

29 Nov 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India, Bangladesh to deepen ties as partners, says Goyal](#)

Context:

- Indian Commerce and Industry Minister's speech at the **Bangladesh International Investment summit**.

India-Bangladesh economic ties:

Present status:

- **Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia** with a volume of over \$10 billion and India is the second biggest trade partner of Bangladesh.
- Bilateral trade and economic engagement between India and Bangladesh has grown steadily over the last decade. Cooperation in the power sector has become one of the hallmarks of India-Bangladesh relations.

Measures being taken to further deepen economic engagement:

- Meetings of various institutional mechanisms are being conducted regularly to promote bilateral trade and economic engagement.
 - Secretary level meetings of Commerce and shipping ministries.
 - In order to promote cooperation on bilateral trade, an **India-Bangladesh CEO's Forum** was launched in 2020 to provide policy level inputs in various areas of trade and investment and also to facilitate exchanges among the business communities of both the countries. The India-Bangladesh CEO Forum will meet soon for the first time. This is expected to promote mutual investments.
 - Meeting of the **India-Bangladesh Textile Industry Forum** was held in 2020 to enhance linkages and collaboration in the textile sector.
- The two countries are working towards a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.
- On the infrastructure front, the connectivity between the two neighbours has been strengthened over time via roadways, railways, waterways and airways. The **land customs stations (LCS) have been upgraded to integrated check posts (ICP)**.
- Indian companies have a notable presence in Bangladesh. Currently around 350 Indian companies are registered in Bangladesh. **India is also developing two Indian economic zones at Mirsarai and Mongla in Bangladesh.**

Recommendations:

- Focus on areas of **technology, connectivity, entrepreneurship, health and tourism** would help further strengthen bilateral economic ties between the two countries.
 - **Improving physical connectivity** through rail, road infrastructure would be an imperative for expanding and realising the potential for bilateral trade and investments.
- **Enhanced co-operation and collaboration** between the two countries and treating each other as partners rather than competitors will only help the two countries complement each other's capabilities and capacities.

Conclusion:

- A robust economic relationship between the two nations would not only reap rich economic dividends for the two nations but it would also bring in an **era of economic prosperity in South Asia**.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Understanding the new variant of the virus

Context:

- A new variant of SARS-CoV-2 (B.1.1.529) has been designated as a **Variant of Concern (VoC)** by the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) and has been named

Details:

- As of date, nine countries have confirmed the presence of Omicron. This includes South Africa, Botswana, England, Hong Kong, Australia, Italy, Israel, Czech Republic, and Belgium.
 - According to the recent release of [INSACOG](#) Bulletin, none of the sequenced samples in India have the Omicron variant until date.
- The Omicron variant has a **large number of mutations** compared to other prevalent variants circulating across the world. This includes 32 mutations in the spike protein.

Concerns:

- Given the fact that many of the mutations have been noticed in the receptor-binding domain of the spike protein, there are concerns that these mutations may **cause increased transmission** as well as lead to **vaccine escape and breakthrough infections** in already vaccinated individuals.
- From a diagnostic point of view, some of the mutations in the spike protein cause primers used in some of the RT-PCR kits to not function as expected. This leads to what leads to **spike gene target failure (SGTF)** which would make it difficult to diagnose [COVID-19](#).

Way forward:

- **Enhanced surveillance and genome sequencing of the variant** should be undertaken to detect and track the prevalence of the Omicron variant.
- Rapid sharing of genome sequences of the virus and the epidemiological data linked with it should be made publicly available to help in developing a better understanding of the variant.
- Existing **public health and social measures** need to be strengthened to control and prevent transmission. **Vaccination coverage has to be enhanced to slow down the emergence of any future variants.**

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. How to win over Kashmiri youth

Context

Recently, there was a suggestion that de-radicalisation camps should be organised for the youth in Jammu and Kashmir.

Radicalisation In J&K:

A. What is Radicalisation?

- Radicalisation is the process through which an individual or a group adopts progressively radical political, social, or religious ideas, particularly when it comes to support for or use of violence.
- Ideologies, religious views, political convictions, and biases towards certain groups of people can all be motivating factors.
- People can be radicalised in a variety of methods and over a variety of time periods, ranging from a few days or hours to several years.
- The Judge Webster Commission 2009 had observed: 'Radicalism is not a crime. Without exhortation to violence, radicalization alone may not be a threat.'

B. History of Radicalisation in Kashmir:-

- General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Pakistan's dictator-President, started the practise of utilising religious overtones in statecraft.
- He emphasised the importance of religion in government policy. During his reign, the development of Madrasas began, and they have played a significant role in the Islamization and radicalization of Pakistani youth.
- Later, as part of low-intensity war activities, this spilled over into Kashmir (LICO).
- Insurgents who wanted J&K to secede from India began using violent measures to achieve their goal in 1989.
- As a result, effective counter-insurgency operations were launched.
- To combat militancy, the Public Safety Act of 1978 and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 were utilised.
- In Pakistan, hundreds of tanzeems (fighting organisations) were formed to fight in Afghanistan. Some of these were later sent to Jammu and Kashmir.
- In the pretext of Islam and Kashmiri liberation, Pakistani operatives went about recruiting young people to train in Pakistan.
- Due to threats from terrorist leaders in the 1990s, many Kashmiri families transferred one of their sons to Pakistan to be trained and subsequently deployed in Kashmir.

- Governor's rule remained in place in J & K for a long period, effectively suppressing the democratic process.
- Homegrown militancy first emerged in Kashmir during protests over state elections in 2008, and then again when the Indian Army killed three infiltrators in 2010.
- The Hurriyat Conference of All Parties called for violent protests, which led to rioting, the burning of government cars, and "stone-pelting events."
- With the emergence of homegrown militancy, the situation on the ground deteriorated.

C. Extent of Radicalisation in J&K

Extent of Radicalisation in J&K

- **Taking refuge in religious functions and discussions.**
- **Posting incendiary messages on social media.**
- **Terming destruction of Sufi shrines as a 'divine act of God.'**
- **Wahhabi followers taking over Hanafi masjids.**
- **Rise in Xenophobia.**
- **Radicalisation owes its resurgence to the concept of 'death with dignity.'**
- **Easy Availability of Radical Material.**
- **Radical Problems in Kashmir has its roots linked to New Delhi.**

Critical Evaluation of De-radicalisation camps

A. What is De radicalisation?

- Deradicalization is a term used to describe the process of persuading someone with strong political, social, or religious beliefs to take more moderate perspectives on topics.
- Even in the last five years, "deradicalization" initiatives, which are aimed at gently moving people and groups away from violent extremism, have expanded in popularity and reach.
- Deradicalization is the process of separating a person from their extremist beliefs, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.

B. Significance of De-radicalisation Camps

- Deradicalisation camps are distinct from past approaches to rehabilitation in that they also focus on persons who have not yet committed a terrorist act.
- Deradicalisation camps employ modern approaches such as technology and internet communication, which have been effectively co-opted by terror groups.
- It requires examining if the process can be reversed and how government-led measures can assist in ensuring that committed terrorists do not engage in criminal activities after freed from jail.
- Focusing on rehabilitation makes sense in light of the fact that dedicated ideologues may never abandon their views, but they may modify their conduct.

C. Challenges associated with Deradicalization Camps

- **No standard definition:** The terms “terrorism,” “violent extremism,” “radicalisation” and “deradicalisation” are still loosely defined; there is no universal agreement.
- **Twin Challenges:** There were now twin challenges for the Army, the Central Armed Police Forces and the J&K Police.
 - The first were the terrorists for whom the rules of engagement were different
 - The second were the Kashmiri youth who formed the bulk of the protestors — Indians for whom all the rules and laws applicable to any Indian citizen apply.
- **Human Rights Issues:** When stone-pelting incidents took a serious and alarming turn, armed personnel responded with pellet guns and other means of riot control. Injuries, especially eye injuries, were a serious fallout of this response which was criticised for Human rights violation.
- **Problems of Kashmiri Youths:**
 - Kashmiri children in schools and colleges outside the State are often mistreated when any misadventure takes place in J&K. The incidents of violence against minorities, including Muslims, in north India have only worsened problems with Kashmiri youths.
 - The Kashmiri youth feel that they face hostility from the Indian state because of their Muslim identity and so the status quo cannot be effective.
- **Similar to Detention Camps:** The suggestion of de-radicalisation camps for the youth can appear similar to the detention camps run by China for Muslim minorities.
- **Political Threats:** This suggestion will be exploited for political gains by the pro-Pakistani elements and further vitiate the atmosphere.

D. De-radicalisation Efforts:

Operation Sadbhavana:

Operation Sadbhavana is a one-of-a-kind compassionate endeavour undertaken by the Indian Army in the state of Jammu and Kashmir to address the aspirations of people afflicted by terrorism aided and abetted by Pakistan.

Bharat Darshan:

The J&K Police Department organised a Bharat Darshan tour to Delhi and Agra for students in August 2018 to "provide them the chance to comprehend the history and development of different regions of the country."

Other Initiatives:

The Army has also helped in school construction, medical assistance, veterinary care, and disaster relief.

E. Global Experience:

- a. **UK:** By revising the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) in 2009, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown transformed the country's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) into a multi-agency approach, making it more transparent and democratic.
- b. **Sri-Lanka:** Sri Lanka's rehabilitation programme to combat violent insurgency, which was started by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), provides valuable insight into both the accomplishments and pitfalls of the deradicalisation programme.

Solutions to De-radicalisation

1. Different sectors, such as education, social services, and health, should be assigned defined roles.

2. To combat the 'hate' ideology, it is necessary to move away from a State-mandated counselling programme and toward a multi-agency-designed educational programme with community and religious backing.
3. Elected community officials and faith-based organisations can both play key roles.
4. 'Counter-narratives' and avoiding internet radicalization are important aspects which can identify and assist susceptible people.
5. Individuals at risk should be identified, the nature of the risk assessed, suitable assistance plans developed, and channel support extended or terminated by local government entities.
6. As a 'channel police practitioner,' the police function has been limited to coordinating.
7. Human rights organisations can work to look after infringements on freedom of expression and privacy, particularly in schools.
8. Before increasing counter-terrorist capabilities, policymakers must address "unaddressed socio-economic and political reasons" that are accountable for the increase of violence, according to a Brookings research on violent extremism released in March 2019.

Conclusion:

- Deradicalization camps provide a number of challenges for India as it considers what ideas and experiences to adopt for its own programmes.
- When Kashmiri youngsters study in other parts of India, the state must ensure their safety.
- It is critical that Kashmiri youngsters feel at ease wherever they are. This necessitates a genuine professional approach, a gentle touch, and long-term commitment.
- Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's speech in Addis Ababa on January 29, 2016, provided a final solution to this question, stating that "good governance can prevent terrorism." That is exactly what our government should do, rather than holding 'deradicalization' camps.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. What the Omicron variant means for India

Context

Recently, cases of the new coronavirus variant Omicron are rising across much of Europe. This editorial highlights the danger of Omicron to India.

Background:

- Botswana recently discovered a novel version of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- Early research reveals that the Omicron variation is responsible for the sharp increase in cases in South Africa's Gauteng area.
- The Omicron variation has been found in 90% of the samples in this area.
- This variation has recently been designated as a 'variant of concern' by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Decline in COVID-19 Cases in India:

- Following the severe second wave in India, the sustained drop in COVID-19 cases has given rise to hope that a return to normalcy is on the horizon.
- The low number of cases in India now appears to be due to two variables.
- To begin with, seroprevalence tests show that a big percentage of the population has previously been exposed to the virus, offering some protection against further infections.
- Second, the vaccination programme is gaining ground. Approximately 44% of Indian people have been completely immunised, with 82% receiving at least one dose.

Concerns of Omicron Variant:

- This variation has a substantial number of mutations that should be taken seriously.
- They could make it possible for the new variation to bypass immunity gained from a previous infection or a vaccination.
- The development of the new variety is alarming and necessitates heightened caution.
- Epidemiologists are most concerned about the likelihood of a new, more transmissible version of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- Its capacity to infect humans may greatly outpace that of the Delta version.
- There are no accurate estimates of how much more transmissible the Omicron variety is than prior viral strains.
- There is a larger possibility for breakthrough cases and subsequent transmission when novel variations may defy immunity gained via vaccination and past infections.
- Vaccines and therapies such as monoclonal antibodies may need to be modified if these mutations lead to higher immune evasion.
- The virus will continue to grow and change in a compromised immune system, altering its shape to evade immune reaction.

Way Forward: Addressing the Variant

- A strong immune response can ultimately eliminate the virus.
- It would make sense to prioritise the old and immunocompromised for a future increased dose.
- Epidemiologists all across the globe recognise that limiting travel can only provide limited respite.
- Vaccination is the greatest way to limit the number of cases.
- A single vaccination dose can significantly lower the chance of hospitalisation or a poor outcome; two doses are even better.
- However, due to present vaccine distribution disparity, this method of control is out of reach for the majority of people in low- and middle-income nations.
- While many wealthy nations are arranging for booster doses to protect their people, including children and the elderly, this approach comes at the expense of the rest of the globe.
- More than 60 nations, including South Africa, have vaccinated fewer than 25% of their population.
- These are the areas where a new, more transmissible variety has the most possibilities. Vaccine distribution equity is an important worldwide public health necessity, in addition to being the correct thing to do ethically and morally.

- India must increase supply to COVAX, an international cooperative aiming to vaccinate nations with limited access to vaccines, as well as persuade countries with excess supplies to do so.

Conclusion:

India and other nations should take note of South Africa's example of making data available in real time for the world to examine and displaying the greatest levels of openness. At this time, appropriately planning for an uncertain future is critical.

Category: ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. COP26 pledges need a new climate of cooperation

Context

This editorial discusses the promises made at Glasgow COP26 and highlights the need for a new climate of cooperation.

Background of Glasgow COP26:

- **Promises Made:** Following the net zero objective, the United States and Europe launched the next most important climate goal, the Global Methane Pledge, which was signed by 104 nations and aims to reduce global methane emissions considerably by 2030.
- **Noteworthy Absentee:** There were some significant absentees when global leaders convened in Glasgow for the COP26. Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin, the leaders of the world's second and fourth greatest carbon emitters, respectively, did not make it to Glasgow.

Concerns with India's Commitments:

- India has set a deadline of 2070, which is two decades later than the original date of 2050.
- India, despite being the world's third-largest emitter of methane, was not a signatory.
- Despite having the world's biggest contiguous mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, India was not included in the vow to stop deforestation.

Significance and Potential of India in Pursuing Green Energy

- India has been a strong supporter of green energy as a means of lowering carbon emissions.
- Despite the fact that India has yet to make a large shift to renewable energy, with renewable energy accounting for only 22.5 percent of total electricity generation, the country has been at the forefront of the worldwide solar power movement.
- With France, the country co-founded the International Solar Association (ISA), an alliance of more than 120 nations dedicated to the promotion of solar energy.
- India, along with over 35 other countries, signed the Glasgow Breakthrough Agenda at this year's COP26 to promote clean energy and make it more accessible, in order to boost India's position on renewable energy, such as solar energy.

Challenges for India

Green Energy challenges:

When it comes to moving to green energy, India has two major challenges: the consumption of the world's second-largest population and a lack of appropriate renewable energy sources.

Less Dependency on Nuclear Power:

Countries with populations equivalent to India's, such as China and the United States, have relied heavily on nuclear power to reduce carbon emissions, something India cannot do since it is not a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Policy Issues:

India has committed to using green energy to satisfy at least half of the country's electricity needs. However, the government will need to take considerable steps to do so, including lowering the cost of renewable energy to make it more accessible and appealing to the general public and commercial sector.

Economic Challenges:

- According to a recent assessment, the Indian renewable energy industry faces a massive financial hurdle. India has experienced severe economic challenges.
- Demonetisation, which took place in 2016, has had a negative influence on the country's GDP growth rate ever since.
- Since 2018, foreign investment in India has also been falling.
- The COVID-19 epidemic, which struck in early 2020, slowed GDP growth even further, wreaking havoc on various businesses.

Resource Scarcity:

- Economic survival is based on the use of limited resources. The country is facing a resource shortage, forcing it to pick between competing goals.

Countering Multiple Challenges:

- With a population of 1.3 billion people, meeting climate targets while battling a unique coronavirus epidemic has proven difficult for the world's largest democracy. India does not have the financial resources that its developed-world counterparts enjoy to sustain all aspects of its economy, people, and environment.

Way Forward

- If powerful developing economies like India are to play a constructive role in combating climate change and achieving the net zero target, the developed North must strengthen its support by taking a shared responsibility.
- Assistance should be provided to India and LDCs in pursuing climate goals since they already face daunting challenges such as fighting poverty, providing basic health-care services, and ensuring access to education.
- People without food when they are hungry, medicine and doctors when they are sick, and schools for their children cannot be expected to understand or relate to the adversities of climate change being debated.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Running business on Cloud

Cloud Computing:

- Cloud computing is the **on-demand availability of computer system resources (both hardware and operating system)**, especially data storage (cloud storage) and computing power, **without direct active management by the user**.
- Large clouds often have functions distributed over multiple locations, each location being a data center. To provide quick responses especially when customers are present in multiple geographies, it is prudent to host the Cloud in multiple locations. This is called **Edge computing**.
- Cloud computing has **two vital technologies**: “**virtualisation**” which lets computer resources be shared through multiple virtual machines; and “**network**” that lets data requests flow to and from the datacentre or the Cloud through the Internet.
- There are **public Clouds, private Clouds and hybrid Clouds**.
 - In public cloud systems, the same datacentre and network circuits are used by multiple customers while in private Cloud systems geographically distributed hardware are cordoned off virtually such that the computing resources are allotted only to one customer.
 - In a hybrid Cloud, the extremely vital, private information is stored in the private Cloud while the less critical data is stored in the public Cloud.
- Cloud computing helps achieve **economies of scale**, which can help in **reducing capital expenses**. Cloud computing offers **more computing power and more choice of software** as per one's demand.

G. Tidbits

1. Cooperative model best suited for India, says Shah

- Union Home and Cooperation Minister has described the **cooperative model as the best suited model to achieve an all-encompassing and inclusive development** in a huge country like India with a population of 130 crore and a predominant rural population. The Co-operative model is **best suited for economic development in villages**.

- The Minister called for replicating the successful cooperative model like the **Amul dairy cooperatives** in the domain of organic farming to encourage more farmers to adopt the practice.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with regards to the Minimum Support Price:

1. It was first introduced in 1965 to encourage farmers to grow foodgrains.
2. At present, it covers 23 crops.
3. No MSP is offered for pulses in India.

Choose the correct statements:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The MSP system was introduced in 1965 to encourage farmers to grow foodgrains.
- It was initially declared for paddy and wheat, but later extended to 23 crops, including 7 cereals (paddy, wheat, maize, sorghum, pearl millet, barley and ragi); 5 pulses (gram, tur, moong, urad, lentil); 7 oilseeds (groundnut, rapeseed-mustard, soyabean, seasmum, sunflower, safflower, nigerseed); and 4 commercial crops (copra, sugarcane, cotton and raw jute).

Q2. Consider the following statements with regards to Norovirus:

1. It is a group of viruses that leads to gastrointestinal illness.
2. Norovirus is resistant to many disinfectants and can heat up to 60°C.
3. The virus can also survive many common hand sanitisers.

Choose the correct statements:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Norovirus is a group of viruses that leads to gastrointestinal illness. It is a very contagious virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea.
- Norovirus is resistant to heat with some of the norovirus capable of withstanding temperatures up to 60 degree Celsius. They are also found to survive freezing low temperatures.
- Norovirus are resistant to many disinfectants. Hand sanitizers aren't as effective against Norovirus as some of these viruses can also survive many common hand sanitizers.

Q3. The famous Yelagiri Hills lie in which of the following states?

- a. Tamil Nadu
- b. Kerala
- c. Karnataka
- d. Telangana

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Yelagiri is a hill station in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is situated in the district of Vellore close to city Krishnagiri. Yelagiri has plenty of spectacular green valleys, rose-gardens, and orchards and is fast emerging as a popular tourist destination.

Q4. Consider the following statements with regards to Drugs Controller General of India:

1. The DCGI establishes standards for the manufacturing, sales, import, and distribution of drugs in India.
2. The DCGI also regulates medical and pharmaceutical devices.
3. DCGI is also responsible for the training of Drug Analysts deputed by State Drug Control Laboratories and other Institutions.

Choose the correct statements:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Drugs Controller General of India is the head of department of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization of the Government of India responsible for approval of licences of specified categories of drugs such as blood and blood products, IV fluids, vaccines, and sera in India.

- Drugs Controller General of India, comes under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. DCGI also sets standards for manufacturing, sales, import, and distribution of drugs in India.
- The DCGI also regulates medical and pharmaceutical devices.
- DCGI is also responsible for the training of Drug Analysts deputed by State Drug Control Laboratories and other Institutions.

Q5. Which one of the following National Parks lies completely in the temperate alpine zone?

- a. Manas National Park
- b. Namdapha National Park
- c. Neora Valley National Park
- d. Valley of Flowers National Park

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Valley of Flowers National Park is situated in the state of Uttarakhand. It is situated at an altitude of about 3352 to 3658 metres above sea level and so lies completely in the temperate alpine zone.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In the context of climate action, developing economies such as India are burdened with several challenges and require the help of the developed North. Hence, it is argued that to fulfill COP26 pledges, the world needs a new climate of cooperation. Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Environment and Ecology]
2. Experts have argued that there is a high sense of alienation amongst Kashmiri youth, owing to the nature of security response of the Indian state against cross-border terrorism. In the light of this, suggest a softer approach that could be adopted to win the hearts and minds of young Kashmiris at the grassroots. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Internal Security]