

14 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Teen pregnancies pose a challenge in Rajasthan

Context:

Amid the high prevalence of child marriages, reducing teenage pregnancies continues to be the biggest challenge in addressing issues related to the reproductive health of adolescents in Rajasthan.

Details:

- More than one-third of the girls get married before they cross 18 and 6.3% of girls in the age group of 15 to 19 years are already mothers or are pregnant.
- The women in the state face challenges in the field of sexual and reproductive health because of structural poverty, social discrimination, regressive social norms, inadequate education, and early marriage and childbearing.

Way Forward:

- A study states that for every ₹100 spent on meeting the unmet needs of adolescents, there will be a return of approximately ₹300 in terms of healthcare costs saved.
 - This indicates a very high potential for gains in health and economic gains from the interventions.
 - The potential health gains from the interventions could avert 1.45 lakh unwanted pregnancies, 1.46 lakh unwanted births, over 14,000 unsafe abortions, and the deaths of more than 7,000 infants and 300 pregnant women between 2021 and 2025.
 - The findings also revealed that a per capita investment of ₹1 in weekly iron and folic acid supplement (WIFS) could save almost ₹2 to ₹20 in terms of averted productivity loss in adolescents.
- Adolescents comprise 23% of Rajasthan's population, their [demographic dividend](#) could be harnessed through effective strategies.
- Investment in sexual and reproductive health is crucial for the State.
- There is a need to increase the modern contraceptive prevalence rate.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Sri Lankan fishermen seek India's action over disputes

Context:

Sri Lanka's northern fishermen want the authorities in India and Sri Lanka to urgently step up action to resolve the long-persisting conflict in the Palk Strait.

Issue:

- The Sri Lankan fishermen have pointed to the perils of bottom-trawling and pair-trawling fishing methods that are commonly used by Tamil Nadu fishermen.
 - This results in a drastically smaller catch and frequent damage to their modest fishing gear.

- They complain that there has been no forward movement or a solution until now. Indian fishermen crossing the maritime boundary and fishing in their waters has resulted in huge losses amounting to several crores to the fishermen there.
- The fisher associations have also sought compensation from the Indian authorities to cope with the financial losses.
- Having braved the civil war and the displacement and dispossession that came with it, the northern fishermen have been struggling to rebuild their livelihoods post-war.
- The ongoing conflict with Indian fishermen — mostly from Tamil Nadu’s Ramanathapuram and Nagapattinam districts — has severely impacted the revival of their livelihoods.
- However, on the Indian side, reports of Tamil Nadu fishermen being attacked at sea, allegedly by their Sri Lankan counterparts have surfaced.
- Tamil Nadu has repeatedly accused the Sri Lankan Navy of attacking or killing its fishermen in the Palk Strait.

Situation on ground:

- The plan to keep the fishermen from Tamil Nadu from resorting to exploiting the remaining fishery resources on the Sri Lankan side by replacing their trawlers with deep-sea fishing vessels has not really taken off.
- There has been no breakthrough in talks between the fishermen from both countries.
- The sticking point has been a differing approach that is being suggested from both sides. Sri Lanka is backing the joint patrolling by both countries, and a ban on unsustainable fishing practices such as bottom trawling by the Tamil Nadu fishermen.
- The Indian side wants a more gradual phase-out period and not an immediate one. Political leaders in Tamil Nadu rarely acknowledge that the state’s fishermen contribute immensely to the problem by crossing territorial waters.
- The incursions into Sri Lankan waters are largely driven by trawler owners who compel their poor employees to do so and while obeying the orders, the poor employees either get killed or arrested.
- A comprehensive solution, one that would severely curtail unauthorised fishing and help in an orderly sharing of and sustainable use of resources by fishermen from both sides, is long overdue.

Proposed solutions:

- Permit licensed Indian fishermen to fish within a designated area (e.g. 5 nautical miles) of Sri Lankan waters and vice versa.
- There is precedent in the 1976 boundary agreement, which allowed licensed Sri Lankan fishermen to fish in the Wadge Bank (a fertile fishing ground located near Kanyakumari) for a period of three years.
- Poaching and Trawling – further limiting the days, timeframe, and location for fishing and an immediate end to bottom trawling.
- Trawlers have been referred to as the “hoovers of the shelf bottom” and “bulldozers mowing down fish and other benthic species.”
- Indian fishermen point out that unless its government introduced concrete steps to buy back trawlers, it would not be possible to stop trawling operations. The government should implement a buy-back arrangement as soon as possible. There is unlikely to be much opposition from trawler owners and fishermen because they know the reality.

Way Forward:

- India must view the Palk Bay region as a common heritage of the two countries and project this vision.
- There is a need for an authority, comprising fisheries experts, marine ecologists, fishermen's representatives, strategic specialists, and government officials.
- The humanitarian approach that has been expected to be the cornerstone of the approach to this conflict has not always been discernible.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: DEFENCE

1. Punjab unhappy after Centre enhances powers of BSF

Context:

In a gazette notification, the Union Home Ministry has amended an earlier notification of 2014 on the jurisdiction of the Border Security Force (BSF) to exercise its powers in states where it guards the international border.

Details:

- It outlined the new jurisdiction as “whole of the area comprised in the States of Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya and Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and so much of the area comprised within a belt of 50 kilometers in the States of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal and Assam, running along the borders of India”.
- Earlier, the BSF's limit was fixed up to 80 km from the international boundary in Gujarat and 15 km in Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal and Assam.
- The recent notification replaces a 2014 order under the BSF Act, 1968, which also covered the States of Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya.

Border Security Force (BSF):

- Border Security Force (BSF) is a Central Armed Police Force under the Union.
- The BSF is the border guard of the country and is called 'India's First Line of Defence'.
- This Union Government Agency under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs came into being in the wake of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. It was established on [1st December 1965](#).
- It ensures the security of the borders of India and is headed by an officer from the Indian Police Service.
- It also undertakes defensive actions during wartime to free up Indian Army troops for offensive operations.
- The violations for which the BSF carries out search and seizure include smuggling of narcotics, other prohibited items, illegal entry of foreigners and offences punishable under any other Central Act among others.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. A portrait of the Nobel masters of 'metrics'

Context

- David Card, Joshua Angrist and Guido Imbens have been awarded the Nobel Prize for economics for their research about the use of “natural experiments” on the impact of minimum wage, immigration and education on labour markets.
 - David Card was awarded one half of the prize, while the other half was shared by Joshua Angrist and Guido Imbens.
 - This is the first time the economic prize has been divided in this fashion with one half going to one awardee and the other half divided across two awardees.

Background

- Economists are often interested in causal questions such as the impact of education on incomes, the impact of COVID-19 on poverty and so on.
- They are also interested in understanding the direction of **causality**. Does education impact income or is the causality in reverse with income levels impacting education?
- Economists have used two kinds of experiments to study this causality and direction of causality questions: **random experiments and natural experiments**.

Randomized Experiments

- Under randomized experiments, the researchers allocate say medicines to a treatment group and compare the effect of the medicine with the control group which is not given the medicine.
- In 2019, the Nobel Committee gave awards to three scholars for their contribution to the field of randomized experiments. However, one cannot randomize experiments to study issues such as why certain people and regions are more unequal or have fewer educational opportunities and so on.

Natural experiments

- In natural experiments, economists study a policy change or a historical event and try to determine the cause and effect relationship to explain these developments.
- A natural experiment thus is an empirical or observational study in which the variables of interest are not artificially manipulated by researchers but instead are allowed to be influenced by nature.
 - Natural experiments use real-life situations to study impacts on the world as economists cannot conduct clinical trials like in medicine.

Natural experiments are more difficult for two reasons.

1. The first is to identify what will serve as a natural experiment.
2. Second, in a random experiment, the researcher knows and controls the treatment and control groups which allows them to study the cause and effect of the medicine.
 - But in natural experiments, such clear differentiation is not possible because people choose their groups on their own and even move between the two groups.

On Minimum Wages

- Economists around the world believed that raising the minimum wage will lead to greater unemployment.
- The argument is that higher wages will increase costs for the firms and lead to employers recruiting fewer people.

Survey

- In 1992, **New Jersey** increased its minimum wage while neighbouring **Pennsylvania** did not.
 - The hourly minimum wage in New Jersey was increased from \$4.25 to \$5.05.
- A survey on either side of the New Jersey-Pennsylvania border established that the higher wages had no impact on employment!

Inference

- It is widely believed that minimum wages may not affect employment since firms may pass on the costs to consumers.

Card's research on immigration and education

- Card studied the effect of immigration and education on the labour market. In 1980, 1,25,000 Cubans emigrated to the US, with most of them settling in Miami.
- There was a seven per cent increase in the Miami labour force due to the influx.
- Card analysed this natural experiment and observed that low levels of education had no negative impact on the labour force.

Angrist and Guido Imbens' work on LATE

- In the mid-1990s, Angrist and Guido Imbens tried to establish a cause and effect relationship between education and income.
- Causality or causation refers to the relationship between cause and effect.

How does it work?

- They considered a natural experiment where some people are offered a computing course (treatment group) while other people are not (control group).
 - In both groups, there were people who were interested in the course, while others were uninterested.

Inference

- They concluded that the cause and effect relationship could be established only for those participants who opted for the course, as they changed their behaviour.
- Also, a cause and effect relationship between an additional year of education and income was applicable only for those people who decided to leave school when they are given a chance.
- The effect on such a group, where researchers do not know who the participants are, but only the size, is called Local Average Treatment Effect (LATE).

Significance

- Such research made economics more applicable to everyday life, provided policymakers with actual evidence on the outcomes of policies.

Conclusion

- In this way, Angrist and Imbens' methodological insights about natural experiments, and Card's use of natural experiments to understand labour economics have proved to be extremely beneficial in the field of economic sciences.

2. Sowing better to eat better

Context

- Nutritional indicators of many states have worsened as depicted by the first round of the Fifth National Family Health Survey. The survey had covered 17 States and five Union Territories.
- Findings from the Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (2016-18) have also painted a grim picture about the role of micronutrient malnutrition.

A look at numbers

The agro-food system comprises all those activities related to the production, processing, distribution, sale, preparation and consumption of food.

- India produces sufficient food, feed and fibre to sustain about 18% of the world's population (as of 2020).
- Agriculture contributes about 16.5% to India's GDP and employs 42.3% of the workforce (2019-20).

Challenges to agri-food systems

- Reduction of agricultural lands as it is being diverted to commercial activities.
- Agriculture is prone to disasters and extreme events.

A multi-pronged approach is needed to tackle malnutrition

- The agri-food systems need to be reoriented to minimise costs on the environment and the climate.
- It should aim to improve dietary diversity, reduce post-harvest losses, make safety net programmes more nutrition-sensitive, support women's empowerment, enforce standards and regulations, improve Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, nutrition education, and promote effective use of digital technology.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- FAO has been engaged with the Indian government for mainstreaming agrobiodiversity, greening agriculture, promoting nutrition-sensitive agriculture and strengthening national food security.
- Its principle is based on agro-ecology where the farming practices help in mitigating climate change, reduce emissions, recycle resources and prioritize local supply chains.
- It emphasizes diversity in agriculture to adapt to shocks.
 - Different combinations of integrated crop-livestock-forestry-fishery systems can help farmers produce a variety of products in the same area, at the same time or in rotation.

Also read: [Food and Agriculture Organisation \(FAO\)](#)

Conclusion

- Therefore, a sustainable agri-food system is one in which a variety of sufficient, nutritious and safe foods are made available at an affordable price to everyone, and nobody goes hungry or suffers from any form of malnutrition.
- Sustainable agri-food systems can deliver food security and nutrition for all, without compromising the economic, social and environmental bases.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Deconstructing climate finance

Context

- Media reports have highlighted that developed countries are soon going to meet the target of providing \$100 billion annually in climate finance to developing countries by 2025.
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)) has also claimed that climate finance provided by developed countries had reached \$78.9 billion in 2018.
- The article evaluates if the claims are genuine or are erroneous.

Flawed claims

1. Finances from Developed to the Developing Countries
 - Awarding finances from the developed to the developing countries should be from public sources either in the form of grants or as concessional loans.
 - However, the OECD report makes it clear that the public finance component amounted to only \$62.2 billion in 2018, with bilateral funding of about \$32.7 billion and \$29.2 billion through multilateral institutions.
 - Concern
 - Of the public finance component, loans comprise 74%, while grants make up only 20%. The report does not say how much of the total loan component of \$46.3 billion is concessional.
 - From 2016 to 2018, 20% of bilateral loans, 76% of loans provided by multilateral development banks and 46% of loans provided by multilateral climate funds were non-concessional.
 - Between 2013 and 2018, the share of loans has continued to rise, while the share of grants decreased.
 - Inference
 - The numbers clearly reveal a higher proportion of finances were conferred as loans and not as grants increasing the debt burden of many low-income countries.
2. Inflating Climate Finances
 - The OECD reports are also criticized for bloating climate finances.
 - It had included development projects such as health and education that only notionally target climate action.
3. Biennial Reports

- The 2018 Biennial Assessment of UNFCCC's Standing Committee on Finance reports that on average, developed countries provided only \$26 billion per year as climate-specific finance between 2011-2016.
 - This rose to an average of \$36.2 billion in 2017-18.
4. Oxfam report
- The Oxfam report on climate finance takes into picture the estimate of how much climate finance is actually targeting climate action, discounts for grant equivalence and thus takes into perspective the outcome of such investments.
 - In contrast to the OECD report, Oxfam estimates that in 2017-18, out of an average of \$59.5 billion of public climate finance reported by developed countries, the **climate-specific net assistance ranged only between \$19 and \$22.5 billion per year.**
5. U.S. climate funding
- U.S. President Joe Biden has promised to double US international climate finance by 2024.
 - However, it is the US congress that has to decide on the quantum of finances and the US in the past has also broken commitments.
 - Example
 - It had promised \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) under President Barack Obama, but delivered only \$1 billion before President Donald Trump withdrew U.S. support from the GCF.
 - Even if the finances are mobilized it will be mostly from the Private sector and such investments from the private sector will be based on benefits they wish to derive and not as per the priorities and needs of the developing countries.
6. Adaptation and Mitigation

Climate change mitigation means avoiding and reducing emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to prevent the planet from warming to more extreme temperatures.

Climate change adaptation means altering our behaviour, systems, and—in some cases—ways of life to protect our families, our economies, and the environment in which we live from the impacts of climate change.

- Climate finance has also remained tilted towards mitigation, despite the repeated calls for maintaining a balance between adaptation and mitigation.
- Currently available adaptation finance is significantly lower than the needs expressed in the Nationally Determined Contributions submitted by developing countries.

Conclusion

- Developing countries should continue to put pressure on developed countries to live up to their promises and commitments as the history of climate negotiations has not been in their favor.

F. Prelims Facts

1. 'Gati Shakti' will boost infra projects: PM

What's in News?

Prime Minister launched 'PM Gati Shakti', a national master plan for synchronising connectivity infrastructure projects across modes of transport.

This topic has been covered in [Oct 13th, 2021 CNA](#).

G. Tidbits

1. India, Iran discuss ways to fight drug trafficking from Afghanistan

What's in News?

Indian and Iranian officials held a virtual meeting following the largest seizure of heroin at the Mundra port in Gujarat, to discuss ways to fight drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

- For many decades narcotic drugs production and organised drug trafficking from Afghanistan has posed a major threat to the world.
- As immediate neighbours to Afghanistan, Iran and India have also been significantly impacted by other developments in that country.
- Analysts have pointed out that a large number of narcotic substances that were with various narcotic producing groups in Afghanistan were made to disappear from the country as the Taliban took control of Kabul.

2. Sticky edible oil prices lead to duty cuts

What's in News?

Recent steps taken by the government to curb the persistently high inflation in edible oils.

- The government has decided to exempt crude palm, soya bean and sunflower seed oils from customs duty, and slash the Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) is levied on their imports from October 14 till March 31, 2022.
 - Imports of crude palm, soya bean and sunflower seed oils attract a basic customs duty of 2.5% and an AIDC of 20%.
- The customs duty on edible grade palm, sunflower and soya bean oils is being halved as well, with no cess levied on their imports.

The decision would help in reducing price burden on ultimate consumers amid the surging edible oil prices.

3. '100 new Sainik Schools will admit students from 2022-23'

What's in News?

100 new Sainik Schools will be set up under public-private partnership.

- These schools will function in an exclusive vertical, distinct from the existing schools under the Defence Ministry.

- The Cabinet had approved the proposal for launching 100 schools to be affiliated with the Sainik Schools Society.
- In terms of support from the Ministry, the society would provide affiliation to private and government schools that qualify a certain objective criterion related to academics and infrastructure.
- The scheme envisages to provide an annual fee support.

4. India's trade with China set to exceed \$100 billion in 2021

What's in News?

India's trade with China is set to cross the \$100 billion mark for the first time in 2021.

- The shipments have hit \$90 billion after three quarters, an almost 30% jump from pre-pandemic levels.
- Two-way trade jumped 49% for the first time in nine months.
- India's biggest exports to China are iron ore, cotton, and other raw material-based commodities.
- India imports mechanical and electrical machinery in large quantities, while imports of medical supplies have increased in the past two years owing to the pandemic.
- Chinese exports of mechanical and electrical products, as well as medicinal materials, grew robustly. Medicine and medicinal material exports more than doubled.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Which of the following military exercises involve India and USA?

1. Malabar
2. Yudh Abhyas
3. Vajra Prahar

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Exercise Malabar is a naval exercise involving the United States, Japan and India as permanent partners.
- Yudh Abhyas is a joint military exercise, bilaterally occurring between India and the US.
- Vajra Prahar is the joint military exercise between the special forces of India and the United States (US).

Q.2 Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Border Security Force (BSF) is the designated border guarding force for all the international borders of India.
2. It falls under the administrative control of the Ministry of Defence.
3. Recently, its jurisdiction has been set up to 10kms from the international border.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Border Security Force (BSF) is one of the five Central Armed Police Forces of the Union of India.
- It is India's border guarding organisation on its border with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- It falls under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- In 2021, amendments have been made on the jurisdiction of the Border Security Force (BSF) to exercise its powers in states where it guards the international border. It outlines the new jurisdiction as "whole of the area comprised in the States of Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya and Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and so much of the area comprised within a belt of 50 kilometers in the States of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal and Assam, running along the borders of India".

Q.3 The "One Sun, One World, One Grid" (OSOWOG) is an initiative of which country?

- a. USA
- b. Japan
- c. Germany
- d. India

Answer: d

Explanation:

- One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG) is a transnational electricity grid supplying solar power across the globe.
- It is an initiative of India.
- The Prime Minister of India first presented the idea in 2018 during the first assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Q.4 The strategic Bandar Abbas port is located in which country?

- a. Pakistan

- b. Iran
- c. Afghanistan
- d. Oman

Answer: b

Explanation:

Bandar Abbas is a port city and capital of Hormozgān Province on the southern coast of Iran, on the Persian Gulf.

Q5. Consider the following pairs:

Tradition	State
1. Chapchar kut festival	Mizoram
2. Khongiom parba ballad	Manipur
3. Thang-Ta dance	Sikkim

Which of them is/are correctly matched?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Chapchar Kut is a festival of Mizoram.
- Khongjom Parba is a style of ballad singing from Manipur using Dholak (drum) which depicts stories of heroic battles fought by Manipuris against the British Empire in 1891.
- The Thang Ta dance form has originated in Manipur. This dance is an Indian martial art form that involves the use of weapons for the performance. The Meiteis are the pioneers in Thang Ta.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Without concrete financial commitments, global climate change summits have turned into fancy talk shops. Suggest ways to change this unfortunate reality. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Environment and Ecology]
2. As a nation, it is time to focus on our quality of food, rather than quantity. Suggest measures to achieve this goal. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Agriculture]