16 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIETY

1. Hunger Index: poor ranking devoid of ground reality and facts, says Govt.

Context:

Global Hunger Index 2021 has been released.

Global Hunger Index:

- Global Hunger Index is an index jointly released by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe every October.
- It aims to track hunger at the world, regional and country levels.
- The Hunger Index measures countries' performance on four component indicators – undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting and child mortality.

Know more about the Global Hunger Index in the linked article.

Calculating GHI:

GHI ranks countries on a 100-point scale, 0 representing zero/no hunger. 0 is the best possible score and 100 is the worst. The GHI scores are based on four indicators. Taken together, the component indicators reflect deficiencies in calories as well as in micronutrients. Thus, the GHI reflects both aspects of hunger (undernutrition and malnutrition).

1. UNDERNOURISHMENT: the share of the population whose caloric intake is insufficient.
2. CHILD STUNTING: the share of children under the age of five who have low height for their age.
3. CHILD WASTING: the share of children under the age of five who have low weight for their height.
4. CHILD MORTALITY: the mortality rate of children under the age of five (a reflection of the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments).

Undernourishment data are provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and child mortality data are sourced from the U.N. Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. Child wasting and stunting data are drawn from the joint database of UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the World Bank, among others.

Key Findings:

- The Index ranked India at the 101st position out of 116 countries.
- India is also among the 31 countries where hunger has been identified as serious.
- India ranked 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) released in 2020.
- According to the Index, only 15 countries fare worse than India. They are Papua New Guinea (102), Afghanistan and Nigeria (103), Congo (105), Mozambique and Sierra Leone (106), Timor-Leste (108), Haiti (109), Liberia (110), Madagascar (111), Democratic Republic of Congo (112), Chad (113), Central African Republic (114), Yemen (115) and Somalia (116).
- India was also behind most of the neighbouring countries. Pakistan was placed at 92, Nepal and Bangladesh at 76 and Sri Lanka at 65.

India's Concerns:

- The Government of India has challenged the country's poor ranking in the Global Hunger Index 2021 and the methodology used.
- It has raised concerns that the methodology is devoid of ground reality and facts.
- The Government has contested the performance of neighbouring countries on the Index.
- It has also questioned the FAO report 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021'.
    - The report has said that four countries of this region — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka — have not been affected at all by the COVID-19 pandemic induced loss of job/business and reduction in income levels, rather they have been able to improve their position on the indicator 'proportion of undernourished population'.
    - This is also the only indicator in the report that has shown deterioration in India, the other three either show an improvement or have remained unchanged.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. TB deaths up in pandemic: WHO

Context:

According to the 2021 Global TB report released recently by the World Health Organization (WHO), the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed years of global progress in tackling tuberculosis.

Details:

- For the first time in over a decade, TB deaths have increased.
- The WHO estimated that some 4.1 million people currently suffer from TB but had not been diagnosed with it or had not officially reported it to the national authorities.
    - This figure is up from 2.9 million in 2019.
- In 2020, more people died of TB, with far fewer people being diagnosed and treated or provided with preventive treatment compared with 2019.
- Overall spending on essential TB services fell.
    - One challenge was the disruption in access to TB services and a reduction in resources. In many countries, human, financial and other resources had been reallocated from tackling TB to COVID-19.
    - Another challenge was that people struggled to seek care during lockdowns.
- India (41%), followed by Indonesia (14%), the Philippines (12%) and China (8%) were the top four countries that contributed most to the global reduction in TB notifications between 2019 and 2020.
- There was also a reduction in the provision of TB preventive treatment.
    - There has been a 21% reduction since 2019.
- In addition, the number of people treated for drug-resistant TB fell by 15%, from 1,77,000 in 2019 to 1,50,000 in 2020, equivalent to only about 1 in 3 of those in need.

WHO modelling projections suggest that the number of people developing TB and dying from the disease could be much higher in 2021 and 2022.

Read more on Tuberculosis (TB) – Definition, Causes, Diagnosis & Treatment

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Former CECs flag security concerns over e-voting

Context:

Telangana State Election Commission (SEC) is set to carry out an e-voting experiment and the Election Commission of India (EC) is also exploring remote voting.

- This would involve voting from another location set up by the authorities and not Internet-based voting from home.

Concerns:

- Former Chief Election Commissioners (CEC) have raised a range of concerns over the idea of online voting and remote voting.
- If the security of EVMs that are standalone devices is being questioned from time to time, then Internet-based voting would have even more critics.
- In the case of e-voting, several concerns arise with respect to maintaining the secrecy of ballots and even bringing political parties on board.
- With respect to the e-voting plan, it is so far not clear how verification of voter identification, maintaining a free voting environment and secrecy of ballots would be maintained.

Security, verification, and anonymity are of utmost importance when it comes to voting. In the case of e-voting, one of the largest complications is that an anonymous vote makes it very difficult to verify whether the result is accurate or if there has been a security compromise.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Bhutan, China sign MoU for 3-step process to expedite boundary talks

Context:

In a step towards resolving the boundary disputes, Bhutan and China signed an agreement on a three-step roadmap to help speed up talks.

Details:

- The roadmap "for Expediting the Bhutan-China Boundary Negotiations" is expected to kickstart the progress on the boundary talks process that has been delayed for five years.
- The delay was first due to the Doklam standoff in 2017 and then the pandemic.

Read more on the Doklam Issue covered in 17 June 2019 CNA.

How does it impact India?

- The timing is significant for India given the border talks on the standoff at the Line of Actual Control appear to have hit an impasse.

This topic has been covered in <u>Oct 12th, 2021 CNA.</u>

2. Lebanon on edge after sectarian unrest

Context:

Sectarian unrest in Lebanon.

Details:

- Sectarian politics have divided Lebanon and fuelled civil conflict since independence.
- At least six people have been shot dead in Beirut as demonstrations related to a probe into 2020's catastrophic port blast prompted the city's worst civil violence in years.
- Shi'ites and Christians have lined up on opposite sides of this standoff.
- The country is suffering one of the world's worst-ever economic meltdowns. The latest bloodshed adds to the woes of the country.

Issue:

- Political tensions have been building over the probe into the explosion, which killed more than 200 people and devastated swathes of Beirut.
- The judge has sought to question a number of senior politicians and security officials, including Hezbollah allies, suspected of negligence that led to the explosion, which was caused by a huge quantity of ammonium nitrate.
    - All have denied wrongdoing.
- Some of the most prominent suspects sought for questioning on suspicion of negligence are Shi'ite allies of the heavily armed, Iran-backed Shi'ite group Hezbollah.
- Recent shooting erupted as protesters headed to a demonstration called by Hezbollah and its ally Amal to demand the removal of the judge investigating the port blast.
- Besides, the latest bloodshed takes place against the backdrop of one of the world's sharpest economic depressions, which spiralled from the meltdown of its financial system in 2019.
- The collapse, which has driven about three-quarters of Lebanese into poverty and sunk the currency by 90%, was caused by decades of financial mismanagement and corruption by the sectarian elite.
- Lebanon's collapse is driving ever more people to emigrate.
    - It is causing a brain drain across the sectarian spectrum which economists say will set back Lebanon for years.
- Also, Lebanon's web of sectarian rivalries is complicated by foreign interests.

Way Forward:

- The new government has vowed to revive negotiations with the IMF to secure a rescue package.
- But Lebanon must first agree on the size of vast losses in the financial system.
- It should agree on how the losses should be shared out.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: DEFENCE

1. Aim is to make India a military power on its own strength: PM

Context:

Seven new Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU) have been incorporated after the dissolution of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).

Background:

Earlier, the Union Cabinet had approved a long-awaited reform plan to corporatize the OFB, which has 41 factories, into seven fully government-owned corporate entities on the lines of DPSUs.

**Read more on this topic covered in **

Details:

- The Defence Ministry had issued an order for the dissolution of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) with effect from October 1, 2021.
- The government had decided to convert OFB from a Government Department into seven 100 per cent Government-owned corporate entities as a measure to improve self-reliance in the defence preparedness of the country.
- OFB's assets, employees and management have now been transferred to seven newly constituted defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs).
- the seven new defence companies are: Munitions India Limited (MIL); Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (AVANI); Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited (AWE India); Troop Comforts Limited (TCL) (Troop Comfort Items); Yantra India Limited (YIL); India Optel Limited (IOL) and Gliders India Limited (GIL).
- These 7 new companies would form a strong base for the military strength of the country in the times to come.
- The objective of this restructuring is to:
    - transform Ordnance Factories into productive, and profitable assets
    - improve expertise in product range
    - increase competitiveness
    - improve quality
    - enhance cost-efficiency
    - ensure self-reliance in defence preparedness

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Fast forward (Gati Shakti National Master Plan)

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched a national master plan for multi-modal connectivity that aims to develop infrastructure to reduce logistic costs and boost the economy.

Details

- It is a digital platform that will bring Ministries including Railways and Roadways together for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects.
  - The plan aims to lend more power and speed to projects by connecting all concerned departments on one platform.
- It will incorporate the infrastructure schemes of various Ministries and State Governments like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, UDAN, etc.
- Economic Zones like textile clusters, pharmaceutical clusters, defence corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters, agri zones will be covered to improve connectivity & 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).

Role of States

- States have a crucial role, considering that key pieces of the plan such as port linkages and land availability for highways, railways, industrial clusters and corridors depend on political consensus and active partnership.

Why was it launched?

- According to PM Modi, there was a lethargic approach to development work, with departments working in silos and there was no coordination on projects.
  - Example: A new good quality road is constructed by one department, and a few days later another department digs that very road to lay water pipelines. This shows a lack of coordination.
- To overcome the difficulties, Gati Shakti joins different departments for the **coordinated development of projects** from road to railways, aviation to agriculture.
- India has a high logistics cost at 13-14 per cent of GDP.
  - It was impacting competitiveness in exports. Gati Shakti is aimed at **reducing logistic costs and turnaround time**.
- Currently, any inter-ministerial issues that arise relating to a project are addressed in regular meetings of infrastructure-related ministries. These issues will be raised in advance, and then taken up for execution.

How will progress under the National Master Plan be monitored?

- The National Master Plan has set targets for all infrastructure ministries.

- A project monitoring group under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will monitor the progress of key projects in real-time, and report any inter-ministerial issues to an empowered group of ministers, who will then aim to resolve these.

Significance

- 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.

- It will help improve global competitiveness, promote manufacturing and modernize infrastructure in the country.

- Gati Shakti plan will help raise the global profile of local manufacturers and help them compete with their counterparts worldwide.

- The project can generate employment opportunities for the youth in future.

- Gati Shakti portal would help reduce the human intervention required as ministries will be in constant touch, and projects will be reviewed by the project monitoring group in real-time.

- The portal will also highlight all the clearances any new project would need, based on its location — and allow stakeholders to apply for these clearances from the relevant authority directly on the portal.

Way forward

- Delay in the completion of infrastructure projects can often be traced to incompatible and hostile land acquisition. It has resulted in alienating communities and threatening environmental integrity.

- Given the Centre's inclination towards Geographic Information Systems and remote sensing to identify potential industrial areas, policymakers should reclaim lands already subjected to degradation and pollution, rather than alienate controversial new parcels.

Conclusion

- Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Union Government to convince the citizens that such a policy initiative will benefit them, help in improving efficiency leading to better outcomes in social welfare and the centre should respect States' autonomy, take them into confidence to achieve desired results.

2. Tackling terror

Background

UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis of 9th Oct 2021

Tackling Violence

- Indian authorities should take urgent steps to protect minority communities (Pandits and the Sikhs) that are being targeted by armed groups in Jammu and Kashmir.

- Various political forces and civil society should stand in solidarity with the victims.

- Civil society must take the initiative to foster communal amity and mobilize people across communities against hatred.
- Political dialogue must be initiated, Statehood should be restored as originally envisaged during the process of dilution, press and political freedoms must be reinstated, thus creating an environment to isolate and tackle terror in the region.

F. Prelims Facts

To be updated shortly!!!

G. Tidbits

1. U.S.-India ministerial dialogue adds focus on climate finance

What's in News?

India's Finance Minister and the U.S. Treasury Secretary met for the eighth ministerial meeting of the U.S.-India Economic and Financial partnership.

- The ministerial held a session dedicated to climate finance for the first time.
- India and the US reaffirmed the collective developed country goal to mobilise $100 billion annually for developing countries from public and private sources, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation.
- With the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow coming up, India has been pushing for rich countries to meet their Paris Accord climate finance commitment of $100 billion per year.

Note:

India has been under pressure, including from the U.S. and U.K., to provide a deadline to reach 'Net Zero' emissions. India has so far not made commitments beyond its Paris-related goals and has argued that rich countries must move towards 'net minus' commitments.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 With regards to elections in India, consider the following statements and choose the incorrect ones:

1. The state election commissions are responsible for conducting elections to the respective state legislatures.
2. The NRIs are allowed to vote in the parliamentary elections at the respective Indian embassies.
3. E-voting is allowed only for service voters in India.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Election Commission of India is responsible for conducting elections to the respective state legislatures.
- The state election commissions are responsible for conducting elections to the municipalities and panchayats within the state.
- The NRIs are allowed to vote in the parliamentary elections only when they are physically present in their voting constituency.
- Service voters in India are allowed to vote through proxy or postal ballots.

Q.2 Tuberculosis disease is caused by

a. Parasite
b. Virus
c. Bacteria
d. Fungi

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Tuberculosis is a contagious infection caused by bacteria that mainly affects the lungs but can also affect any other organ including bone, brain and spine.
- It is an infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacteria.

Q.3 If Thomas Cup is to Badminton, Uber Cup is to

a. Football
b. Golf
c. Badminton
d. Basketball

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Uber Cup, also called the World Team Championships for Women, is a major international badminton competition contested by women's national badminton teams.
- The Uber Cup is named after a former British woman badminton player, Betty Uber, who in 1950 had the idea of hosting a women's event similar to the men's.

Q.4 Consider the following statements with regards to the Forest Conservation Act, 1980:

1. The Supreme Court, in TN Godavarman Thirumulpad versus Union of India and Others (1996), have defined forest as, all areas which are recorded as 'forest' in any government record, irrespective of ownership, recognition and classification.
2. The Act restricts the state government and other authorities to take decisions first without permission from the central government.
3. The Forest Conservation Act gives complete authority to the Central government to carry out the objectives of the act.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Supreme Court, in TN Godavarman Thirumulpad versus Union of India and Others (1996), have defined forest as, all areas which are recorded as 'forest' in any government record, irrespective of ownership, recognition and classification.

- The Act restricts the state government and other authorities to take decisions first without permission from the central government.

- The Forest Conservation Act gives complete authority to the Central government to carry out the objectives of the Act.

Read more on Forest Conservation Act (FCA 1980) – Objectives and Amendments

Q.5 With reference to the Constitution of India, consider the following statements: (2019)

1. No High Court shall have the jurisdiction to declare any central law to be constitutionally invalid.
2. An amendment to the Constitution of India cannot be called into question by the Supreme Court of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Both the Supreme Court and the High Courts declare any central law to be constitutionally invalid if it violates the Indian Constitution.
- An amendment to the Constitution of India can be called into question, challenged or even struck down by the Supreme Court of India.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. There has been an uptick in violence in J&K recently and the targeted killings of civilians have emerged as a major cause for concern. In this context, what future course of action would you suggest to contain the situation? (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Security]
2. The success of the Gati Shakti National Master Plan is dependent on the extent of cooperation between Centre and States. Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Economy]

Read the previous CNA here.