

21 Nov 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Why no special status to A.P., HC asks Centre

Context:

Recently, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has ordered the Centre to explain why it has not granted Andhra Pradesh Special Category Status (SCS).

Details:

Special Category Status

What is Special Category Status to states?

- A Special Category Status (SCS) is a categorization provided by the Centre to states that confront physical and socioeconomic obstacles such as steep terrains, critical international boundaries, economic and infrastructure backwardness, and non-viable state finances.
- The Indian Constitution has no provision for designating any state as a Special Category Status (SCS) state.

Background

- The concept of special category status was initially proposed in 1969, when the fifth Finance Commission tried to grant preferential treatment to some impoverished states in the form of government support and tax cuts.
- Initially, three states were accorded special status: Assam, Nagaland, and Jammu and Kashmir.
- From 1974-1979, five additional states were added to the special category. Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Tripura are among them.
- With the inclusion of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1990, the number of states expanded to ten. Uttarakhand was granted special category status in 2001.

Criteria for special category status:

- Hilly and difficult terrain
- Low population density or sizeable share of tribal population
- Strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries
- Economic and infrastructural backwardness
- Non-viable nature of state finances

Benefits states confer with special category status:

- The central government bears 90% of the state spending on all centrally sponsored initiatives and foreign help, while the remaining 10% is handed to the state as a loan at 0% interest.

- Preferential treatment when it comes to receiving central funds.
- Excise duty reduction to encourage industries to the state.
- These states can take advantage of debt-swapping and debt-relief programmes.
- If a special category state has unspent money at the end of a fiscal year, it does not lapse and is carried forward to the next fiscal year.

What does The 14th Finance Commission say about the Special Category status?

- The recommendations of the 14th [Finance Commission](#) were implemented following the dissolution of the Planning Commission and the founding of [NITI Aayog](#).
- After its proposals were implemented in 2015, the 14th Finance Commission effectively removed the idea of special category status.

2. Indore keeps cleanest city tag for fifth year

Context:

Recently, the Swachh Survekshan Awards, 2021 was handed out by the President of India.

Details:

Swachh Survekshan Awards, 2021

- For the sixth year in a row, Indore was declared the cleanest city.
- Chhattisgarh has been named the cleanest state in the category of states having more than 100 urban local bodies for the third time.
- Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh were placed second and third, respectively, among states having more than 100 urban local bodies (ULBs).
- Varanasi was named the cleanest “Ganga city.”
- Surat and Vijayawada were in second and third place, respectively, among cities.
- With less than 100 ULBs, Jharkhand was deemed the cleanest state, followed by Haryana and Goa.

Additional Information:

Swachh Survekshan Report

- The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) released the Swachh Survekshan Urban report, while the Jal Shakti Ministry published the Grameen (Rural) report.
- It is one of the world’s largest sanitation surveys.
- The survey helps to broaden the scope of the ranking process while also motivating cities and communities to actively pursue mission projects in a timely and innovative manner.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Study Reveals Pollution In Water Bodies Around Thermal Power Plant

Context:

Recently, a new study titled “Polluted Power: How Koradi And Khaperkheda Thermal Power Stations Are Impacting The Environment” has been released.

Details:

- The study discovered severe and widespread contamination in the areas surrounding the Maharashtra State Power Generation Company Koradi and Khaparkheda thermal power facilities.
- The research discovered harmful elements such as mercury, arsenic, aluminium, and lithium in surface and groundwater, as well as extensive pollution of air, water, and soil owing to fly ash.

Additional Information:**How are Thermal Power Plants Polluting the Water Bodies?**

- Thermal pollution is one of the most serious problems in the local environment.
- When the water in a power plant becomes unusable, it is frequently dumped into a nearby canal.
- Because this effluent is often hotter than the surrounding natural water, it can raise the temperature of the water, which can have a harmful influence on the local ecology.
- Furthermore, this effluent frequently contains dissolved metals and metalloids, which might disrupt the surrounding ecosystem's equilibrium.

Two-Way Problem Of Water Stress And Power Shortages

- Water is used in thermal power plants in India for cooling and the disposal of fly ash, a byproduct of combustion operations.
- This high water consumption causes two interconnected issues: Thermal power plants have an impact on water security and are, in turn, impacted by water scarcity.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**1. ‘Paxlovid may be huge advancement for all Coronaviruses’****Context:**

Recently, Pfizer announced encouraging results of an interim analysis of a phase-2/3 trial of the antiviral drug paxlovid.

Details:**What is Paxlovid?**

- Paxlovid is an antiviral medication that is taken orally and inhibits the capacity of SARS-CoV-2 to proliferate in the body.
- Ritonavir is believed to enable Paxlovid to stay in the human body for longer periods of time, allowing the medicine to retain larger concentrations to aid in the fight against the virus.
- The medicine is predicted to lessen the requirement for hospitalisation in COVID-19 patients.

- Paxlovid is being developed to treat non-hospitalized, symptomatic people with COVID-19 who are at high risk of developing severe disease that might lead to hospitalisation or death.
- These drugs will especially matter for those people in whom
 - (i) an immune response to infection or vaccination is not mounted because of immunocompromise and
 - (ii) for infection in the unvaccinated or breakthrough infection in the vaccinated.

2. Can this portable robot end septic tank deaths once it is deployed?

Context:

A group from the IIT Madras has developed a HomoSEP robot to put an end to the practice of manual scavenging.

Details:

HomoSEP:

- HomoSEP is an abbreviation for “homogeniser of septic tanks.”
- When inserted into a septic tank, HomoSEP has a shaft linked to blades that can open like an inverted umbrella.
- This is advantageous since the septic tank entrances are tiny and the tank interiors are larger.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Why is India's coal usage under scrutiny?

Context

On the final day of the UN Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow, India promised to “phase down” rather than “phase out” the use of coal.

Background:

- PM presents India's climate action plan at COP26 in Glasgow
- India promises to cut its emissions to net zero by 2070.
- India is responsible for only 5 percent of global emissions.
- A five-point agenda, naming them ‘Amrit Tatva’ was presented.

Coal and Carbon Emissions

1. Why must dependence on coal be reduced?

- Carbon emissions are often regarded as the primary cause of global warming.
- Countries have committed to being carbon neutral by various dates.
- Carbon neutrality is attained when countries pay for their carbon emissions by removing an equivalent quantity of carbon from the atmosphere.
- As a result, it is critical to lessen reliance on coal. Coal is the most polluting of the fossil fuels, thus its usage in particular has been scrutinised.

2. Coal Use in India

- Most of this coal comes from domestic mines which are used to meet over 70% of India's electricity needs.
- Since FY 2018-19, domestic production has stagnated and has been unable to meet the rising domestic demand, leading to a rise in imports.
- Most of the country's coal production is limited to Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh with a total production of over 550 million tonnes, contributing to over 75% of the country's total coal production.

Critical Evaluation of Indian Commitment At Glasgow Conference

1. What is the Promise?

- The Prime Minister promised to increase non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 500 GW by 2030, meet 50% energy needs from renewable sources and reduce carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes in a decade.

2. Facts on Indian Carbon Emissions

- According to World Bank data of 2018, India produces 1.8 metric tonnes of carbon emissions per capita against 15.2 metric tonnes produced by the U.S.
- According to an estimate by the Centre for Science and Environment, the promise to reduce emissions by 1 billion tonnes means that India would need to reduce its carbon output by 22% by 2030.
- India now meets about 12% of its electricity needs from renewable sources, and increasing it to 50% by 2030 will be difficult.

3. What are the Concerns in fulfilling the Promise?

- While some renewable energy sources like solar are cheap, they are unreliable because of the intermittency problem. They thus require the use of storage batteries, which adds to the cost.
- It should be noted that many low-income countries with low savings may not even possess the capital required to invest in renewable energy.
- Further, the damage that coal causes to commonly owned resources like the environment is not factored into its cost.

4. What are the Concerns for India in phasing out coal?

- India has fought attempts by developed countries to impose a cap on its emissions.
- It has argued that adopting stringent steps to reduce carbon emissions can drag down growth and affect efforts to reduce poverty.
- Per capita carbon emissions of countries such as India and China are still lower than those of many developed countries.
- Critics have pointed out that the focus on ending the use of coal deflects attention from other fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas that are heavily used by developed countries. They also say developed countries have not made good on their promise made at COP15 in Copenhagen to offer \$100 billion every year to developing countries to achieve net zero emissions.

Challenges in Phasing out Coal

- Coal is the most cost-effective and dependable solution for them to satisfy their expanding energy demands.
- It is quite doubtful that emerging countries such as India and China would limit or even halt their coal usage.
- As an alternative, some leaders have advocated a carbon tax to ensure that the price of coal reflects the cost of the environmental harm it does.
- High carbon prices can cause a significant drop in coal output and have a negative impact on living standards unless alternative energy sources come in to fill the void.
- India also faces structural issues in the power sector that will make the move to sustainable energy more difficult.

Conclusion:

- India is still rapidly industrialising. As a result, despite good intentions, greenhouse gas emissions from the production of steel, cement, chemicals, and other carbon-intensive commodities will certainly grow.
- India would need to implement more energy-efficient measures, convert to cleaner fuels, and innovate and invest in carbon-capture technology in these sectors.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. What are the ramifications of the Biden-Xi summit?

Context

Recently, U.S. President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping held a virtual summit earlier this week touching upon a range of policy concerns in the bilateral space.

Background:

- The tensions between the United States and China have risen across a range of global and regional issues, including trade, Taiwan, and the South China Sea, as well as technology, particularly 5G.

- The recent summit exchange saw the two Presidents express their positions on each of these issues, but there was no major announcement.
- This implies that the job ahead for both countries will be to manage tensions so that they do not spill over and harm the global economy.

Core Areas of Tension between US and China:-



1. Trade Disputes: –

- Trade and tariffs are at the top of the agenda of policy matters causing bilateral friction.
- After the globally damaging trade war with China through 2019 and 2020, a dispute that was exacerbated on a vast swathe of Chinese exports, a temporary reprieve came with the Phase One Trade Agreement.

2. Taiwan Issue: –

- A second key area of tension is Taiwan's independence.
- The U.S. is holding firm to its long-standing policy on this complex subject, which it acknowledges but does not recognise China's claim to Taiwan under the One China policy.
- In contrast, China will likely respond aggressively to any moves by Western powers seen as strengthening Taiwanese independence, including direct arms sales to Taipei and visits by Western lawmakers to the island territory.

3. Technology: –

- A third major bilateral subject that has proved to be contentious is technology.
- On the one hand, the US used the trade war with China to bluntly accuse China of "unfair trade practices for technology and intellectual property", and U.S. policymakers relied on a matrix of export restrictions to target China's semiconductor supply chain in a bid to safeguard critical infrastructure in the telecommunications sector.
- On the other hand, Chinese nationals in the U.S. on allegations of industrial espionage, hint at the deep chasm between the U.S. and Chinese governments on the broad question of technology and surveillance.

Conclusion:

Although the 2021 U.S.-China virtual summit meeting China reiterates its claim on Taiwan independence," China would have gone some way towards uplifting its prospects. But no quick victory has come out of the latest dialogue.

2. Will Pak. law on Kulbhushan Jadhav help India's position?

Context

Recently, Pakistan's Parliament passed the International Court of Justice (Review and Reconsideration) Bill, 2021, granting the right of appeal to Kulbhushan Jadhav.

Background:

- The International Court of Justice (Review and Reconsideration) Bill, 2021, granted the right of appeal to Kulbhushan Jadhav, former Indian Navy officer on death row on espionage and other charges.
- India expressed misgivings about the law, saying it still does not fulfil the terms laid down by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which included the provision that India be allowed consular access to Jadhav.

Kulbhushan Jadhav Case

1. When was he Arrested?

- Kulbhushan Jadhav was arrested in March 2016 and charged with espionage and sabotage against Pakistan's security installations.
- The case received attention as it came soon after the January 2016 Pathankot terror strike that India blamed on Pakistan-based terrorists.

2. India's arguments at the ICJ

- In 2017 Jadhav was sentenced to death by a military court in Pakistan for alleged acts of sabotage. India moved the ICJ and pointed out that Pakistan had failed to provide consular access to Jadhav.
- India had argued at the ICJ in 2017 that Jadhav had been denied his rights under the Vienna Convention and Pakistan had "failed to inform" New Delhi about his arrest.
- The law passed by Pakistan's parliament is being presented as proof of Islamabad complying with the ICJ ruling.

3. What did the ICJ rule?

- In its observations of 2017, the ICJ asked Pakistan to take "all measures at its disposal" to ensure that Jadhav is not executed pending its final decision.
- It observed that Pakistan had violated Article 36 of the Vienna Convention by not allowing India consular access to Jadhav and by denying his right to a proper legal representation.

Arguments Against the Recent Law

- The law will end up as mere paperwork if Pakistan fails to provide verifiable legal access to Jadhav. India has already expressed its misgivings.
- The law is a repeat of the International Court of Justice (Review and Reconsideration) Ordinance, 2020 that Delhi had rejected as inadequate for meeting the goals stated in the ICJ's observations of 2019.
- India said the ordinance did not "create the machinery of an effective review and reconsideration" as mandated by the ICJ.

Conclusion

- Pakistan predicted that India would return to the ICJ to bring a contempt notice against Pakistan, and that this law would preempt such a move.
- Pakistan is expected to claim that it has not only complied with the ICJ's decision, but has also made it law.
- The bill is also an attempt to resolve a domestic political spat in Pakistan.

For detailed information on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) refer to the following article:

[International Court of Justice \(ICJ\) – UPSC Notes](#)

Category: JUDICIARY

1. Flaws in the system

Context

Recently, there is a controversy over the transfer of judges from Madras High Court.

Background:

- The transfer of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee from the Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court has given rise to a controversy over the question of judicial transfers.
- Judicial transfers are criticised for being made only for administrative reasons or to have any element of 'punishment' behind them.

Constitution safeguard on the transfer of judges: –

- **Article 222** of the Constitution provides for the transfer of High Court judges, including the Chief Justice.
- It says the President, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, may transfer a judge from one High Court to any other High Court.
- It also provides for a compensatory allowance to the transferred judge.
- This means that the executive could transfer a judge, but only after consulting the Chief Justice of India.

What is the Supreme Court's view on the issue?

1. **In Union of India vs. Sankalchand Himatlal Sheth (1977)**
 - a. The Supreme Court rejected the idea that High Court judges can be transferred only with their consent.
 - b. It reasoned that the transfer of power can be exercised only in public interest.
 - c. The President is under an obligation to consult the Chief Justice of India
 - d. The Chief Justice of India had the right and duty to elicit and ascertain further facts from the judge concerned or others.
2. **In S.P. Gupta vs. President of India (1981) – 'Judges' Transfer Case'**
 - a. The **First Judges Case** considered the validity of the transfer of two Chief Justices as well as a circular from the Law Minister proposing that additional judges in all High Courts may be

asked for their consent to be appointed as permanent judges in any other High Court, and to name three preferences.

- b. This position was overruled in the '**Second Judges Case**' (1993). The opinion of the Chief Justice of India was to have primacy. Since then, appointments have been made by the Collegium.

What is the current procedure for transfers?

- The 'Second Judges Case' made the opinion of the Chief Justice of India ought to mean the views of a plurality of judges; the concept of a 'Collegium of Judges' came into being.
- In the college era, the proposal for transferring a High Court judge, including a Chief Justice, should be initiated by the Chief Justice of India.
- For transferring a judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of India should take the views of the Chief Justice of the court concerned, as well as the Chief Justice of the court to which the transfer is taking place.
- The Chief Justice of India should also take into account the views of one or more Supreme Court judges who are in a position to offer their views in the process of deciding whether a proposed transfer should take place.
- In the case of transfer of a Chief Justice, only the views of one or more knowledgeable Supreme Court judges need to be taken into account.
- The recommendation is sent to the Union Law Minister who should submit the relevant papers to the Prime Minister.
- The Prime Minister then advises the President on approving the transfer.

Controversies in Judicial Transfers: –

- Transfer orders become controversial when the Bar or sections of the public feel that there is a punitive element behind the decision to move a judge from one High Court to another.
- As a matter of practice, the Supreme Court and the government do not disclose the reason for a transfer.
- Some adverse opinions on a judge's functioning disclosure would impinge on the judge's performance and independence in the court to which he is transferred.
- On the other hand, the absence of a reason sometimes gives rise to speculation whether it was affected because of complaints against the judge.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Assam to be language lab for country

Context:

Assam is seen as the laboratory of the country's language-based education.

Details:

Languages in Assam

- Assamese and Bodo are the official languages of Assam. Besides, Bengali is also the official language of several districts in the Barak Valley.
- Assamese is spoken by the vast majority of the people of Assam.
- Other languages spoken in Assam include Dimaca, Mishing, Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, and others.
- Small ethnic groups in Assam speak languages such as Tai-Phake, Tai-Aiton, Tai-Khamti, and others.
- Manipuri, Khasi, Garo, Hmar, Kuki, and other languages are spoken in various regions of Assam.

2. Nihangs share in the joy of 'farmer brothers'

Context:

Recently, Nihang Sikhs rejoiced when the PM announced the scrapping of the three farm laws.

Details:

Nihang Sikhs:

- Nihang Sikhs are also known as Sikh warriors.
- The Nihangs are descended from the Khalsa Panth, which was created in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs' ninth guru.
- Many people believe the cult is the "guru di ladli fauj" (the guru's preferred army).
- The Akaal Sena, a band of soldiers commanded by Guru Hargobind, the sixth guru, is said to have given birth to the armed sect.
- The Akaal Sena then became the 10th guru's 'Khalsa Fauj.'
- During the numerous attacks of Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Abdali in the mid-18th century, Nihangs were vital in safeguarding the Sikhs.
- They were also important members of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following are the four holy places related to the life of Lord Buddha?

1. Vaishali
2. Lumbini
3. Bodh Gaya
4. Sarnath
5. Kushinagar
6. Shravasti

Options:

- a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- b) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c) 3, 4, 5 and 6 only

d. d) 1, 3, 5 and 6 only

Answer: b

Explanation:

The Four Most Important Pilgrimage sites of Buddhism are as follows:

1. **Lumbini**, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Location in 1997, is the sacred site where Lord Buddha was born in 623 BCE from Queen Maya Devi.
2. **Bodh Gaya** is one of the holiest and most sacred places in the world, where Lord Buddha received "Enlightenment" under a pipal tree. That pipal tree is referred to as the Bodhi tree.
3. **Sarnath**, one of the four holiest locations in the world, is located in Uttar Pradesh, India, to the north-east of Varanasi.
4. **Kushinagar** is one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage destinations and is located in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Kushinagar is the sacred spot where Lord Buddha chose to die and achieve "Parinirvana."

Hence Option B is correct.

Q2. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Compulsory licensing is when a government allows someone else to produce patented product or process without the consent of the patent owner or plans to use the patent-protected invention itself.
2. Countries can only make use of compulsory licenses for the domestic market, not for export.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Compulsory licensing is when a government allows someone else to produce a patented product or process without the consent of the patent owner or plans to use the patent-protected invention itself. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- Compulsory licenses can be used by countries for both domestic and export products. **Hence Statement 2 is incorrect**

Q3. With respect to the Sickle Cell Disease, which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

1. It is a genetic disease, i.e., it is inherited from parents.
2. It affects haemoglobin, the molecule in white blood cells that delivers oxygen to cells throughout the body.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Sickle cell anaemia is an inherited red blood cell disorder in which there are insufficient healthy red blood cells to transport oxygen throughout the body. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- Normally, red blood cells are flexible and spherical, and they travel readily through blood channels. Red blood cells in sickle cell anaemia are shaped like sickles or crescent moons.
- These stiff, sticky cells can become lodged in tiny blood veins, slowing or blocking blood flow and oxygen delivery to various regions of the body. **Hence Statement 2 is incorrect.**

Q4. Consider the following Pairs:

Tribal Freedom fighters	Region
1. Komaram Bheem	Telangana
2. Poto Ho	Jharkhand
3. Thalakkal Chanthu	Kerala

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Komaram Bheem is renowned as Telangana's heroic warrior. He belonged to the Gond (Indigenous) tribe.
- Poto Ho, from Jharkhand, was a hero of the historic Serengsia Valley War against British rule.
- Thalakkal Chanthu was an archer and the commander-in-chief of the Pazhassi Raja's Kurichya warriors who battled British forces in the Wayanad woods in Kerala.

- Hence all the statements are correct.

Q.5. With reference to river Teesta, consider the following statements:

1. The source of river Teesta is the same as that of Brahmaputra but it flows through Sikkim.
2. River Rangeet originates in Sikkim and it is a tributary of river Teesta.
3. River Teesta flows into Bay of Bengal on the border of India and Bangladesh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Teesta River flows from the Pahunri glacier (not from the Brahmaputra). **Hence Statement 1 is incorrect.**
- River Rangeet originates in Sikkim and is the state's biggest river as well as a tributary of the Teesta. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**
- The Brahmaputra River flows from the Angsi glacier near Mount Kailash. Teesta is a right tributary of the Brahmaputra. Teesta runs through West Bengal and Sikkim before reaching the Bay of Bengal via Bangladesh. **Hence Statement 3 is incorrect.**

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Explain with relevant examples the technological solutions to Eradicate manual scavenging. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-1, Social Issues]
2. The transfer of High court judges by the collegium is riddled by controversies. In the light of the statement, discuss the solutions to improve and streamline the judicial appointments procedure in India. (15 Marks, 250 Words)[GS-2, Judiciary]