

08 Nov 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Haryana law on local hiring causes concern

Context:

- The **Haryana Government's law to reserve 75% jobs for locals** has been notified recently.

Provisions of the law:

- The law requires firms with 10 or more employees to reserve 75% of all jobs offering a salary of less than ₹30,000 a month for eligible candidates of State domicile.
- The law applies to private companies, societies, trusts, and partnership firms, among others, located in the state.
- There would be a penalty for non-compliance.
- **An exemption can be claimed by employers** when enough local candidates are not available with the desired skills, qualifications, and proficiency. However, an officer of the rank of deputy commissioner or higher will evaluate such a claim.

Concerns:

Reduced talent pool:

- Haryana currently does not have enough captive supply of skilled labour and the proposed law by **disallowing the influx of talent from other parts of the country** will lead to a **depleted pool of skilled labour in technology sectors** such as IT and IT-enabled services (ITeS).

Lead to 'unease' of doing business:

- The new law adversely **impacts the freedom of the companies to take business decisions**. Curbs of any kind ultimately affect business freedom and **could impact its productivity and competitiveness** and its ability to flourish.
 - The industry needs the most efficient workforce to stay competitive in a globalised world.
- Also, provisions like the need to take permission from notified authorities to employ outsiders beyond a certain threshold might lead to the **inspector raj like regime**.
- This could **disincentivize new investments in the state**.

Shifting of investment:

- This could trigger an exodus of large domestic and multinational investors across sectors such as auto and information technology that rely on highly skilled manpower, from hubs such as Gurugram.
 - Notably in recent times, large firms, particularly in e-commerce, IT & ITeS and new manufacturing sectors, had chosen Gurugram as a hub for their businesses.
- The shifting of companies to other states will **adversely impact not only the state's revenue sources (through corporate tax) but also the employment opportunities** available to the workforce. This **does not augur well for economic recovery in the post-pandemic phase**.

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

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis of 9th Mar 2021](#)

Recommendations:

- **Giving reservations in jobs is only a temporary solution, the need of the hour is to focus on better job creation and skill development.** The state governments should focus on ensuring adequate investments in **education, health and skill development**.
- Instead of compelling firms to hire locals, the State can consider giving a 25% subsidy to firms as an incentive for hiring locals.
- The government can come up with certain **incentives for companies that are investing money in training the local youths**. Such incentives could be in the form of capital for better skill development, lower electricity charges, better infrastructure facilities, etc.
- Even if the state decides to go ahead with the local reservation provision, the government should consider lowering the salary ceiling to Rs. 15,000 a month on a 'cost to company' basis and raise it in tandem with efforts to improve skill sets in the State.
- Also, the reservation, if implemented should begin from 20%-25% to allow for sufficient time for the creation of a talent pool within the state as technical and specialised skill sets will take time to inculcate among the State's youth.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Ban on Italian firm linked to Agusta scam lifted

Context:

- The Indian government has decided to lift the ban on the Italian defence company involved in the AgustaWestland VVIP helicopter deal. This decision follows the Indian **Prime Minister's visit to Rome for the G-20 meet and his meeting with the Italian Prime Minister**.

Background:

- Over the past few years, bilateral relations between India and Italy have been held up over the ban on the Italian Defence Company as well as the case of the Italian marines accused of killing Kerala fishermen.
 - Recently India had formally dropped all charges against Italian marines in the Enrica Lexie case and the Supreme Court agreed to close criminal proceedings on the basis of a decision by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Significance of the move:

Defence trade:

- The ban on the Italian defence company had impacted the Navy in particular, as it had curtailed its list of probable **suppliers for "heavyweight torpedoes"**. The lifting of the ban will open up the avenues for more robust **defence trade partnership** between the two nations.

Impetus to the bilateral relationship:

- The decision to lift the ban on Italian Defence Company might signal the **relaunch of bilateral partnership between the two countries**.

- With two issues plaguing the India-Italy bilateral relationship being resolved, the two countries can now focus on strengthening and deepening their bilateral cooperation and partnership.

India-Italy relationship:

- Italy has also expressed its intention to strengthen its otherwise below potential bilateral relations with India. **India too is looking to broad base its international relations.**
 - The strengthening of the India-Italy partnership can help India consolidate the EU-India strategic relationship further.
- Both nations had decided to adopt the **Action Plan for an enhanced Partnership between India and Italy (2020-2024)** to set up priorities, strategic goals and mechanisms of a bilateral partnership at the India-Italy virtual summit held in November 2020.
 - The major sectors identified were enhanced **economic engagement, defence cooperation, cooperation against the pandemic and clean energy transition.**

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

[UPSC PIB Summary of 6th Nov 2020](#)

- Recently, Italy too, shedding its historic neglect of the Indo-Pacific region in its foreign policy realm has signalled its intention to enter the Indo-Pacific geography, by seeking to **join India and Japan in a trilateral partnership.**

For detailed information on this topic refer to the following article:

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis of 12th July 2021](#)

Major outcomes of the G-20 summit in Rome:

- Plan to **achieve 40% vaccinations of the global population by the end of 2021.**
- A **G20 Joint Finance-Health Task Force** to ensure adequate financing of pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.
- **Agreement on a global minimum tax on corporations** as part of an effort to build “a more stable and fairer international tax system”. G-20 also recognised the final political agreement to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy.
- The G20 leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the United Nations climate convention (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. The G20 will accelerate their actions in the areas of mitigation, adaptation and finance, acknowledging the key relevance of **achieving global net zero greenhouse gas emissions or carbon neutrality by or around mid-century.**
- **The G20 leaders committed to strengthening actions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.** They will strive to ensure that at least 30% of global land and at least 30% of the global ocean and seas are conserved or protected by 2030.

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SECURITY

1. A new jurisprudence for political prisoners

Context

- Students from Kerala who were charged under provisions of the [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act \(UAPA\)](#) for alleged Maoist links have been granted bail by the Supreme Court by setting aside the objections of the National Investigation Agency.

Background

- The case involved students from Kerala, who were pursuing Journalism and Law respectively.
- The police had allegedly seized objectionable printed and written materials from them which include violent exhortations for civil war, in tune with Maoist ideology.
- The police registered the case and later the investigation was handed over to the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\)](#).

The provisions of the UAPA were invoked.

Provisions of the UAPA

Section 13

- It deals with participating in or inciting unlawful activities.
- It is the provision about punishment for unlawful activities.

Section 38

- Offence relating to membership of a terrorist organisation.
 - A person, who associates himself, or professes to be associated, with a terrorist organisation with intention to further its activities, commits an offence relating to membership of a terrorist organisation.

Section 39

- It deals with "offence relating to support given to a terrorist organisation."

Arguments in favour of the Accused

- Both the accused were students and there were no allegations of any overt act of violence.
- At a formative young age, the accused might have been fascinated by what is propagated by CPI (Maoist).

- There was no prima facie material to show an intention on the part of the accused to further the activities of the terrorist organisation.

SC Observation

- Mere association with a terrorist organisation is not sufficient to attract Section 38 and mere support given to a terrorist organisation is not sufficient to attract Section 39 of UAPA.
- The association and the support have to be with the intention of furthering the activities of a terrorist organisation.
 - Such intention, according to the court, can be inferred from the overt acts or acts of active participation of the accused in the activities of a terrorist organisation.
- Mere possession of documents or books by the accused at a formative young age, or even their fascination for an ideology, does not ipso facto or ipso jure make out an offence, the Court ruled.

Section 43D(5) of the UAPA

- It says that for many of the offences under the Act, bail should not be granted, if “on perusal of the case diary or the report (of the investigation)... there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation ... is prima facie true”.
 - As opposed to the general criminal law, under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), grant of bail is the exception.
 - If the prosecution either through the case diary or through the chargesheet is able to show ‘reasonable grounds’ for believing that the accusation is prima facie true, then the accused “shall not be released on bail”.
- Thus, the Act prompts the Court to consider the version of the prosecution alone while deciding the question of bail.

Concerns

- Unlike the Criminal Procedure Code, the UAPA, by virtue of the proviso to Section 43D(2), permits keeping a person in prison for up to 180 days, without even filing a charge sheet.
- Thus, broad offences included under the UAPA and difficult bail conditions mean individuals can be detained indefinitely even without conviction of the accused.

Presumption of guilt

National Investigation Agency (NIA) vs Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali

- In Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali, the Court said that by virtue of Section 43D(5) of UAPA, the burden is on the accused to show that the prosecution case is not prima facie true.
- Many intellectuals including Sudha Bharadwaj and Siddique Kappan were denied bail based on a narrow interpretation of the bail provision as done in Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali.

Thwaha Faisal v Union of India

- The Court, in Thwaha Faisal, refused to construct Section 43D(5) in a narrow and restrictive sense.
- It has to some extent, liberalised an otherwise illiberal bail clause.

Union of India vs K.A. Najeeb (2021)

- For granting bail in Thwaha Faisal the SC relied on a decision in Union of India vs K.A. Najeeb (2021).
- In K.A. Najeeb, the larger Bench said that even the stringent provisions under Section 43D(5) do not curtail the power of the constitutional court to grant bail on the ground of violation of fundamental rights.

Challenges in the interpretation of laws

- The text of the UAPA limits judicial discretion and adjudication. This is more evident in the context of bail.
- As part of interpretation, the court usually has two approaches:
 - Literal Interpretation
 - To read and apply the provision literally and mechanically which has the effect of curtailing the individual freedom as intended by the makers of the law.
 - In contrast to this approach, there could be a constitutional reading of the statute, which perceives the issues from a human rights angle and tries to mitigate the rigour of the vicious content of the law.
- The former approach is reflected in Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali and the latter in Thwaha Faisal.

Significance

- In this case, the Court has asserted the primacy of judicial process over the text of the enactment, by way of an interpretative exercise.
- The Court has acted in its introspective jurisdiction and deconstructed the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) with a great sense of legal realism.

Way forward

- The judgment should be invoked to release other political prisoners in the country who have been denied bail either due to the harshness of the law or due to the follies in understanding the law or both.

Conclusion

- Thwaha Faisal vs Union of India thus paves the way for a formidable judicial authority against blatant misuse of the draconian law.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. AUKUS could rock China's boat in the Indo-Pacific

Introduction

- The unparalleled rise of China has been one of the most notable geopolitical phenomena. It espouses greater ambitions and under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, a newly-assertive

China is pursuing a sophisticated strategy that exploits all elements of state power to strengthen its position in the world.

- Across much of the Indo-Pacific region, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is using military and economic coercion to bully its neighbours.
- This predatory conduct increases the risk of conflict.

Issues

- **Australia** banned Chinese telecom giant Huawei in 2018 and its PM called for an investigation into the origins of COVID-19.
 - China retaliated by imposing tariffs on or capping Australian exports.
 - Australia thus has felt increasing pressure from an assertive China.
 - In order to balance this threat, Australia has been trying to strengthen its partnerships with India, the U.S. and the U.K to strategically balance out China.
 - The **U.S.** too has been shifting its focus to the Indo-Pacific region given the potential of the region and also the increasing assertiveness of the Chinese whom it considers a challenger to its global dominance.
 - In this regard it has been focusing on strengthening bilateral partnerships with its traditional partners in Asia like Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and new partners like India and Vietnam.
 - It has also been promoting new formations like the [Quad](#).
 - The **U.K.** has expressed its vision to engage more deeply with the Indo-Pacific.

Context:

- Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. (AUKUS) have come together to establish a new trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific.

Details:

- Under the 'AUKUS' alliance, the three partners are jointly going to increase the development of joint capabilities and technology sharing.
 - The focus of AUKUS will be on integrating all defence and security related science, supply chains, industrial bases and technology.
- The partnership would also involve a new architecture of meetings and engagements between the three countries and also cooperation across emerging technologies like AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities.

Nuclear-Powered Submarines

- It is expected to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines in a bid to counter China's growing power in the strategically vital region.
 - Australia has ratified the nuclear Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has vowed to abide by its tenets, notwithstanding the highly sensitive technology transfer implied in the latest proposal.

- Nuclear powered submarines can be deployed for longer periods and need to surface less frequently. They have longer ranges and are more capable compared to the conventional diesel electric submarines.

Pre-existing similar arrangements

- It complements similar arrangements for the region such as the Five Eyes intelligence cooperation initiative, [ASEAN](#) and the Quad.
 - The Five Eyes (FVEY) is an intelligence alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - ASEAN is an economic union comprising 10 member states in Southeast Asia.
 - QUAD is an informal strategic dialogue comprising India, Japan, Australia and the US.

Geopolitical Implications:

- The AUKUS alliance will have a profound impact on the various stakeholders in the region and will also result in the reshaping of relations in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.
1. United States of America:
 - This development seems an extension of the U.S. policy of pivot to Asia which emphasizes on the need to focus more attention on the Indo-Pacific region while pivoting away from conflicts in West Asia.
 - This is also an extension of the U.S.'s Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) announced in 2018, which authorises US\$1.5 billion in spending for a range of US programmes in East Asia and Southeast Asia to “develop a long-term strategic vision and a comprehensive, multifaceted, and principled US policy for the Indo-Pacific region.”
 - The Indo-Pacific region has assumed great significance in the United States' foreign policy calculus as its tensions with China have only grown.
 2. United Kingdom:
 - Leaving the EU under BREXIT has left Britain seeking to reassert its global position. As part of this effort, it has increased focus towards the Indo-Pacific.
 3. Australia:
 - Australia has come under increasing pressure from an assertive China. In order to balance this threat, Australia has been trying to strengthen its partnerships with India, the U.S. and the U.K to strategically balance out China.
 - Balancing encompasses the actions that a particular state takes in order to equalise the odds against more powerful states; that is to make it more difficult and hence less likely for powerful states to exert their military advantage over the weaker ones.

- Unlike hard balancing which encompasses traditional balancing of power using military capabilities and formal military alliances like NATO, limited hard balancing relies on informal alliances or strategic partnerships, where there is some military coordination.
 - Under the arrangement, Australia will build at least eight nuclear-powered submarines using U.S. expertise. The nuclear submarines will increase Australia's maritime security capacity and also give the alliance a stronger military presence in the region.
4. China:
- Though none of the countries mentioned China while announcing the deal and also clarified that the alliance was not targeted against any one country, the Counter China policy is very evident in the new trilateral security partnership with emphasis on aspects such as upholding the international rules-based order, and promoting peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific in the light of China's assertiveness in the region.
 - The transfer of nuclear propulsion technology to an ally was intended to send a message of reassurance to countries in Asia.
 - China has cautioned that the new pact would undermine regional peace and stability and "intensify" an arms race and undermine international non-proliferation efforts.
5. India and Japan:
- Notably, Australian Prime Minister said he had called the leaders of Japan and India to explain the new alliance. This is crucial given that Japan, India, Australia and the U.S. already have a strategic dialogue known as 'the Quad' which too seeks increased cooperation among the member nations in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - Notably, India and Japan share an uneasy relationship with the increasingly assertive neighbour China.
 - The trilateral grouping would be complementary to arrangements such as the Quad.
6. France:
- In 2016, Australia had selected French shipbuilder Naval Group to build a new submarine fleet worth \$40 billion to replace its more than two-decades-old Collins submarines.
 - With the alliance in place the contract that Australia had for building submarines with the French company has been scrapped.
 - France has criticized this move.
7. New Zealand:
- New Zealand wasn't asked to be part of the alliance despite sharing strategic relations with the U.S.
 - New Zealand has a long-standing nuclear-free policy that includes a ban on nuclear-powered ships entering its ports. This stance has sometimes been a sticking point in its otherwise close relations with the U.S.

- The omission of New Zealand would prevent it from sharing a range of information, including artificial intelligence, cyber and underwater defence capabilities.

8. ASEAN:

- There has been no official statement from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a forum.
- Except for Malaysia and Indonesia, none of its 10 member-states has shown signs of protest at the formation of AUKUS.
 - Even with these two states, the concerns seem hinged around the fear of a 'nuclear arms race'.
- However, Australia has unambiguously reassured its commitment to ASEAN centrality and its continued support for the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty as well as the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.

Significance

- The move will promote stability in the Indo-Pacific and support shared values and interests.
- It will ensure a peaceful and rules-based international order.
- US
 - It may safeguard the interests of partners.
 - In the Pacific, the U.S. and others have been concerned about China's actions in the South China Sea and its antipathy toward Japan, Taiwan and Australia.
 - The Quad and AUKUS are distinct, yet complementary.
 - The Quad initiatives straddle the Indian and the Pacific Oceans but the AUKUS is Pacific-centric.
 - Such a strategy could potentially strengthen Japan's security as well as that of Taiwan in the face of China's mounting bellicosity.
 - Shifting AUKUS's fulcrum to the Pacific Ocean could reassure ASEAN nations.

Concerns/Challenges:

Doubts have been raised over the actual effectiveness of the AUKUS. The newly announced trilateral security arrangement is unlikely to be a game changer in the Indo-Pacific region as envisaged by the member countries.

- Given the formidable military presence of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region and its collaboration with like-minded countries via platforms such as the Quad, Five Eyes, it is unclear what AUKUS will help achieve for the U.S.
- There are doubts over whether the AUKUS will be effective in deterring China's strategic calculus across the region, particularly relating to its maritime ambitions and territorial expansionism.
 - In fact AUKUS has the potential to cause a recalibration of China's plans with respect to nuclear-powered submarines.

- It could heighten Beijing's anxiety over its nuclear-powered submarine fleet and push it towards building more such platforms giving rise to an arms race in the region.
- It is very likely that it would be well over a decade before the submarine construction plans come to fruition. This large time frame could as well witness drastic changes in the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.

India's perspective:

- India has distanced itself from the AUKUS grouping. The Foreign Secretary of India has stated that the new partnership is neither relevant to the Quad, nor will it have any impact on its functioning.
- Despite the professed indifference towards AUKUS, India may derive secondary benefits from the AUKUS arrangement having three advanced nations with arguably the most sophisticated military know-how in the world coming together to support a free and open Indo-Pacific in the light of the increasingly assertive attitude of China in the region. This could provide some degree of deterrence to China.
- Also, India's concerns regarding 'encirclement' by China may be partially mitigated by AUKUS.
 - China has made massive inroads in India's neighbourhood in terms of infrastructure development projects and presence.
- There is apprehension that the deal could eventually lead to crowding of nuclear attack submarines (SSNs/submersible ship nuclear) in the Eastern Indian Ocean, eroding India's regional pre-eminence.

Additional Information

Exercise Talisman Sabre

- Talisman Sabre is a biennial exercise between the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the United States (US) military.
- It is designed to test their respective forces in planning and conducting Combined and Joint Task Force operations and improve the combat readiness and interoperability between Australian and US forces.

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty

- It is also known as the Treaty of Rarotonga. It bans the use, testing, and possession of nuclear weapons within the borders of the zone.
- It formalises a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Pacific.

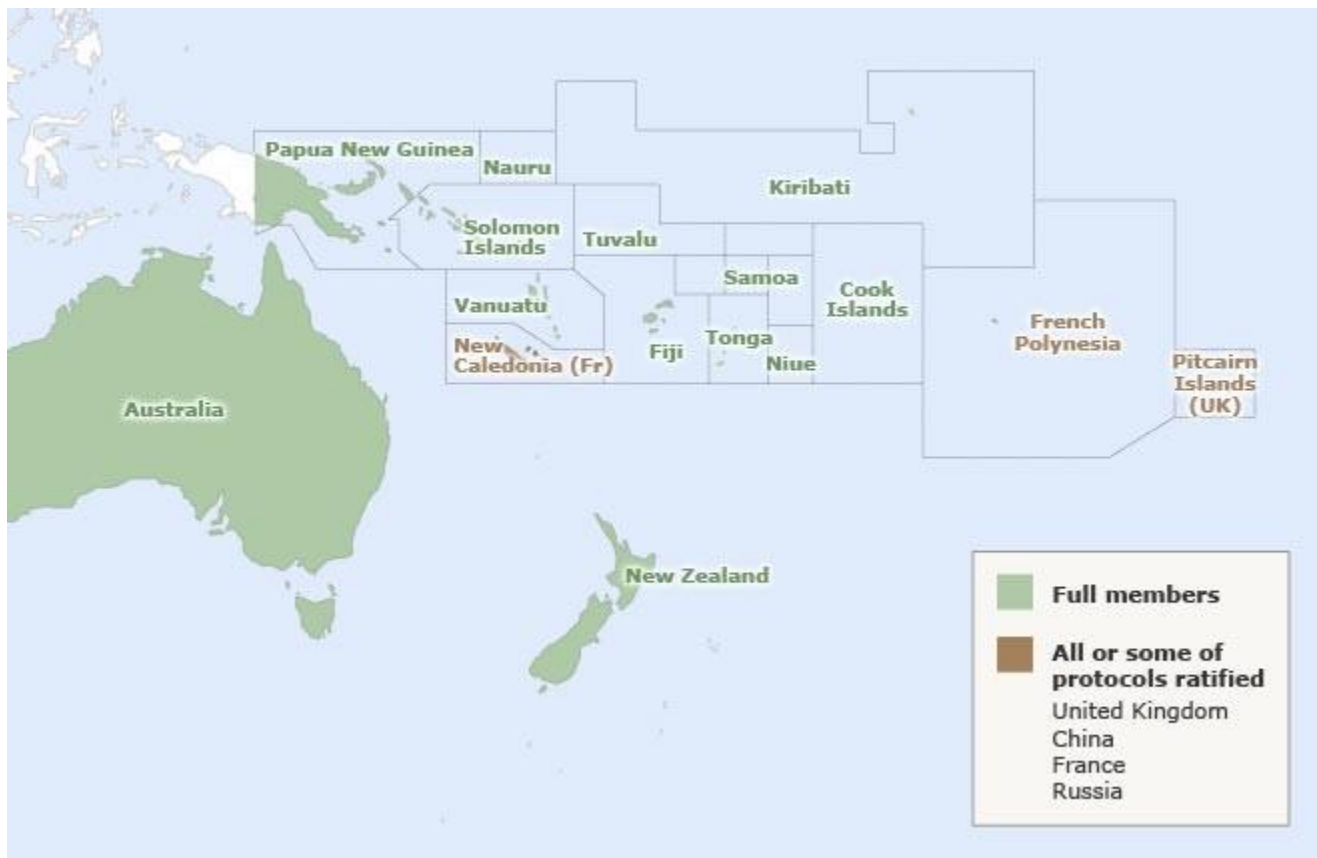


Image source: <https://teara.govt.nz/>

Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ Treaty)

- The Treaty is also known as the Bangkok Treaty.
- The Treaty obliges States Parties not to develop, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over nuclear weapons, station or transport nuclear weapons, or test or use nuclear weapons.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. The long road to timely MGNREGA payments

Reference:

UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis of 30th Oct 2021

F. Prelims Facts

1. Does the new oral drug, Molnupiravir, treat COVID-19?

Context:

- Molnupiravir tablet has been approved by the United Kingdom for use as an antiviral medicine against COVID-19.

Molnupiravir:

- Molnupiravir is the first **antiviral medicine** that can be taken as a pill rather than being injected or administered intravenously for the treatment of the COVID-19 disease.
- Molnupiravir was originally developed to treat influenza and works by **inhibiting the replication of certain RNA viruses**.
- Molnupiravir is a **nucleoside analogue**, which means it mimics some of the building blocks of RNA. It exerts its antiviral action through introduction of copying errors during viral RNA replication.
 - Molnupiravir gets incorporated into the growing RNA strands. Such RNA strands become faulty blueprints for the next round of viral genomes and when enough mutations occur, the viral population collapses. Thus the drug prevents the SARS-CoV-2 virus RNA replication process through “**error catastrophe**”.
- Molnupiravir is a **pro-drug**, which means that it needs to undergo processing in the body to become active.
- Some experts have raised **safety concerns over the compound’s mutagenic potential in human cells** — the possibility that it could incorporate itself into human DNA.

2. World Heritage sites in India:

- **World Heritage Sites are designated by UNESCO** for having cultural, historical, scientific or other forms of significance.
- Of the over 1,150 such sites globally (as of July 2021), **India has 40 of them, the second-most in the continent and sixth overall**. This includes 32 cultural, 7 natural and 1 mixed heritage site.
- The **walled city of Ahmedabad** has the distinction of being the **first city in India to be accorded the status of a UNESCO world heritage site**.
 - The city was **founded by Sultan Ahmad Shah in the 15th century**, on the eastern bank of the Sabarmati River. It presents a rich architectural heritage from the sultanate period, notably the Bhadra citadel, the walls and gates of the Fort city and numerous mosques and tombs as well as important Hindu and Jain temples of later periods. The urban fabric is made up of densely-packed traditional houses (*po/s*) in gated traditional streets (*puras*) with characteristic features such as bird feeders, public wells and religious institutions.
- Of the 40 inscribed sites located in India, **Khangchendzonga National Park is the only ‘Mixed World Heritage Site’ in India** having fulfilled the nomination criteria under both natural and cultural heritage.
 - Located at the heart of the Himalayan range in northern India (State of Sikkim), the Khangchendzonga National Park includes a unique diversity of plains, valleys, lakes, glaciers and spectacular snow-capped mountains covered with ancient forests, including the world’s third highest peak, Mount Khangchendzonga.
- As far as antiquity is concerned, the **rock shelters of Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh are the oldest inscribed site and are said to be 30,000 years old**.
 - The Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka are in the foothills of the Vindhyan Mountains on the southern edge of the central Indian plateau. Within massive sandstone outcrops, above comparatively dense forests, are five clusters of natural rock shelters, displaying paintings that appear to **date from the Mesolithic Period** right through to the historical period.

Know more about [UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India](#) in the linked article.

G. Tidbits

1. Fisherman killed in Pak. firing off Gujarat

- **India–Pakistan maritime trespassing** has been a constant source of friction between the two countries.
- Such trespassing is common to Pakistani and Indian fishermen operating along the coastline of the **Indian state of Gujarat and the Pakistani province of Sindh**. Most violations occur due to the absence of a physical boundary and lack of navigational tools for small fishermen.
- The Gujarat coast in particular has seen several incidents of fishermen caught by the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) for transgressing the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)**. There are more than 350 fishermen from Gujarat currently in Pakistani jails after having been intercepted by the agency along the IMBL.

Context:

- An Indian fisherman was killed recently in firing by the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) on an Indian fishing boat off the Gujarat coast.

Also read: [Sir Creek Issue](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Consider the following statements with regards to the UAPA law:

1. The law was originally enacted in 1967.
2. As per the Act, an investigating officer is required to obtain the prior approval of the Director-General of Police to seize properties that may be connected with terrorism.
3. UAPA has life imprisonment as the highest punishment.

Choose the correct ones from the given codes:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is an Indian law aimed at the prevention of unlawful activities associations in India. Its main objective was to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.
- The law was originally enacted in 1967.

- Subsequent to the 2019 amendment to the Act, an investigating officer is required to obtain the prior approval of the Director-General of Police to seize properties that may be connected with terrorism.
- The death sentence is the highest punishment under the Act.

Q.2 Consider the following statements with regards to Molnupiravir:

1. It is the world's first antiviral medicine which can be taken as a pill for the treatment of Covid-19.
2. It was originally developed to treat influenza.
3. The drug has been codenamed 'EIDD-2081'.

Which of these statements is/are incorrect?

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 & 3 only
- c. 1 & 3 only
- d. None of these

Answer: d

Explanation:

Context:

- Molnupiravir tablet has been approved by the United Kingdom for use as an antiviral medicine against COVID-19.

Molnupiravir:

- Molnupiravir is the first antiviral medicine that can be taken as a pill rather than being injected or administered intravenously for the treatment of the COVID-19 disease.
- The drug has been codenamed 'EIDD-2081'.
- Molnupiravir was originally developed to treat influenza and works by inhibiting the replication of certain RNA viruses. Molnupiravir gets incorporated into the growing RNA strands. Such RNA strands become faulty blueprints for the next round of viral genomes and when enough mutations occur, the viral population collapses. Thus the drug prevents the SARS-CoV-2 virus RNA replication process through "error catastrophe".

Q.3 Which of the following was not amongst the climate change targets announced by India at the recently held climate conference at Glasgow?

- a. India will achieve net-zero target by 2070
- b. India will ensure 50% of its energy will be sourced from renewable energy sources latest by 2040
- c. India will also reduce its emissions intensity per unit of GDP by less than 45% latest by 2030
- d. India would also install 500 Gigawatt of renewable energy by 2030

Answer: b

Explanation:

India's new climate actions announced at the ongoing 26th CoP of UNFCCC:

- India will achieve net zero emissions latest by 2070. This is notable given that so far India was the only major emitter that had not committed to a timeline to achieve net zero carbon dioxide emissions and has also argued against the concept of net zero carbon targets.
- Renewable energy would be tapped in a big way in India. By 2030, India will ensure 50% of its energy will be sourced from renewable sources. India plans to generate 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030. This marks a 50 GW increase from its current target of 450 GW.
- India also committed to reducing its carbon emissions until 2030 by a billion tonnes. By 2030, India will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy to less than 45 per cent. India is largely on track to meet, and even exceed, its Paris Agreement targets: reduce emissions' intensity of its gross domestic product (GDP) by 33 to 35 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030.

Q.4 Consider the following statements with regards to the Indian Government's plan to list India's G-secs in the international bond indices:

1. The RBI had earlier notified a fully accessible route for investment by non-residents for investment in government securities without any ceiling.
2. The move is expected to increase foreign inflow into India's debt market.
3. It will help the government in managing its market borrowing programme.

Choose the correct code from the following:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Budget 2020-21 had proposed to remove limit on foreign investment in some government securities, as a first step towards their inclusion in global bond indices.
- Following the announcement made in the Union Budget 2020-21 that certain specified categories of Central Government securities would be opened fully for non-resident investors without any restrictions, apart from being available to domestic investors as well, the Reserve Bank of India had notified the Fully Accessible Route (FAR) for investment by non-residents in securities issued by the Government of India.
- In order to further mainstream government securities, the Indian Government plans to list India's G-secs in the international bond indices.

- The move is expected to attract foreign inflows in the debt market, help the government in its market borrowing programme by increasing liquidity in domestic bond markets and also keep a check on yields.

Q.5 In which of the following relief sculpture inscriptions is 'Ranyo Ashoka' (King Ashoka) mentioned along with the stone portrait of Ashoka? (UPSC-2019)

- a. Kanaganahalli
- b. Sanchi
- c. Shahbazgarhi
- d. Sohgaure

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Kanaganahalli, situated about 3 km from Sannati, Karnataka, is an important excavation site for Buddhist monuments. The most important finding of the excavation from this site includes a stone sculptured slab bearing the name Ranyo Ashoko.
- Kanaganahalli inscription also includes a portrait of Ashoka (surrounded by female attendants and queens).

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The judgment of the Supreme Court of India in the Thwaha Faisal vs Union of India case has immense potential to reclaim the idea of personal liberty and human dignity. The Court has acted in its introspective jurisdiction and deconstructed the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) with a great sense of legal realism. This paves the way for a formidable judicial authority against blatant misuse of this law. Critically evaluate. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-2, Polity]
2. AUKUS could rock China's boat in the Indo-Pacific. Examine. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-2, International Relations]