

## 31 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>
<a href="#">1. Foreign funds and the Missionaries of Charity</a>
<b>INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS</b>
<a href="#">1. Prime Minister puts off UAE visit</a>
<b><u>C. GS 3 Related</u></b>
<b><u>D. GS 4 Related</u></b>
<b><u>E. Editorials</u></b>
<b>HEALTH</b>
<a href="#">1. In NFHS report card, the good, the sober, the future</a>
<a href="#">2. Should vaccination be made mandatory?</a>
<b><u>F. Prelims Facts</u></b>
<a href="#">1. New scheme to support the marginalised</a>
<a href="#">2. Sahitya Akademi announces awards in 20 languages</a>
<b><u>G. Tidbits</u></b>
<a href="#">1. 'India-Australia interim FTA talks to close soon'</a>
<a href="#">2. 'NTPC Renewable Energy to float tender for 3 GW by Feb.'</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. Foreign funds and the Missionaries of Charity

*Syllabus: Development processes and the development industry — the role of NGOs*

*Prelims: Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act and its provisions*

*Mains: Evaluation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act and its impact on the NGO ecosystem.*

**Context:**

- The **rejection of the application for renewal of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act registration of Missionaries of Charity** by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on grounds of not meeting eligibility conditions and the presence of adverse inputs on its functioning has brought to light the issue of regulation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) under the FCRA.

**Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act:**

**Ambit:**

- The [Foreign Contribution \(Regulation\) Act, 2010](#) regulates foreign donations to individuals, associations, groups and NGOs.
  - As per available data, there are 22,762 FCRA-registered NGOs currently in India.
- As per the law, even members of the legislature, political parties, government officials, judges, media persons are prohibited from receiving any foreign contribution. However, in 2017, an amendment to the law now **allows political parties to receive funds** from the Indian subsidiary of a foreign company or a foreign company where an Indian holds 50% or more shares.

**Purpose:**

- The Act seeks to **regulate foreign contributions that could pose a danger to national interest or internal security** by curbing foreign contributions motivated by political or religious objectives.
  - In 2017, the MHA suspended the FCRA of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) on grounds of using 'foreign funds' to lobby with parliamentarians on tobacco control activities.
  - There have been Intelligence Bureau inputs showing the utilization of incoming foreign funds for activities that destabilize national peace and security. There were reports of such contributions being used to train and equip naxals.
- The Act aims at keeping a **check on foreigners influencing the Indian electoral politics, journalists, public servants, etc.**

**Regulations:**

- It is mandatory for all such NGOs receiving foreign funding to **register under the FCRA**. This registration is initially valid for five years and needs to be renewed subsequently.
- Registered associations can receive foreign contributions for stated social, educational, religious, economic and cultural purposes only.
- **Filing of annual returns** on the financial aspects is compulsory.
- Under the new rules notified in 2015, NGOs are required to give an **undertaking** that the acceptance of foreign funds is not likely to prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India or impact friendly relations with any foreign state and does not disrupt communal harmony.
- As per the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (Amendment), Act, 2020:**
  - **Aadhaar registration** is made mandatory for people or organizations to receive foreign funds.
  - The foreign contribution must be accepted only through an **FCRA account in the State Bank of India, New Delhi branch**.
  - Only 20% of the foreign funds can be used for administrative purposes as against the earlier limit of 50%.
  - It prohibits persons authorized under FCRA from transferring the received foreign contributions to any person/organization.

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

[CNA dated Sep 21, 2020](#)

#### **Powers under the Act:**

- The Act empowers the Ministry of Home Affairs to **suspend the licence** of any entity not following the regulations set forth under the FCRA.
- The MHA on inspection of accounts and upon receiving any adverse input against the functioning of an association can suspend the FCRA registration initially for a period of 180 days.
- When the FCRA registration is suspended, the association cannot receive any fresh donation and cannot utilise more than 25% of the amount in the bank account without prior permission from the MHA.
- The MHA can also **cancel the registration of an organisation** which will not be eligible for registration or grant of 'prior permission' for three years from the date of cancellation.

#### **Concerns:**

**Large number of cancellation of registrations:**

- Since 2011 **the registrations of 20,664 associations have been cancelled** for violations such as misuse of foreign contribution, non-submission of mandatory annual returns and for diverting foreign funds for other purposes.
- This includes prominent ones like Amnesty International, Greenpeace India, People's Watch, European Climate Foundation, Compassion International and the Gates Foundation-backed Public Health Foundation of India, that work in sensitive areas like pollution and climate change issues, human rights, child labour and human slavery and health.

#### **Ambiguous terms:**

- The Act mandates that registered NGOs have to prove the source of funding and their utilization is appropriate and is not a threat to the **“public interest” or “national security”**. Given that these terms are not clearly defined in the Act, there is the possibility of misuse of this.

#### **Delay in the processing of applications:**

- **Thousands of applications of NGOs are yet to be scrutinized and renewed**, as the deadline of 31st December to renew the registration of NGOs under the FCRA is reached.
  - Only about 5000 applications have been processed so far out of the 22000 odd applications registered with FCRA.
- This could lead to a scenario where such NGOs may lose their eligibility to accept funds from abroad.

#### **Effect on the NGO ecosystem:**

- The stringent provisions under the Act have resulted in an **estimated 30% drop in international non-profit contributions**.
- This could impact the functioning of NGOs which will only hurt the poorest and most vulnerable recipients of philanthropic efforts, particularly those by NGOs working in areas where government aid fails to reach.

#### **Recommendations:**

- While the need to regulate foreign funding and to ensure transparency and accountability in the receipt and utilisation of foreign contribution is non-negotiable, the **regulations should not stifle the functioning of genuine non-governmental organizations or associations**, who are working for the welfare of society.
  - Ever since independence, NGOs have played a crucial role in helping the needy in India, providing aid to the distressed and elevating the socio-economic status of millions in the country. Utilising funds raised through donations, NGOs in India work for a wide range of causes.

- NGOs have acted as a **bridge between the government and the common people**. They have reached out to the marginalised communities and far off areas in India in multiple ways. Even during the ongoing [COVID-19](#) pandemic, the relief work done by the NGOs is laudable.
- The Government must give a **more transparent account of its actions against NGOs**.

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. Prime Minister puts off UAE visit

*Syllabus: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*

*Mains: India-UAE trade agreement - Significance*

#### Context:

- Indian Prime Minister's visit to UAE has been postponed due to the sudden spike in [Omicron](#) cases. This would delay the inking of the **proposed India-UAE limited free trade agreement**.

#### Free trade agreement negotiations between India and UAE:

- The highlight of the Prime Minister's UAE visit was to have been the signing of a partial FTA after formal talks were launched in September 2021.
- As per available sources, a **limited or "early harvest agreement"** allowing for trade in goods between the two sides has been finalised currently. This does not include investments and services trade.
- The two countries would continue to **negotiate a larger Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** including investment protection measures as well as special facilities for Indian labour and expatriates. This is expected to be finalized by March 2022.
- Civil aviation officials have also been working separately on an **updated Bilateral Air Services Agreement** that would allow more flights from more airports between India and the UAE.

#### Significance of the agreement:

- India and UAE are important trading partners. **The UAE is India's third-largest trading partner after the United States and China**. The free trade agreement would help further streamline the trade of goods which is bound to bring economic advantages to both countries.

- The negotiations also aim to **add services and investment measures** in the further talks. This is bound to help India which could gain by services exports to the UAE and could also benefit from the sustained flow of investment from UAE into the Indian economy.
- The special **facilities for Indian labour and expatriates** to be included in the framework will help the large Indian diaspora in the UAE.
  - According to 2020 data tabled by the Ministry of External Affairs, almost 13.6 million Indians live outside of India. The largest portion of this number, **3,41,000 resides in the United Arab Emirates.**
- Also if a CEPA is signed between India and the UAE, it would mark the first Indian FTA in the region. This could provide an **impetus for future such bilateral FTAs** with other countries in the region. **India shares strong economic complementarities with many countries in the region** given India's large appetite for fossil fuels and its services prowess. The CEPA would also provide an impetus to the bilateral trade deals that the current government is negotiating at present with Australia, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada, and Israel.
- The CEPA between India and UAE will also provide the two countries with an opportunity to **co-operate and collaborate with respect to the quadrilateral economic cooperation along with U.S. and Israel.**
- A robust economic relationship between the two countries based on a mutually beneficial CEPA will only help **strengthen the strategic, security relationship** between the two countries.

### C. GS 3 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### E. Editorials

**Category: HEALTH**

#### **1. In NFHS report card, the good, the sober, the future**

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

*Mains: NFHS data and its importance in the functioning of government agencies.*



**Context:**

The recently released fifth edition of the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** has positive news against the COVID-19 pandemic.

**National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5**

The NFHS-5 presents a top view of the condition of the nation's health and related development indicators.

To know more, check the link:- [National Family Health Survey](#)

**Highlights of National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5****Positive Indicators:**

The state of the nation's health looks promising on various fronts like:

- Stabilizing population growth
  - The **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** i.e. the average number of children born per woman has declined to 2.0 from 2.2.
  - A total of 31 States and Union Territories have achieved fertility rates below the replacement level of 2.1.
- Improved family planning services
  - The main reasons for the decline in fertility are:
    - An increase in usage of modern family planning methods (56.5% in 2019-21 compared to 47.8% in 2015-16).
    - Further, 62% of current users have received information about the side effects of contraceptives.
    - Significant improvements in female literacy, with 41% of women having undergone 10 or more years of schooling (compared to 36% in 2015-16). Fertility decline has taken place alongside notable improvements in access to quality education, especially girls' education.
- Better delivery of health systems
  - Maternal health services are showing steady progress.
  - Institutional births were accessed by 88.6% of women in 2019-21 compared to 78.4% in 2015-16.

- Almost 10% increase in institutional deliveries in public health facilities.
- The practice of child marriage has shown a decline (from 26.8% in 2015-16 to 23.3% in 2019-21).
- The proportion of women who have their bank accounts has reached a record 78.6%.
- About 50% of the women use mobile phones and about one in three women use the internet.

### Concerns Highlighted:

It also highlights the need for further improvement to address various issues like,

- Gender-based violence.
- Harmful practices against women and girls, like child marriage and gender-biased sex selection.

### Conclusion

While it is heartening to see significant improvements in the fields such as female literacy, it is important to invest in fields such as mobile technology, banking, education, and women's economic empowerment and device targeted strategies or policies based on the specific indicators that are currently lagging. This would help India achieve its development goals as well as the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) 2030 Agenda](#).

## 2. Should vaccination be made mandatory?

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

**Mains:** *Assessment of India's overall vaccination performance.*

### Context:

Challenges in vaccination drive against COVID-19, including vaccine hesitancy and shortage in supplies.

### Background:

A total of 142 crore doses have been administered in India till date. The vaccination drive was taken up in a phased manner, starting with the healthcare workers, frontline workers, then for people aged 60 years and above, then for people aged 45-plus with co-morbidities, and finally, for persons above 18 years.



Various challenges have been encountered during this phase.

## **Challenges in the Vaccination Drive**

### **Vaccine supplies and logistics issue**

The last mile reach of vaccines is one of the major challenges. The first dose of vaccination is not yet complete for all the eligible persons, while many countries are moving towards booster doses.

### **Issue of vaccine hesitancy**

It is a major challenge in universal vaccination currently.

Reasons:

- Anti-vaxxers are actively spreading rumours, pseudoscience, and unscientific information against vaccination.
- The spread of pseudo-information like vaccination leads to infertility and vaccines can alter the DNA in the body.
- It is also a result of a trust deficit in the scientific community and the government.

### **Way forward**

- Health care workers travelling to inaccessible areas and remote places are a welcome sign in ensuring the last mile reach and that no one is left behind.
- Further, the accessibility and availability of vaccine doses can be increased by fastening the production and licensing of newer vaccines.
- To counter vaccine hesitancy, large-scale innovative and creative awareness campaigns have to be undertaken to educate the public about the efficiency of vaccines.
- Legislations making vaccination mandatory for entry into public places and workplaces are in the right direction.
- Door-to-door campaigns with local groups, Panchayat leaders, ward members, and women from [self-help groups](#) should be undertaken.

### **Conclusion**

The problem of the availability of vaccines in low-economic countries is a major one and will create new strains or variants in the future. This is why the [World Health Organization](#) has stated that instead of giving booster shots to all, we must provide two doses of vaccines to all the eligible people across the world. Developed countries have a big role to play.

India being called the “Pharmacy of the world”, has a major role to play in increasing vaccine production and supplying it to poor countries to end the pandemic. Also, domestically the government should provide incentives for people who get vaccinated and focus on educating people by involving doctors, community influencers such as religious leaders, political leaders, panchayat leaders and other influential groups, frontline and healthcare workers to promote vaccines and achieve 100% immunization.

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. New scheme to support the marginalised

- An umbrella scheme, **SMILE (Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise)**, including two sub-schemes for the welfare of **transgender persons and persons engaged in begging** is to be launched soon by the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry.
- The scheme will cover rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, **education, skill development and economic linkages**.

### 2. Sahitya Akademi announces awards in 20 languages

#### Sahitya Akademi Award:

- The Sahitya Akademi Award is a **literary honour** in India given out by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters.
- The award is annually conferred on writers of the most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the **24 major Indian languages** including the **22 listed languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, English and Rajasthani**.

#### Context:

- The Sahitya Akademi has announced its awards for 2021.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. ‘India-Australia interim FTA talks to close soon’

- India and Australia are expected to soon complete negotiations for an interim free trade agreement (FTA). The pact would cover areas such as goods, services, investment, rules of origin, customs facilitation, legal and institutional issues.
- The final **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)** is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.
- The economic agreement would help **increase bilateral trade in goods to \$100 billion within five years and increase trade in services to \$15 billion**. Thus the agreement will help boost the economic ties between the two countries.

## 2. 'NTPC Renewable Energy to float tender for 3 GW by Feb.'

- India has a target of having **175 GW of renewable energy by 2022**, including 100 GW of solar and 60 GW of wind energy.
- According to a Central Electricity Authority report, as of the end of November 2021, **India's renewable energy capacity — excluding large hydro plants — is 104 GW**, including 49 GW solar and 40 GW of wind energy.

### H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Considered as the second-largest religious congregation in India after the Kumbh mela, the Ganga Sagar mela is hosted by which of the following states in India?**

- a. Bihar
- b. Uttar Pradesh
- c. West Bengal
- d. Uttarakhand

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- The Ganga Sagar Mela is a religious festival and the second-biggest fair of India after Kumbha Mela, celebrated on the Ganga Sagar Island, at the mouth of the river Hooghly in West Bengal.
- It is held in the month of January-February. It is attended by thousands of pilgrims every year. A dip in the water at this place, during Gangasagar Mela, is considered to be sacred.

**Q2. Consider the following statements with regards to the Indian Pangolins:**

1. Indian Pangolin is widely distributed in India, except in the arid region, high Himalayas and the North-East.
2. The Indian Pangolins are listed under Schedule I, Part I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
3. Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) is the only conservation breeding centre for Indian pangolins in the world.

**Choose the correct code:**

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- The Indian Pangolin is widely distributed in India, except in the arid region, high Himalayas and the North-East. It can be found at elevations up to 2500 m. The species also occurs in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- Pangolins are listed in Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, implying the highest degree of protection.
- Nandankanan Zoological Park is the only conservation breeding centre of Indian Pangolins in the world.

**Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to India-UAE negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):**

1. The UAE is currently India's third-largest trading partner after the US and China.
2. The UAE is also India's second-largest export destination after the US.
3. India has signed CEPAs with South Korea and Japan.

**Choose the correct code:**

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- India and UAE share a robust trade relationship.
- UAE is India's third-largest trading partner for the year 2019-20 after China and US.
- UAE is the second-largest export destination of India (after the US) with an amount of nearly US\$ 29 billion for the year 2019-20.
- India is currently negotiating a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with UAE.
- Notably, India has a working CEPA with ASEAN, Japan and South Korea.

**Q4. Which of the following statements is not correct with regards to the GST compensation to be given to the states?**

1. Under the GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017, states are guaranteed compensation for loss of revenue on account of implementation of GST for a transition period of five years between 2017 and 2022.
2. The compensation is calculated based on the difference between the states' current GST revenue and the protected revenue after estimating an annualised 10% growth rate from the base year of 2015-16.
3. The amount would be paid every two months based on provisional accounts, and adjusted every year after the State's accounts were audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: c****Explanation:**

- Under the GST law, states are compensated for any loss of revenue arising on account of the implementation of GST for five years till June 2022.
- The compensation is calculated based on the difference between the states' current GST revenue and the protected revenue after estimating an annualised 14% growth rate from the base year of 2015-16.
- The amount would be paid every two months based on provisional accounts, and adjusted every year after the State's accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

**Q5. Consider the following statements with regards to Bamboo in India:**

1. The restructured National Bamboo Mission was launched in 2018-19 for the holistic development of the complete value chain of the bamboo sector and is being implemented in a hub (industry) and spoke model.
2. The Indian Forest Act 1927 was amended in 2017 to include bamboo for the category of trees.
3. The bamboo's calorific value is equal to that of coal.

**Choose the correct code:**

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 was promulgated on November 23, 2017. It amends the Indian Forest Act, 1927. Under the Act, the definition of tree includes palms, bamboos, stumps, brush-wood and canes. The Ordinance amends this definition to remove the word bamboos.

**Q6. In India, 'extended producer responsibility' was introduced as an important feature in which of the following? (UPSC-2019)**

- a. The Bio-medical Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 1998
- b. The Recycled Plastic (Manufacturing and Usage) Rules, 1999
- c. The e-Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011
- d. The Food Safety and Standard Regulations, 2011

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy approach under which producers are given a significant responsibility – financial and/or physical – for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products.



- It is a commitment on the producer to facilitate a reverse collection mechanism and recycling of end of life, post-consumer waste. The objective is to circle it back into the system to recover resources embedded in the waste.
- In the last few years, India has framed laws that have introduced the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility for plastic packaging waste and e-waste.
- The e-waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011 introduced 'extended producer responsibility'.

### I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. How does the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act regulate donations? Critically examine the issues related to foreign donations received by NGOs. (250 words; 15 marks)(GS Paper 2/Governance)
2. The recently released 5th edition of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) has encouraging news but addressing discriminatory social norms must remain our top priority. Critically evaluate. (250 words; 15 marks)(GS Paper 2/Governance)