

13 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. Expert panel clears Covaxin for emergency use in 2-18 age group

Context:

Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin (BBV152) has been recommended for emergency use authorisation (EUA) for 2 to 18-year-olds by the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO).

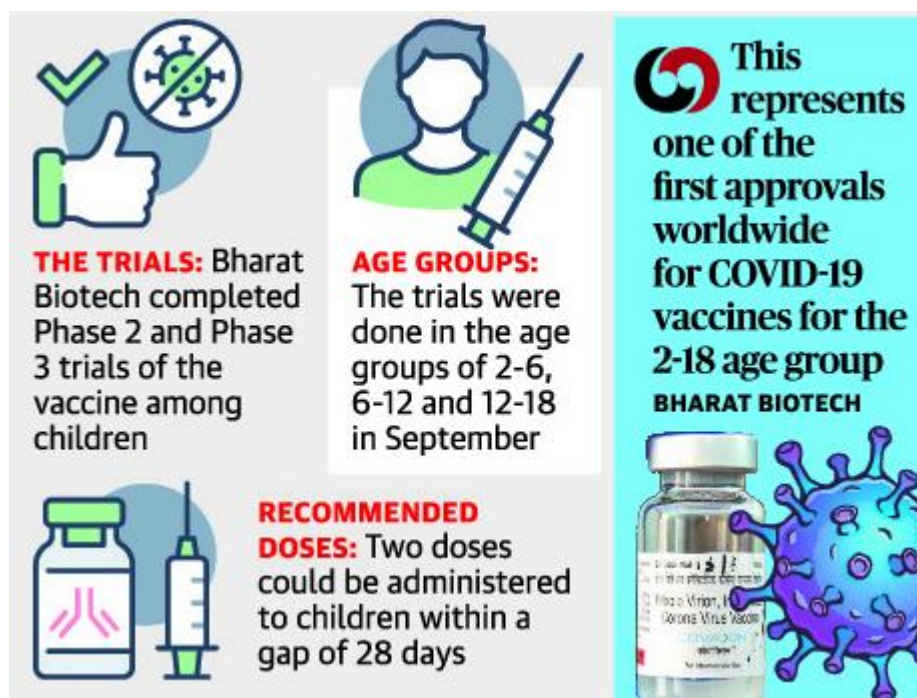


Image Source: The Hindu

Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO):

- CDSCO is the central drug authority in India.
- It is responsible for approving licenses for certain categories of drugs.

Functions of the CDSCO

The CDSCO is responsible for the following:

- Drug approval under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- Conducting clinical trials.
- Setting standards for drugs.
- Quality control over drugs imported into the country.

- Coordinating activities of the state drug control organisations.
- Registration of foreign manufacturers of drugs and medical devices whose products are to be imported into the country.
- Grant of licences to import drugs by Government hospitals or Medical Institutions for the use of their patients.
- Recommend banning of drugs considered harmful or sub-therapeutic under Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

Covaxin:

- Covaxin is India's first indigenous, whole-virion, inactivated vaccine developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the [Indian Medical Research Council \(ICMR\)](#) and the National Institute of Virology (NIV).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. MHA begins talks with Gorkha leaders, West Bengal Govt.

Context:

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) began tripartite talks with Gorkha representatives from the Darjeeling hills, and the Terai and Dooars regions, and the Government of West Bengal.

The talks are aimed at resolving the issues related to the Gorkhas.

What is the Gorkha Issue?

- The Gorkhaland Movement is a movement mainly focused on the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal, which demands the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland.
- Gorkhaland consists of Nepali-speaking people of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong and other hilly districts of West Bengal. The people belonging to these areas have ethnic, cultural and language differences with the Bengali community of West Bengal.
- The demand for Darjeeling as a separate administrative region dates back to 1907.

Read more on [Issues in News – Gorkhaland- A Demand for Identity](#)

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Govt. announces plastic waste recycling targets

Context:

The Environment Ministry has issued plastic waste recycling targets.

Details:

- The draft rules mandate producers of plastic packaging material to collect all of their produce by 2024 and ensure that a minimum percentage of it be recycled as well as used in subsequent supply.

- It has also specified a system whereby makers and users of plastic packaging could collect certificates — called Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) certificates — and trade in them.
- Only a fraction of plastic that cannot be recycled — such as multi-layered multi-material plastics — would be eligible to be sent for end-of-life disposal such as road construction, waste to energy, and waste to oil and cement kilns.
- Only methods prescribed by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) would be permitted for their disposal.
- Producers of plastic would be obliged to declare to the government, via a centralised website, how much plastic they produce annually.
 - Companies would have to collect at least 35% of the target in 2021-22, 70% by 2022-23 and 100% by 2024.
 - In 2024, a minimum of 50% of the rigid plastic (category 1) would have to be recycled as would 30% of their category 2 and 3 plastic.
 - Every year would see progressively higher targets and after 2026-27, 80% of their category 1 and 60% of the other two categories would need to be recycled.
- If entities cannot fulfil their obligations, they would on a “case by case basis” be permitted to buy certificates making up for their shortfall from organisations that have used recycled content in excess of their obligation.
- Non-compliance would not invite a traditional fine. Instead, an “environmental compensation” would be levied.

Plastic packaging Categories:

- Category 1 is “rigid” plastic;
- Category 2 is “flexible plastic packaging of single layer or multilayer (more than one layer with different types of plastic), plastic sheets and covers made of plastic sheet, carry bags (including carry bags made of compostable plastics), plastic sachet or pouches;
- Category 3 is called multilayered plastic packaging, which has at least one layer of plastic and at least one layer of material other than plastic.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The sanctions cloud over India-U.S. ties

Context:

- India's Chief of the Air Staff had recently clarified that the delivery of the **S-400 Triumf air defence systems from Russia** is expected according to schedule.

- India is scheduled to receive five squadrons of the **surface-to-air missile** systems from Russia.
- The U.S. Deputy Secretary of State had publicly announced that she was hoping that both the U.S. and India could amicably resolve the issue of India purchasing S-400 missile system from Russia and the **possibility of the U.S. sanctioning India for this purchase under its Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)**.
 - The Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) was enacted by the U.S. Congress to **discourage trade in the defence and intelligence sectors of Russia**.
 - The U.S. had imposed **sanctions on its NATO ally, Turkey and even China** for the procurement of the S-400 missile system. The sanctions include suspending the export licence, banning American equity/debt investments in entities, prohibiting loans from U.S. financial institutions and opposing loans from international finance institutions.
 - Despite the CAATSA, India had gone ahead and signed the agreement with Russia and also paid an advance for the S-400 missile system.

India's stand on the issue:

- India maintains that **it enjoys sovereign rights to purchase defence equipment for its safety and security**. India has stressed the **tactical importance of the defence missile systems** considering the environment in the Indian subcontinent wherein India could as well face a two-front war with China and Pakistan.

Arguments against the imposition of CAATSA sanctions on India:

- In the light of one section in the U.S. favouring the imposition of sanctions against India for its purchase of the S-400 missile system, the article argues that such a move should be avoided based on the following arguments.

Damage the India-U.S. relationship:

- The Imposition of CAATSA sanctions against India would have an **adverse impact on the otherwise growing India-U.S. bilateral relationship**.
 - The bilateral relationship between the U.S. and India now spans 50 sectors, including critical sectors like defence and economy. India has also been cooperating with the U.S. on matters of critical security.
- **India has also lately exhibited some degree of strategic tilt towards the U.S.** amidst the evolving situation in the regional as well as global platforms. In such a scenario the imposition of sanctions against India could lead to stirring up of the latent belief in the Indian political leadership and top bureaucracy that the **U.S. cannot be relied upon as a partner**.

Changing defence trade scenario:

- India has been diversifying its defence purchases and **reducing its dependency on Russia**.
 - Over the last decade, India's military purchase from Russia has steadily declined. India's import of arms decreased by 33% between 2011-15 and 2016-20 and Russia was the most affected supplier, according to a report by the Stockholm-based defence think-tank SIPRI.

- In the same period, government-to-government deals with the U.S. touched \$20 billion and deals worth nearly \$10 billion are under negotiation. **The U.S. designated India as a Major Defence Partner in 2016 and gave India Strategic Trade Authorisation-1** which allows India access to critical defence technologies developed in the U.S. Also notably, defence manufacturers in both countries are exploring ways to co-develop and co-produce military equipment.
- Notably, one important provision in the CAATSA allows for a temporary waiver from sanctions for those countries which are trying to scale down their defence ties with Russia.

Evolving regional and global scenario:

- The geopolitical situation in the region is undergoing a drastic change. Today, there is a **growing relationship between China and Russia** with both countries seeking to expand engagement in Afghanistan from where the U.S. withdrew its military after two decades of war. **The U.S. is seeking to contain China and its growing assertiveness in the region via its Pivot to Asia policy.**
- India is having to deal with an increasingly aggressive China along its northern borders which have witnessed repeated Chinese incursions.
- India could play a critical role in this direction given India's centrality in the Indian Ocean region. Shedding its traditional non-alignment posture India has been actively engaging with the U.S. and other like-minded countries on multilateral forums like the [Quadrilateral Security Dialogue](#).
- The move to impose sanctions on India based on the **CAATSA could push India towards its traditional military hardware supplier, Russia.**

Does not affect U.S.'s interests:

- Given **India shares the same vision as the U.S. on the Indo-Pacific construct and both the countries share strategic coherence on a wide range of issues**, India's purchase of the S-400 missile system does not endanger the U.S.'s national security or affect its military operations in an adverse manner.

Conclusion:

- The CAATSA test will determine the course of the India-U.S. strategic partnership.
- Notably, the **CAATSA provides for a presidential waiver**. This allows the President to waive sanctions in certain circumstances. This provision should be exercised by the U.S. President to **provide a waiver for India for its purchase of the S-400 missile system** from Russia.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Boost tourism through disruption

Background:

- Given their contact intensive nature, **the Indian tourism and hospitality sector was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic** and it experienced substantial job loss. In this context, the article discusses the measures required to revive the sector.

India's performance in the sector:

- India has improved its competitiveness in travel and tourism. **India has improved its ranking in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report from 65 in 2013 to 34 in 2019.**
- Despite being home to diverse natural landscapes as well as a rich cultural heritage, India has not been able to use this to its advantage. **The international arrivals have remained comparatively low in India**, at around 9 to 10 million.

Significance of the sector:

- The tourism and hospitality sector has **huge potential in India**.
 - The **employment generation capacity** of the sector is much higher compared to the agricultural or manufacturing sector i.e; it can generate a large number of jobs for a given investment.
 - The growth in this sector has **multiplier effects on income generation** as it is employment-intensive. This could help achieve the elusive “**inclusive growth**” ideal in India.
 - The tourism sector, unlike many other sectors, **can grow with smaller capital investments and that too without any industrial gestation period**. This becomes all the more important for a developing economy like India which is perennially faced with the challenge of resource mobilization for its economic growth and development

Measures already taken by the government:

- In the pre-pandemic period, many initiatives were adopted to promote the tourism sector, such as providing **e-visas** under various categories for people from particular countries, **Global Media Campaigns** and the **Paryatan Parv celebration**.
- In the post-pandemic phase, the Government of India has announced **financial support for more than 11,000 registered tourist guides/travel and tourism stakeholders**. It has also announced the issuance of five lakh free tourist visas once international travel resumes.

Recommendations:

- While welcoming the initiatives being taken by the government, the article argues for long-term measures to tap the potential of the tourism and hospitality sector in India. In this direction, it makes the following recommendations.

Skilling the workforce:

- There is a need to **train the workforce in India** so that workers can develop the skills to perform jobs in the travel and tourism sector.

Public-private partnership:

- There is a need to **push for public-private partnerships to tackle the challenges in the tourism sector of India**.
- **Travel and tourism startups should be encouraged** with active support from the government for ideation and access to finance.

Use of technology:

- **Frontier technologies like blockchain technology** should be harnessed for use in the sector.
 - Blockchain ledger coupled with IOT devices for healthcare could have a positive impact on medical tourism.
 - Blockchain-based money solutions could help kick-start local tourism industries.

Conclusion:

- India needs a comprehensive disruptive innovation strategy to tap the potential of the tourism and hospitality sector to create employment opportunities and create avenues for economic growth.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Retail inflation falls to 4.35%; industrial output growth up

What's in News?

- India's retail inflation has cooled off to a five-month low of 4.35%.
- This is owing to a sharp fall in food price inflation, while industrial output growth accelerated driven largely by a statistical effect of a low base. (August 2020 had recorded a 7.1% contraction.)

Retail Inflation:

- Retail inflation is the general rise in the retail prices of goods and services in the economy.
- Retail inflation is measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services, such as transportation, food and medical care.
 - It is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the predetermined basket of goods and averaging them.
 - Changes in the CPI are used to assess price changes associated with the cost of living; the CPI is one of the most frequently used statistics for identifying periods of inflation or deflation.

2. Modi to launch master plan for multimodal connectivity

What's in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch 'PM GatiShakti'.

- PM GatiShakti is a national master plan for multimodal connectivity.
- It will address the past issues through institutionalising holistic planning for stakeholders for major infrastructure projects.
- PM GatiShakti is the result of the government's endeavour to build Next Generation Infrastructure which improves Ease of Living as well as Ease of Doing Business.
- Infrastructure plans would be designed and executed with a common vision, instead of being made in silos.

- The master plan would cover projects of many Ministries and State Governments, including [Bharatmala](#), Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, UDAN, textile clusters, defence corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters and agricultural zones.
- Economic Zones like textile clusters, pharmaceutical clusters, defence corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters, agri zones will be covered to improve connectivity and make Indian businesses more competitive. It will also leverage technology extensively including spatial planning tools with ISRO imagery developed by BiSAG-N (Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics).

The multi-modal connectivity will provide integrated and seamless connectivity for the movement of people, goods and services from one mode of transport to another. It will facilitate the last mile connectivity of infrastructure and also reduce travel time for people.

3. Malabar exercise could expand: U.S. Admiral

What's in News?

Phase II of the [Malabar naval exercise](#) in the Bay of Bengal.

- While Phase-I of Malabar was held in August and hosted by the U.S. Navy near Guam, Phase-II is being held between October 12 and 15 in the Bay of Bengal.
- As Phase-II of the exercise began, the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations said that the exercise could expand and it was up to the “partners inside the Quad” to discuss that.
- Phase-II will build upon the synergy, coordination and inter-operability developed during Phase-I.
- It will focus on advanced surface and anti-submarine warfare exercises, seamanship evolutions and weapon firings.

Note: India-US Relationship:

- India has signed all four foundational agreements with the U.S.:
 - the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement ([LEMOA](#)) – logistics agreement in 2016.
 - the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018.
 - the [Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation \(BECA\)](#) in 2020.
- While the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) was signed a long time ago, an extension to it, the Industrial Security Annex (ISA), was signed in 2019.

4. Govt. nod for fertilizer subsidy

What's in News?

The Centre has approved an additional fertilizer subsidy of ₹28,655 crore for the rabi or winter planting season.

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the new nutrient-based subsidy rates for phosphatic and potassic fertilizers.
- For urea, the Centre sets a fixed maximum retail price.

- Non-urea fertilizer prices are decontrolled, with the government fixing nutrient-based subsidy rates instead.
- The subsidy is paid to fertilizer companies as compensation for selling their products to farmers below market prices.
- Thus, the price a farmer pays for a 50-kg bag of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), the most popular fertilizer after urea, would continue to remain at ₹1,200.
- The increased subsidy would offset the hike in global rates of DAP, nitrogen, phosphate and potassic fertilizers.

5. Do not breathe easy on the silicosis prevention policy

Silicosis:

- **Silicosis is a long-term lung disease caused by inhaling large amounts of crystalline silica dust**, usually over many years.
- Silica is a substance naturally found in certain types of stone, rock, sand and clay. Working with these materials can create a very fine dust that can be easily inhaled. Once inside the lungs, it causes **swelling (inflammation)** and gradually leads to areas of hardened and **scarred lung tissue (fibrosis)**.
- Silicosis is an **occupational disease due to dust exposure. It is incurable and can cause permanent disability.**

Rajasthan state government's policy on silicosis:

- **Rajasthan contributes over 17% of the value of mineral production in India.** This accounts for the largest contribution from states.
- **Rajasthan was the first state to notify silicosis as an 'epidemic' in 2015, under the Rajasthan Epidemic Diseases Act, 1957.** In 2019, it also announced a formal Pneumoconiosis Policy.

G. Tidbits

1. Modi for 'humanitarian help' to Afghanistan

What's in News?

G20 extraordinary leaders' meeting on Afghanistan.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asserted that Afghanistan requires unhindered humanitarian assistance and an inclusive government.
- He reiterated India's call for shaping international response to the Afghan crisis along the conditions laid down in the UN Security Council Resolution 2593.
 - The resolution demands that Afghan territory should not be used to threaten/attack any country or to shelter/ train terrorists or plan/finance terrorist acts.
 - It was put forward by the US, UK, and France and adopted after 13 council members voted in favour.

- The Prime Minister supported the role of the United Nations in solving the current crisis in Afghanistan, and also highlighted the harmony between the UN and the G20 in this regard.

Note:

India has not yet recognised the Taliban set-up in Kabul as a legitimate government of Afghanistan.

2. China launches biodiversity fund

What's in News?

China has pledged to inject \$233 million into a new fund to protect biodiversity in developing countries, despite disagreements among major donors on the initiative.

- Beijing is the world's biggest polluter.
- China has sought to play a more prominent role internationally in biodiversity conservation in recent years.
- A summit on safeguarding plants, animals and ecosystems was organised in the Chinese city of Kunming.
- The summit aims to establish a new accord setting out targets for 2030 and 2050.
- China will take the lead in establishing the Kunming biodiversity fund with a capital contribution of 1.5 billion yuan (\$233 million) to support the cause of biodiversity conservation in developing countries.

'30 by 30' agenda:

- A key proposal being debated at the conference is the "30 by 30" agenda that would afford 30% of the Earth's land and oceans protected status by 2030.
- According to a UN report, global spending to protect and restore nature needs to triple this decade to about \$350 billion annually by 2030 and \$536 billion by 2050 to meet this target.
- However, some rich country donors believe that a new fund for conservation is not necessary as the United Nations' Global Environment Facility helps developing nations finance green projects.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Which of the following statements is correct with regard to the G20?

- a. It was formed primarily to focus on climate change and environmental issues in 20 major economies.
- b. It comprises 19 countries and the European Union.
- c. G20 countries conduct annual joint military exercises in the Mediterranean Sea.
- d. Russia was recently removed from the group.

Answer: b

Explanation:

The G20 is an annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest-growing economies. It comprises 19 countries and the European Union. The G20 summit founded in 1999 is the premier forum

for international cooperation on the most important aspects of the international economic and financial agenda. It brings together the world's major advanced and emerging economies.

Q.2 Recently the term 'PM Gati Shakti' was seen in news. What does it refer to?

- a. National master plan for multimodal connectivity and integrated infrastructure development.
- b. Financial inclusion programme aimed at North-Eastern states.
- c. Livelihood generation scheme for migrant workers affected by the pandemic.
- d. A public-private partnership in the commercial space sector.

Answer: a

Explanation:

PM Gati Shakti is a national master plan for multimodal connectivity and integrated infrastructure development.

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

1. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy approach related to waste management.
2. Under this policy, producers are given significant responsibility for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products.
3. India is opposed to this policy and it is limited to European countries.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy approach related to waste management.
- Under this policy, producers are given significant responsibility for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products.
- The Environment Ministry has issued draft rules that mandate producers of plastic packaging material to collect all of their produce by 2024 and ensure that a minimum percentage of it be recycled.

Q.4 The Nutrient Based Subsidy Rates for non-urea fertilizers are approved by -

- a. Ministry of Finance

- b. NITI Aayog
- c. Ministry of Agriculture
- d. Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs

Answer: d

Explanation:

For urea, the Centre sets a fixed maximum retail price. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approves the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates of non-urea fertilisers.

Q5. With reference to the recent developments in science, which one of the following statements is not correct?

- a. Functional chromosomes can be created by joining segments of DNA taken from cells of different species.
- b. Pieces of artificial functional DNA can be created in laboratories.
- c. A piece of DNA taken out from an animal cell can be made to replicate outside a living cell in a laboratory.
- d. Cells taken out from plants and animals can be made to undergo cell division in laboratory petri dishes.

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Functional chromosomes cannot be created by joining segments of DNA taken from cells of different species.
- Pieces of artificial functional DNA can be created in laboratories. It is Artificial Gene Synthesis or DNA Printing.
- A piece of DNA taken out from an animal cell can be made to replicate outside a living cell in a laboratory. It is cloning.
- Cells taken out from plants and animals can be made to undergo cell division in laboratory petri dishes. It is called tissue culture.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India's tourism and hospitality sector may hold the key towards solving the long pending unemployment problems in the country. Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Economy]
2. 'The task of reorganizing the states in India is still unfinished'. Do you agree? Elucidate with examples. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]