

26 Apr 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

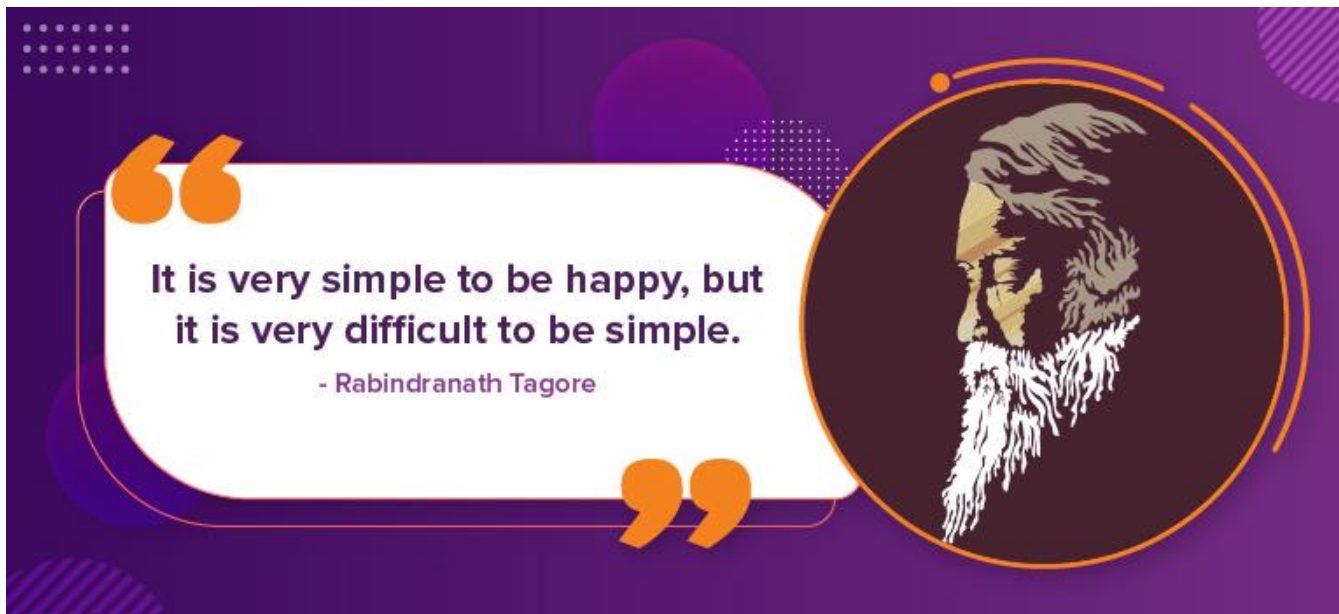


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A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The quarrel over Kuril Islands

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

Prelims: *Kuril Islands*

Mains: *Kuril Islands dispute and its implications*

Context: The Kuril Islands situated between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean are under dispute as both Russia and Japan claim sovereignty over them.

What are the Kuril Islands/Northern Territories?

- These four islands are located between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean, near the northernmost prefecture of Japan, Hokkaido.
- Despite the fact that the islands have been under Russian control since the end of [World War II](#), both Moscow and Tokyo claim sovereignty over them.
- The islands were seized by the Soviet Union at the end of WWII, and Japanese residents were expelled by 1949.
- Japan claims the disputed islands have been a part of the country since the early 1800s.



Image source: The Hindu

What is the Kuril island dispute?

- Several treaties confirm Japan's sovereignty over the islands. The Shimoda Treaty of 1855, the St. Petersburg Treaty of 1875 for the exchange of Sakhalin for the Kuril Islands, and the Portsmouth Treaty of 1905, all signed after Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.
- Russia, on the other hand, claims that the Yalta Agreement (1945) and the Potsdam Declaration (1945) establish its sovereignty, and that the San Francisco Treaty of 1951 establishes Japan's recognition of Russian sovereignty over the islands.
- Japan had "renounced all right, title, and claim to the Kuril Islands," according to Article 2 of the treaty.
- Japan claims that the San Francisco Treaty cannot be applied because the Soviet Union never signed it.
- In addition, Japan refuses to acknowledge that the four disputed islands were once part of the Kuril chain.

Attempts at resolution:

- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made the most recent attempt when he looked into the joint economic development of the disputed islands.

- In fact, based on the 1956 Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration, both countries agreed to hold bilateral talks.
- After the conclusion of a peace treaty, Russia was even willing to return two islands to Japan, the Shikotan Island and the Habomai islets, as stated in the 1956 declaration.
- Japan's efforts to improve relations with Russia were motivated by a desire to diversify its energy sources, while Russia sought to diversify its buyer base and attract foreign investment.
- However, nationalist sentiments on both sides prevented the dispute from being resolved.

Way Forward:

- Japan has been one of the most adamant Western allies in condemning Russian aggression and imposing sanctions on it.
- The Kuril Islands are under Russia's "illegal occupation," according to Japan's recent Diplomatic Bluebook for 2022.
- Fears of a Russia-China alliance have likely fueled Japan's actions, as the country has territorial disputes and a tense history with China.
- Japan may have seen this as an opportunity to further isolate Russia by portraying it as a "repeat violator" of international law.
- Japan may have been prompted to take this stance because it believes the [invasion of Ukraine](#) proves that reclaiming the Kuril Islands is a futile effort.

Nut Graf

Japan's policy shift on the Kuril Islands will embitter bilateral relations with Russia while advancing the possibility of its two neighbours, China and Russia, coming together against it which in turn is a cause of concern for India.

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The goal of an energy-secure South Asia

Syllabus: GS-2, *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.*

Mains: *Need and significance of energy-security in South Asia*

Context: This article talks about the need and significance of energy security in the South Asia region.

Need for energy security in South Asia:

According to the Global Climate Risk Index, South Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change (CRI). In 2018, India and Sri Lanka were ranked fifth and sixth in the list of countries most affected by extreme weather, respectively.

- **Rise in Electricity Generation:**

- Electricity generation in South Asia has risen exponentially.
- Bangladesh has achieved 100% electrification recently while Bhutan, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka accomplished this in 2019.
- The Bangladesh government has significantly revamped power production resulting in a rise in power demand.
- India is trying to make a transition to renewable energy to provide for 40% of total consumption.

- **Policies of South Asian Countries:**

- The electricity policies of South Asian countries aim at providing electricity to every household.
- The objective is to supply reliable and quality electricity in an efficient manner, at reasonable rates and to protect consumer interests.

- **Geographical Differences and Availability of Resources:**

- Geographical differences between these countries call for a different approach depending on resources.
- While India relies heavily on coal, accounting for nearly 55% of its electricity production, 99.9% of Nepal's energy comes from hydropower, 75% of Bangladesh's power production relies on natural gas, and Sri Lanka leans on oil, spending as much as 6% of its GDP on importing oil.

South Asia Roadmap for the World Bank's Climate Change Action Plan (2021-25):
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It emphasizes regional cooperation and regional markets to decarbonize energy production and scale up the role of renewable energy in cleaner energy trade. These efforts coincide with the recent Green Grids Initiative - [One Sun, One World, One Grid](#), which was launched on the sidelines of the COP26.

Significance of Energy Security in the development of South Asia:

- **Energy consumption leading to economic growth:**
 - Electrification not only improves people's lives, but also boosts the economy by increasing the country's GDP.
 - An increase of 0.46 percent in energy consumption results in a 1% increase in GDP per capita.
 - The generation of electricity is critical to the economic growth of middle-income countries.
 - Increased investment and economic activity both within and outside the country result from increased electricity.
- **Benefits from widening electricity coverage:**
 - The South Asian nations have greatly benefited from widening electricity coverage across industries and households.
 - For example, 50.3% of Bangladesh's GDP comes from industrial and agricultural sectors which cannot function efficiently without electricity.
- **Energy security benefitting in achievements of SDGs:**
 - Solar power-driven electrification in rural Bangladesh is a huge step towards Sustainable Development Goal 7.
 - SDG 7 is "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030".
 - Besides, Bangladesh engaging more than 1,00,000 female solar entrepreneurs ensures achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5.
 - SDG5 is "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".
 - India's pledge to move 40% of the total energy produced to renewable energy is also a big step. Access to electricity improves infrastructure i.e SDG 9.
 - SDG 9 is "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation".
 - Energy access helps online education through affordable Internet i.e. SDG 4.
 - SDG 4 is "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".
- **Green growth, green energy**

- South Asian leaders are increasingly focused on efficient, innovative and advanced methods of energy production for 100% electrification.
- Indian Prime Minister in his 'net zero by 2070' pledge at [COP26](#) in Glasgow asserted India's target to increase the capacity of renewable energy from 450GW to 500GW by 2030.
- South Asia has vast renewable energy resources — hydropower, solar, wind, geothermal and biomass — which can be harnessed for domestic use as well as regional power trade.
- The region is moving towards green growth and energy as India hosts the [International Solar Alliance](#).

Challenges:

- The regional energy cooperation framework was prepared by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 2014, but its implementation is uncertain.
- The conflation of identity, politics and international borders shapes South Asia's regional geopolitics. As a result, transnational energy projects would have to deal with a variety of social and conceptual issues, which is a major impediment to peaceful energy trade.
- A regional security approach with a broader group of stakeholders could help smooth the energy trade process if energy trade is linked and perceived through the lens of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
- Participation in cross-border projects is currently limited to specific tasks, such as between Bhutan and India or Nepal and India.

Way Forward:

- By increasing the deployment of renewable energy, expanding the use of hydropower resources, and strengthening the electricity transmission and distribution networks, the region is already moving toward diversification of energy supply options.
- As a result, the region must urgently assess the risks and prioritize technological and financial solutions for constructing resilient energy systems.
- It may be beneficial to learn from and collaborate with other regions or countries that have experienced power sector infrastructure damage, and have designed policy, regulatory, and technological solutions to build a resilient energy system.

Nut Graf

South Asia is reinforcing its transmission and distribution frameworks to cater to growing energy demand. Going forward, resilient energy frameworks are what is needed such as better building-design practices, climate-proof infrastructure, a flexible monetary framework, and an integrated resource plan that supports renewable energy innovation.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Data, interrupted

Syllabus: GS-3, Economy; Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Prelims: Household Consumer Expenditure; Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES)

Mains: Significance of Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES)

Context: India's official statistical machinery is gearing up to relaunch the All-India Household Consumer Expenditure Survey from July 2022.

What is Household Consumer Expenditure?

- Household Consumer Expenditure is the amount of money spent by households on the purchase of goods and services.
- The household sector includes people who live in communal settings such as retirement homes, boarding houses, and prisons, as well as those who live in traditional households.
- **Components used to measure Household Consumer Expenditure:**
 - Household spending on essential goods and services, such as food, clothing, rent, etc.
 - Household spending on products provided by the government, e.g. tickets to public museums, zoos.
 - Household spending for licenses and permits, e.g. fees for issuing passports
 - Household's consumption of outputs produced by them, e.g. consumption of milk and vegetables produced on a farm.
 - Income in kind earned by employees, e.g. free train tickets for railway employees

Need for Household Consumer Expenditure

- The estimates of consumption spending show the demand dynamics of the economy, living standards, and growth trends.
- Helps policymakers address possible structural anomalies in a specific socio-economic population.
- It provides a forecasting tool to producers of goods and services.
- Helps the government to establish a new base level for the GDP and other macro-economic indicators.

All-India Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES):

- Every five years, the National Statistical Office (NSO) conducts the All-India Household Consumer Expenditure Survey.
- The CES is a quinquennial survey that collects data on household consumption spending patterns in both urban and rural areas across the country.
- The information gathered in this exercise reveals average spending on goods (both food and non-food) and services.
- It also reveals estimates of household Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) and the distribution of households and people across MPCE classes.

Significance of All-India Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES):

- Estimates of monthly per capita consumption spending are critical in determining the economy's demand dynamics.
- It also aids in assessing living standards and growth trends across multiple strata, as well as understanding shifting priorities in terms of baskets of goods and services.
- It assists policymakers in identifying and addressing potential structural anomalies that could cause demand to shift in a specific socioeconomic or regional cohort of the population.
- The CES is a valuable analytical and forecasting tool in addition to providing pointers to producers of goods and providers of services.

Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) Survey (2017-18)

- The most recent Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) was conducted in 2017-2018 and did not receive government approval.
- The government had thrown out the results of the previous survey, which took place in 2017-18, citing "data quality" issues.
- Due to the pandemic, the survey could not be launched in the previous two years.

Nut Graf

The Government's actions, including the delayed release of critical jobs data, have dulled the perception of free-market and transparent democracy. Surveys on such parameters need to be conducted more frequently for more effective policy actions informed by ground realities.

F. Prelims Facts**1. India repressed critical voices: report**

Syllabus: *GS2: Polity and Governance: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

Prelims: *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)*

Context: This article discusses the recommendations of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) on religious freedom in India.

Recommendations on India:

- In 2021, India's religious freedom situation had "significantly deteriorated."
- India was designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" by the United Nations (CPC). This group of countries performs the worst in terms of religious freedom.
- The government continued to use existing and new laws to systematise its ideological vision of a Hindu state at both the national and state levels.
- The government had "repressed critical voices," particularly minority communities and individuals reporting on them, according to the report section on India.
- The report discusses the challenges that Non-Governmental Organizations face, particularly in terms of foreign funding, as well as anti-conversion laws.

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF):

- It is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government agency created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), as amended.
- **Functions:**
 - To monitor the universal right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) abroad.
 - To make policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.
 - To track the implementation of these recommendations.

2. 'Labour participation dips to 40% from 46% in six years'

Syllabus: GS3: Economy: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Prelims: Labour force participation rate

Context: The Centre released data on Monitoring the Indian Economy.

Labour force participation rate:

- Labour force participation rate is defined as the section of the working population in the age group of 16-64 in the economy currently employed or seeking employment.
- The labour force participation rate is the measure to evaluate the working-age population in an economy.

Data on labour force participation:

- Only 40% of Indians of legal working age were employed or were looking for jobs in 2021-22.
- India's labour force has shrunk from about 445 million to 435 million in the six years.
- Labour force participation among women, which was already in low double digits, has declined further.
- Among men, the participation rate declined to 67%, from more than 74%. The dip in the participation rate was higher in the urban areas.
- The rate dropped in all the States, except in Rajasthan. The slide was more pronounced in two southern states Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Losing interest

India's labour force participation has declined from more than 445 million to 435 million over the past six years

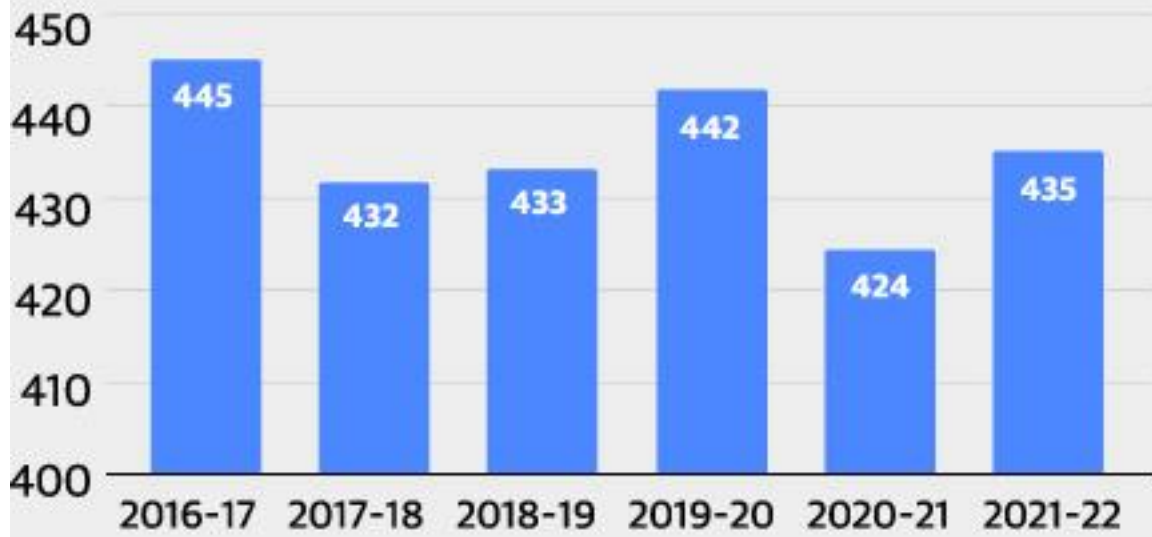


Image source: The Hindu

G. Tidbits

1. No limits to Russia-China ties, says EU chief amid Ukraine war

- President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen addressed the inaugural session at the annual Raisina Dialogue.
- She condemned the Russian aggression in Ukraine but also supported the need to find a “diplomatic solution” to the crisis.
- The top representative of the European Commission said both India and the [European Union](#) share common interests in maintaining "safe trading routes, in seamless supply chains, and in a free and open Indo-Pacific".

2. India 3rd highest military spender

Recently, new data on global military spending was published by the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#).

Data published by SIPRI:

- Despite the economic consequences of the pandemic, global military spending increased in 2021, reaching a new high of \$2.1 trillion.
- The United States, China, India, the United Kingdom, and Russia were the top five spenders in 2021, accounting for 62 percent of total spending.
- The United States and China accounted for 52 percent of the total.
- India has prioritised the modernisation of its armed forces and self-reliance in arms production in the face of ongoing tensions and border disputes with China and Pakistan, which occasionally devolve into armed clashes.
- Ukraine's military spending has increased by 72 percent since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, according to the report, as the country has strengthened its defenses against Russia.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with regards to the provisions of the 91st Amendment to the Indian Constitution:

1. The total number of ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in a state shall not exceed 15% of the total strength of the Legislative Assembly of that state, provided that the number of ministers, including the Chief Minister, in a state shall not be less than 12.
2. Supreme Court had ruled in 2008 that there is no violation of the law if a CoM has less members than the lower limit because the Act was enacted to put a cap on the huge expenditure incurred by states because of jumbo cabinets.

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The 91st Amendment Act provided for the disqualification of a minister when he stands disqualified as a member of Parliament.
- The total number of ministers in a state's Council of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, cannot exceed 15% of the total number of members of that state's Legislative Assembly. It should not be less than 12.

- The Constitution 91st Amendment Act, 2003 was enacted to put a cap on the huge expenditure incurred by states because of jumbo cabinets. The intention was to reduce pressure on the state exchequer.
- **Hence both the statements are correct.**

Q2. Vihangam, an internet-based portal, is related to which of the following fields/sectors?

- a. Defence
- b. Agriculture
- c. Mining
- d. Aquaculture

Answer: c

Explanation:

At Mahanadi Coalfields Limited, an internet-based platform called 'VIHANGAM' was launched, which was integrated with a Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) (MCL). The system allows for real-time transmission of aerial video of mining activities from mines to a platform that authorized personnel can access via the VIHANGAM portal.

Hence option C is correct.

Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to the Indus Water Treaty (IWT):

1. India has been given the right to generate hydroelectricity through run of the river (RoR) projects on the Western Rivers which, subject to specific criteria for design and operation, is unrestricted.
2. The IWT was signed by the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the then Pakistani President Ayub Khan.
3. Annexure C of the IWT allows India certain agricultural uses, while Annexure D allows it to build 'run of the river' hydropower projects, meaning projects not requiring live storage of water on western rivers.

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 Indus Waters Treaty is a water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan signed in 1960. It was brokered by the World Bank.
- Under the Treaty, India has been given the right to generate hydroelectricity through a run of the river project on the western rivers, subject to specific criteria for design and operation. It also gives Pakistan the right to raise concerns about the design of Indian hydroelectric projects on western rivers. **Hence statement 1 is correct.**
- The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank and signed by then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's president Ayub Khan, administers how the water of the Indus River and its tributaries that flow in both the countries will be utilised. **Hence statement 2 is correct.**
- Annexure C of the IWT allows India certain agricultural uses.
- Annexure D allows it to build 'run of the river' hydropower projects, meaning projects not requiring live storage of water on western rivers. **Hence statement 3 is correct.**

Q4. The 'E-2025' initiative of the WHO is aimed at tackling the spread of which of the following diseases?

- a. Tuberculosis
- b. Malaria
- c. Diabetes
- d. Chikungunya

Answer: b

Explanation:

WHO launched the E-2025 initiative ahead of World Malaria Day to end malaria transmission in 25 countries by 2025. It is based on the European Union's E-2020 initiative.

Hence option B is correct.

Q5. Siachen Glacier is situated to the [UPSC 2020]

- a. East of Aksai Chin
- b. East of Leh
- c. North of Gilgit
- d. North of Nubra Valley

Answer: d

Explanation:

Siachen Glacier is one of the world's longest mountain glaciers, lying in the Karakoram Range system of Kashmir near the India– Pakistan border, extending for 70 km from north-northwest to south-southeast. It is the source of the 50-mi-long Nubra River, a tributary of the Shyok, which is part of the Indus River system. Siachen Glacier lies to the north of the Nubra valley. **Hence, option (d) is correct.**

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Liberal electricity sharing policies with neighbouring nations can add a new dimension to India's soft power. Elaborate. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, IR]
2. Policies that are not based on concrete data are destined to fail. Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Governance]

