

19 Jan 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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C. GS 2 Related

Category: International Relations

1. The Houthi attack on the United Arab Emirates

Prelims: Houthis

Mains: Impact of the developments in Yemen on the regional stability

Context:

- The Houthi rebels of Yemen have claimed responsibility for a suspected **drone attack in Abu Dhabi**, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which caused multiple explosions.

Who are the Houthis?

- The Houthi movement is basically a **Zaydi revivalist group** founded by Hussein al-Houthi and his father, Badr al-Din al-Houthi, in the early 1990s.
- The **Zaydis make up roughly one-third of the Sunni majority of Yemen's population**. For centuries the Zaydis have been a powerful sect within Yemen and had even established the Mutawakkilite Kingdom in Yemen after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.
- While the Zaydis are **seen as part of the Shia branch of Islam**, in terms of theology and practice, they are different from the Shias of Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon.

The rise of the Houthis:

- The Houthi movement turned political and started attacking the regime of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his support for the U.S.'s war on terror. They started mobilizing tribesmen in the north against the Government.
- The **Houthis backed the anti-government protests that began in Yemen in 2011 in the backdrop of the Arab Spring protests** that spread rapidly in the region. The then President Saleh resigned and handed over power to Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, a Saudi-backed Sunni.
- Yemen, under the guidance of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, started a national dialogue to resolve internal differences. The Houthis too were part of the dialogue. The talks failed and the Houthis got back to the insurgency.
- Since then the Houthis made **military progress** against the Yemeni government. The Houthis have been **controlling the northern parts of the country, including the capital Sana'a**, for almost seven years.

Involvement of the regional powers:**Saudi Arabia:**

- The rapid rise of the Houthis in Yemen set off alarm bells in Saudi Arabia which saw the Houthis as Iranian proxies and **a threat to their regional hegemony in the Arabian peninsular region**. **Saudi Arabia started a military campaign** in March 2015 against the Houthis.
- In the recent past, the Houthis have launched multiple attacks on Saudi cities from northern Yemen in retaliation for Saudi airstrikes on Houthi strongholds. In 2019, the Houthis claimed an attack on two important Saudi oil installations.

United Arab Emirates:

- The United Arab Emirates has backed some factions in Yemen. While the UAE has pulled out its troops from Yemen after a Houthi attack it had continued to offer **tactical support to the Southern Transitional Council**, a group of rebels based in Aden, that has been fighting the Saudi-backed Government forces of President Hadi.
- Recently, **Giants Brigades**, a militia group largely made up of Southern Yemenis (backed by the UAE) and the Joint Forces (the militia led by a nephew of the slain former President Saleh) have attacked the Houthis. They have been able to inflict major damages on the Houthis.

- The recent drone attack in UAE seems to be a message from the Houthis to UAE to stay out of the developments in Yemen.

D. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Escalation of the 'forgotten war' in Yemen

Syllabus: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

Mains: – Houthis-UAE Conflict and geopolitical concerns associated with it.

Context: –

This article discusses the Houthis-UAE Conflict and geopolitical concerns associated with it.

What is the Houthis-UAE Conflict?

- The Houthis hijacked a UAE-flagged ship, Rwabee, in the Red Sea, alleging that it was carrying military cargo.
- The Saudis retaliated with a massive bombardment of Sanaa airport and then diverted a ship carrying fuel to Yemen to its own port.
- The Houthis have refused to release the vessel despite a United Nations Security Council resolution.
- They have criticized the United Nations for siding with "murderers who violate international laws".
- The Houthis are just 20 km from the provincial capital, but now face freshly deployed crack troops mobilized by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – the '**Giants Brigade**' that is rapidly moving north after taking Shabwa province.
 - The Giants Brigades is a militia that fights for the Yemeni government.



Why would the Houthis target the UAE?

- The UAE was part of the Saudi-led coalition that intervened in Yemen in 2015 to reinstate the internationally recognized government ousted by the Houthis in late 2014.
- The Gulf country announced that it has reduced its military involvement in Yemen but analysts have pointed out it retains significant influence through backing Yemeni fighters.
- The fighting has intensified as the Saudi-led coalition launched a “large-scale” attack on Yemen’s Sanaa.
- Houthi warned Saudi Arabia of a “painful” response if the coalition did not stop its “aggression”.

What are the Geopolitical Competitions?

- The UAE and Saudi Arabia are now engaged in a major territorial re-ordering of Yemen.
- The former is seeking unchallenged influence over the strategically valuable Bab el-Mandeb strait which links Asia with Africa and, through the Suez Canal, with Europe.
- The UAE has now taken control of littoral ports and islands on both sides of the Red Sea beside Aden and Mocha in Yemen.
- The UAE is also partnering with Israel in this area to neutralize any effort by Iran to intervene in these waters through its Houthi allies.
- The Saudi interest is to construct an oil pipeline from its Eastern Province to Nishtun port on the Arabian Sea, thus bypassing the Strait of Hormuz where Iran has a dominant presence.
- Houthis have also condemned UAE efforts to control the shipping lanes in the Red and Arabian Seas to serve U.S. and British interests, and have threatened further attacks on Abu Dhabi.

Conclusion: –

The UAE may find the de facto partition of Yemen acceptable as it would retain its control over the southern ports and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and manage the south. With limited interest in the conflict in the international community, this will remain a “forgotten war”.

E. Editorials

Category: International Institution

2. Preventing genocide

Syllabus: *International Institution.*

Mains: – *Critical Evaluation of Genocide Obligation in India.*

Context: – This article examines the criticality of laws to prevent genocide in the light of recent events of hate speech.

What is a Genocide?

- The word “genocide” was first coined by Polish lawyer Raphaël Lemkin in 1944 in his book Axis Rule in Occupied Europe.
- Genocide is an internationally recognized crime where acts are committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.

What is the Genocide Convention?

- In 1946, Cuba, India, and Panama co-sponsored General Assembly Resolution 96(I), which affirmed genocide as a ‘crime under international law’.
- As a result of this resolution, a convention on the prohibition of genocide was passed by the General Assembly in 1948 and came into effect in 1951.

Objectives of the Convention: –

- Prevention of genocide as well as the punishment of the crime.
- Legal obligations on states that are party to the convention include the obligation not to commit genocide,
 - to prevent genocide, and to punish genocide (Article I),
 - to enact legislation to give effect to the provisions of the convention (Article V);
 - to provide for effective penalties for those found guilty of criminal conduct (Article V);
 - Obligation to try those charged with genocide in a competent tribunal (Article VI).

India and its Obligation under the 1948 Genocide Convention

- Genocide has not been defined by any law in India, even though India ratified the Convention.
- India has a Constitutional Obligation under Article 51 to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations and therefore Article 253 makes it mandatory for Parliament to enact any law pertaining to implementing any treaty, agreement, or convention.

Genocide Convention and Concerns of Indian Obligation

- India is in violation of its international obligation to criminalize genocide within its domestic law per Articles V, VI, and VII, and to take all means to ensure the prevention of genocide.
- An examination of Indian domestic law shows that there are no comparable provisions for the prosecution of any mass crimes, least of all genocide.
- Indian Penal Code provisions relating to rioting do not embody the basic elements of the crime of genocide with the specific intent to cause its destruction.

- These also do not pertain to another key aspect of the Genocide Convention of prevention and creating the conditions in which such hate speech.
- Other associated acts of the convention are not allowed to flourish, which may facilitate the commission of genocide.

What is Recent International Legal Development?

- It is also worth noting a significant and recent international legal development relating to the Genocide Convention.
- The Gambia has initiated proceedings before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Myanmar on the basis of the Convention.
- The ICJ previously addressed the question of violation of the Genocide Convention in the Case Concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
- In its final judgment in 2007, the court found a failure to prevent genocide by Serbia.
- The breaches of the Genocide Convention related to the obligations to prevent and the lack of cooperation, but not for the commission of genocide.

Conclusion: –

In the overall analysis, it is more imperative than ever that international legal protections against genocide are incorporated in domestic legislation. Preventing genocide remains a challenge that nations, institutions, and individuals continue to face.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Rising sea levels prompt Indonesia to relocate the capital

- Indonesia's parliament has passed a law approving the **relocation of its capital from Jakarta** to a site on the Indonesian part of Borneo island.
- The new capital will be called "**Nusantara**".
- The city of Jakarta was slowly sinking due to **rising sea levels**. Also, the city had witnessed severe congestion due to the dense population. Jakarta has long been plagued by serious infrastructure problems and **flooding exacerbated by climate change**.

G. Tidbits

1. 'Cyberattacks surge as COVID spurs digital push'

- The **World Economic Forum's 'Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2022'** notes that the accelerating pace of digitalization, fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a record-breaking year for **cybercrime** with **ransomware attacks rising 151% in 2021**, and an average of 270 cyberattacks per organization being faced.
- These cyber-attacks are having a marked influence on the financial functioning of the company.

2. The controversy over the proposed steel plant in Odisha

- The JSW Group's plan to establish a mega steel project near the port town of Paradip, Odisha is being opposed by the locals who fear that the land acquisition process would **undermine their livelihood sources** as well as **contribute to pollution levels in the region**.

- This same area of land was earlier signed off to POSCO India Limited for setting up a steel plant. The project had to be shelved due to local protests.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with regards to the Beating Retreat Ceremony and choose the ones which are incorrect:

1. It is unique to India and is not seen in other nations.
2. This Beating Retreat Ceremony is conducted on January 28 every year, the second day after Republic Day.
3. The venue of the Beating Retreating Ceremony is Raisina Hills.

Choose the correct code:

1. 1 & 2 only
2. 2 & 3 only
3. 1 & 3 only
4. All of the above

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Beating Retreat is a military ceremony dating to 17th-century England and was first used to recall nearby patrolling units to their castle. It is not unique to India and is widely practiced in other countries as well to mark important occasions.
- The Beating Retreat ceremony, held on January 29 each year, marks the culmination of the four-day-long Republic Day celebrations.

Q2. Which of the following nations recently relocated its capital due to the rising sea levels?

1. Maldives
2. Indonesia
3. Mauritius
4. Philippines

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Indonesia's parliament has passed a law approving the relocation of its capital from Jakarta to a site on the Indonesian part of Borneo island.
- The new capital will be called "Nusantara".
- The city of Jakarta was slowly sinking due to rising sea levels. Also, the city had witnessed severe congestion due to the dense population. Jakarta has long been plagued by serious infrastructure problems and flooding exacerbated by climate change.

Q3. The famous 'Silent Valley' environmental movement was associated with which of the following states?

1. Maharashtra
2. Tamil Nadu
3. Sikkim
4. Kerala

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Save Silent Valley was a social movement aimed at the protection of Silent Valley, an evergreen sub-tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala, India. It was started in 1973 by an NGO led by Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) to save the Silent Valley from being flooded by a proposed hydroelectric project.

Q4. 'Mikir Hills' form a part of the border dispute between which of the following states?

1. Assam – Meghalaya
2. Assam – Mizoram
3. Assam – Nagaland
4. Assam – Arunachal Pradesh

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- 'Mikir Hills' form a part of the border dispute between Assam and Meghalaya.
- Assam and Meghalaya share an 885-km-long border. As of now, there are 12 points of dispute along their borders.
- A major point of contention between Assam and Meghalaya is the district of Langpih in West Garo Hills bordering the Kamrup district of Assam. Langpih was part of the Kamrup district during the British colonial period but post-Independence, it became part of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya. Assam considers it to be part of the Mikir Hills in Assam. Meghalaya has questioned Blocks I and II of the Mikir Hills -now Karbi Anglong region – being part of Assam. Meghalaya says these were parts of erstwhile United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts.

Q5. In the context of which of the following do some scientists suggest the use of cirrus cloud thinning technique and the injection of sulphate aerosol into the stratosphere? (UPSC-2019)

1. Creating artificial rains in some regions
2. Reducing the frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones
3. Reducing the adverse effects of solar wind on the Earth
4. Reducing the global warming

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Thinning cirrus clouds would be achieved by injecting ice nuclei (such as dust) into regions where cirrus clouds form, making the ice crystals bigger and reducing the cirrus optical depth. Thinning the clouds could allow more heat to escape into space and thereby cool the planet.
- Stratospheric sulfate aerosol injection has been proposed to counter anthropogenic greenhouse gas warming. Stratospheric sulfate aerosol injection increases the reflectivity of the lower stratosphere helps reflect inbound sunlight back into space and thus helps keep the planet cool.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Throw light on the significance of maintaining a cordial relationship with the Middle East nations for India's economic development. (250 words; 15 marks)(GS Paper 2/International Relations)
2. What are some of the issues faced by schools in villages and small towns of India? Suggest ways to overcome such issues. (250 words; 15 marks)(GS Paper 2/Social Justice).

