

## 22 Dec 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><u>A. GS 1 Related</u></b>
<b><u>B. GS 2 Related</u></b>
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>
1. <a href="#">The problems within the UDAN scheme</a>
<b>INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS</b>
1. <a href="#">Shringla for talks with Myanmar military</a>
<b><u>C. GS 3 Related</u></b>
<b><u>D. GS 4 Related</u></b>
<b><u>E. Editorials</u></b>
<b>POLITY AND GOVERNANCE</b>
1. <a href="#">Changing the iconography of power</a>
<b>ECONOMY</b>
1. <a href="#">How the Code on Wages 'legalises' bonded labour</a>
<b><u>F. Prelims Facts</u></b>
1. <a href="#">'Chillai kalan' puts Kashmir in a deep freeze</a>
2. <a href="#">A chance encounter with rare species</a>
<b><u>G. Tidbits</u></b>
1. <a href="#">Making up for lost school time in Assam</a>
2. <a href="#">HC orders social disability audit of public transport in six weeks</a>
3. <a href="#">House to review Bill on raising marriage age</a>
<b><u>H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions</u></b>
<b><u>I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions</u></b>

#### A. GS 1 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

#### B. GS 2 Related

Category: GOVERNANCE

##### 1. The problems within the UDAN scheme

**Topic: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.**

**Prelims: UDAN scheme - provisions**

**Mains: Initiatives taken to provide impetus to regional connectivity - Significance and challenges**

### **UDAN Scheme:**

- The **Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme** is a low-cost flying scheme launched in April 2017. The scheme aims to make flying affordable to all.
- It is also known as the **regional connectivity scheme (RCS)** as it seeks to improve air connectivity to tier-2 and tier-3 cities through the revival of unused and underused airports.
  - The Government under the RCS has earmarked around ₹4,500 crore for revival of 50 airports in the first three years.
- Airlines are required to offer airfares at the rate of ₹2,500 per hour of flight. At least 50% of the total seats on a flight have to be offered at these rates.
- The **government offers subsidy for a period of three years** to ensure financial viability of the routes.

**Know more about the [UDAN Scheme](#) in the linked article.**

### **Status of the scheme:**

- As against the target set by the Ministry of Civil Aviation of operationalising as many as 100 unserved and underserved airports and starting at least 1,000 RCS routes by 2024, the [Airport Authority of India](#) has awarded 948 routes under UDAN.
  - Out of these only a little over 400 routes have been launched by airlines, hence **most of the routes awarded under UDAN are not active** and some of the routes launched have been **discontinued**.
    - Out of the total 28 seaplane routes connecting 14 water aerodromes, only two have commenced.
  - The initiatives to provide improved connectivity to hilly regions and islands through helicopters and seaplanes have remained unimplemented.
  - The Government offers subsidy for a route for a period of three years and expects the airline to develop the route during this time so that it becomes self-sufficient. But **some airlines have stopped operating the route once the tenure of the subsidy expired**.

### **Factors responsible for the poor performance:**

- Failure to set up airports or heliports due to **lack of availability of land**.

- **Poor financial health of the smaller, regional carriers.**
- So far, only those routes that have been bagged by bigger domestic players such as IndiGo and SpiceJet have seen a better success rate under the UDAN scheme.
- The smaller entities find it hard to compete with the bigger airlines. They find it hard to provide a comparable salary to domestic pilots on par with the bigger airlines. They have problems with availability of pilots and are forced to hire foreign pilots which costs them a lot of money and makes the business unviable.
- This financial stress has impacted the functioning of the airlines - maintenance of aircraft, payment of rentals to aircraft lessors, salaries to the staff, etc. As a result they are having to function with a very small fleet.
- These factors have made it difficult for the airlines to start flights on routes awarded to them or have found it difficult to sustain the routes awarded to them.
- **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**
  - The COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding restrictions and regulations have adversely impacted the sector which has only further strained their financial health.

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. Shringla for talks with Myanmar military

*Topic: India and its Neighborhood Relations*

*Mains: India-Myanmar bilateral relationship - Significance and challenges*

#### Context:

- Indian Foreign Secretary is on a two-day visit to Myanmar and is scheduled to meet General Min Aung Hlaing, who toppled the elected government last February in a military coup.

#### Details:

- The visit is being seen as an **outreach to Myanmar's military-backed regime** after the military coup in Myanmar and a tacit acknowledgement of the coup in Myanmar.
- The visit also underscores the **balancing act** that India is trying to maintain on upholding democratic values in the neighbourhood and also maintaining a working relationship with the military-backed regime in Myanmar.
- While India has expressed strong apprehensions over the developments in Myanmar and the sentencing of former State Councillor and Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to four years imprisonment, it has also avoided moves to antagonize the current regime in Myanmar.

- Recently, India had abstained from endorsing a resolution that sought to prevent arms supplies to the Myanmar military and also appointed a new Ambassador to Myanmar as a sign to show that **India has not “derecognised” the Myanmar government despite the coup.**

### **Reasons behind India’s moves:**

- India is expected to speak to the Tatmadaw (military) about **India’s growing security concerns** over insurgent groups based along the 1,600-km India-Myanmar border which have carried out attacks in recent months. Militants allegedly take refuge across the border after carrying out attacks in India.
- India believes that it is necessary to **engage with the new regime** to strengthen and deepen democracy in Myanmar.
- The visit is also an attempt to **counter China’s influence in Myanmar**, which could grow as the regime gets more isolated.
- The stand being taken by India is in line with [ASEAN](#) policy on Myanmar which has been constant engagement with the military regime while pushing for democracy in the country. Hence this stand will help **align India’s stand with that of ASEAN** and this augurs well for India’s relationship with this critical regional grouping.

Also read: [India - Myanmar Relations](#)

#### C. GS 3 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

#### D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

#### E. Editorials

**Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

### **1. Changing the iconography of power**

*Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

**Mains:** *Structural refurbishment of significant monuments; Arguments in favour and arguments against.*

**Context:** This article talks about the instances of structural refurbishment carried out by the Central government and its implications.

### **What is Nationalism of refurbishment?**

- The central government has taken on the responsibility of rehabilitating all types of historic places, religious or secular, old or modern.
- The systematic transformation of a number of sites and buildings with strong symbolic value in the nation's public life has been done.
- The Parliament House on Raisina Hill, the Vishwanath Mandir in Varanasi, Ahmedabad's Sabarmati Riverfront, and the capital's Central Vista Avenue are a few examples.

### **Arguments in Favour:**

- India must move from crumbling Mughal splendour and British Raj relics to its own 21st-century self-image as a growing Asian Giant.
- The administration wishes to alter the iconography of power.
- The Chinese model is chosen, in which everything is spanking new, massively huge, and technologically sophisticated.
- All around the country, [Special Economic Zones](#), Smart Cities, international airports, multi-lane expressways, and glamorous malls have already sprung.
- Refurbished historic structures are the most recent symbol of New India's politically motivated visual and aesthetic makeover.
- We need a staging of Indian democracy, not just a functional polity, society, or religious group.

### **Arguments Against:**

- Instead of renovating the buildings, India should preserve its ancient, diverse, incoherent, complicated, untidy, inclusive, delicate, and durable elegance.
- This has reduced the people's relationship with the nation to that of passive awe-struck observers of spectacular structures.
- The current regime's penchant for monumentality, spectacle, and grandeur is reminiscent of imperialist and fascist governments across the world.
- The reconstruction of structures is being done for political reasons, but it also jeopardises the cultural core of India's varied community.
- This hindrance represents the religious, sectarian, caste, and occupational identities that have emerged through time in defiance of any state's ham-fisted initiatives.

## Way Forward

- Individuals and societies must tolerate difference, cohabit with others, respect nature, accept the brevity of life, and, most significantly, keep cognizant of the evanescence of power.
- Better urban infrastructure is critically needed in Indian cities, and Indian waterways must be cleaned up.

## Category: ECONOMY

### 1. How the Code on Wages 'legalises' bonded labour

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

*Mains: Labour code in India; Consequences on bonded labour.*

#### Context:

This article examines how the [labour codes](#) in India legalise bonded labour.

#### What is Bonded labour?

- Bonded labour, often known as debt bondage, is perhaps the least known kind of slavery today, while being the most common technique of enslaving individuals.
- When a person's labour is required as payback for a loan, they become a bound labourer.
- The individual is then duped or forced into working for little or no remuneration.

#### Constitutionality of Bonded Labour:

- Bonded labour is illegal in India under [Articles 21](#) and 23 of the Constitution.
- Human trafficking and forced labour are expressly outlawed under Article 23 of the Indian Constitution. Furthermore, Article 21 protects the right to life and the right to personal liberty.
- The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, enacted in 1976, was the first to abolish the practice.
- The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1976 established a legislative framework to combat bonded labour.

#### Supreme Court on bonded Labour:



1. The Supreme Court interpreted Article 23 to declare that "a person who has been forced to work as bonded labour and a person who is working as labour at a rate less than the minimum wage shall be treated similarly" in *Peoples' Union for Democratic Rights vs. Union of India* (1982).
2. The Supreme Court stated in its decision in *Badhua Mukti Morcha vs. Union of India* (1997) that the right to live in dignity, inherent in Article 21, derives its lifeblood from Part IV of the Constitution, which prescribes the [Directive Principles of State Policy](#), particularly Articles 39(e) and (f), 41 and 42.

### What are the Concerns?

- The identification and release of bound labourers is a laborious process, with officials downplaying the scope of forced labour.
- Training and compensation supplied as part of rehabilitation packages were insufficient to fulfil the demands of freed bonded labourers. Furthermore, the State failed to recognise the bonded status of family members.
- Women were refused release certificates and state benefits since labourer-employer contracts had been arranged with the head of the household, the husband.
- This demonstrates the State's inability to implement a systematic and long-term plan to end bonded labour, which begins with identifying bonded labourers and continues until efforts are made to guarantee that those who are released are not re-enslaved.
- Furthermore, governments' hesitation to act aggressively against bonded labour in recent years has been exacerbated by the trend of decreasing labour protection in the face of globalisation.
- As a result, safeguards are reduced, providing unscrupulous employers with additional opportunities to limit and eliminate impoverished workers' freedom through debt, monitoring, and intimidation.
- Because governmental forces have access to money and authority, and civil society groups have grassroots connections and a greater understanding of the gravity of the problem, they must work together to eliminate the threat of bonded labour.
- Despite previously existing legislative safeguards, disadvantaged agricultural, informal sector, and migrant workers were already caught in a vicious cycle of increasing debt and diminishing income, depriving them, their families, and future generations of their most fundamental rights.

### How does the Labour Code legalise bonded labour?

- The Labour Code – the [Code on Wages, 2019](#) — legalises this horrifyingly authoritarian, inhuman practice by permitting companies to provide unrestricted credit extensions to their employees and charge them an undetermined interest rate.
- The government appears to actively support the practice by repealing even the most lax restrictions previously in place under the Minimum Wage Act of 1948. (now subsumed in the Code).

- Rule 21 of the Minimum Earnings (Central) Rules, 1950 specified specific "deductions" from workers' wages.
- The sub-rule (2)(vi) permitted "deductions for recovery of advances or correction of overpayment of wages, provided that such advances do not exceed an amount equivalent to the employed person's earnings for two calendar months."
- Furthermore, it noted that "the monthly instalment of deduction should in no event exceed one-fourth of the salary earned in that month."
- Wage deductions are permitted under the Wage Code for the recovery of "advances of whatever sort, and the interest due in respect thereof, or for correction of overpayment of wages."

### **What are the implications of the Labour Code on bonded labour?**

- It has repealed the former Act's restriction of 'not more than two months' of a worker's earnings that an employer might offer as advance. Employers can now make limitless advances to their employees, increasing their hold.
- It has legalised the charging of an interest rate by the employer on such advances by including an interest clause with no details on what may be charged. The cumulative result is an open invitation for the bonded labour system to thrive.
- Furthermore, the Code raises the permitted monthly deduction for such recovery to one-half of the worker's monthly pay, up from one-fourth under the previous Act.
- The government has intervened by sustaining and growing economic inequality to the benefit of certain castes and classes, thus preventing workers from achieving full political independence.

### **Way Forward:**

In India, bonded labour results from poverty, social marginalisation, and the government's unwillingness to address the practice and its underlying causes.

Economic servitude nullifies political freedom, and democracy itself needs governmental action in the economic system to avoid such practices.

While a full recast of rural and agricultural land arrangements is required, and state ownership of land is critical to this, defined democracy should be founded on the presence of economic rights.

An individual's constitutional rights must not be forfeited as a condition previous to receiving any privilege.

## **F. Prelims Facts**



### 1. 'Chillai kalan' puts Kashmir in a deep freeze

- The **40-day harsh spell of winter**, locally called '**chillai kalan**', has started in the Kashmir valley pushing the minimum temperature to sub-zero levels.

### 2. A chance encounter with rare species

- The rarely found species of **Albino Indian Flapshell turtle** has been spotted in **Sirnapalli forest in Telangana's Nizamabad**.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. Making up for lost school time in Assam

- In a praiseworthy initiative, two Government-run schools in western Assam's Goalpara district have undertaken an initiative to **help bring COVID lockdown-induced school dropouts and slow learners on a par with regular students** under **Mission Sanjog**.
  - The main reason for children dropping out of school is their inability to catch up with the faster learners, who the schools tend to focus attention on.

### 2. HC orders social disability audit of public transport in six weeks

- Noting the **non-availability of requisite and enabling infrastructure for persons with disability** and it being a violation of **Article 21 of the Constitution of India**, the Delhi High Court has called for a social disability audit of the existing public transport infrastructure.
- The court stated that people with disabilities should be given due facilities to make their commuting through public transport less challenging.

### 3. House to review Bill on raising marriage age

- As per the **NFHS-5 data**, **nearly 23% of girls under 18 were married** pointing to the challenge of child marriage in Indian society especially with respect to girls.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to the Indian flapshell turtle (*Lissemys punctata*):**

1. It is only found in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.
2. Its IUCN status is Vulnerable.
3. These turtles are omnivores.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Indian flapshell turtle (*Lissemys punctata*) is a freshwater species of turtle found in South Asia. Apart from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, it is also found in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.
- It is morphologically an evolutionary link between the softshell and hardshell aquatic turtles.
- Exploitation for profit and habitat change are threats to their survival. Its IUCN status is Vulnerable.
- The Indian flapshell turtle is known to be omnivorous. Its diet consists of frogs, shrimp, snails, aquatic vegetation, plant leaves, flowers, fruits, grasses, and seeds.

**Q2. The World Press Freedom Index (WPFI) is an annual ranking of countries compiled and published by**

- a. World Economic Forum (WEF)
- b. Amnesty International
- c. Economist Group
- d. Reporters Without Borders

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- The Press Freedom Index is an annual ranking of countries compiled and published by Reporters Without Borders since 2002 based upon the organisation's own assessment of the countries' press freedom records in the previous year.

**Q3. Which of the following statements about compassionate employment is/are correct?**

1. Compassionate appointment is not a matter of right.
2. Dependent family of missing government employees can be considered for compassionate appointment.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Compassionate Appointment is a social security scheme launched by the Government to grant appointment to a dependent family member on a compassionate basis when a government servant dies while in service or retires on medical grounds.
- The Supreme Court has held in an order that compassionate employment is not a vested right, but is to enable the family to tide over an immediate crisis that may result from the death of the employee.

**Q4. Which of the following are the functions of the Enforcement Directorate (ED)?**

1. Investigating violations of Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) laws and provisions.
2. Investigating offences of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) laws and provisions.
3. Processing cases of fugitive/s from India under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.
4. ED is India's officially designated single point of contact for liaison with Interpol.

**Options:**

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

- d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- CBI is India's officially designated single point of contact for liaison with the Interpol.

**Q5. What is the application of Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer Technology? (UPSC 2017)**

- a. Production of biolarvicides
- b. Manufacture of biodegradable plastics
- c. Reproductive cloning of animals
- d. Production of organisms free of diseases

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- In genetics and developmental biology, somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) is a laboratory strategy for creating a viable embryo from a body cell and an egg cell. The technique consists of taking an enucleated oocyte (egg cell) and implanting a donor nucleus from a somatic (body) cell.
- It is used in the reproductive cloning of animals.

### I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the main features of the UDAN scheme. What are the challenges faced by the Government in connecting tier-2 & tier-3 cities with the metros? (250 words; 15 marks)(GS Paper 3/Economy)
2. What safeguards are provided to the states included in the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution? Would Ladakh's inclusion in this schedule help the region in preserving its unique culture and heritage? (250 words; 15 marks)(GS Paper 2/Polity)