

14 Apr 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Alarm bells over Nepal's dwindling forex reserves](#)

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

Prelims: Forex Reserves

Mains: Impact of Nepal's economic crisis on India

Context

A report by the Nepal Rastra Bank on the 'Current Macro-Economic and Financial Situation' suggests that the country's forex reserves have been reducing quickly.

Details

- According to the report, Nepal's forex reserves have crashed by 18.5% to \$9.58 billion in March 2022 from \$11.75 billion in July 2021.
- The report finds that the current forex reserves are enough to sustain the country's imports only for about seven months.

Forex Reserves

- Forex Reserves also called Foreign Reserves are nothing but the assets that are held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority.
- Forex Reserves are cash and other reserve assets such as gold held by the central bank that is mainly used to,
 - Balance payments of the country
 - Influence the exchange rate of its currency
 - Maintain confidence in the financial markets
- Forex reserves are usually held in reserve currencies such as the US Dollar, Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling.
- Also, these may include foreign currencies, bonds, treasury bills, and other government securities.

Read more about – **Forex Reserves**

Reasons for depleting forex reserves of Nepal

- Nepal is heavily reliant on the country's imports which buy a range of merchandise goods apart from fuel.
- The prevailing weak economic indicators and the current rate of inflation have resulted in Nepal spending huge amounts from its forex reserves.
- Nepal is famous for its tourism sector and depends highly on the sector.
 - But the tourism sector was affected heavily during the COVID-19 pandemic as global tourist flow fell.
- Further, the global energy crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine has put extraordinary inflationary pressure on Nepal's economy.
- One of the key causes of the shortfall in forex reserves is the decline in foreign remittances because of the job losses of the Nepalese workforce abroad during the pandemic.

Impact of Nepal's economic crisis on India

- The situation in India's neighbourhood looks troubled due to a political crisis in Pakistan and economic crises in Sri Lanka and Nepal along with a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

- The Nepal government to prevent a further drop in forex reserves has extended a ban on the imports of various items.
 - This will impact India's trade with Nepal as Nepal relies highly on Indian exports of essential supplies such as fuel.
- Nepal's major energy supplier is the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).
 - Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) pays IOC in two instalments every month and the forex crisis will affect its ability to pay IOC for its energy imports.
- The economic crisis in Nepal might push the country toward China for financial assistance which will become a cause of concern for India.
- The economic crisis might aggravate into a political crisis with the elections nearing in Nepal which might cause problems of refugees in India.

Nut Graf

Acknowledging the significance of Nepal in terms of security, trade and diplomacy, India must extend humanitarian, financial aid and cooperative strategies to maintain its influence and strategic interests in Nepal and counter the growing debt-trap diplomacy of China.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Hits and misses: India's solar power energy targets

Syllabus: Infrastructure: Energy

Prelims: National Solar Mission

Mains: Significance of solar energy, solar policy of India and the issues associated with the implementation of solar power projects.

Context

This article analyses India's performance in solar power generation and its storage facilities.

India's solar power generation

- India is ranked **fifth** in terms of installed solar power capacity after China, U.S., Japan and Germany.
- In 2021, the total installed solar capacity in India was about 55 GW.
- Solar energy production accounts for roughly half the total renewable energy (RE) capacity of India (excluding large hydropower) and about 14% of the total power generation capacity of India.
- Of the 55GW capacity, nearly 77% is contributed by the grid-connected utility-scale projects and the remaining is from the grid-connected rooftop and off-grid projects.

India's solar policy

- Ever since 2011, India's solar sector has made considerable progress at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of nearly 59%.
- The solar energy produced was about 0.5GW in 2011 and is about 55GW in 2021.

- **The Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM)** (National Solar Mission), started in 2010, was the first step of the government towards promoting and developing solar power in India.
 - According to the National Solar Mission, the total installed capacity target was set as 20GW by 2022.
 - Considering the progress made, it was revised in 2015 to 100GW by 2022.
 - Again in 2021, the government set a solar target of 300GW by 2030.

Read more – [National Solar Mission](#)

Significance of solar power for India

- Solar power plays a crucial role in mitigating global warming and the adverse effects of climate change.
- Solar power generation also helps India achieve its commitments in the [Paris Agreement](#) and also in achieving net-zero carbon emissions, by 2070.
- The Prime Minister of India in the United Nations Conference of Parties meeting in Glasgow, in 2021, vowed that India would achieve a non-fossil fuel energy capacity of 500 GW by 2030 and meet half of its energy demands through renewable energy by 2030.
 - Solar power will play a key role in facilitating these commitments.
- To boost the renewable energy generation, the Centre, in 2020, set a target of achieving 450GW of renewable energy-based installed capacity by 2030 and out of which the solar power would account for 300GW.

Shortfall in India's solar power targets

- A report jointly prepared by two energy-research institutes **JMK Research and Analytics** and the **Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis** suggests that India may miss achieving its 2022 target of installing 100GW of solar power capacity.
- Till April 2022, only about 50% of the 100GW target has been met (100GW consists of 60GW of utility-scale and 40GW of rooftop solar capacity).
- It is expected that about 19GW of solar capacity is to be added in 2022.
 - Out of this, 15.8GW is from utility-scale and the remaining 3.5GW is from rooftop solar.
- This means that about 27% of India's 100GW solar target would not be achieved.
- A deficit of 25GW in the targeted 40GW rooftop solar target was on the expected lines. Therefore, it is the shortfall in rooftop solar power that is posing challenges to India's solar-adoption policy.
- The report also found that there will be a shortfall of about 86GW in India's solar target of 300GW by 2030.

Reasons for shortfall in rooftop solar adoption targets

- In 2015, the government started the initial phase of the **grid-connected rooftop solar programme** with an aim to incentivise its use in residential, institutional and social areas.
 - The next phase was approved in 2019, and had a target of 40GW of total rooftop solar capacity by 2022, with incentives in the form of central financial assistance (CFA).
 - As of November 2021, of the 4GW set for the residential sector, only 1.1GW had been achieved.
- The disruption in supply chains caused due to the **COVID pandemic** has further affected the implementation of rooftop solar programmes.
- In the **initial stages**, India's rooftop solar sector was impacted by issues such as,

- Lack of consumer awareness
- Inconsistent policy frameworks of governments
- In the **recent years**, the issues which the rooftop solar sector face are,
 - Pandemic-induced supply chain disruptions and policy restrictions
 - Regulatory challenges
 - Limits on net-metering
 - Taxes on imported cells and modules
 - Challenges in negotiating power supply agreements (PSAs)
 - Problems with Banking and Financing
 - Delays in the approval of grants

Path ahead

- The report notes that the above factors continue to impact the sector.
- However, there has been significant progress made in the rooftop solar segment due to the falling technology costs, increasing grid tariffs, rising consumer awareness and the growing need for cutting energy costs.
- The report suggests that rooftop solar capacity will increase in the coming days as the land-based and grid connectivity for solar projects are expected to be hard to come by.
- Experts expect the government to push and expedite solar capacity programmes to achieve the 100GW target by 2022 by reallocating the unmet rooftop targets to utility-scale projects.

Nut Graf

As the shortfall in achieving the targets of renewable energy production in the country has far-reaching implications, the governments both at the Centre and States must look for ways to address the issues in the implementation of such projects.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

1. The key phrase is ‘focus on the foetus, for the future’

Syllabus: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Prelims: Diabetes mellitus

Mains: Concerns associated with NCDs in general and Hyperglycemia-in-Pregnancy in particular; Recommendations

The silent epidemic of non-communicable diseases:

- While the COVID-19 pandemic has received worldwide attention, another silent epidemic responsible for millions of premature deaths every year continues to go largely ignored. The silent ‘pandemic of non-communicable diseases’ (NCDs) has been sweeping steadily across the world over the last few decades.

- The main types of NCD are cardiovascular diseases (such as heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes.
- **Cancer, diabetes, heart disease and lung disease** – the four main types of what public health experts call NCDs – are now the world’s top killers. NCDs kill 41 million people each year, equivalent to **71% of all deaths globally**.
- Each year, more than 15 million people die from an NCD between the ages of 30 and 69 years; 85% of these **“premature” deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries**. 77% of all NCD deaths are in low- and middle-income countries.
- Apart from causing such a large number of deaths, NCDs are **associated with long hospitalisations and costly treatment**, which in turn places a huge amount of pressure on the already fragile health systems.

Diabetes:

- Diabetes is characterised by a **sustained high level of blood sugar** (“hyperglycemia”).
- Diabetes occurs either when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces. Insulin is a hormone that regulates blood sugar.
- The high blood sugar over time leads to **serious damage to many of the body’s systems**, especially the nerves and blood vessels and also to vital organs like the heart, eyes, kidneys, nerves and brain.
- In the year **2021, around 537 million people are estimated to have diabetes**. Extrapolating this data to the year 2045, almost 783 million people will be living with diabetes. Also, there continues to remain a **high proportion of undetected diabetes as well as pre-diabetes cases**.

Causes:

- Like all other non-communicable diseases, diabetes too is the result of a combination of **genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors**.
- Ageing population, genetic predisposition, nutrition based on unhealthy diets and urbanisation induced lifestyle transition leading to lack of physical exercise along with pregnancy-related diabetes are the major causes of diabetes.

Hyperglycemia-in-Pregnancy:

- Hyperglycemia-in-Pregnancy (HIP) includes pregnancy-related diabetes including both newly detected diabetes during pregnancy (or ‘gestational diabetes’) as well as women with pre-existing diabetes (or ‘pre-gestational diabetes’).
- The global prevalence of HIP is 16.7% of all live births. **In India, one out of four live births is complicated by HIP.**

Concerns associated with HIP:

- Several studies have indicated the **foetal origins of adult disease** which notes that a person’s susceptibility to many of the adult diseases is already programmed while he/she was still an unborn, developing baby (“foetus”) inside his mother’s womb.
- The health of offspring and of further generations depends upon the metabolic health of the pregnant woman.
- Based on the above hypothesis, a foetus exposed to increased blood sugar levels in the mother’s womb gets adversely affected. **Maternal diabetes permanently affects the structure, the functioning and the**

metabolism of the developing human body at the cellular and tissue levels, thereby predisposing the individual to disease in adult life.

- Such a child when exposed to an unhealthy environment of high caloric foods, lesser physical activity and stress in adulthood develops diabetes. Also, such a person also becomes prone to other related NCDs such as hypertension and heart disease.
- Also HIP can give rise to **transgenerational effects**. The foetus exposed to HIP, after growing into an adult might transmit unfavourable genetic and epigenetic effects to the next generation. Thus, a vicious cycle is established.

Recommendations:

- Like other NCDs, **detection, screening and preventive treatment** should be the key components of the response to diabetes.
- **Targeting pregnancy-related diabetes** will help bring down the expanding burden of diabetes and other NCDs. Hence, a major strategic point for checkmating diabetes and other NCDs lies at the intra-uterine level.
- Screening women for their vulnerability to gestational diabetes and management of sugar levels in women with pre-existing diabetes would be a critical intervention against HIP. Early detection of diabetes in pregnancy can help prevent trans-generational transmission of NCDs.

Nut Graf

Given the increasing burden of NCDs and the impact of Hyperglycemia-in-Pregnancy on the NCDs, the urgent need of the hour is to focus on detection, screening and preventive treatment of HIP. The need of the hour is to “Focus on the Foetus, for the Future”.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Beijing’s move, India’s turn

Syllabus: India and its Neighbourhood- Relations.

Mains: Reset of India-China ties- Significance and challenges.

Context:

- Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s visit to New Delhi in March 2022.

Background:

Strain in India-China ties:

- India-China ties have dipped to their lowest in decades following a **border clash in the Galwan Valley at the Line of Actual Control**.
- 90,000 soldiers from both armies continue to be been deployed in Ladakh for nearly two years now.
- Despite 15 rounds of negotiations between senior military commanders and some degree of disengagement, there **has been no de-escalation of the border crisis**.

Details:

- The visit by the Chinese foreign minister to India amidst the border stand-off came across as a significant development in the bilateral relationship.

- Though the visit by the Chinese foreign minister had minimal outcome, it would be erroneous to deem it a failure.
- In recent years, China had looked at Indian moves in the region through the prism of their U.S. policy and had expressed strong concerns over the growing India-U.S. relationship and the formation of organizations like the Quad. China's assertiveness along Indian borders was also seen as a reaction to the strengthening of the [India-U.S. relationship](#). But **India's neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict seems to have triggered a rethink in Beijing.**
 - India has refused to condemn Russia's military invasion, continues to trade with Russia, and has abstained from voting on United Nations resolutions, despite stark warnings from the U.S. and its western partners.
 - India has also increased, rather than reduced, the import of its crude oil supplies from Russia. India and Russia are also exploring ways of conducting bilateral trade through the rupee-rouble exchange route, by bypassing the dollar-based financial system.
- Notably, China has praised India for pursuing an independent foreign policy. In this context, Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to New Delhi was driven either by the need to **wean India away from the Quad** or as an exploratory step towards a larger **strategic reset with India**.
- During Mr. Wang's visit, China offered to create a virtual G-2 in Asia by protecting India's traditional role and collaborating on developmental projects as **'China-India Plus' in South Asia**.

India's moves viz-a-viz China:

- While India has taken a stance that unless there is peace and tranquillity in the border areas, the bilateral ties with China will not go back to normalcy, some of India's moves seem to be directed at easing the tension and preventing further deterioration of ties with China.
- India treats its border stand-off with China as a bilateral issue and has resisted efforts to raise the issue in any joint statement during high profile India-U.S. meetings.
- The activities of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community in India have been calibrated to remain within limits that do not provoke Beijing.
- Despite the border crisis, **India's trade with China** reached a record high of \$125 billion in 2021. **India remains the biggest recipient of loans disbursed by the [Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank](#).**

Impact of a reset in ties between India and China:

- Any reset of India's ties with China will alter New Delhi's relationship with the U.S. and raise questions about the effectiveness of Quad.

Quad:

- While India's Quad partners have been understanding of India's divergent views from that of the other Quad group members on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, any reset of ties between India and China will be a body blow to the grouping. This is because China is the glue that binds the Quad together and India remains the centrepiece of the Quad.

India-U.S. ties:

- India is the centrepiece of the U.S. administration's Indo-Pacific strategy. This is evident from the deepening of the India-U.S. relationship in recent times. This also explains U.S.'s patience with India's neutral stand on the Russia-Ukraine issue.
- While Indian and American policies are at variance in countries such as Myanmar, Iran and Afghanistan, China is the one interest that aligns the two countries together. That basic premise of a collaborative partnership with India will be tested by any reset in [China-India ties](#).

Nut Graf

Though the reset of ties with China would be necessary for peace and security along India's northern borders, India should also consider the possible adverse impact that such a reset could have on its strategic relationship with the U.S. and association with the Quad, both of which could be critical tools in tackling any future assertiveness or rise of China.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Rongali Bihu and Bihu dance

Syllabus: GS-1, Indian Heritage and Culture; Salient aspects of Art Forms

Prelims: Facts about Rongali Bihu and Bihu dance

Context

Assamese women were seen performing Bihu on the occasion of Rongali Bihu in Sonapur.

Rongali Bihu

- Rongali Bihu is a traditional ethnic festival celebrated in the Northeastern Indian state of Assam.
- The festival is celebrated in the first month of the Assamese calendar and marks the advent of the Assamese New Year.
- This festival coincides with the advent of the spring season.
- It is usually celebrated in the 2nd week of April, signifying the time of harvest.
- The festival is celebrated by the performance of the Bihu dance by the locals.

Bihu dance

- The Bihu dance is a native folk dance of Assam.
- It is related to the Bihu festival and is an important part of Assamese culture.
- The Bihu dance is performed in a group and the dancers are usually young men and women.
- The dancing form consists of brisk steps and rapid handclaps and movements.
- The dancers are seen in colourful costumes mainly with a red colour theme which represents joy and vigour.

G. Tidbits

1. India to grow at 8%, says World Bank

- The World Bank in its bi-annual **South Asia Economic Focus Reshaping Norms: A New Way Forward** report said that India is projected to grow at 8% in the fiscal year (2022-23) and over 7.1% in the next fiscal year (2023-24).

- In the South Asia region, the growth is expected to be slower than projected because of the impact of Russia's war on Ukraine along with existing issues such as fragile growth, rising commodity prices, bottlenecks in supply and financial sector vulnerabilities.
- The impact of the war has seen further fastened inflation, impacted current account balances and increased fiscal deficits.
- The report suggests that countries must look towards greener fuels and commodities as a response to rising fuel prices and the introduction of green taxes.

2. U.S. State Department flags curbs on free speech

- In its 2021 Human Rights Report on India, the U.S. State Department has flagged concerns over arbitrary arrests and detentions, extra-judicial killings, violence against religious minorities, curbs on free expression and media, and overly restrictive laws on funding of NGOs.
- The report flagged violations of privacy by authorities by citing the media reports on journalists being targeted for surveillance through the Pegasus malware and "including the use of technology to arbitrarily or unlawfully surveil or interfere with the privacy of individuals".

3. UGC issues norms for students to do two programmes at once

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) issued guidelines to allow students to pursue two academic programmes simultaneously at higher education institutes.
- The guidelines will be applicable for academic programmes other than Ph.D. and the students cannot claim retrospective benefits.
- The move is in line with the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, "which emphasises the need to facilitate multiple pathways to learning involving both formal and non-formal education".
- The move is criticised by experts stating it will increase the load on universities and teachers.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Dr B.R. Ambedkar?

1. He was born in Ambadawe town of Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.
2. He was part of the Bombay Presidency Committee that worked with the Simon Commission in 1925.
3. He started magazines like Mooknayak, Reshwa and Bahishkrit Bharat.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, Dr B.R. Ambedkar was born in **Mhow** in the **Central Provinces (modern-day Madhya Pradesh)** to a Marathi family with roots in the Ambadawe town of Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, He was part of the Bombay Presidency Committee that worked with the Simon Commission in 1925.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, He started magazines like Mooknayak, Equality Janta and Bahishkrit Bharat.
 - **Reshma** was written by **Sardar Ajit Singh** and is not associated with Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Mahavira:

1. He is considered to be a contemporary of Buddha.
2. He did not condemn the Varna system.
3. He did not believe in God's existence.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, Buddha and Mahavira were contemporaries.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, Mahavira unlike Buddha stressed on equality but **did not reject the caste system (Varna system)**.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, He did not believe in God's existence.
 - According to him, the universe is a product of the natural phenomenon of cause and effect.

Q3. With reference to coal, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Anthracite has the highest energy content of all coals.
2. The percentage of carbon in bituminous coal is between 25%–35%.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, Anthracite contains 86 – 97% of carbon and generally has the highest energy content of all coals.
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, Bituminous coal contains about 60 – 80% carbon.

Q4. Which amongst the following is the best description of Ishihara test?

- It is a test that detects and measures antibodies in blood.
- It is a colour perception test for red-green colour deficiencies.
- It is a test to detect genetic material from a specific organism, such as a virus.
- It is a routine screening procedure for cervical cancer.

Explanation:

- The Ishihara test is a color perception test for red-green color deficiencies.
- It was named after its designer, Shinobu Ishihara.
- The test consists of several plates, each of which depicts a solid circle of colored dots appearing randomized in color and size.
- Within the pattern are dots which form a number or shape clearly visible to those with normal color vision, and invisible, or difficult to see, to those with a red-green color vision defect.
- Hence **option b** is correct.

Q5. Which one of the following statements is correct?

- Ajanta Caves lie in the gorge of Waghora River.
- Sanchi Stupa lies in the gorge of Chambal River.
- Pandu-lena Cave Shrines lie in the gorge of Narmada River.
- Amaravati Stupa lies in the gorge of Godavari River.

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The spectacular Buddhist site of Ajanta consists of several caves nestled in a curving section of the Sahyadri hills, overlooking the **Waghora** river.
- Hence **option a** is correct.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

- Assess the progress made by India in building solar power infrastructure in the past decade. How close are we in realizing our solar power generation targets? (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Energy]
- What are the different types of diabetes that affect the human body? Elaborate the reasons behind the increasing number of diabetes patients in India. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-2, Health]