

18 Dec 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Federation opposes anti-conversion Bill

Topic: *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

Mains: *Concerns with Anti Conversion Bill and its consequences.*

Context:

The Federation of Indian Christians held a protest against the proposed anti-conversion bill proposed by the Karnataka government.

What is an Anti-Conversion Bill?

- A measure prohibiting forced religious conversions is known as an anti-conversion bill.
- If the Anti-Conversion Bill is passed, it will become law, and culprits of forced conversions will face punishment.

Background and Origin:

- Anti-conversion law originated in colonial India when it was implemented by princely states during the British period in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Several princely states enacted anti-conversion legislation, such as the Raigarh State Conversion Act of 1936 and the Udaipur State Anti-Conversion Act of 1946, and several other states, including Bikaner, Patna, and Jodhpur, followed suit.
- Several anti-conversion measures were proposed in parliament after India's independence, but not a single one was enacted.

Anti Conversion in Different states:

- At present, there are eight states where the law is in force. They are: – (i) Odisha (1967), (ii) Madhya Pradesh (1968), (iii) Arunachal Pradesh (1978), (iv) Chhattisgarh (2000 and 2006), (v) Gujarat (2003), (vi) Himachal Pradesh (2006 and 2019), (vii) Jharkhand (2017), and (viii) Uttarakhand (2018).
- In November 2019, the Uttar Pradesh Law Commission enacted a new law to regulate religious conversions.
- Recently, the Karnataka government has proposed to pass the anti-conversion bill.

For more on this, check the link:

[Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020](#)

2. Raising women's legal age of marriage to 21 in House agenda

Topic: *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

Main: *Critical analysis raising women's legal age of marriage.*

Context:

The Centre has decided to raise the legal age of marriage of women from 18 to 21 years.

Details:

Know more about this issue: [CNA 17 December 2021](#)

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Ecologists oppose changes to Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Mains: Critical Evaluation of Biological Diversity Amendment Bill 2021 and its Concerns.

Context:

Environmentalists have expressed concern over amendments to the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

Biological Diversity Amendment Bill 2021

- The Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021 seeks to alleviate strain on wild medicinal plants by promoting their cultivation.
- It also promotes the transmission of research results while leveraging India's biological resources.
- Objectives:-
 - To facilitate fast-tracking of research.
 - Encourage the Indian system of medicine.
 - Decriminalize certain provisions for use of traditional knowledge by 'vaid', 'hakims' and registered AYUSH practitioners.

Concerns with the Biological Diversity Amendment Bill 2021:

- Experts criticized the law for prioritizing intellectual property and commerce over the Act's primary goal of safeguarding biological resources.
- The bill imposed a heavy "compliance burden" and made it difficult to conduct collaborative research and investments, as well as to simplify patent application processes.
- According to the bill's text, it also wants to "extend the scope of levying access and benefit sharing with local populations, as well as for greater conservation of biological resources."
- The Bill intends to exclude registered AYUSH medical practitioners and those who have access to codified traditional knowledge, among others, from notifying State biodiversity boards before utilizing biological resources for specific reasons.
- The bill would "reverse all of the recent attempts to implement the Biological Diversity Act."
- There was not a single "suggested amendment provision to safeguard, conserve, or strengthen the stake of local communities in the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity."
- The modifications will allow "biopiracy" and eliminate the necessity for AYUSH manufacturing enterprises to get permits.

Know more about the [Biological Diversity Act of 2002.](#)

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. The challenge of achieving 9.5% growth rate

Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Mains: Challenges faced by the Indian economy in achieving 9.5% growth rate

Context:

- The National Statistical Office (NSO) released the second quarter Gross Value Added (GVA) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) numbers.

Observations by NSO:

- Base Effect:** The resultant base effect was the strongest in the first quarter of 2021-22.
- Improvement in Some Sectors:**
 - In the first half of 2021-22, only four of the eight GVA sectors have exceeded their corresponding 2019-20 levels.
 - These are agriculture; electricity, gas, mining and quarrying; and public administration, defense and other services.
- Centre's Gross Tax Revenues:**
 - For achieving the projected annual growth at 9.5% for 2021-22 given both by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the policy instrument may have to be a strong fiscal support in the form of government capital expenditure.
 - This is currently being facilitated by the buoyant Centre's gross tax revenues.
 - The Centre's gross tax revenues have shown an unprecedented growth rate of 64.2% in the first half of 2021-22.
- Fiscal Deficit:**
 - The fiscal deficit target of 6.8% may come under pressure because of upward revisions in some expenditure items such as food and fertilizer subsidies, MGNREGA and extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana along with some shortfall in non-tax and non-debt capital receipts.
- State capital expenditures:**

- The Centre's incentivisation of state capital expenditure through additional borrowing limits would also help in this regard.
- Even as Central and State capital expenditures gather momentum, high-frequency indicators reflect an ongoing pick-up in private sector economic activities.

Current challenges faced by the Indian economy

1. Two years worth of GDP growth has been lost

- In the current financial year — 2021-22 — the GDP is expected to grow back to register a growth of 8.3%. This would mean that, in terms of overall economic production, India would have lost two full years of growth.
- The recent growth rate of GDP in percentage terms gives an impression of a “V-shaped” recovery. But, in terms of actual production, the economy will only manage to recover the ground it lost last year.

2. Both retail and wholesale inflation is trending up

- At a time when economic growth has taken a hit and recovery is muted due to the second Covid wave, India is also facing ever-increasing prices. Headline retail inflation is the rate at which prices increase for retail consumers.
- Core inflation has remained consistently close to RBI's upper limit, showing that it is not just a matter of petrol and diesel prices being very high or vegetables and fruit prices rising too fast. The common Indian is witnessing a fast rise in prices across the board.

3. Poor credit offtake in the commercial sector

- The biggest engine of GDP in the Indian economy is the expenditure that Indians undertake in their private capacity. This demand for goods and services is what accounts for more than 55% of all GDP in a year.
- Even before Covid, the Indian economy had reached a stage where the common man was holding back this expenditure.
- The first Covid wave made that trend worse with people either losing jobs or salaries being reduced. The second Covid wave has compounded the problem further because now everyone is bothered about the high health expenses.
- In the absence of consumer spending, the country's businessmen — both big and small — are holding back new investments and refusing to seek new loans.

4. Inadequate spending by the government

- Domestic consumers are holding back consumption and domestic businesses are holding back investments. Thus, it was incumbent on the government to spend more and pull the economy out of the current rut.

- After being forced to spend more in 2020-21, the government has actually pulled back (as a proportion of GDP) in 2021-22. It is for this reason that its deficit will fall in FY22 as against FY21.

5. The slow pace of vaccination and a possible third Covid wave

- By now it is clear that there is no economic recovery unless India gets a significant majority of its population vaccinated.
- The possibility of a third wave is quite dangerous for economic recovery. That's because the increased uncertainty further worsens the trends of consumers holding back consumption and businesses holding back new investments.

6. Monetary policy hitting a barrier

- The government has not been expanding its fiscal policy by as much as many expected it to. Indeed, it was largely left for the RBI to pump in loads of cheap money in the form of new loans in a bid to jump-start the economy.

Way Forward:

- The acceleration in growth in the second quarter of 2021-22 reflects the Central Government's emphasis on capital investment, which has gained traction in recent months. This momentum must be maintained for the remainder of the fiscal year.
- Private consumer demand would rise in tandem with employment and income growth, as a result of the recovery in the services sector, particularly in the trade, hotels, and so on.
- This might happen in the second half of 2021-22, assuming that COVID-19's new strain, [Omicron](#), does not disrupt economic activity again.

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. For disabled citizens to have the police they deserve

Topic: *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

Mains: *Issues faced by persons with disabilities in meaningful access to the police.*

Context:

This article discusses the issues faced by persons with disabilities in meaningful access to infrastructure such as police stations, prisons, etc.

Background:

- The [Supreme Court](#) remarked in Patan Jamal Wali vs. State of Andhra Pradesh that women with disabilities are frequently considered as “soft targets” and “easy victims” for sexual violence.
- Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has announced Draft Accessibility Standards/Guidelines for facilities created under its control (police stations, prisons, and disaster response centres).

- When the standards indicate that access is a “social responsibility” of society toward “differently-abled,” they contradict rights-based understandings of disability.
- This understanding is inaccurate since access is a legal right that is granted to disabled people as empowered citizens.

Arguments in favour of the Standards:

1. The Standards provide accessibility standards for services related to police stations and prisons.
2. The Standards guarantee that people with disabilities who are suspected of committing crimes receive proper treatment, including having disabled-friendly access to police stations and disabled-friendly restrooms.
3. The Standards give guidance on how to include people with disabilities in disaster mitigation, readiness, response, and recovery operations.
4. The federal government has effectively eliminated the prospect of handicapped people joining the police service by issuing these guidelines.
5. The Standards include methods for constructing new police stations as well as upgrading existing police stations and prisons to make them more contemporary, gender-sensitive, and accessible.
6. They also emphasize disability-inclusive training for disaster relief personnel, data collection, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT).
7. Following the universal design concept, these guidelines impose accessible infrastructure models for schools, hospitals, and shelters.

Arguments against the Standards:

1. When the Standards claim that accessibility is society’s “social responsibility” to the “differently-abled,” they contradict a rights-based concept of disability.
2. According to the Standards, police officers on civil duty may be people with impairments. This contradicts the Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities’ 2021 Office Memorandum.
3. Several reasonable accommodations for the disabled are described as only recommended in the Standards. These include having trained police officers at each police station to help people with impairments.
4. The Standards do not require directional signage to be accessible to the visually impaired, such as by auditory methods.

Way Forward:

When the Standards become law, they will be a tremendous step forward in making our law enforcement system more accessible to the disabled. Strengthening the Standards further by adding proposals from well-thought-out public comments would get us closer to our goal of guaranteeing that India’s handicapped residents receive the police protection they deserve.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Kovind inaugurates Kalibari temple in Dhaka

Context: –

President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated a famous Hindu temple, namely, the Ramna Kalibari in Dhaka that had been destroyed by Pakistani forces in 1971.

Ramna Kalibari Temple:

- **Ramna:** The Ramna ('lawn' in Persian) region may be dated back to the early 1600s when it was held by Mughal authorities. A Mughal garden, vast green spaces, and garden buildings were all present.
- **Main Deity:** The temple is devoted to the Goddess Kali and is said to have been constructed during the Mughal era.
- **2nd oldest temple in Dhaka:** It is the second oldest Hindu temple in Bangladesh, the Dhakeshwari Temple being the oldest.
- **Relation with 1971 War:** The temple was demolished by Pakistani soldiers during Operation Searchlight in March 1971, which was a horrific crackdown that resulted in genocide and the Bangladesh War of Liberation.
- **Saint Anandamayee:** In 1929, the temple complex added a new structure for devotees of the great saint Anandamayee. Later, she was appointed as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's spiritual counsellor. Anandamayee was affectionately known as "Shahbag-er ma," or "Mother of Shahbag."

2. CCI freezes Amazon-Future deal, slaps ₹200 crore fine on U.S. firm

Context:

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has suspended its approval of Amazon's investment in a Future Group company, which was granted in November 2019.
- The CCI judgment was made because the US e-commerce company withheld the scope and complete information of its investment while seeking regulatory permission.

Read more on the [Competition Commission of India \(CCI\)](#) in the link.

3. Russia drafts pact to limit U.S., NATO role in ex-Soviet nations

Context:

Russia unveiled proposals to contain the U.S. and [NATO](#) in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which amongst the following writs can be issued against a private individual?

1. Habeas corpus
2. Mandamus
3. Prohibition

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation

- 'Habeas Corpus' means 'to have a body of'. This writ, which is used to free someone who has been wrongfully detained, can be issued against any private individual. **Hence statement 1 is correct.**
- The term 'mandamus' which means 'we command' can be issued against a public officer, a public company, a tribunal, an inferior court, or the government. It cannot be issued against a private person or entity, the President or Governors of States, or a Chief Justice. **Hence statement 2 is incorrect.**
- A court may issue a writ of prohibition to prevent lower courts, tribunals, and other quasi-judicial institutions from acting outside of their power. It cannot be used against a private person or entity. **Hence statement 3 is incorrect.**

Q2. The writ of habeas corpus cannot be issued in which of the following cases?

1. When the detention is outside the jurisdiction of the court
2. When the proceeding is for the contempt of a legislature or a court
3. When the detention is lawful

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation

- A writ of Habeas Corpus is a command issued by a court with the competent authority to anybody holding a person in custody or detention.
- This writ covers all forms of imprisonment that are used illegally or in an unapproved way or to an unapproved degree.
- Habeas Corpus **cannot be used** in the following situations:
 - When detention is legal, Habeas Corpus cannot be issued.

- It is also not stated if the detention or action is for contempt or a violation of a legislative provision.
- If the detention is ordered by the High Court or the Supreme Court, this writ cannot be issued.
- A Habeas Corpus writ cannot be granted if the detention occurs outside of the court's jurisdiction.
- **Hence all statements are correct.**

Q3. The Order of the Druk Gyalpo was conferred to PM Modi by which amongst the following countries?

- a. Japan
- b. Bhutan
- c. South Korea
- d. Mongolia

Answer: b

Explanation

- Recently, Bhutan conferred the Order of the Druk Gyalpo honour on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The Order of the Druk Gyalpo is the highest civilian honour of Bhutan.
- **Hence Option B is correct.**

Q4. Which of the following countries are not parties to United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)?

- 1. USA
- 2. China
- 3. India
- 4. Somalia
- 5. Mexico

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 4 and 5 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3 only
- d. 2, 4 and 5 only

Answer: a

Explanation

- The Convention on Biological Diversity, also known as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, is a multilateral convention that was signed during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
- It is a part of the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme).
- The CBD is signed by 196 nations. The CBD convention is not ratified by the United States. The United States is the only UN member state that has not done so.
- **Hence Option A is correct.**

Q5. Who amongst the following require the approval of National Biodiversity Authority to undertake Biodiversity related activities?

1. Non-resident Indian
2. A body corporate, association or organisation- not incorporated or registered in India
3. A body corporate, association or organisation – incorporated or registered in India under any law for the time being in force which has any non-Indian participation in its share capital or management.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation

- The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) was established by the Central Government in 2003 to implement India's Biological Diversity Act (2002). The NBA is a statutory body that serves the Indian government by providing facilitative, regulatory, and consultative services.
- The following persons/entities seeking access to biological resources occurring in India, shall have to seek prior approval from the National Biodiversity Authority:
 - Non-Indian Individual;
 - Any company, society, trust, organisation, association, institution, etc., registered or incorporated outside India;
 - A Non-Resident Indian;
 - Any company, society, trust, organisation, association, institution, etc., registered or incorporated in India, having non-Indian participation in its share capital and/or management.
- **Hence Option D is correct.**

Q6. Consider the following statements with respect to the Biological Diversity Act:

1. The offences under this Act shall be cognizable and non-bailable.

2. Any person aggrieved by any determination of benefit sharing or order of the National Biodiversity Authority or a State Biodiversity Board under this Act can directly approach the Supreme Court of India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation

- The Act, which was passed in 2002, intends to conserve biological resources, manage their sustainable use, and enable fair and equitable sharing of benefits emerging from biological resource usage.
- The offences under the Biological Diversity Act shall be cognizable and non-bailable. **Hence statement 1 is correct.**
- Any person aggrieved by any determination of benefit sharing or order of the National Biodiversity Authority or a State Biodiversity Board under this Act may file an appeal to the **National Green Tribunal** in accordance with the provisions of that Act. **Hence statement 2 is incorrect.**

Q7. Local self-government can be best explained as an exercise in

- a. Federalism
- b. Democratic decentralisation
- c. Administrative delegation
- d. Direct democracy

Answer: b

Explanation

- The two basic guiding concepts of local self-government, created under the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, are decentralisation and local empowerment.
- People elect local self-government bodies, which are administered by their representatives, either directly or indirectly.
- As a result, local self-government is best understood as an example of democratic decentralisation.
- **Hence Option B is correct.**

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Do you think the Government of India has been spending enough money on infrastructure development in the country? Comment. Also list the advantages of increasing capital expenditure.[GS-3, Economy]
2. Discuss the potential of India's semiconductor mission in reviving India's manufacturing sector.[GS-3, Science & Technology]

