

08 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. SC questions income limit for EWS quota

Context:

The Supreme Court has asked the government to explain how it zeroed in on the figure of '₹8 lakh' as the annual income criterion to identify Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among the forward classes of society for grant of 10% reservation in medical admissions under the all-India quota (AIQ).

- The court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by NEET aspirants challenging a July 29 notification of the Centre announcing 27% quota to OBCs and 10% reservation to EWS in the all-India quota category.

Details:

- The bench raised questions as to how the limit of Rs eight lakh can be the same for every place in the country.
- The Centre said fixing a limit of Rs eight lakh annual income for the EWS category is a matter of policy based on the National Cost of Living Index.

Significance:

- The Supreme Court's query is significant as the One Hundred and Third Constitutional Amendment of 2019, which introduced the 10% EWS quota, is itself under challenge before a larger Bench.
 - As a result of the 103rd Constitutional Amendment, the government introduced a 10% EWS reservation for general category candidates.
 - This is for all those candidates who are not covered under any reservations (such as OBC, SC, ST, and except PH and Ex-servicemen criteria) and belong to economically backward sections.
 - The amendment is under question for making economic criteria as the sole ground for grant of reservation benefits.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Intolerance and vandalism in Afghanistan of concern: India

Context:

Recently, there were reports of vandalism in a Sikh place of worship in Kabul. Such reports of intolerance and vandalism in Afghanistan have raised concerns across the world and in India.

UN Security Council Resolution 2593:

- The international community continues to insist that the [Taliban](#) should fulfil the goals outlined in the UN Security Council Resolution 2593.
 - It articulates and guides the collective approach of the global community towards Afghanistan.
 - The resolution talks of ensuring that the Afghan territory is not used for terrorist acts, it talks of safe passage of Afghans and foreign nationals.
 - It expects the Taliban to form an inclusive government and foster freedom and diversity.
 - UNSC Resolution 2593 has asked Afghanistan to be shaped like a country that respects minorities and women.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Government releases GST dues of ₹40,000 crore to States

Context:

The Centre released ₹40,000 crore to States and Union Territories.

Details:

- The centre has released the GST dues under the back-to-back loan facility to meet the shortfall in GST compensation cess collections.
- Earlier in July 2021 an amount of ₹75,000 crore was released to the States & UTs with legislature.
- With the current release, the total amount released in the current financial year as back-to-back loan in-lieu of GST compensation has reached ₹1,15,000 crore.
- This release is in addition to normal GST compensation being released every 2 months out of actual cess collection.
- In the 43rd GST Council Meeting held it has been decided by the Central Government that it would borrow ₹1.59 lakh crore in 2021-22 and release it to States and UTs with Legislature on a back-to-back basis to meet the resource gap due to the short release of compensation on account of the inadequate amount collected in the Compensation Fund.
- The release of ₹40,000 crore made is funded from borrowings of Gol in 5-year securities.
- It is expected that this release will help the States/UTs in planning their public expenditure among other things, for improving, health infrastructure and taking up infrastructure projects.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

1. Killing the chills

Context:

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has endorsed the first anti-malarial vaccine. It is being seen as a historic moment, achieving a breakthrough not only for malaria control but also for child health and science itself.

Read more on this topic covered in [Oct 7th, 2021 CNA](#).

Details:

- Malaria has stalked sub-Saharan Africa and several other parts of the world for years now.
- As per WHO, in 2019, nearly half the world's population was at risk of malaria, while most cases and deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In 2019, the WHO African region accounted for a disproportionate burden — 94% of cases and deaths.
- Children under five are the most vulnerable group affected by malaria; in 2019, they accounted for about two-thirds of all malaria deaths.
- The malaria vaccine, RTS,S, which has been in the making for nearly 30 years, acts against *P. falciparum*, believed to be the most deadly malaria parasite globally.

Significance:

- The approval marks a milestone in a timeline that records a long and laborious process to deal with malaria.
- The vaccine that the WHO approved has been used in pilot programme participants (children and infants) in Africa from 2015 after it got a nod for this specific use.
- This vaccine is expected to significantly reduce the severity of cases and prevent deaths.
- Remarkably, it facilitated equitable access to malaria prevention, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion:

- While further steps are taken to manufacture, fund and roll out the vaccine to nations affected by malaria, maintaining equity of access is key.
- As the work towards providing vaccination continues, nations must not stop the routine malaria prevention activities, including providing insecticide-treated bed nets.
- The immediate step should be speedily and meticulously making the vaccine available from the lab to the field.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Seeding a data revolution in Indian agriculture

Context:

- In June 2021, two significant documents relating to the Indian agriculture sector were released. Consultation papers on:

1. The India Digital Ecosystem of Agriculture (IDEA) from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW)
2. Indian Agriculture: Ripe for Disruption from a private organisation, Bain and Company.

Details:

- The first paper talks about a digital revolution in the agriculture sector and later predicts a revolutionary investment growth in agri-logistics, offtake, and agri-input delivery by 2025.
- Data is vital to every segment in current times.
- The MoA&FW report describes creating data to fuel the growth.

The forecast:

- The Bain report is a data-based prediction on agri-business scenarios.
- It has predicted the future of agri-business in another 20 years.
- The report has a 'today forward– future back approach' and predicts a drastic investment opportunity development by 2025.
- It includes targeting the production of alternative proteins, and food cell-based food/ingredients and initiating ocean farming, etc.
- The agriculture sector (currently worth \$370 billion), is estimated to receive an additional \$35 billion investment.
- The two enabling conditions for such investment opportunities are:
 - The changes in the regulatory framework, especially recent changes in the [Farm Acts](#)
 - Digital disruption.
- The report has demonstrated the business opportunity available in supply chains between farm to Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandi and mandi to the customer, which can be realised with the support of digital disruption and the latest agriculture reforms.
- The report depicts agriculture reforms announced by the union government as a game-changer in the agriculture sector.

The report argues that benefiting from the huge investments into the agri-ecosystem, doubling farmers' income targets can be achieved in near future.

- The IDEA-consulting paper is based on the Task Force and Working Group report constituted by the MoA&FW to design the blueprint of "digital agriculture".
- The IDEA concept profounds the creation of second enabling conditions. The IDEA principles explicitly talk about openness of data, which means open to businesses and farmers, indicating the kind of integration it aims at.
- Value-added innovative services by agri-tech industries and start-ups are an integral part of the IDEA architecture.
- The Indian agriculture sector in future will encompass farm to table and pave the way for a single national market with a national platform with better connection between producer and consumers.

Concerns:

- The IT industry has opposition to IDEA mainly due to the ethics of creating a Unique Farmer ID based on one's Aadhaar number and also the potential for data misuse.
- While the report focuses on widespread food production in controlled environments, emission, energy, and other resource footprints and sustainability issues around these techniques needed to confirm the projected trajectory are not included in the report.
- A majority of small and marginal farmers are not technology-savvy.
- Politically, these two reports ignore the protest of farmers against the reforms without considering it as a barrier or risk factor resulting in a repealing of these new farm laws.

Conclusion:

- While it is undeniable that a data revolution is inevitable in the agriculture sector, given its socio-political complexities, just technology fixes and agri-business investments cannot improve farmers' livelihoods.
- There need to be immense efforts to improve the capacities of the farmers in India.
 - At least until the educated young farmers replace the existing under-educated small and medium farmers.
- This capacity building can be done through:
 - Building the capacities of individual farmers
 - Coping with the new situation by establishing support systems
 - Through **FPOs** and other farmers' associations where technical support is available for farmers.
- Considering the size of the agriculture sector of the country it is not going to be an easy task and would need a separate programme across the country with considerable investment.

2. Will a bad bank fix India's broken banking system?

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

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Handling complexity

Context:

U.S.-Japanese scientist Syukuro Manabe, Klaus Hasselmann of Germany and Giorgio Parisi of Italy have been announced as winners of the Nobel Physics Prize for their work on climate models and the understanding of physical systems.

Details:

- The Physics Nobel winners have developed tools to get a handle on complex systems.
- These models could show the effect of human activities on the climate.
- The climate model developed by Dr. Manabe showed how levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere corresponded to increased earth surface temperatures.

- It is a classic work that showed, even in the 1960s, that the atmosphere would undergo another 2.3° C warming with the doubling of carbon dioxide content.
- Hasselmann had helped identify climate “fingerprints”- factors both natural and human activities contributing to the climate change process.
 - He identified a way of treating the random noise-like variations of the weather, devising a method to generate useful signals on the scale of the climate.
- The other half of the prize, to Giorgio Parisi from the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, is for developing a method to sensibly study complex condensed matter systems called “spin glasses”.
 - This is an outstanding feat in both mathematical and physical innovation.
 - The idea to break what is called “replica symmetry”, seen in a spin glass, in a consistent manner, which was his contribution, led to a method to study one of the simplest models of a genuinely complex system.
 - His work has helped solve problems in mathematics, biology and neuroscience; for instance, how memory is stored in networks of nerve cells.
- The climate science work by Syukuro and Hasselmann on the one hand and theoretical condensed matter physics work by Parisi on the other — is that both describe complex physical systems.

The Nobel committee hoped to send a message with its prize announcement as the rate of global warming has set off alarm bells around the world. The message seems to be to convey that the modelling of climate is solidly based on physics theory. Notable in this is the climate scientists’ work, which makes it obvious where science stands on the issue of global warming and estimates the human fingerprint on climate change.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Tanzanian novelist wins Nobel

What’s in News?

Tanzanian novelist Abdulrazak Gurnah has won the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature.

- The Nobel Prize has been awarded to him “for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee”.
- In his 10 novels he has consistently, and with great compassion, penetrated the effects of colonialism in East Africa and its effects on the lives of uprooted and migrating individuals.
- Gurnah is the first African writer to win the award since the Zimbabwean Doris Lessing in 2007, and only the second writer of colour from sub-Saharan Africa.

2. HAL delivers heaviest propellant tank to ISRO

What’s in News?

HAL has delivered SC120-LOX semi-cryogenic tank to [ISRO](#).

- It is the heaviest semi-cryogenic propellant tank ever fabricated by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

- The semi cryo-liquid oxygen (LOX) tank is a part of the SC120 stage intended for replacing the L110 stage in the existing Mk-III launch vehicle.
- This will enhance the payload capacity in the Mk-III launch vehicle.
- Therefore, it would especially play an important role in the upcoming [Gaganyaan project](#).

Note:

- HAL has been associating with ISRO for India's prestigious space programmes for five decades.
- HAL has delivered critical structures, tankages, satellite structures for the PSLV, GSLV-Mk II and GSLV-Mk III launch vehicles.
- In 2020, HAL had delivered the biggest ever cryogenic liquid hydrogen tank (C32-LH2), four meters in diameter and eight meters in length, much ahead of the contractual schedule.

3. Indian forces to carry out exercise with U.K.

What's in News?

India's armed forces are scheduled to carry out an exercise with the U.K.'s Queen Elizabeth carrier strike group.

India – U.K Relations – Defence:

- The 6th edition of the Indo-UK joint military exercise Ajeya Warrior has commenced at Chaubatia, Uttarakhand.

Know more about [Ex Ajeya Warrior](#) in the linked article.

- Earlier, India and the U.K. participated in a two-day bilateral Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Royal Navy Carrier Strike Group (CSG-21), led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, in the Bay of Bengal as the carrier was passing through.

Note:

- India and the U.K. are also in talks for a bilateral logistics support agreement. Read more on [India – UK relations](#) in the linked article.

G. Tidbits

1. Moscow will invite Taliban to Afghanistan talks on Oct. 20

What's in News?

Russia will invite representatives of the Taliban to international talks on Afghanistan.

- Moscow had hosted an international conference on Afghanistan in March 2021 at which Russia, the United States, China and Pakistan released a joint statement calling on the then-warring Afghan sides to reach a peace deal and curb violence.
- It also called on the Taliban not to launch any offensives in the spring and summer.
- Since then, the U.S. and its allies withdrew their troops from Afghanistan after 20 years on the ground. Subsequently, the Taliban seized power and the previous government collapsed.

Concerns:

- Russia is worried about the potential for fallout in the wider region and the possibility of Islamist militants infiltrating the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, which Moscow views as its southern defensive buffer.

In the wake of the Taliban takeover, Moscow has held military exercises in Tajikistan and bolstered its hardware at its military base there.

2. India, Nepal to conduct joint patrols for controlling trans-border crime

What's in News?

The border guarding forces of India and Nepal will conduct regular joint patrolling along the border.

- Joint patrolling has been planned in order to control trans-border crimes, smuggling of arms, human trafficking and other areas of concern.
- The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), a central armed police force, secures the Nepal and Bhutan borders.

Also read: [India – Nepal relations](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Consider the following statements with regards to SC120-LOX semi-cryogenic tank and choose the correct one(s).

1. It has been developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.
2. It intends to increase the payload capacity in the existing Mk-III launch vehicle.
3. The newly developed tank would especially play an important role in the upcoming Gaganyaan project.

Options:-

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- SC120-LOX semi-cryogenic tank has been developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.
- It intends to increase the payload capacity in the existing Mk-III launch vehicle.
- The newly developed tank would especially play an important role in the upcoming Gaganyaan project.

Q.2 Consider the following statements with regards to the EWS quota as it applies to the NEET exam.

1. The individual's income for inclusion in the EWS quota must be under Rs. 8 lakh per annum.
2. 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018 led to the introduction of EWS reservation.
3. For inclusion under this criteria, the family should not own agricultural land of size 3 acres or more.

Which of these statements is/are incorrect?

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 & 3 only
- c. 1 & 3 only
- d. All of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- For an individual to be eligible for the EWS quota, the family's income must be under Rs. 8 lakh per annum.
- 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019 led to the introduction of EWS reservation.
- For inclusion under this criteria, the family should not own agricultural land of size 5 acres or more.

Q.3 Which of the following security forces is responsible for securing India's border with Nepal?

- a. Indo Tibetan Border Police
- b. Sashastra Seema Bal
- c. Border Security Force
- d. Assam Rifles

Answer: b

Explanation:

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), a central armed police force, secures the Nepal and Bhutan borders.

Q.4 Consider the following statements with regard to Multidimensional Poverty Index and choose the correct ones.

1. The index is published annually by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and United Nations Development Programme.
2. The three dimensions included in the index are Health, Education and Living Standard.
3. All the UN member nations are included in the index to get a holistic view.

Options:-

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 & 3 only
- c. 1 & 3 only
- d. All of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Multidimensional Poverty Index is published annually by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and United Nations Development Programme.
- The three dimensions included in the index are Health, Education and Living Standard.
- Usually, over 100 developing countries are evaluated. MPI 2020 presented 107 country-specific details.
- The MPI value is calculated by multiplying the incidence of poverty by the average share of deprivations ($H \times A$).

Q.5 With regard to India's joint military exercises with different nations, which of the following is/are not correctly matched?

- 1. Mongolia
- 2. Thailand
- 3. UK
- 4. Nepal

Nomadic Elephant
Maitree
Vajra Prahar
Surya Kiran

Options:-

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 1 & 4 only
- d. All of the above

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Indo-Mongolian Joint Military Exercise is termed 'Nomadic Elephant'.
- Exercise Maitree is a bilateral exercise between the Indian Army and the Royal Thai Army, started off in 2006. It is an annual event between the troops of the armies of both countries. It is also called Indo-Thailand Joint Exercise.
- The joint military exercise Vajra Prahar between India and the US started off in 2010. 'Vajra Prahar' is a Special Forces joint training exercise conducted alternately in India and the US.
- Surya Kiran is a bilateral Joint Military Exercise between Indian and Nepal.

- Ajeya Warrior is a bilateral military exercise between India and the UK.

Q.6 Recently, there was a growing awareness in our country about the importance of Himalayan nettle (*Girardinia diversifolia*) because it is found to be a sustainable source of (UPSC 2019)

- a. anti-malarial drug
- b. biodiesel
- c. pulp for paper industry
- d. textile fibre

Answer: d

Explanation:

- *Girardinia diversifolia*, also known as the Himalayan nettle or Nilgiri nettle, is found abundantly in open forest land, river sides, and moist habitats in Nepal and in Himalayan parts of India.
- *Girardinia Diversifolia* is a shade-tolerant, tall, stout and erect herb.
- The stem contains bast fibre of unique quality which is strong, smooth and light.
- It was found to be a sustainable source of textile fibre.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Indian agriculture is in need of a data revolution but technological fixes and agribusiness investments alone will not be enough to improve farmers' livelihoods. Critically examine. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Economy]
2. The malaria vaccine must see speedy implementation from the lab to the field. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Science and Technology]

Read the previous CNA [here](#).