

04 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: HISTORY

1. Chola inscriptions on civic officials' eligibility

Context:

Chola inscriptions in Tamil Nadu.

Details:

Inscriptions at Thenneri village in Kancheepuram district:

- Chola-era inscriptions talk about the qualifications required for members of the village administrative council.
- However, very little is known about the Thenneri inscriptions laying down qualifications for candidates to village administrative committees known as ‘perumkuri sabai’.
- It also sheds light on how farm produce was taxed.

Inscriptions at Thenneri village in Kancheepuram district:

- These inscriptions which dwell upon ‘Kudavolai’ that is a system to elect members to the annual committee, garden committee, tank committee and other committees for 30 wards — are well-known.
 - The annual committee is known as ‘variyam’.
- The inscriptions are on the walls of the Kanthaleeswarar temple.

Note:

- The Kanthaleeswarar temple and the Abathsaheswarar temple are on the banks of Thenneri.
- They were constructed by Sembian Mahadevi, the grandmother of Chola King Rajaraja, in memory of her son Uthama Chola.

Thenneri:

- Perumpanattrupadai, a Sangam-era literary work, refers to the king who created the lake as ‘Thondaiman Ilanthiraiyan’.
- The copper plates of the Pallava period refer to the lake as ‘Thiraiyan Eri’.
- Over centuries, it has become Thenneri.

B. GS 2 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

C. GS 3 Related

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Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Locked in a stalemate

Context:

Military commanders from India and China are expected to hold the 13th round of talks to continue the effort to find a way out of the LAC crisis.

Read more on [India-China Conflict - Galwan Valley Clash](#).

India-China Relations:

- The bilateral relations are at their lowest since 1988.
- Recently, the Chinese Foreign Ministry laid the blame for the border crisis entirely on India's doorstep, saying India's illegal trespass caused the dispute.
- India in turn reminded China that it was its provocative behaviour, and amassing of troops following annual military exercises, that led to the flashpoints in 2020.

Also read: [India - China relations](#)

Details:

- The military commanders' talks will take up disputes in Hot Springs, while disputes in Demchok and Depsang remain unresolved.
- Since the crisis in 2020, both sides have set up buffer zones in Galwan Valley and on the north bank of Pangong Lake, and have disengaged on the south bank and in Gogra.
- This temporary arrangement has helped prevent the recurrence of clashes, but with past agreements in disarray, a longer-term understanding to keep the peace is of utmost importance.

Issues:

- The recent transgression by Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers at Barahoti in Uttarakhand is part of a pattern of large-size patrols by China to assert their claim while also testing India across the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Way Forward:

- There is a need for better operational synergy between the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), to avoid any surprises as in Galwan, which is presently severely lacking.

- Safeguarding territorial integrity and national security holds equal value for both sides.
- A continued military build-up in the Eastern Sector, underline the pressing need for reaching an understanding.
- Both sides have the space to cooperate on issues including tackling the pandemic, concerns about terrorism in the region and the situation in Afghanistan. Doing so will certainly build trust.
- However, it would be possible for both sides to delve deeper into other issues once normalcy is restored along the LAC.

2. NS2, a win-win proposition?

Context:

Nord Stream 2 (NS2) running from Russia to Germany across the Baltic Sea has been complete.

Nord Stream 2 System:

- The NS2 pipeline runs along the already completed Nord Stream 1 system, and the two together will supply an aggregate of 110 billion cubic metres of gas to Germany per year.
- NS2's manufacture began in 2016 and construction in 2018.
- The 1,224 km, \$11-billion underwater link is the shortest, most economical and environment-friendly route to double Russia's gas export to Germany.
- The pipeline falls in German and Danish territory.
- This would take the Russian gas to Europe via Germany, under the Baltic Sea.
- The pipeline offers stability to the strategically important energy trade because Russia's dependence on the European Union and vice-versa are increased and this should promote realism.

Controversy relating to NS2:

- Since it was first planned, Nord Stream 2 has drawn criticism from the US.
- The US believes that the project would increase Europe's dependence on Russia for natural gas, thus boldening its President Vladimir Putin.
 - Currently, EU countries already rely on Russia for 40% of their gas needs.
- Ukraine also has issues with the project.
 - Relations between Ukraine and Russia have seriously deteriorated in the aftermath of the Crimean conflict in 2014.
 - There is an existing land pipeline between Russia and Europe that runs through Ukraine, which feels that with Nord Stream 2, Russia could bypass the Ukrainian pipeline, and deprive the country of lucrative transit fees.

- Ukraine has not diversified its economic fundamentals, whose viability is dependent on Russia moving fossil fuels through its territory.
- But the loss of cheap money gained through transit fees could in the long run benefit its economy.
- German Chancellor Angela Merkel is accused, mainly by Poland and Ukraine, of weakening the EU's political unity and strategic coherence by giving Russia greater leverage through NS2.

Way Forward:

- The completion of NS2 suggests that no third party can affect the project's outcome.
- Any violation of the commercial rationale of NS2 by Russia would enable Ukraine to invoke the assurances it has been given.
 - Therefore, Russia must proceed in a manner that avoids friction.
- To enable a consensus on NS2, Germany has promised assistance to Ukraine for the development of hydrogen energy, but such commitments are less robust in their detail.

Despite the lack of certainty in Germany's financial promise, there is reason to take it seriously. The German elections could result in a coalition, in which case opposition to NS2 might be dropped off in return for more substantial compensation for Ukraine. Since the hydrogen option is environmentally friendly, this presents scope for accommodating the requirements of German coalition politics and support for the Ukrainian budget and turning NS2 into a win-win proposition.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Reimagining food systems with lessons from India

The article talks about the need for reaching the goal of an equitable livelihood as there is an alarming escalation in global hunger.

Global Hunger:

- The world has seen the fragility and vulnerability of food systems that was even more highlighted by the pandemic.
- It is projected that the pandemic would double the global hunger figure.

United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) 2021:

- UNFSS 2021 concluded after an intense bottom-up process conceived in 2019 to find solutions and catalyse momentum to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and thinks about food and help address rising hunger.
- The food system transformation is considered essential in achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) 2030.
 - 11 out of 17 SDGs are directly related to the food system.

What is the expectation from its outcome?

- Global food systems - the paths that food travels from production to plate — are in a state of crisis in many countries. This has severely affected the poor and the vulnerable.
- The summit created a mechanism for serious debates involving UN member states, civil society, non-governmental organisations, academics, researchers, individuals, and the private sector.
 - This would evolve transformative themes and ideas for reimagining food systems to enhance the satisfaction of all stakeholders including future generations.
- The debate and response focused on five identified action tracks namely:
 - Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
 - Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
 - Boost nature-positive production
 - Advance equitable livelihoods
 - Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stress.

The summit provided a historic opportunity to empower nations to make the best use of the power of food systems to drive our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and help achieve all 17 SDGs by 2030.

Challenges:

- Climate change and unsustainable use of land and water resources are the most formidable challenges food systems face at present.
- Dietary diversity, nutrition, and related health outcomes are other areas of concern as a focus on rice and wheat has created nutritional challenges of its own.
- It is ironic that despite being a net exporter and food surplus country at the aggregate level, India has a 50% higher prevalence of undernutrition compared to the world average.
- But the proportion of the undernourished population declined from 21.6% during 2004-06 to 15.4% during 2018-20.
- Reducing food wastage or loss of food is a mammoth challenge and is linked to the efficiency of the food supply chain. Food wastage in India exceeds ₹1-lakh crore.

Safety nets:

- One of India's greatest contributions to equity in food is its [National Food Security Act 2013](#).
 - This anchors the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the Mid-Day meals (MDM), and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- India's food safety nets collectively reach over a billion people.
- India has taken a bold decision to fortify rice supplied through the [Public Distribution System](#) with iron.
- Agricultural research institutes are about to release varieties of many crops having much higher nutrition as a long-term solution for undernutrition and malnutrition.

Why the world must eliminate hunger?

- An alarming escalation in global hunger is unfolding, with the worsening of world hunger in 2020, much of it related to the fallout of the pandemic.
- While the pandemic's impact has yet to be fully mapped, 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World' report estimates that around a tenth of the global population was undernourished in 2020.
- It is important to reiterate that hunger and food insecurity are key drivers of conflict and instability across the world.
- 'Food is peace', is a catchphrase often used to highlight how hunger and conflict feed on each other.
- The Nobel Peace Prize 2020 conferred on the United Nations [WFP](#) highlighted the importance of addressing hunger to prevent conflicts and create stability.
- The immediate need is to collaborate to invest, innovate, and create lasting solutions in sustainable agriculture contribution to equitable livelihood, food security, and nutrition.

“Until the day we have a medical vaccine, food is the best vaccine against chaos.”

Category: ETHICS

1. Peace at the heart of education

The article talks about the role of education in imparting the skills and values needed to prevent potential conflicts.

International Day of Non-Violence:

- International Day of Non-Violence is celebrated every year on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The ideals of peace are celebrated on this day.

- The day presents an opportunity to explore the causes of violence and reassert a commitment to building a culture of dialogue through education.

Read more on the [International Day of Non-Violence](#) in the linked article.

Concerns:

- The pandemic has introduced new forces of division on a global scale.
- Levels of hate speech have grown over the year.
- Forms of structural violence – the economic, racial and gendered forms of injustice built into social systems have worsened as marginalised groups, including displaced persons and racialised groups, have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.
- Around the world, the surge in inequality is driving instability, tension and is fuelling potential social unrest.

‘Pathways for peace’ - a flagship 2018 report by the World Bank and the United Nations showed that many of the world’s conflicts arise from exclusion and feelings of injustice.

Preventing Conflicts:

- In order to rebuild solidarity, the root causes of human animosity must be understood.
- There is a need to make peace with one another. The structures, attitudes and skills that create and sustain peace is the need of the hour.
- Ignorance and fear of the unknown should be overcome through understanding and dialogue.

Role of Education:

- According to UNESCO, education is a significant part of the answer because it can impart the skills and values necessary to recognise and prevent potential conflicts and promote tolerance.
- Education for peace has a rich history in India. The philosophies of various religions, cultures and of Gandhi have non-violence, syncretism and tolerance at their core.

Way Forward:

- The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 presents a unique opportunity to contribute to strengthening equity, justice and social cohesion.
- The policy has a broad focus on value-based and experiential education, including promoting critical thinking, cultural exchanges, teaching in regional languages, and a commitment to education for all.
- It also advocates for reforms in curricula and pedagogy.

- Peace education can be integrated within national curricula and the broader learning environment to promote non-violence, conflict resolution and compassion.
- Equipping children from a young age with the skills to respect the dignity of others is key to building resilient and peaceful societies.
- Teachers and educators also need to be equipped with skills to promote peace through experiential and interactive methods.
- Intercultural competencies, like empathy and critical thinking, are best learned through intercultural exchanges and scenario-based learning and not rote learning.
- Global best practices, promoted through UNESCO, can offer a way forward.
 - UNESCO also promotes schools as safe and non-violent spaces.
 - UNESCO highlights the need to recognise and improve opportunities for disadvantaged groups, like women and girls and persons with disabilities.

One year into the NEP 2020, it is important to assess priorities in education. Beyond discussions around innovation, technology and smart future schools, there is a need to understand the potential of education systems in building peaceful societies. In times of crisis, education has the ability to provide hope and confidence.

F. Prelims Facts

1. ₹445 cr. given to discoms to prevent jumbo deaths

What's in News?

The Odisha government has provided ₹445.75 crore to distribution companies to increase the ground clearance of electrical networks and replace bare conductors in elephant corridors and movement areas.

- The aim is to achieve zero casualties of elephants.
- It is aimed at preventing elephant deaths due to electrocution.
- Many interposing poles have been erected and circuit bare conductors replaced by covered ones.

Elephant Corridor:

- An elephant corridor is a stretch of land, sometimes forested, which connects large habitats with the elephant population and also forms a channel for the movement of elephants to and from the habitats.
- This movement is important as it increases the survival and birth rates of the animal.
- Threats to elephant corridors are developmental work like construction, roadways, railways, coal and iron ore mining, etc.

1. Shringla visits Trincomalee oil tank farm

What's in News?

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla visited the Second World War-era oil storage facility in the strategically important port district of Trincomalee on Sri Lanka's east coast.

- This has been a key bilateral economic partnership link for decades between India and Sri Lanka.
- The Trincomalee harbour, one of the deepest natural harbours in the world, was developed by the British during the War.
- Since 2003, the Lanka IOC, the Sri Lankan subsidiary of India's oil major Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), has the leasing rights to 99 tanks at the facility for a period of 35 years for an annual payment of \$100,000.
- His visit to the site assumes significance as oil sector trade unions in Sri Lanka have demanded that tanks be brought under the control of the state fuel entity Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC).

2. 'Pandora Papers' expose top world leaders

What's in News?

An investigation published by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) media consortium has uncovered offshore assets of heads of state.

Pandora Papers:

- "Pandora Papers" are based on the leak of 11.9 mn documents from 14 financial services companies.
- The documents behind the latest investigation are drawn from financial services companies in countries, including the British Virgin Islands, Panama, Belize, Cyprus, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore and Switzerland.
- Some 35 current and former leaders are featured in the documents analysed by the ICIJ — facing allegations ranging from corruption to money laundering and global tax avoidance.
- Over 700 Pakistanis, including some Ministers and key members of Prime Minister Imran Khan's inner circle, were among the individuals whose names were linked with the Papers.

- The ICIJ found links between almost 1,000 companies in offshore havens. More than two-thirds of the companies were set up in the British Virgin Islands.

Note:

The “Pandora Papers” are the latest in a series of mass ICIJ leaks of financial documents that started with LuxLeaks in 2014, and was followed by the Panama Papers, the Paradise Papers and FinCen.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. The battle of Saraighat was fought in 1671 between

- British and Burmese empires
- Bakhtiar Khilji and Kamata kingdom
- Kukis in the Northeast and the British
- Ahoms of Assam and the Mughals

Answer: d

Explanation:

The Battle of Saraighat was a naval battle fought in 1671 between the Mughal Empire and the Ahom Kingdom on the Brahmaputra river at Saraighat, Assam.

Q2. Consider the following pairs:

Tiger Reserve	State
1. Indravati	Chhattisgarh
2. Valmiki	Bihar
3. Kawal	Telangana
4. Mudumalai	Tamil Nadu

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- 1 and 4 only
- 2, 3 and 4 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: d

Explanation:

Tiger Reserve	State
• Indravati	Chhattisgarh
• Valmiki	Bihar
• Kawal	Telangana
• Mudumalai	Tamil Nadu

Q3. Kudavolai during the Chola Rule refers to

- a. Land Revenue System
- b. Administrative Divisions
- c. Military establishment
- d. System to elect members

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Chola inscriptions in Tamil Nadu have a reference to 'Kudavolai'.
- Kudavolai refers to a system to elect members to the annual committee, garden committee, tank committee and other committees for 30 wards.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. It is one of the deepest natural harbours in the world, developed by the British during World War II.
2. It is on the northeastern coast of Sri Lanka.

The above statements best describe:

- a. Oluvil Harbour
- b. Port of Galle
- c. Port of Colombo
- d. Trincomalee Harbour

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Trincomalee Harbour is a seaport in Trincomalee Bay.

- It is one of the deepest natural harbours in the world, developed by the British during World War II.
- It is on the northeastern coast of Sri Lanka.

Q5. When a bill is referred to a joint sitting of both the Houses of the Parliament, it has to be passed by

- a. A simple majority of members present and voting
- b. Three-fourths majority of members present and voting
- c. Two-thirds majority of the Houses
- d. Absolute majority of the Houses

Answer: a

Explanation:

When a bill is referred to a joint sitting of both the Houses of the Parliament, it has to be passed by a simple majority of members present and voting.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. With an alarming escalation in global hunger unfolding, reaching the goal of an equitable livelihood is a necessity. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS 3, Economy)
2. India and China need to restore normalcy along the border before cooperation on other issues. Examine. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS 2, International Relations)