

## 25 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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### B. GS 2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. [‘India’s vaccine pace is inspirational to lower-income countries’](#)

#### **Context:**

- India has achieved the feat of **1 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses**.

#### **Factors that have aided India's feat:**

- The **political commitment to vaccination** was important as it set the ground rolling for mass vaccination.
- India had a huge advantage coming out of **systematic investments that had been made in strengthening public health systems under the [National Health Mission](#)**. ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) workers, ANMs (Auxiliary Nurse Midwives), and the health infrastructure helped India to very quickly mobilise millions of health workers to carry out the vaccination drive.
- India's historical strength in building **indigenous vaccine manufacturing prowess** inspired confidence among the global community to transfer technology for manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines to Indian manufacturers like the Serum Institute of India (SII).
- The **public confidence in vaccines** also helped overcome vaccine hesitancy as observed in some countries.
- **The large-scale use of technology** such as the CoWin app has been a big game-changer. This digital innovation helped India organise its vaccination efforts, enabling vaccine tracking and vaccine management, otherwise not possible through manual efforts. Digital technologies like CoWIN can be leveraged very fast, at a low cost and to great effect.

#### **Way forward:**

- The COVID vaccination experience can serve as a **critical threshold for the public health policy and implementation in India** to take a leap.
- It will be extremely important for India to ensure that learnings out of the COVID crisis are used to improve its health systems and make it pandemic-proof. In this direction, the article makes the following recommendations.
  - **Digital tools like CoWIN can be repurposed for routine immunisation services and other healthcare programmes.** Example - CoWIN like platform could be used in [tuberculosis](#) programmes to efficiently track patients.
  - India should plan for a **more geographically distributed manufacturing of life-saving medical commodities**. Distributed manufacturing bases can help handle disruptions like the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - One of the lessons that has emerged very clearly from this pandemic and India's response is that **public health system capacities need to be continuously bolstered**. India should systemically invest in public health infrastructure and pandemic preparedness.
  - India should consider **building public-private partnerships in the healthcare sector** that are mutually reinforcing.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

#### 1. E-waste disposal, a mounting headache

##### Context:

- The article expresses **concerns over the e-waste recycling system** in New Delhi in particular and India in general.

##### Background:

##### **E-waste:**

- The [International Telecommunication Union](#) defines e-waste as **all items of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) and its parts that have been discarded by its owner as waste without the intent of re-use.**
- This waste is classified into six categories: Cooling and freezing equipment like refrigerators, freezers; other equipment such as televisions, monitors, laptops, notebooks and tablets.
- It also comprises fluorescent lamps and other large and small equipment like washing machines, clothes dryers, dish-washing machines, vacuum cleaners and microwaves. Ventilation equipment, small IT and telecommunication equipment like positioning systems (GPS), pocket calculators, routers, personal computers, printers and telephones are also included in the broad definition of e-waste.

##### **E-waste concerns:**

- E-waste contains **hazardous substances** such as lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polybrominated biphenyls (PBBs), mercury, polybrominated biphenyl ethers (PBDEs), brominated flame retardants (BFRs), and also valuable substances such as iron, steel, copper, aluminium and plastics.
- E-waste releases harmful chemicals, such as lead, on burning, which **adversely impacts human blood, kidney and the peripheral nervous system.** When it is thrown in landfills, the chemicals seep in the ground water affecting both land and sea animals.
- Electronic waste is emerging as a **serious public health and environmental issue.**

##### **E-waste generation in India:**

- **India is the third-largest producer of e-waste after China and the United States.**
  - A study by KPMG and ASSOCHAM says computer equipment account for almost 70 per cent of e-waste in India, followed by telecom/phones (12 per cent), electrical equipment (8 per cent) and medical equipment (7 per cent).
- According to a 2018 report by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), India had generated close to two million metric tonnes of e-waste. The e-waste generation in India is projected to rise to three million metric tonnes owing to increasing digitization.
  - **The country's e-waste generation increased 43 per cent between FY18 and FY20.** The pandemic-induced consumption of electronic devices is set to add to the problem in future.
- **Delhi was among the top e-waste contributors in the country** with 9.5% in the overall e-waste generation.

### Concerns:

- The **unprecedented generation of e-waste** is a cause of concern.
- The **high cost of handling and procurement, low margins and underutilisation of capacities** pose basic problems to most formal sector or pollution control board-recognised e-waste handlers.
- A major concern for Delhi and also India in general with respect to the e-recycling system is that despite measures in place for collection and recycling, the **industry has been dependent on informal players** like ragpickers and aggregators without appropriate licences for e-waste disposal.
  - A significant portion of the e-waste generated in India goes to the informal sector. As per available estimates, more than 95% of this waste is handled by the informal sector.
  - The informal sector is not capable of undertaking special treatment for e-waste processing and disposal.
- The private firm roped in by the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) for e-waste collection has received very few pickup requests for e-waste collection which could be indicative of the **low awareness of the general citizenry over e-waste handling rules and its significance.**
- A substantial proportion of the pickup requests were cancelled as it involved calls for picking up material in working condition and the users' price expectation was higher than the company's offer.

### Governmental efforts:

- India is also the only country in South Asia to have a specific legal framework for handling e-waste since 2011.

- The **E-waste (Management and Handling) Rules** address not just the need to handle e-waste in an environmentally friendly way, but also its transportation, storage and recycling.
- India has also introduced the concept of **extended producer responsibility (EPR)**. In 2016, the rules were tweaked to introduce **Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO)** while bringing buy-back, deposit refund and exchange schemes under EPR.

### **Recommendations:**

- India needs a **multipronged approach** to streamline e-waste management.

### **Creating awareness:**

- Given the low level of awareness among the people, there is the need to create awareness of e-waste through various mediums.
  - Making contact through resident welfare associations could allow the administration to reach out to a larger number of people in a shorter timeframe.
  - Use of social media platforms also offers an easy and affordable way to create awareness among the people.
- **People should be encouraged to efficiently use their electronic devices** by regularly maintaining them which would help extend the average life of the electronic devices. People should be **encouraged to break consumerist patterns**. This would invariably help reduce e-waste generation.

### **Formalizing the informal sector:**

- Given the fact that a significant portion of the e-waste goes to the informal sector and the concerns associated with it, there is a need to take appropriate policy measures to formalize the informal sector.
- This could involve measures such as **easy licensing of existing informal workers, offering incentives for those with licenses in the form of state support, easy credit facilities, etc.**
- The role of informal players cannot be denied and they should be included as part of the solution.

### **Increasing private sector participation:**

- **More private players should be involved in e-waste collection and processing.** They can bring in the **much-needed efficiency and technological solutions** for the mounting e-waste problem in India.
- The **revenue from valuable metal extraction** from e-waste along with **state support through tax benefits** can incentivize the private sector participation in the sector.
  - E-waste processing can yield precious metals such as copper, iron, tin, nickel, lead, zinc, silver, gold and palladium. Printed circuit boards contain rare and precious metals such as

ruthenium, rhodium, palladium, osmium, iridium and platinum - together referred to as the **Platinum Group Metals**.

#### Digital solutions:

- Using **online portals** which people can make use of to raise pickup requests would lead to better efficiency in the e-waste recycling system.

For more related information refer to the following article:

[CNA dated March 2, 2021: IIT-Delhi researchers develop technology to recycle e-waste.](#)

### D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### E. Editorials

**Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

#### 1. In Glasgow, all eyes on 2030

##### Context:

- The **26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26)** is scheduled to be held soon in Glasgow.

##### Background:

- The **Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)** of the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) released in August 2021 had sounded an alert for the nations of the world over global temperature rise.

For related information on the AR6 refer to the following article:

[CNA dated Aug 10, 2021: IPCC report forecasts a future of severe weather.](#)

- Ahead of the COP26, major preparatory conferences and bilateral meetings have been held to persuade countries to **raise their emission reduction commitments from the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)** under the Paris Agreement.



- There has been a **growing call for net zero emissions by 2050**.

#### Details:

- The article argues that the **COP26 must focus sharply on reducing emissions till 2030, rather than on net zero 2050** based on the following arguments.

#### **Insufficient climate action:**

- The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) had emphasised that to keep temperature rise within 1.5°C, **global emissions should be reduced by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, on the way to net zero 2050**.
- However many high-emitter countries are short of the emissions reductions required by 2030 to restrict global temperature rise to well below 2°C or even the goal of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- Global emissions in 2030 are expected to be 16.3% above the 2010 level, as against the call for 2030 emissions to be 45% less from 2010 levels for the 1.5°C goal. Thus **there is a need for a significant increase in the level of ambition of NDCs till 2030**.
- The updated NDCs submitted by the parties too would not be sufficient to meet the IPCC recommendations. While several large emitters like the U.K., European Union, China and the U.S. have raised their emission targets, this is still grossly insufficient to meet the temperature goals. **At the current rate of emissions even with the updated NDCs, much of the carbon budget would be used up fast.**
  - **Carbon budgets** represent the quantum of CO<sub>2</sub> the atmosphere can hold for a given global temperature, best assessed through cumulative emissions and not annual flows.

#### **Overlooking the need for immediate action:**

- The net zero 2050 target is too distant a goal and this might divert attention away from the urgent 2030 target that COP26 should focus on.

#### **Contradictory to the CBDR principle:**

- The net zero target also seems to be contradictory to the foundational principle of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](https://unfccc.int/)), which is **common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)**. Instead of a common goal, the article argues for a **differentiated target year**. Developed countries should reach net zero earlier while the developing countries should get more time. The article calls on the developed countries to take up more responsibility for climate action given their legacy emissions. The developing countries should also do what they can, with technological and financial assistance from the developed countries.

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

[CNA dated April 8, 2021: Deconstructing declarations of carbon neutrality](#)

**India's predicament:**

- India accounts for 7% of global emissions and ranks as the world's third-largest emitter. However, India has **extremely low per-capita emissions** that are far below the global average.
- India has so far resisted pressures to raise its [Paris Agreement](#) emission reduction commitments and it has not yet submitted its updated NDC. This might put India under pressure from the LDCs and the most vulnerable countries from climate change.
- Also, **India remains extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change** as indicated by important indices like the **climate change risk index**.

**Recommendations:**

- India could **consider raising its NDC pledge of reducing Emissions Intensity** (ratio of emissions to GDP) by 33-35% from 2005 levels by 2030 to 38-40%. This is quite achievable for India.
- Considering the growing calls for net zero emissions, **India could offer to achieve net zero emissions by 2070-75**, invoking CBDR. India could offer a peaking year between 2040-45.
- India should focus on **increasing its forest and tree cover** while at the same time shifting to **green sources of energy** - renewable energy, green hydrogen and [electric vehicles](#).
- India should argue for **financial and technological assistance from developed countries**.
- India should also argue for **adequate adaptation measures** to complement the mitigation efforts at the COP26.

**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**1. India's Central Asian outreach**

**Background:**

- Indian External Affairs Minister has made a number of visits to the Central Asian region in a short span of time. This seems to be indicative of a **renewed approach to India's Central Asian diplomacy amid the recent developments in Afghanistan**.

**India's initiatives in the Central Asian region:**



- After the breakup of the Soviet Union and the formation of the independent republics in Central Asia, **India provided financial aid to the region and established diplomatic relations.** India has maintained constant contacts with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. India signed the **Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA) with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan** to stimulate defence cooperation and deepen trade relations.
- In 2012, India unveiled its '**Connect Central Asia**' policy aimed at furthering India's political, economic, historical and cultural connections with the region.
- The current administration made a high pitch for deepening of the relations with the Central Asian region with the Prime Minister visiting all the Central Asian countries.
- India signed MoUs with Iran in 2015 to **develop the [Chabahar port](#)** in the Sistan-Baluchistan province. This port project is significant with respect to India's interests in the Central Asian region as most of the Central Asian leaders view India's Chabahar port as an opportunity to diversify their export markets and control China's ambitions.
- India is also a part of the **[Ashgabat Agreement](#)**. This allows India access to connectivity networks to facilitate trade and commercial interactions with both Central Asia and Eurasia, and also access the natural resources of the region.
- **India has extended a credit line of \$200 million for the support of development projects to Kyrgyzstan.**
- India has made **efforts to reach out to countries like Armenia** Mr. Jaishankar has become the first Indian External Affairs Minister to visit Armenia. The two countries have agreed to enhance trade and cultural exchanges to boost bilateral relations. India also supported efforts for a peaceful solution to the **[Nagorno-Karabakh conflict](#)** between Azerbaijan and Armenia under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Minsk group.
- India has increased its **participation in regional multilateral associations** like the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and **[Shanghai Cooperation Organization \(SCO\)](#)**.

### Challenges:

- India's efforts to establish robust relations with the Central Asian region have been stonewalled by **Pakistan's lack of willingness to allow India passage through its territory.**
- **China has gained significant leverage in the Central Asian region** through its BRI project and it would seek to undermine and even restrict India's attempt to find a standing in the region.
- The **recent developments in Afghanistan** have catalysed new geostrategic and geoeconomic concerns in the Central Asian region including for India. There are **serious security threats from the Taliban**. Also given the strategic influence that Pakistan holds over the Taliban, India's interests in Afghanistan are likely to suffer.

### Conclusion:

- **Central Asian countries have been keen to have India as a partner** as they have sought to **diversify their strategic ties** amid the rising anti-Chinese sentiments within the region.
- The **common security threats from the Taliban** also require India and Central Asian countries to deepen their engagement.
- India too stands to gain from a robust relationship with the Central Asian region.

For information on the significance of the Central Asian region for India, refer to the following article:

[RSTV India's World: 2nd India - Central Asia Dialogue](#)

- In this context, India needs to recalibrate its rules of engagement with the Central Asian region.

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. U.P. to get nine new medical colleges

#### **Pradhan Mantri Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana (PM-ASBY):**

- The scheme is aimed at **strengthening healthcare infrastructure** across the country.
- The objective of PM-ASBY is to **fill critical gaps in public health infrastructure**, especially in critical care facilities and primary care in both urban and rural areas.
  - The scheme will provide **support for both rural and urban health and wellness centres**.
  - **Critical care services** will be available in all the districts of the country with more than five lakh populations through exclusive critical care hospital blocks, while the remaining districts will be covered through referral services.
- People will have access to a full range of **diagnostic services in the public healthcare system** through a network of laboratories across the country, and integrated public health labs will be set up in all the districts.
- Under PMASBY, a **national institution for one health**, four new national institutes for virology, a regional research platform for WHO South East Asia Region, nine biosafety level-III laboratories, **five new regional national centres for disease control** will be set up.
- Under the PMASBY scheme, **preference is given to underserved, backward, and aspirational districts**.
- The scheme aims to increase the availability of health professionals, correct the existing geographical imbalance in the distribution of medical colleges and effectively utilize the existing infrastructure of district hospitals.
  - Under the scheme, 157 new medical colleges have been approved across the nation. Also, support is expected for the up-gradation of existing colleges.

### Context:

- Prime Minister is scheduled to launch the Pradhan Mantri Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana (PM-ASBY) and inaugurate nine medical colleges in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

### Additional information:

- **National Health Policy (NHP), 2017** envisages raising **public health expenditure from the existing 1.15% to 2.5% of GDP by 2025** in a time-bound manner.

## 2. Rice's share in India's exports

- **Rice exports form the fifth-highest share in terms of India's total exports.**
  - Petroleum, gems and jewellery constitute the highest share in India's total exports.
- **India is the biggest exporter of rice globally**, forming over 30% of the world's exports.
- Around 90% of India's rice exports go to Asian and African countries.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. Union Minister launches air disinfection device

- An air disinfection and purifying device called "**Bipolar Air Disinfectant and Purifier**" developed by a private firm has been recently launched by the Union Minister of Tourism and Culture.
- The device can **inactivate pathogens** like SARS-COV-2, influenza, legionella virus, rhinovirus, varicella-zoster virus, TB bacteria, e coli, fungi and moulds.

### 2. 'Misinformation, hate speech in FB'

- Internal documents at Facebook have indicated the **issue of misinformation, hate speech and celebrations of violence** in its Indian market. It also points out the **use of bots and fake accounts** being used by political parties for political mileage.
  - India is Facebook's largest market.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q.1 GAVI, often seen in the news, refers to which of the following?**

- a. Global vaccine alliance formed specifically to expedite the rollout of Covid vaccine around the world
- b. Global vaccine alliance formed under OECD guidelines
- c. Global vaccine alliance with a goal of increasing access to immunization in poor nations
- d. Global vaccine alliance working on rolling out world's first anti-malarial vaccine

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- GAVI is a public-private global health partnership with the goal of increasing access to immunization in poor countries.
- As part of its mission, GAVI has helped vaccinate more than 888 million children in the world's poorest countries.
- By improving access to new and under-used vaccines for millions of the most vulnerable children, the Vaccine Alliance is transforming the lives of individuals, helping to boost the economies of lower-income countries and making the world safer for everyone.

**Q.2 Consider the following statements with regards to the National Fund to Control Drug Abuse and choose the correct ones:**

- 1. The fund is overseen by Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry.
- 2. The fund was created in accordance with a provision of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, with a nominal corpus of ₹23 crore.
- 3. The Act states that the fund would be used to combat illicit trafficking of narcotics, rehabilitating addicts, and preventing drug abuse.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- National Fund to Control Drug Abuse was created in accordance with a provision of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.
- The Act states that the fund would be used to combat illicit trafficking of narcotics, rehabilitating addicts, and preventing drug abuse.
- It had a nominal corpus of Rs.23 crore.
- The fund is overseen by Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry
- Under the NDPS Act, the sale proceeds of any property forfeited, grants made by any person and institution, and income from the investments of the fund, go towards the fund.

**Q.3 Consider the following statements with regards to additional judges in the High Court and choose the incorrect ones:**

1. The Parliament determines the maximum number of additional judges permitted in any High Court in India.
2. The maximum tenure of an additional judge is 2 years.
3. The additional judges in the High Court are appointed by the Governor of that state.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Additional Judges can be appointed by the President under clause (1) of Article 224 of the Constitution. When the need for this arises, the State Government should first obtain the sanction of the Central Government for the creation of such additional posts.
- The President decides if and when there is a need to have more additional judges and hence it is the president who determines the maximum number of additional judges permitted in any High Court in India.
- Under the constitutional provisions, an additional judge can be appointed for a maximum period of two years unlike permanent judges, who are appointed till the age of 62.

**Q.4 Consider the following statements with regards to the GIFT city:**

1. It is located in Gujarat's Gandhinagar.
2. It is a greenfield project.

3. It would only have commercial areas and no residential facilities.

**Which of these statements are correct?**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) is an under-construction central business district in Gandhinagar in Gujarat, India.
- It is India's first operational greenfield smart city and international financial services centre, which the Government of Gujarat promoted as a greenfield project.
- The city includes commercial, financial and residential complexes.

**Q.5 With reference to Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), consider the following statements: (UPSC-2019)**

1. AIIB has more than 80 member nations.
2. India is the largest shareholder in AIIB.
3. AIIB does not have any members from outside Asia.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia.
- India is the second-largest shareholder in AIIB, with China being the largest shareholder.



- AIIB is headquartered in Beijing. The membership has grown to 97 approved members worldwide. It includes member nations outside of Asia as well. Example: Australia, New Zealand.

### I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Examine India's interests in Central Asia and its diplomatic outreach towards the region. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS Paper 2/International relations)
2. COP26 must focus sharply on reducing emissions till 2030, rather than on net zero 2050, which is too distant a goal. Critically analyse. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS Paper 3/environment and Ecology)