

30 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. No money left in MGNREGA coffers; 21 States in the red

Context:

- Many states are running out of funds to continue timely payments under [MGNREGA](#).

Details:

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provides a **legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment** in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related **unskilled manual work** at the statutory minimum wage. **The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD)**, Government of India is monitoring the implementation of this scheme in close coordination with State Governments.

Overview:

- According to its own financial statement, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (**MGNREGA**) **scheme shows a negative net balance of Rs 8,686 crores**.
- Close to 21 out of 35 states and UTs have already utilised over 100% of the allocated funds** under MGNREGA for the financial year 2022 till October 29, 2021.
- Key states are showing a negative net balance with **Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal faring the worst**. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu had a negative balance of Rs 2,323 crores and Rs 1,999 crores respectively.

Reasons:

- The scheme was given a budget of ₹1.11 lakh crore in the previous financial year which provided critical support to close to 11 crore workers.
- However, the scheme's 2021-22 budget was set at ₹73,000 crores** with the option of supplementary allocations in case of any insufficiency.
 - As of October 29, the total expenditure, including payments due had already reached ₹79,810 crores.
- Officials at the centre have also blamed **State governments for using it as a supply-led scheme instead of a demand-driven one** with many states asking the field authorities to artificially create the demand.

Impact:

- **Payments of MGNREGA wages, as well as material costs, will be delayed** unless the states use their own funds.
- It also increases the economic distress on poor and vulnerable households.
 - **MGNREGA data shows that 13% of households who demanded work under the scheme were not provided work.**
- A [Supreme Court](#) judgement in 2016 had described pending wage payments under MGNREGA as “**a clear constitutional breach committed by the State**” and “**a modern form of begar**”.

Way ahead:

- Supplementary budget allocations will take another month at least till the next parliamentary session begins.
- A senior official of Rural Development Ministry has also emphasised that people will continue to get the work according to the demand. **States can also provide temporary funds out of their own resources which could be reimbursed by the Centre once the funds are available.**

2. UIDAI seeks indemnity from Data Bill

Context:

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has asked for exemption from the [Personal Data Protection \(PDP\) Law](#).

Background:

- The Committee of Experts on a Data Protection Framework for India was constituted in August 2017 to examine issues related to data protection and recommend methods to address them, and draft a data protection Bill. It was chaired by Justice B. N. Srikrishna.
- The committee was constituted in line with the Supreme Court's judgement in the right to privacy case ([Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India](#)).

Details:

- In an interaction with the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Data Protection Bill 2019, UIDAI said the authority is already being governed by the Aadhaar Act and there cannot be duplicity of laws.
- Section 35 of the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill 2019 creates the scope for the government to exempt any of its agencies from any or all provisions of the Act, for processing of personal data in certain cases. These include: (i) in the interest of security of state, public order, sovereignty and integrity of India and friendly relations with foreign states, and (ii) for preventing incitement to commission of any cognisable offence relating to the above matters.
 - UIDAI is seeking an exemption under this section.

Concerns:

- It might create two systems of regulation. One with the government agencies who will be out of the ambit of the law, giving them complete freedom to deal with the personal data. And the second will be private data fiduciaries who will have to deal with every letter in the law.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Ensure Afghan soil is not used for terror, U.S., India tell Taliban

Context:

- Officials from India and USA concluded their joint dialogue on Counter Terrorism as part of the eighteenth meeting of the U.S-India Counter-Terrorism Joint Working Group and the fourth session of the U.S-India Designations Dialogue.

Details:

- The two countries have called on the [Taliban](#) to ensure that Afghanistan is not used as a safe haven for terrorists.
 - Further, in line with **UNSC Resolution 2593 (2021)**, both sides called on the Taliban to ensure Afghan territory is not used to threaten or attack any country or plan or finance terrorist attacks.
- As part of the Joint Statement on Vision and Principles of the India-U.S. Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, India and USA had supported an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process that results in sustainable peace; cessation of violence; elimination of terrorist safe havens; and preservation of the gains of the last 18 years.
- They also communicated views on countering **narco-terror networks** and **transnational illegal weapons smuggling networks**.
- India and USA called for coordinated action against all terror groups including those proscribed by the [UNSC](#) such as **Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed under UNSC resolution 1267**.
- Both countries reaffirmed that counter-terror cooperation is an important pillar under the **U.S. India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership**.
 - Prime Minister Modi and President Trump had vowed to strengthen an India-U.S. Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, anchored in mutual trust, shared interests, goodwill, and robust engagement of their citizens in 2020.
- They also decided to **further the cooperation on law enforcement, information sharing, exchange of best practices, and increase strategic convergence on counter-terrorism challenges**.
- In the joint U.S-India statement, the two countries denounced the use of terrorist proxies and cross border terrorism and called for the perpetrators of the [26/11 Mumbai attack](#) to be brought to justice.

Also read: [India – US relations](#)

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Descent into chaos

- ASEAN has decided to exclude Myanmar's military junta from its annual summit held on October 26-28 in response to the violence and reign of terror unleashed by the Junta which has claimed an estimated 1,000 lives.
- According to the UN, close to three million people are in need of lifesaving assistance because of "conflict, food insecurity, natural disasters and COVID 19".

For more information on this topic, refer to the following article:

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis of 13th May 2021](#)

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. In India, the Steady Subversion of Equality

Context:

The article analyzes the current status of India as a democratic country.

Background:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been continuously embracing the democracy and diversity of India globally and comparing India with the Western Countries on democratic values.
- The central idea of democracy lies in equality that means providing equal status to each and every person of the country. But the 'E' word is fading up.
- The pledge to assure equality to all, however, not fully achieved in reality, has provided India with power and sheen in the past.
- Now, India has become an example of composite nationalism. Considering the current situation it becomes necessary to measure the distance between present-day India and democratic values.

The vision of the Constitution and the new laws:

- The Constitution was written with the promise of equality to all and if any kind of benefit was provided to smaller groups or religious or linguistic minorities or Dalits, it was in order to attain equality.
- This goes beyond all the parameters of identity – colour, race, language, faith, caste, region or food. But, faith has increasingly emerged as a differentiator between citizens, as per the article.
- It must be taken into account that laws in India are undergoing the process of rewriting. Some examples are discussed below:

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019:

Read more about [CAA, 2019](#) in the link.

Marital Choices:

- Inter-faith marriages are now seen as crimes unless proven otherwise. In Gujarat, the law criminalizing inter-faith marriage was called out by Gujarat High Court.
- In Uttar Pradesh, an ordinance named [Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020](#) was introduced that is now a law. Till July, 63 FIRs have been filed against it and 162 were booked out of which 80 people were arrested, a majority of them belong to the Muslim community.
- Similarly, in Madhya Pradesh, there is a law that has differential impacts on Muslims. According to the author, this implies that the E word is slowly losing its essence.

Lynching:

- There have been reports of people being lynched on account of the consumption of beef.
- State governments and the Central government have not followed the recommendations of the Supreme Court of setting up the fast track courts and advice to ban hate messages on social media, compensation to victims, or bringing in an anti-mob lynching law.

Disturbed Areas Act:

- The Gujarat Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property and Provision for Protection of Tenants from Eviction from Premises in Disturbed Areas Act in Gujarat defines where one can reside.
- This separates the communities by forcing them to buy property in their own areas. This move was taken to prohibit riots.

Hostile Environment:

- The informal sector employs most of the minorities and the environment there is not very good.
- Those in power actively support and reward those who head mobs, raise slogans or demonstrate hate enough to shut down cities and regular life. This is done for better political prospects.
- The top leaders being silent on mob violence spread more communal violence in the country.

Way Forward:

- Indian nationalism talks about shared and participatory kinship and differentiates it from the faith practised at home.
- Prioritising any one identity will have disastrous consequences and history provides enough evidence of this. Rwanda, South Africa or Germany are reminders that the E-word is as much a pragmatic consideration as it is a normative ideal.
- If the leaders remain silent on these topics then the idea of equality will be lost and India will deviate from the path of democracy.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Core sector growth decelerated to 7 month low of 4.4% in September

Index of Eight Core Industries

- The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade releases the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI).
- ICI measures combined and individual performance of production in selected eight core industries viz. Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, and Electricity. The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the [Index of Industrial Production \(IIP\)](#).
- Output from India's eight core sectors grew 4.4% in September, the slowest pace of year-on-year growth in seven months.

Also read: [Core Industries](#)

2. Air quality in city drops to 'poor' category

Air Quality Index

- Air quality in Delhi deteriorated to the "poor" category primarily due to the increase in [stubble burning](#).
- AQI keeps a tab on 8 major air pollutants in the atmosphere namely, Particulate Matter (PM10), Particulate Matter (PM2.5), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2), Sulphur Dioxide (SO2), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Ozone (O3), Ammonia (NH3), Lead (Pb).
- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) had developed this Air Quality Index in consultation with IIT-Kanpur and air quality professionals and experts.

Know more about [Air Quality Index \(AQI\)](#) in the linked article.

3. Nationwide PCV drive launched

PCV

- Union Health Minister launched a nationwide expansion of Pneumococcal 13-valent Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) under the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).
- It has been initiated as a part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.
- Pneumonia is a leading cause of under-five mortality.
 - Around 16% of deaths in children occur due to pneumonia in India. The nationwide rollout of PCV will reduce child mortality by around 60%.

Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)

- Universal Immunization Programme was launched in 1985.
- Twelve vaccine-preventable diseases are covered against which free immunization is provided:
 - Diphtheria
 - Pertussis
 - Tetanus
 - Polio
 - Measles
 - Rubella, a severe form of Childhood Tuberculosis

- Hepatitis B
 - Meningitis
 - Pneumonia caused by Hemophilus Influenza type B
 - [Rotavirus](#) diarrhoea
 - Pneumococcal Pneumonia and
 - Japanese Encephalitis
- Elimination of Polio in 2014 and maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination in 2015 were the two major milestones covered under [Universal Immunization Programme](#).

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Habeas Corpus:

1. It can be issued against both public authorities, as well as private individuals.
2. Locus Standi does not apply.
3. The Principle of application of res judicata is not applicable in Writ of Habeas Corpus even if filed on the same grounds as the first one.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- 'Habeas Corpus' literally means "to have a body of". It allows a prisoner to indicate that his or her constitutionally guaranteed rights to fair treatment in a trial have been infringed upon.
- The writ of habeas corpus can be issued against both public authorities as well as private individuals.
- Locus Standi does not apply to Habeas Corpus. If a person detained or confined can't file an application for the writ then some other person can file it on his/her behalf.
- Res judicata means a case that has already been decided or a matter settled by a decision or judgment. The Principle of application of res judicata is applicable in the Writ of Habeas Corpus even if filed on the same grounds as the first one.

Q2. With respect to Defamation in India, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Defamation is civil as well as criminal wrong.
2. The civil law of defamation is not codified whereas the criminal law is codified.
3. The right to reputation is an integral part of Article 21 of the Constitution.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Defamation means “The offence of injuring a person’s character, fame, or reputation by false and malicious statements”. In other words, defamation is nothing but causing damage to the reputation of another.
- In India, defamation could both be a civil and a criminal offence.
- The criminal law on defamation is contained in sections 499 to 502 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. But the civil law of defamation is not codified.
- In the Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India case, the apex court held that the reputation of an individual is a basic element under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Q3. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
2. The ICI is released every six months.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry releases the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI). ICI measures combined and individual performance of production in selected eight core industries viz. Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity. The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- It is a monthly index. ICI for a reference month is released with a time lag of one month on the last day of the next month.

Q4. With respect to the Governor of RBI, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. An economics or finance background is compulsory as prescribed under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
2. He/she can hold office for a term of three years or until the age of 70 years with no scope for reappointment.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 doesn't mention any specific qualification for the governor. Persons with diverse educational backgrounds have been selected as Governors in the past.
- Section 8 (4) of the RBI Act explains the following: "The Governor and a Deputy Governor shall hold office for such term not exceeding five years as the (Central Government) may fix when appointing them and shall be eligible for re-appointment."

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. The Sustainable Development Goals were first proposed in 1972 by a global think tank called the 'Club of Rome'.
2. The Sustainable Development Goals have to be achieved by 2030.

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: b

Explanation:

- The UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012, commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the 'Rio Earth Summit' (held in 1992), initiated the debate and work towards post-2015 development agenda targets. Accordingly, the UN General Assembly in its 70th Session considered and adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated 169 targets for the next 15 years.
- The Sustainable Development Goals have to be achieved by 2030 which would act as the deadline.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Despite Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) bringing a radical and rational systemic change by empowering the poor, it is beset with challenges. Discuss. (15 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, Social Justice]
2. What are the causes of farmer suicides in India? Highlight the initiatives taken by the government to help prevent farmer suicides and suggest a future course of action. (15 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-3, Economy]