

24 Apr 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [WTO may ease curbs on Indian grain exports](#)

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Prelims: World Trade Organization (WTO)

Mains: impact of WTO regulations on the Indian exports

Context:

The World Trade Organization (WTO) director is looking 'positively' at resolving the issue that is hampering India's bid to export grains to countries facing shortage.

What is the Issue?

- Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, global wheat prices have reached new highs. The United States has asked India to assist with the current food grain crisis.
- Due to a large void in global stocks, India's wheat exports are expected to rise as supplies from warring Russia and Ukraine dwindle.
- The Indian government is attempting to close the gap by requesting that diplomatic missions assist with outbound shipments.

Challenges and Issues associated with India's grain export:

- **Minimum support price (MSP):**
 - Other members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have criticized India's MSP for its high level of domestic support.
 - WTO rules governing the export of food by a country that had also procured food on a Minimum Support Price basis were among the challenges.
- **Domestic support and Procurement:**
 - For the second year in a row, India notified the World Trade Organization (WTO) that its domestic rice support had exceeded its WTO commitments.
 - India also informed the World Trade Organization (WTO) that it had used the WTO Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security for the second time.
 - The government's purchase of rice and wheat from farmers for its consumer assistance programme has resulted in extremely high stock levels.
- **Global Competitiveness:** Indian wheat is not competitive globally. Domestic prices are set by the government through its procurement policy while global prices are usually lower.
- **Structural Challenges:**
 - Rise in shipping costs
 - Change in shipping routes
 - Global shortage of containers
- **Farm subsidies:**
 - The battle over farm subsidies between developed and developing economies is also ongoing.

- The “peace” clause, which allows a 10% subsidy on public food grain stockpiles, was hammered out after arduous negotiations at the Bali ministerial conference in 2013.
- The issue of establishing a permanent peace clause for public stockholding based on government procurement in order to help Indian farmers is still being debated.

Opportunities for India:

- The Ukraine conflict has presented India with both challenges and opportunities, such as dealing with the global rise in commodity prices.
- Foodgrain exports, such as wheat, were among the possibilities, as was the possibility of exporting manufactured goods to destinations where supplies had become unreliable.
- India has approached more than 20 countries about exporting wheat, with a goal of exporting a record 15 million tonnes of wheat in 2022.
- In 2022, India is expected to produce more than 111 million tonnes of rice, resulting in a surplus.

Nut Graf

Amidst a global shortage of food grains in the aftermath of the Ukrainian war, countries like India which have the potential to address food shortage by exporting agricultural products, are facing difficulties from the World Trade Organization. India should identify opportunities of export of food grains to become a major supplier to the world.

2. Argentina to revive Falklands issue in India

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

Mains: *Falkland dispute and role of India*

Context: The Government of Argentina will launch a campaign in India.

Details:

- The Commission for the Dialogue on the Question of the Malvinas Islands in India” will be launched by Argentina.
- The commission will be demanding negotiations with the United Kingdom to settle the territorial dispute over the Islas Malvinas that are known as the Falkland Islands in the United Kingdom.
- Know more about the [Falkland Islands Issue](#)

Falkland Islands

The Falkland Islands, also known as the Malvinas Islands or the Spanish Islas Malvinas, are a self-governing British overseas territory in the South Atlantic Ocean. It's about 300 miles (480 km) northeast of South America's southernmost point, and about the same distance east of the Magellan Strait.



Nut Graf

As a post-colonial state, India has been supportive of a negotiated settlement of the Falkland dispute for many years. India has consistently supported negotiations owing to its historic role in achieving decolonisation in the Global South.

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials**Category: INFRASTRUCTURE****1. How quickly can India move away from coal?**

Syllabus: Energy

Mains: Analysis of the significance of coal in India, reasons for the decline in the coal stocks and the potential of renewable energy sources to replace traditional sources.

Context

The reduction in the coal stocks and the resulting power outages in many States have raised questions about India's renewable energy potential to replace the conventional resources.

Background

- Earlier, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister urged the Prime Minister to ensure a sufficient supply of coal to the power-generating plants in the State.
- The Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra also suggested that the government is looking to import coal to manage the power shortages.
- Gujarat, which is one of the top power-consuming States, is also looking for ways to import.

Significance of Coal in India

- Coal is the most crucial and abundant fossil fuel found in India.
- Coal-based plants have lower capital costs compared to hydel and nuclear plants.
- The country's industrial heritage has been built upon indigenous coal.
- Coal accounts for about 55% of the country's energy needs.
- According to the **International Energy Agency's India Energy Outlook 2021 report**, energy use in India has doubled since 2000 and about 80% of the demand is still being met by coal, oil and solid biomass.
- Commercial primary energy consumption in India has grown by about 700% in the last 40 years driven by the rising population and expanding economy. Considering the limited reserve potentiality of other energy resources in the country, coal would continue to be the top source of India's energy production.

Decline in Coal stocks

- The coal stocks have declined below the critical mark (less than 25% of the required stock) in over 100 thermal power plants in India.
- Further, the coal stocks in about 50 thermal power plants are less than 10%.
- According to the Minister for Coal and Mines, about 72.5 million tonnes (MT) of coal is available at different sources of Coal India, Singareni Collieries and coal washeries, and about 22.01 MT is available with thermal power plants.
- The minister further added that there is an adequate quantity of coal available in the country, which can last over a month and that the coal stocks are being replenished daily with record productions.

Reasons for decline in coal stocks in India

- The disruptions caused due to the COVID pandemic have prevented the stock-up of coal.
- Mining operations were paused due to the COVID restrictions.
- After the restrictions were lifted and when the mining operations were gradually started, the onset of monsoons disrupted mining activities and further delayed the arrival of stocks.
- The increase in the household demand for power and the arrival of summer, along with the sudden rise in economic activities, have resulted in a demand-supply mismatch.

Know more about – [Coal Crisis in India](#)

India's renewable energy capabilities

- The Union government is said to have spent about ₹3,793 crores until March 2021 on implementing a number of renewable energy-based schemes and initiatives.
- Presently, about 152.90 GW of renewable energy capacity has been installed in India with,
 - **Solar energy** contributing over 50.78 GW
 - **Wind energy** – 40.13 GW
 - **Bio-power** – 10.63
 - **Large hydel power** – 52 GW
 - **Small hydel power** – 4.84 GW
- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy aims to set up 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based electricity by 2030 which is in line with the commitments made by India at COP26.
- In 2020-21, according to the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), a total of 1,381.83 billion units (bu) of electricity was generated, out of which renewable energy sources' share was 297.55 bu accounting for about 21.5% of the total generation.
- The CEA's report on optimal generation capacity suggests that the share of renewable energy in the gross electricity generation would be around 40% by 2029-30.

Challenges to renewable energy sector

- The capacity of a plant does not necessarily translate into the actual power it generates because of the losses due to external factors like heat or transmission losses.
- Renewable sources such as solar and wind are “**variable resources**” with this ‘variability’ being exposed during periods of peak demand.

- **Example:** Solar energy is primarily available during the daytime in summers. However, domestic demand is highest during the evenings, with no sunlight energy demand and supply face a mismatch.
- These resources also experience “**seasonal variations**”.
 - **Example:** In monsoons, solar energy is not abundantly available whereas wind energy is abundant.
- Another challenge with respect to these sources is “**spatial variability**”.
 - **Example:** Places close to coastal areas have more wind and therefore, possess a greater ability to produce wind energy.
 - Whereas places which are drier, experience more sunlight

Importance of transmission and storage facilities

- Transmission and storage facilities are the key to address the “variability” challenges.
- These facilities help address the ‘duck curve’ power demand among consumers in India.

Duck curve

- This curve is named so because it resembles a duck.
- Duck curve represents the difference between the demand and availability of energy throughout the day.

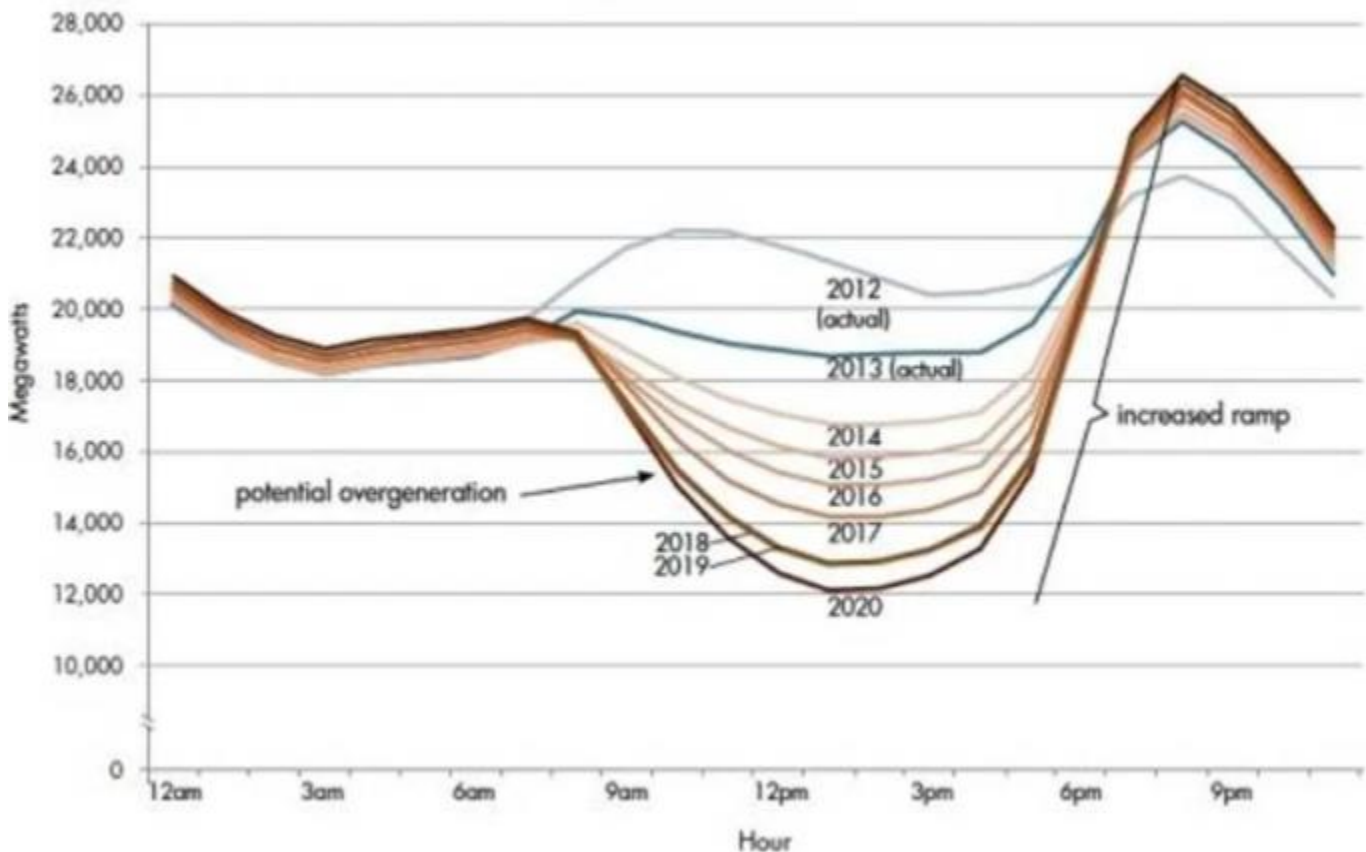


Image Source: INSIDE EVs

- Transmission and storage facilities help in balancing the demand and supply of power.

- Through these facilities, a complementing model can be set up by balancing the imports and exports based on the demand in the country.

Read about – [Green India Initiatives](#)

Nut Graf

Despite efforts to boost the usage of renewable resources for energy generation, India still depends heavily on coal-based generation for stability and energy security. Hence, the government must look for solutions to counter the challenges in the renewable energy sector which provides more economically and environmentally feasible options for the country.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China security pact

This article explains the new security deal signed between the Solomon Islands and China.

For more information on this topic refer to the following article.

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis of 20th Apr 2022](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. Doval to lead first international intelligence heads' Delhi meet

Syllabus: GS-2: International Relations: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Prelims: First international intel chiefs meet

Context: National Security Adviser will lead first international intelligence

First international intel chiefs meet

- The conference is modeled on the lines of the annual Munich Security Conference and Singapore's Shangri-La dialogue.
- It is expected to bring together heads and deputy heads of the top intelligence and security organizations.
- This intelligence assembly is going to discuss all top global security issues that are considered to be an immediate threat to the world, and China is also on the agenda.
- The conference is being organized by the country's external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS).

2. Russia to deploy Sarmat missiles by autumn

Syllabus: GS-3: Security Challenges: Defense equipment

Prelims: Sarmat missile

Context: Russia recently tested Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missiles, capable of mounting nuclear strikes against the United States.

About Sarmat:

- Sarmat is an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) which is colloquially known as Satan.

- It has the ability to dodge all anti-missile defense systems.
- The Sarmat is capable of carrying 10 or more nuclear warheads and decoys.
- It is capable of striking targets thousands of miles away in the U.S. or Europe.
- The operational range of this missile is 18000 km and the minimum range is 5,500 km.
- These missiles also include Kinjal and Avangard hypersonic missiles.
- It is capable of carrying a hypersonic glide vehicle along with other weapons.

Concerns of the West:

- Sarmat missile tests mark a show of strength by Russia at a time when the war in Ukraine has sent tensions with the United States and its allies.
- Western concern at the risk of nuclear war has increased since Russia launched his invasion of Ukraine.
- The prospect of nuclear conflict is now back within the realm of possibility.

3. Why are blue straggler stars different from the norm

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space

Prelims: Blue stragglers

Context: Scientists are studying the eccentricity of blue stragglers.

Eccentricity means a measure of how much the deviation of the curve has occurred from the circularity of the given shape.

What are blue stragglers?

- Blue stragglers are a type of star found in globular clusters and other old, dense stellar systems.
- They are notable because old stellar populations are thought to be devoid of blue (high-mass) stars with short lifespans.
- As a result, the blue stragglers in an old stellar population must have formed after the system as a whole.

How are Blue Stragglers formed?

- A star cluster is a group of stars born at the same time from the same cloud. Each star evolves differently over time, depending on its mass.
- The most massive and bright stars evolve and move away from the main sequence, creating a turnoff in their path.
- Some stars appear to be hotter than the parent cluster's turnoff. These blue stars still strewn above the turnoff were not originally part of the clusters. They were termed "Blue Stragglers".
- Two scenarios are likely to produce blue stragglers:
 - two stars spiraling inwards toward each other
 - two stars colliding head-on.

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to National Investigation Agency (NIA):

1. NIA has the power to investigate scheduled offenses committed outside India
2. NIA can investigate terror cases across the country without having to get permission from the states.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? [Difficulty Level- Medium]

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a central counter-terrorism agency functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- NIA can Investigate professionally the scheduled offences utilising the latest scientific methods. NIA (Amendment) Act 2019 expands the jurisdiction of the NIA. Now, it has **the authority to investigate offences that are committed outside Indian territory subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other nations. Hence statement 1 is correct.**
- The NIA is the central counter-terrorism law enforcement agency in the country. It was created in 2008 after the Mumbai terror attack the same year. The NIA can investigate terror cases across the country **without having to get permission from the states.**
- **Hence statement 2 is correct.**

Q2. The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Pavement Dwellers in which amongst the following cases?

- a. M.C. Mehta v. Union of India
- b. Olga Tellis & Ors v Bombay Municipal Council
- c. Samatha vs State Of Andhra Pradesh
- d. SP Mittal v. Union of India

Answer: b

Explanation:

- In Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation, the state of Maharashtra in 1981 and the Bombay Municipal Corporation decided to evict the **pavement dwellers and those who were residing in slums in Bombay.**

- The petitioners consisted mostly of slum dwellers, pavement dwellers and some socially conscientious journalists. The pavement dwellers had come to the city for purposes of employment in various industries and had settled down on roads and pavements which gave them proximity to their places of work.
- **Observations of the Court:** There can be no depreciation of the Constitution or renunciation of fundamental rights.
- **Hence option B is correct.**

Q3. Consider the following pairs:

Dispute	Countries Involved
1. Aegean	Greece and Turkey
2. Chagos Islands	Mauritius and United Kingdom
3. Falkland Islands	Argentina and France

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?[Difficulty Level- Medium]

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The **Aegean dispute** is a set of interrelated controversies between **Greece and Turkey** over sovereignty and related rights in the region of the Aegean Sea. **Hence Pair 1 is correctly matched.**
- **Mauritius and the United Kingdom** are disputing sovereignty over the **Chagos Archipelago**. Mauritius has stated that the Chagos Archipelago is part of its territory on numerous occasions. **Hence Pair 2 is correctly matched.**
- The **Falkland Islands**, a British overseas territory in the south-west Atlantic Ocean with a sparse population, are still the subject of a sovereignty dispute between **Britain and Argentina**. **Hence Pair 3 is not correctly matched.**

Q4. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Humpbacked Mahseer?

- It is found only in the Cauvery river basin
- Its IUCN status is Critically Endangered

Options: [Difficulty Level- Medium]

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both

d. None

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Hump-backed Mahseer, also known as the water tiger, is a large freshwater fish found **only in the Cauvery river basin**.
- The humpback is **Critically Endangered** as per the IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature's) Red List.
- **Hence all the statements are correct.**

Q5. With reference to India, Didwana, Kuchaman, Sargol and Khatu are the names of
[Difficulty Level- Medium] PYQ (2021)

- a. Glaciers
- b. Mangrove Areas
- c. Ramsar Sites
- d. Saline Lakes

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **Didwana** is a playa. Playas are small lakes with flat floors and undrained basins where rainwater collects and evaporates quickly after it rains.
- Kuchaman Lake is a continental saline lake in Rajasthan's Nagaur District, near Kuchaman city.
- The Kuchaman, Sargol, and Khatu lakes are examples of such playas.
- **Hence option D is correct.**

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Is renewable energy the solution to the emerging power crisis? Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-3, Environment and Ecology]
2. A security agreement between China and Solomon Islands could impact stability in the whole Pacific. Examine. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, International Relations]