

## 10 Feb 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

## 1. Quad Ministers set to meet in Australia

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

*Prelims: Quad*

*Mains: Initiatives taken up by Quad grouping; Significance of the grouping for India*

### Context:

- The Indian External Affairs Minister will be visiting Australia to attend a **meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Quad**.

### Quad:

- The Quad, officially the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue**, is a group of four countries: the United States, Australia, India, and Japan.
- It is a **strategic security dialogue** between like-minded member countries, who share **common interests, principles, and values**.
  - It supports the **rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight**, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity through open dialogue and information sharing.
  - **Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region** remains a top priority for the Quad grouping. The member countries share the vision of a **free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region**.

### Agenda of the upcoming meeting:

- The participating ministers are expected to review ongoing Quad cooperation and announce new measures to ensure increased **cooperation and collaboration to address contemporary challenges such as the COVID pandemic, supply chain vulnerability, climate change, etc.**
- The meeting is expected to discuss **cooperation on vaccines, technology and regional security issues of the Indo-Pacific**.
- On the regional security issue, the Quad is likely to **discuss the challenges that China poses to a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific**. China has been displaying increasing assertiveness while dealing with other countries in the region and resorting to coercive measures to have its way.
- The Quad Foreign Ministers' meet is expected to lay the groundwork for the upcoming Quad leaders' summit.

### Initiatives undertaken under the Quad framework:

- During the Washington Leaders' Summit of September 2021, an ambitious agenda was laid down for the grouping, from cooperating on vaccines to regional infrastructure and critical technologies such as 5G.
  - Member countries have pledged to **donate more than 1.2 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses globally**. They also aim to produce at least 1 billion doses by the end of 2022 to meet the global supply-demand gap for vaccines.
  - The four countries have set up a **new critical and emerging technologies group** focusing on 5G, technical standards and technology supply chains. A joint initiative to identify existing vulnerabilities in the supply chains and bolster supply-chain security for semiconductors is also under consideration by the Quad member countries.

## Nut Graf

*The Quad grouping with its focus on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region amid the increasing assertiveness of China offers India a viable alternative to counterbalance China in the region. The increasing depth of cooperation between the member countries in addressing the contemporary challenges of the COVID pandemic, supply chain vulnerability and climate change adds to the significance of the grouping.*

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

#### 1. Scientists set new record in fusion energy

*Syllabus: Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life*

*Prelims: Tokamak; ITER*

*Mains: Significance of Nuclear Fusion Energy*

#### Context:

- Scientists at the **Joint European Torus (JET) facility** near Oxford in England have achieved a new milestone in producing nuclear fusion energy.
  - The team **generated 59 megajoules of sustained energy during an experiment**, more than doubling the previous record.
  - The energy was produced in a machine called a tokamak.

#### Nuclear Fusion Energy:

- Fusion power is a form of power generation that would generate electricity by using heat from nuclear fusion reactions. In a fusion process, **two lighter atomic nuclei combine to form a heavier nucleus, while releasing energy**.
  - Ongoing studies on nuclear energy involve **using hydrogen as the fuel** for nuclear fusion. Deuterium and tritium, which are isotopes of hydrogen, are heated to high temperatures to create plasma. Plasma is confined to a place using superconducting electromagnets. Consequently, they fuse and release a tremendous amount of heat energy.

#### Tokamak:

- A tokamak is a machine that **confines a plasma using magnetic fields** in a donut shape that scientists call a **torus**.
- The tokamak is one of several types of **magnetic confinement devices** being developed to produce controlled thermonuclear fusion power. As of 2021, it is the leading candidate for a practical fusion reactor.
- In a tokamak, magnetic field coils confine plasma particles to allow the plasma to achieve the conditions necessary for fusion.

#### Significance of Nuclear Fusion:

- Large source of power:** A kilogram of fusion fuel contains about 10 million times as much energy as a kilogram of coal, oil or gas.
- Low carbon:** Given that it is not based on fossil fuels, the carbon emissions will be much lower.

- **Safety:** Nuclear fusion is much safer as compared to nuclear fission reactors.

#### **Significance of the new finding:**

- The breakthrough achieved at the JET facility will be a major boost for ITER.
  - The **ITER** is a **fusion research mega-project** supported by seven members — China, the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the U.S. — and based in the south of France. It seeks to further demonstrate the **scientific and technological feasibility of fusion energy**.

#### **Nut Graf**

*The current breakthrough is a significant step forward towards mainstreaming the use of nuclear fusion energy and realizing the potential of virtually unlimited supplies of low-carbon, low-radiation energy.*

### **D. GS 4 Related**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### **E. Editorials**

#### **Category: ECONOMY**

##### **1. It's time to take a relook at privatisation**

*Syllabus: Indian Economy and issues; Mobilization of resources.*

*Mains: Critical analysis of privatisation policy as a solution to India's economic crisis.*

#### **Background**

- India's fiscal deficit for FY22 is said to be **6.8%** of the GDP or **₹15.06 lakh crore**. It accounts for about **12.7%** of the GDP if debts of the States are included.
- Privatisation is being put forward as an option to generate sufficient revenues for the government to close down the **fiscal deficit**. Also in the recent past, there has been a broad consensus that privatisation is the solution for the revival of the economy post-pandemic as the policymakers suggest that the private sector has more ability to grow faster.

#### **Privatisation**

- Privatisation means the transfer of ownership, management, and control of the public sector enterprises to the private sector.
- **Objectives:**
  - To minimise the public sector's role and create new investment space for the private sector, and to infuse private capital, technology and management practices that will contribute to growth and new jobs.
  - The proceeds from the sale of the public firms would help finance various government-run social sector and developmental programmes.

#### **Privatisation in India**

- The Disinvestment Commission, under the Ministry of Industries, was set up in 1996 to provide inputs on which firms to privatise over a five-10-year period.

- A separate Department of Disinvestment was set up under the Ministry of Finance and later upgraded to a full-fledged Ministry in 2001. It was downgraded back to a department in 2004.
- Despite strong institutional backing, privatisation as a policy has failed to raise significant funds. The actual receipts from disinvestment have fallen short of targets.
- In FY11, **₹22,846 crores** were raised against a target of **₹40,000 crores**.
- In FY20, **₹50,304 crores** were raised against a target of **₹1 lakh crores**.
- Between FY11 and FY21, about **₹5 lakh crores** were raised, which is about 33% of FY22's projected fiscal deficit.

To read more about the [Privatisation Policy](#) in CNA dated June 29, 2021.

### Evidence against privatisation

- Studies indicate that the gap in growth between public sector undertakings (PSUs) with autonomy and private firms is not very significant.
- A study highlighted that the famed British privatisation initiative of British Airways, British Gas, and the Railways led to no systemic difference in performance.
- Evidence on performance after privatisation is more mixed in developing countries.
- Growth post-privatisation is linked to factors like better funding by the private firms compared to the government budget and a better business model.
- Privatisation as a revenue source has also offered meagre returns.

### Challenges with privatisation

- **Valuation** – 65% of 300 national highway projects have been recording significant toll collection growth. Valuations of such assets should ensure to capture potential growth in toll revenue.
- **Employment** – PSUs have been significant generators of employment, with about 10.3 lakh employees in Central Public Sector Enterprises (in 2019). A push for privatisation is said to be a push for mass layoffs, in a period of low job creation.
- **Concentration of public assets in select private hands** – In India, about 70% of profits generated in the corporate sector in FY20 were from just 20 firms.
- **Concerns of Monopoly** –
  - Cigarettes are dominated by a single player, with a 77% market share in FY21
  - Paints has one entity with 40% in FY21
  - Telecom has just three players left
- **Loss of strategic control** – Privatization decreases the government control on strategic sectors.

### Conclusion

An alternative method of selective PSU reform could be considered which has been a success in other countries like:

- In China, growth has been led by corporatised PSUs that are held under a holding company, which promotes better governance, appoints leadership and executes mergers and acquisitions.
- In Singapore, the Ministry of Finance focuses on policymaking, while Temasek Holdings (a private firm) is focused on corporatising and expanding its PSUs.

A PSU with greater autonomy, with the government retaining control and subject to the right incentives, the Indian PSUs could aspire to be as large and efficient as that of China's.

### **Nut Graf**

*Considering the social and institutional constraints, India's ability to privatise firms is expected to continue to be slow in the future. At this rate, it is unlikely to raise significant revenue. Hence other options such as reforming the PSU sector need to be considered.*

## **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **1. Anger in diplomacy**

*Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood – relations.*

*Mains: India's response to social media posts by MNCs on the Kashmir issue and the way forward.*

#### **Context**

Multinational companies faced backlash in India over their posts on social media that supported "Kashmir Solidarity Day".

#### **Kashmir Solidarity Day**

- February 5th is observed as Kashmir Solidarity Day or Kashmir Day in Pakistan.
- The day is observed to show Pakistan's support towards the people residing in the Indian administered part of Jammu and Kashmir and the efforts of separatists of Kashmir.

#### **Details**

- The posts by the companies appeared to be part of a coordinated exercise sponsored by the Pakistani establishment, as they contained offensive messages calling for "Kashmiri liberation".
- Given that the companies, like Hyundai, Toyota, KFC, Pizza Hut, and Schwabe, also have flourishing businesses in India, it is questioned as to why the private MNCs would post politically charged messages.

#### **India's Response**

- The government summoned the respected country's Ambassadors and ensured that Indian embassies take up the issue with other governments.
- The External Affairs Minister raised the matter with his Korean counterpart, who apologised to the Indian people.
- The Commerce Minister added that the apology by Hyundai India was not adequately "forceful or unequivocal".
- The social media consumers in India threatened to boycott products made by the companies concerned.

#### **Way forward**

- The government must consider the bigger picture of its actions and consequences, especially while confronting the powerful global players.
- Holding the foreign governments in democratic countries to account for the actions of the local distributors of their private companies could have unforeseen repercussions.



- India's claims over Jammu and Kashmir are strong, widely acknowledged, and not so fragile that a few social media posts, that appeared only in Pakistan, can dent in any way.
- The Foreign Ministry's resources are to be spent in furthering India's interests rather than on short-lived controversies.

### **Nut Graf**

*The advent of social media has changed how diplomacy is conducted between countries. India must show restraint in handling the controversies emerging out of social media as they have serious consequences on bilateral relations.*

### **2. The French format**

*Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests*

*Mains: Role of Normandy format and Minsk protocol in resolving the Ukraine crisis.*

### **Context**

The Normandy Format talks if convened is said to be a breakthrough for Russia-Ukraine Crisis

### **Normandy Format**

- The Normandy format is a diplomatic grouping created in June 2014 with the aim of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine due to Russia's military aggression.
- It is an informal forum that was set up by France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine.
- It takes its name from the Normandy landings in the second world war.

Read more about the [Russia-Ukraine crisis](#).

### **Minsk Protocol**

- The Minsk Protocol is an agreement signed by representatives of Ukraine, Russia, OSCE, and the then heads of the two separatist groups, Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic, to end the war in the Donbas region.
- The accords call for a general amnesty for the rebels, constitutional amendments giving the breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine more autonomy and the handing over of Ukraine's borders to its army.
- The Minsk deal has never been enforced.

### **Latest Developments**

- The French president held talks with Vladimir Putin and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky, and said that both sides remain committed to the Minsk protocol, aimed at ending the violence between Ukraine and Russia-backed separatists in the east.
- France, through the **Normandy Format talks**, is trying for a Moscow-Kiev dialogue based on the **Minsk protocol**, which was accepted by both sides.
- Russia has assured that it would not escalate the crisis.

### **Differences within the western bloc on Russia**

- **The U.S.** – Threatened to shut down Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline in the event of a Russian invasion.

- **Germany** – Germany has barred Estonia, a NATO member that shares a border with Russia, from supplying arms to Ukraine.
- **Hungary** – It has stated that Russia's demands were reasonable.
- **France** – It has suggested that the West must respect Russia.

### Conclusion

The varied responses from different stakeholders in the west show that Europe has less intent for a conflict with Russia. It is to be seen whether France and Germany have the diplomatic power to calm Russia without compromising on the continent's security. In this regard, it would be considered a big diplomatic breakthrough if the Normandy Format talks could be convened and if Russia and Ukraine are obliged to revive the Minsk agreement.

### **Nut Graf**

*As a continent that experienced two disastrous World Wars and a Cold War, Europe needs to adopt pragmatic realism in resolving the Ukraine crisis. France's shuttle diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine is one of the most significant interventions in the crisis.*

## **F. Prelims Facts**

### **1. ISRO to launch new satellite on Feb. 14**

#### Context:

- As part of the first launch of 2022, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) plans to place, into orbit, an Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-04) onboard the PSLV C-52.

#### EOS-04 satellite:

- EOS-04 is a **radar-imaging satellite**, designed to provide high-quality images under all weather conditions for applications such as agriculture, forestry & plantations, soil moisture and hydrology, and flood mapping.
- The EOS-04 satellite would be placed in a **sun-synchronous polar orbit**.

## **G. Tidbits**

### **1. Pak. drone drops RDX, bomb-making items**

- The Border Security Force (BSF) has recovered over four kg of RDX, a pistol and bomb-making items that were dropped in two packets by a drone that flew from Pakistan into an Indian farm along the Punjab border.
- This is an example of the potential of the **use of drones to threaten the security of the nation**.

### **2. INCOIS carries out coastal vulnerability assessment**

- **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** has carried out **coastal vulnerability assessments** for the entire Indian coast at the States' level. Using this data it has prepared an Atlas and would also prepare a **Coastal Vulnerability Index (CVI)**.
- While the maps determine **the coastal risks due to future sea-level rise** based on the physical and geological parameters, the CVI uses the relative risk posed by physical changes that will occur as sea-level rises.
- The coastal vulnerability assessments can be **useful information for coastal disaster management and building resilient coastal communities**.

### **3. The coups in West Africa and the regional response**



- There have been a **rising number of military takeovers in Africa and West Africa in particular**. Between 2020 and 2022, there already have been **6 successful military coups and 3 failed ones**.
- Recent military coups have occurred in **Guinea, Mali, Sudan and Burkina Faso**.
- The rising instances of coups could have an adverse **impact on democratic institutions and constitutional order** apart from the **loss of human lives and suffering** associated with violent take-overs.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Which of the following best defines 'Khabar Lahariya'?**

- Only newspaper in India operated by only Dalit women
- NGO working in the Bundelkhand region, raising issues of Dalit women
- A special provision under RTI, ensuring faster replies to questions submitted by Dalits
- A direct benefit transfer scheme for Dalit women in Madhya Pradesh

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Khabar Lahariya is an Indian newspaper, published in various rural dialects of Hindi, including Bundeli, Avadhi and Bajjika dialects. The newspaper focuses on gender and education.
- Beginning from the rural villages of Uttar Pradesh, Lahariya profoundly voiced out the issues of their community through a feminist perspective irrespective of class, caste, or religion.
- Khabar Lahariya is India's only newspaper run by Dalit women.

**Q2. Consider the following statements:**

1. Energy by nuclear fusion promises to be low carbon, but more dangerous than how nuclear energy is now produced.
2. A kilogram of fusion fuel contains about 10 million times as much energy as a kilogram of coal, oil or gas.
3. The ITER is a fusion research mega-project supported by seven members — China, the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the U.S. — and based in the south of France.

**Choose the correct code:**

- 1 only
- 2 only
- 1 & 3 only
- 2 & 3 only

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Nuclear fusion is considered safer than nuclear fission. Nuclear fission power plants have the disadvantage of generating unstable nuclei; some of these are radioactive for millions of years. Fusion on the other hand does not create any long-lived radioactive nuclear waste. A fusion reactor produces helium, which is an inert gas.
- Also, fusion energy production is not based on a chain reaction, as is fission. Plasma must be kept at very high temperatures with the support of external heating systems and confined by an external magnetic field. Every shift or change of the working configuration in the reactor causes the cooling of plasma or the loss of its containment; in such a case, the reactor would automatically come to a halt within a few seconds, since the process of energy production is arrested, with no effects taking place on the outside. For this reason, fusion reactors are considered to be inherently safe.

**Q3. INCOIS (Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services) operates under which of the following ministries?**

- a. Ministry of Science & Technology
- b. Ministry of Earth Sciences
- c. Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
- d. Ministry of Defence

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) is an autonomous organization of the Government of India, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- INCOIS is mandated to provide ocean information and advisory services to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community through sustained ocean observations and through systematic and focused research.

**Q4. Consider the following statements with regards to ASEAN:**

1. The motto of ASEAN is “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”.
2. ASEAN was established with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) in 1969 by its founding fathers – Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
3. India has a separate mission to ASEAN in Jakarta.

**Choose the correct code:**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- The ASEAN Declaration or Bangkok Declaration is the founding document of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It was signed in Bangkok in 1967 by the five ASEAN founding members, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.
- India has set up a separate Mission to ASEAN and the EAS in Jakarta in April 2015 with a dedicated Ambassador to strengthen engagement.

**Q5. Who among the following rulers advised his subjects through this inscription -  
'Whosoever praises his religious sect or blames other sects out of excessive devotion to his own sect, with the view of glorifying his own sect, he rather injures his own sect very severely.' (UPSC 2020)**

- a. Ashoka
- b. Samudragupta
- c. Harshavardhana
- d. Krishnadeva Raya

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- The Major Rock Edicts of Ashoka refer to 14 separate major Edicts, which are significantly detailed and extensive.
- 12th Rock Edict read: Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, honours both ascetics and the householders of all religions, and he honours them with gifts and honours of various kinds. But Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, does not value gifts and honours as much as he values this — that there should be growth in the essentials of all religions. Growth in essentials can be done in different ways, but all of them have as their root restraint in speech, that is, not praising one's own religion, or condemning the religion of others without good cause. And if there is cause for criticism, it should be done in a mild way.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. A wave of military coups has hit West Africa again and it not only threatens regional stability but also affects Indian interests. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-2, International Relations]
2. Critically examine the new Central Media Accreditation Guidelines. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-2, Polity]