the developing countries.

2. From Afghanistan to AUKUS, a Biden doctrine takes shape

Background:

U.S. pullout from Afghanistan:

- **The U.S. pulled out its troops from Afghanistan after reaching an agreement with the Taliban** despite the global condemnation of the move. The U.S. line of argument has been that its strategic objectives in Afghanistan have been met and it is not its responsibility to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan.

AUKUS alliance:

- Formation of AUKUS alliance – Under the AUKUS deal, **Australia would get nuclear-powered submarines from the U.S. and the U.K.** Also, Australia will host American bombers on its territory and get access to advanced missile technology.

For more related information on the AUKUS alliance refer to the following article:

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

Quad partnership:

- Increasing support to QUAD partnership – The **first in-person Quad summit of leaders** from India, Australia and Japan was held recently.

For information on the QUAD summit refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 26th Sep 2021](#)

Details:

- At the outset, the U.S. decision to withdraw from Afghanistan appears as the **U.S.'s strategic reluctance** in avoiding taking responsibility to defeat terrorism globally and had also raised credibility questions on America's power.

- However, a closer analysis with respect to the recent developments points to a rather strategic framework being adopted by the U.S. based on **pragmatic realism**.
- The U.S. would limit its focus on preventing terrorist attacks on the American homeland and would rather focus its attention on dealing with the geopolitical contest with China. This approach would allow the U.S. to retreat from other conflict theatres, and refocus its resources on tackling China's rise.
 - Tackling China's rise is vital to America's interests because an increasingly powerful China could challenge the U.S.'s global pre-eminence.
- This marks a **drastic change given the liberal internationalism policy followed by the U.S previously**, which saw it use its military and political power to address humanitarian issues and internal conflicts in some countries.
- Notably, however, despite the overwhelming signalling being given to China on U.S. intentions in the Indo-Pacific through the AUKUS alliance, the **U.S. President ruled out a new Cold War in his UNGA address given recently**.

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

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 22nd Sep 2021](#)

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Making parties constitutional

The article talks about the need for making political parties in India constitutional.

Importance and Nature of Political Parties:

A political party is an organised group of citizens who hold common views on governance and act as a political unit that seeks to obtain control of the government with a view to further the agenda and policy they profess.

- They are indispensable links between the people and the representative machinery of government.
- Political parties maintain a continuous connection between the people and those who represent them either in government or in the opposition.
- Political parties have extra-legal growth in almost every democratic country.
 - The American Constitution does not presume the existence of political parties.
 - In Britain too, political parties are still unknown to the law.
- Similarly, political parties in India are extra-constitutional, but they are the breathing air of the political system.

The German Model:

- The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany gives constitutional status to political parties. Its Article 21 deals with their status, rights, duties and functions.
- It provides:
 - Political parties shall participate in the formation of the political will of the people. They may be freely established. Their internal organisation must conform to democratic principles. They must publicly account for their assets and for the sources and use of their funds.
 - Parties that, by reason of their aims or the behaviour of their members, seek to undermine or abolish the free democratic basic order or to endanger the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany shall be unconstitutional.
 - The Federal Constitutional Court shall rule on the question of unconstitutionality. Details shall be regulated by federal laws.

Internal Democracy in Political Parties:

- Political parties in developed nations maintain high levels of internal democracy.
- In the U.K., the Conservative Party has the National Conservative Convention as its top body. It has a Central Council and an Executive Committee. The Central Council elects its President, a Chairman and Vice-Chairmen at its annual meeting. It also elects an Executive Committee which meets once a month.
- In the U.S., both the Democratic and the Republican parties have the National Committee as their top decision-making body. The National Committee plays an important role in the presidential election and agenda-setting.

The German Model for India:

- As compared to the U.S. and the U.K. models, the German model of constitutionalising political parties is more desirable for India.
- Section 29A(5) of the [Representation of the People Act, 1951](#) is the only major statutory provision dealing with political parties in India.
 - It orders that a political party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy, and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

Issues:

- Political parties are vital players in the political system and need constitutional regulation.
- Most of the parties are openly caste- or religious-based.
- Their finances are dubious and opaque.
- Most of the parties are family fiefdoms.
- There are no periodical in-party elections in Indian parties except in a few.

Conclusion:

- The Indian Constitution is one of the longest constitutions in the world. It even elaborately deals with co-operative societies.

- The right to form co-operative societies is a fundamental right under Article 19 (1)(c), but the right to form political parties is not.
- Political parties are the agents of democracy and safety valves in the political system. They desperately need reform.
- Hence, it is high time to constitutionalise political parties to ensure in-party democracy, to impart transparency in their finances, and to de-communalise them.

2. A State, a 'clean sweep' and the art of sanitation

The article talks about the commendable progress made by Madhya Pradesh in implementing the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

- This campaign was launched by the Prime Minister on 2nd October 2014 to honour Mahatma Gandhi's vision of a clean country.
- The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA), or Clean India Mission, aimed to provide every family with sanitation facilities, including toilets, solid and liquid waste disposal systems.
- The call to achieve the goal by October 2, 2019, and make this an appropriate tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, on his 150th birth anniversary was well-received by all Indian citizens and the international community, too.

Read more on [Swachh Bharat Abhiyan – Details on Mission, Action Plan, Implementation](#)

Details:

- Madhya Pradesh (MP) Government followed a comprehensive and scientific approach in implementing the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- Urban Madhya Pradesh received its ODF certification on October 2, 2017.
- Rural Madhya Pradesh received its ODF certification the following year on October 2, 2018.
- As of today, Madhya Pradesh ranks third in the country in the cleanliness survey, 2020.
- Indore has been ranked the cleanest city in the country in Swachh Survekshan (Cleanliness Survey) since 2017. It has become India's first 'Water Plus' city in [Swachh Survekshan 2021](#).
 - It achieved this feat by treating its wastewater to a satisfactory level, before releasing it into rivers.
- The capital city of Bhopal has bagged the title of the cleanest and the greenest capital of the country in the cleanliness survey of 2020.

MP's Course of Action in Implementing SBA:

- A comprehensive exercise was initiated to identify the sanitation issues people faced through a series of interactions with all identified stakeholders.
- Consequently, insights were gathered to inform the strategy to make Madhya Pradesh 100% Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2019.
- Swachhta (cleanliness) was made an individual's responsibility, both at a personal and public level.
- People's participation was the driving force behind the success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in Madhya Pradesh.

- A multi-pronged strategy was designed involving the construction of toilets, implementing tough regulatory steps such as levying fines for open defecation and encouraging behavioural change through innovation.
 - This approach guaranteed the sustenance of changed behaviours and the longevity of the impact of efforts.
- Good leadership encouraged a sustained change of behaviour. Right from a Collector to a local level leader at the gram panchayat level, they took the message of cleanliness to the people.
- What followed was a remarkable change in the attitudes of the people as they began to own the movement.

The collective efforts of the citizens of Madhya Pradesh and the State machinery have brought about an irreversible positive transformation in sanitation, right down to the grassroots.

3. Failing on food

Context:

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

This topic has been covered in [Sep 30th, 2021 CNA](#).

Details:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved PM POSHAN until 2025-26.
- The approval of the PM POSHAN scheme comes at a critical time when real income declines and the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the ability of families to ensure good nutrition.

Data on Malnutrition:

- The findings in Phase I of the NFHS-5 for 22 States and Union Territories in December 2020:
 - childhood stunting rose in 13 States
 - there was a high prevalence of anaemia among children and women
 - wasting was a serious concern in 12 States.
- The shortfall over the previous survey period exposes the worsening status of nutrition, threatening to deprive millions of children of a fully productive adult life.
- Recent data on child malnutrition highlight the value of good school meals.

PM POSHAN Scheme:

- The centrally supported hot meal programme in Government and Government-aided schools, covering 11.8 crore children, will be supplemented with nutritional elements in identified aspirational districts and areas with high anaemia.
- The scheme, which is proposed to be extended to pre-primary children, provides for:
 - social audit
 - creation of school nutritional gardens to source fresh produce
 - involvement of farmer-producer organisations as providers,
 - emphasis on local food traditions

Way Forward:

- While there are positive features in PM POSHAN Scheme, momentum towards eradicating malnutrition depends upon annual budgetary outlays.
- The proof of its working will lie in measurable outcomes.
- This hidden crisis must be addressed effectively, backed by strong budgetary commitment.
- Support for the PM POSHAN must remain elastic.
- While some child growth metrics such as stunting require a longer window to measure, problems such as anaemia and low weight lend themselves to speedy amelioration.
- The Government must demonstrate that Saksham Anganwadi-Mission POSHAN 2.0, which amalgamates the POSHAN Abhiyan and schemes covering anganwadis, crèches and adolescent girls, is fiscally stronger than its erstwhile component parts.
- There must be a meaningful increase in the current budget estimate over the combined past outlay for the subsumed individual schemes.
- The renewed nutritional plan should introduce a greater diversity of diets that compensates for micronutrient and protein deficiency.
- Strong supplementation of nutrition at school, in the community, and at childcare centres is critical at a time when India faces food inflation and pandemic-induced income declines have depressed essential consumption.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Current account surplus slides to \$6.5 billion in Q1

Current account balance:

- **The current account balance of payment is defined as the sum of the balance of trade (goods and services exports minus imports), net income from abroad, and net current transfers.** A positive current account balance indicates the nation is a net lender to the rest of the world, while a negative current account balance indicates that it is a net borrower from the rest of the world.
- The current account balance of payments is a record of a country's international transactions with the rest of the world.
- The current account is an important indicator of an economy's health.

Context:

- Reserve Bank of India data on current account balance.
 - India's current account balance stands at a surplus of \$6.5 billion (0.9% of GDP) in the first quarter, compared with a surplus of \$19.1 billion (3.7% of GDP) a year earlier.

2. Urban missions to get big outlay

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U):

- SBM-U was launched in 2014. SBM-U focused on the **construction of toilets and making cities open defecation-free (ODF).**

Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT):

- Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (**AMRUT**) was launched in 2015 with the focus to **establish adequate basic infrastructure for urban transformation by implementing urban revival projects**.
- Providing basic services (e.g. water supply, sewerage, urban transport) to households and building amenities in cities that will improve the quality of life for all, especially the poor and the disadvantaged are priorities for the AMRUT scheme.
- The Mission will focus on the following Thrust Areas:
 - Water Supply
 - Sewerage and septage management
 - Storm Water Drainage to reduce flooding
 - Non-motorized Urban Transport
 - Green space/parks

Context:

- The revamped versions of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) are to be launched soon.

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. The recently launched DigiSaksham is:

- a. A digital skills programme to enhance the employability of youth by imparting digital skills.
- b. A Scheme aimed at providing encouragement and support to specially-abled children to pursue Technical Education.
- c. A scheme aimed at making people in rural areas, across States/UTs, digitally literate.
- d. A digital wallet that enables storage and access to educational documents, health records, certificates electronically.

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Under the DigiSaksham initiative, free of cost training will be provided to more than 3 lakh youth, in digital skills including basic skills & advance computing, in the first year. This training programme can be accessed through the National Career Service (NCS) Portal.
- This digital skills programme was launched with the objective of enhancing the employability of youth by improving their digital skills which have become an essential thing in an increasingly technology-driven era.
- Digi Saksham is a joint initiative of Microsoft India and the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Context:

- On September 30, 2021, Digi Saksham Programme was launched by the Union Labour and Employment Minister Bhupender Yadav.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Account Aggregator (AA) framework:

1. It is a consent-based financial data sharing that would allow individuals and small businesses to access, control, and share personal data with third-party institutions.
2. AAs were created through an inter-regulatory decision by RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, PFRDA and FSDC.
3. RBI licenses and governs rules for AAs.

Which of the given statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The account aggregator framework will allow financial data to be exchanged between the holders of data and its users.
- Account aggregators will act as intermediaries who will collect data from one financial entity and exchange it with another.
 - Under the framework, a number of fin-tech entities have been granted the licence to operate as account aggregators.
- AAs were created through an inter-regulatory decision by RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, PFRDA and FSDC.
- RBI licenses and governs rules for AAs.

Q3. It is the largest Nuclear Power station in India and is operated by Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited. It is the result of an inter-governmental agreement between India and Russia.

The Nuclear Power generation facility being talked about is:

- a. Kalpakkam Nuclear Power Plant
- b. Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant
- c. Kaiga Nuclear Power Plant
- d. Kakrapar Atomic Power Station

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant is the largest nuclear power station in India, situated in Kudankulam in the Tirunelveli district of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.
- The plant is scheduled to have VVER-1000 reactors built in collaboration with Atomstroyexport, the Russian state company and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL). Know more about the [Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant](#) in the link.

Q4. Which of the following is/are NOT among the eligibility criteria to become a Supreme Court judge as envisaged in the Article 124 of the Indian Constitution?

1. Only an Indian Citizen not exceeding 65 years of age is eligible.
2. The person should serve as a judge of one high court or more continuously, for at least 10 years or the person should be an advocate in the High court for at least 10 years or a distinguished jurist.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Article 124(3) provides for the qualifications required for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court. The qualifications are:
 - The person should be a citizen of India; and
 - He/She should have been for at least five years a Judge of a High Court or of two or more such Courts in succession; or
 - He/She has been for at least ten years an advocate of a High Court or of two or more such Courts in succession; or
 - He/She is, in the opinion of the President, a distinguished jurist.
- Supreme Court Judges retire upon attaining the age of 65 years.

Q5. With reference to the history of India, consider the following pairs:

1. Aurang: In-charge of treasury of the State
2. Banian: Indian agent of the East India Company
3. Mirasidar: Designated revenue payer to the State

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched? [UPSC 2020]

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Aurang is a Persian term for a warehouse – a place where goods are collected before being sold. The word also refers to a workshop for finished goods.
- The term banian is the Anglicised form of the Sanskrit and Bangla word banik (merchant). In Anglo-Indian society and among the natives too, a banian was one who was engaged by an individual western merchant or a firm to work for them as a broker, interpreter and agent.
- Mirasidar is a designated revenue payer to the State.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Making Political Parties constitutional will ensure in-party democracy by bringing transparency in its functioning. Substantiate. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, Polity]
2. Sanitation is not just about building toilets, it is much more. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words)[GS-1, Social Issues]