

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Modi moots free trade agreement for BIMSTEC](#)

POLITY

1. [The Assam-Meghalaya boundary dispute resolution](#)

C. GS 3 Related

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [ISRO to step up tracking of space debris](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. [India's food response as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Shifting sands](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Identity and privacy](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [IMEX-22](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [Import of plastic bottles for waste processing allowed](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Modi moots free trade agreement for BIMSTEC

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

Mains: Measures adopted in the latest summit of BIMSTEC and the means to further strengthen the grouping.

Context

Fifth summit of the [Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation \(BIMSTEC\)](#), hosted by Sri Lanka.

Details

- The signing of the **Charter of the organization** was the major result of the summit.
 - Adoption of the Charter plays a significant role in laying an institutional foundation for BIMSTEC.
 - Further, the Charter has given the BIMSTEC a new shape and well-defined goals.
 - The signing of the Charter has got BIMSTEC international recognition.
 - BIMSTEC now has its own emblem, a flag and listed objectives and principles that it is going to adhere to.
- The declaration of the **Master Plan for Transport Connectivity** was also announced at the latest summit in Sri Lanka.
 - This would now provide a framework for regional and domestic connectivity.
- With a view to develop a formal structure of the organisation, the member nations agreed to divide the working of the grouping into seven pillars.
 - India will take the leadership of the security pillar.

Way forward

- The Prime Minister of India recommended a [Free Trade Agreement](#) among the member countries for strengthening the BIMSTEC.
- There also exists a need for developing a coastal shipping ecosystem and electricity grid interconnectivity between the nations as these two components play a crucial role in shaping BIMSTEC.

To read more about the BIMSTEC- [Comprehensive News Analysis of 30th March 2022](#)

Nut Graf

The new declarations made in the latest summit of BIMSTEC are a welcome sign and various other measures such as facilitating a Free Trade Agreement have to be examined to realize the huge potential of the grouping in the region.

Category: POLITY

1. The Assam-Meghalaya boundary dispute resolution

Syllabus: Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure- Inter-State Relations

Mains: The significance and the impact of the agreement between Assam and Meghalaya to resolve boundary disputes.

Context

An agreement was signed between the Chief Ministers of Assam and Meghalaya in the presence of the Union Home Minister to resolve the dispute along their boundary.

Background

- Meghalaya became independent from Assam in 1970 and became a full-fledged State in 1972.
- The creation of Meghalaya was based on the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969.
- The Meghalaya government rejected the Act because it was based on the recommendations of a 1951 committee to define the boundary of Meghalaya.
 - According to their recommendations, regions of the present-day East Jaintia Hills, Ri-Bhoi and West Khasi Hills districts of Meghalaya were transferred to the Karbi Anglong, Kamrup (metro) and Kamrup districts of Assam.
- Meghalaya contested for these regions after the statehood, claiming that they belonged to the tribal chieftains of Meghalaya.
- Assam argued that the Meghalaya government could not provide documents or archival materials to prove its claim over these areas.
- After multiple claims, the dispute was narrowed down to 12 sectors based on an official claim by Meghalaya in 2011.

Details

- In January 2021, the Union Home Minister persuaded the north-eastern States to resolve their boundary conflicts by 15 August 2022, as the country celebrates 75 years of Independence.
- In June 2021, Assam and Meghalaya resumed negotiations and accepted a “give-and-take” policy to settle the disputes.
- Out of the 12 disputed sectors, six areas such as Tarabari, Gizang, Hahim, Boklapara, Khanapara-Pilingkata and Ratacherra were considered for negotiations in the first phase.
- The States set up a regional committee for a district affected by the disputed sectors.
- The committees, which were headed by cabinet ministers, undertook various surveys and meetings with the various stakeholders based on “five principles” which include,
 - Historical facts
 - Ethnicity
 - Administrative convenience
 - Willingness of people
 - Contiguity of land with natural boundaries such as rivers, streams and rocks.
- Based on the recommendations of the committee, the two states signed a draft resolution in January 2022.

- On 29 March 2022, an agreement was signed regarding six disputed sectors.

The impact of the agreement

- According to the agreement, Assam will get 18.51 sq. km out of the 36.79 sq. km disputed region and Meghalaya will get the remaining.
 - Despite there being less clarity on the uninhabited stretches that would be divided, political parties and a few communities in Meghalaya are unhappy about the agreement.
- The communities of the other six disputed areas namely, Langpih, Borduar, Nongwah, Matamur, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, and Khanduli feel that the agreement would adversely impact their interests.
- The non-tribal communities have expressed displeasure as they could end up living in a “tribal Meghalaya with no rights”.
- The fears are also the same for the residents of Assam in disputed areas along the border with other States.

Nut Graf

The agreement between Assam and Meghalaya which is regarded to be historic and path-breaking is expected to address the issues not just in the Assam-Meghalaya boundary but also help resolve differences between Assam and other North-Eastern states.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. ISRO to step up tracking of space debris

Syllabus: Awareness in the field of Space.

Prelims: NETRA Project

Mains: The need and the significance of scaling up monitoring and tracking of space debris.

Context

Indian Space Research Organisation ([ISRO](#)) is scaling up its capacity to track orbital debris.

Details

- Space debris tracking radar with a range of 1,500 km and an optical telescope will be indigenously built and developed for the effective surveillance and tracking network under the Network for Space Objects Tracking and Analysis (NETRA) project.
- Space debris is made of spent rocket stages, dead satellites, fragments of space objects and debris due to anti-satellite tests (ASAT).
- The government has approved the deployment of the radar, which will be used to detect and track objects that are 10 cm and above in size.
- Radars and optical telescopes are crucial ground-based facilities for tracking and monitoring space objects which include orbital junk/debris.
- Two radars will be deployed 1,000 km apart for spatial diversity.

- Currently, there is a Multi Object Tracking Radar at Sriharikota, but it has a limited range.

Network for Space Objects Tracking and Analysis (NETRA) project

- Project NETRA is an initiative to develop an early warning system in space by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to detect debris and hazards to the Indian satellites and space assets.
- The project aims to set up multiple observational facilities like telescopes, connected radars, data processing units, and a control centre.
- Read more about [Project NETRA](#) in the link.

The need for scaling up capacity to track the orbital debris

- ISRO conducted 19 Collision Avoidance Manoeuvres (CAM) in 2021.
 - The number of CAMs has increased from just 3 in 2015 to 12 in 2020 and 19 in 2021.
- ISRO monitored around 4,382 events in LEO and 3,148 events in the geostationary orbit where space objects closely approached Indian assets.
- Debris from the **Fengyun-1C satellite** (part of the anti-satellite test (ASAT) by China) and the **Cosmos 2251-Iridium satellite collision** in 2009 has increased the number of threats.
- Experts predict that the amount of debris would increase due to an increase in space missions worldwide.
 - In 2020, 522 objects were placed in space via 102 launches.
 - Whereas in 2021, about 1,860 objects were placed through 135 launches.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. India's food response as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'

Syllabus: Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger

Prelims: World Food Programme; Statistics related to India's food production

Mains: Factors driving global hunger; India's food aid programme and its significance

India's progress towards food security:

- India has made tremendous progress towards food security over the years. From being a food deficit nation dependent on foreign imports, the country has achieved food sufficiency and also become a major food aid donor and commercial exporter of food grains.

Food production:

- India has made notable progress in food production over the years. **In 2020, India produced over 300 million tonnes of cereals.**
- These record harvests over the last few years can be attributed to several enabling policies in the realm of land reforms, public investments, institutional infrastructure, new regulatory systems, intervention in agri markets and prices and agri research.
- In 2021, **India exported a record 20 million tonnes of rice and wheat.**

Safety nets:

- India has a robust public procurement and buffer stock policy. Thanks to the record production in 2021, **India has built up a food stock of 100 million tonnes.**
- Schemes like the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the Mid-Day meals (MDM), and the Integrated Child Development Services (**ICDS**) based on India's National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 have helped create a **food safety net for the vulnerable sections.** This food safety net collectively reaches over a billion people in India.
- Vulnerable and marginalised families in India continued to receive food grains through the TPDS during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** introduced in 2020 provided relief to 800 million beneficiaries covered under the NFSA from COVID-19 induced economic hardships.

Global Hunger:

- **In 2019, 650 million people around the world suffered from chronic hunger.**
- Global hunger is increasing **driven by the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, poverty, and inequality.**
 - For the world's hungry and undernourished people, climate change is an increasingly relevant threat multiplier. A 2021 report from the Food and Agriculture Organization connects global warming — in particular, more frequent and intense weather events such as storms, floods and droughts — to increased food insecurity.
 - The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an almost doubling of the number of people on the brink of starvation.
 - The **crisis in Afghanistan and the ongoing war in Ukraine** will only push a greater number into chronic hunger. The unfolding Ukraine crisis is contributing to high rates of inflation driving food and fuel prices upwards. These higher prices will only add to the burden of the poor and marginalized families and hamper their access to nutrition.
 - Many people around the world are too poor to either buy food or to access the resources they need to grow, harvest and store their food. This is the primary reason why world hunger is still a problem.
- The global hunger problem is leading to a **high burden of malnutrition.** Around 150 million children are stunted and 50 million are wasted. Almost 50% of children and two billion adults suffer from micronutrient deficiencies.
- Apart from leading to malnutrition, hunger also results in creating a humanitarian crisis. Hunger creates a cycle that people can't escape from. It causes individuals to be less productive and more

prone to disease, which in turn makes them less able to improve their livelihoods or earn a better income.

India's food aid programmes:

- India has recently committed **50,000 Metric Tonnes (MT) of food assistance to Afghanistan** in the form of wheat. India is coordinating this food assistance through the [United Nations Food Programme](#).
 - Over 22.8 million people accounting for nearly half of Afghanistan's population are projected to be acutely food insecure in 2022.
- India has also extended over a million metric tonnes in the past, including 75,000 metric tonnes in 2021 in partnership with the WFP.
- In the past two years, India has provided **food aid to several countries in Africa (Zimbabwe) and the Middle East/West Asia (Yemen)** to overcome natural calamities and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- India's action in the domain of food assistance is based on the **concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** – a humanitarian outlook that sees the world as one family. This concept is relevant not just for global peace, cooperation, environment protection but also for humanitarian response including rising global hunger and leaving no one behind.

Significance of humanitarian food assistance:

- Humanitarian food assistance and partnerships in ensuring nutritional security will **contribute towards global peace**.
 - Research undertaken by the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** notes food assistance programmes contributing to creating conditions for peace by bolstering social cohesion, strengthening the link between citizen and state, and resolving grievances within and between communities.
 - The **Nobel Peace Prize to the World Food Programme in 2020** cited the WFP's role and the importance of access to food in maintaining peace.

Way forward:

- India while addressing domestic nutritional security must also take up more responsibility in delivering the **goal of Zero Global Hunger**. In this direction, India should build a robust partnership with the World Food Programme to contribute to addressing food emergencies

Nut Graf

Given the linkage between global hunger and global peace and development, all countries should work towards addressing the global hunger challenge. This requires both humanitarian food assistance in the short run and the creation of food safety nets and resilient livelihoods in the long run.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Shifting sands

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

Prelims: Negev summit; Abraham accords

Mains: Shift in West Asian geopolitics and factors contributing to this change.

Context:

- The Negev summit between the **foreign ministers of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Morocco, Israel and the United States** took place in southern Israel. The participating countries discussed security partnerships, Iran and other related issues.
- The Negev summit signals a **decisive shift in West Asian geopolitics**.

Changed dynamics of West Asian geopolitics:

- Israel has strengthened its relationship with major Arab countries like Egypt and UAE post the **Abraham Accords in 2020**.
- The countries have stepped up their **economic and security cooperation** ever since.
- Israeli Prime Minister visited both Egypt and Abu Dhabi in a first for Israel-Arab relations.
- Arab-Israeli relations have gained a new dimension in recent times with Israel proposing a “**Middle East defensive envelope**” featuring Israel’s advanced missile defence systems during the ongoing Negev summit.

Factors contributing to this changed dynamics:

- The new emerging partnership between the erstwhile foes has been the **result of regional and global developments**.

Shrinking U.S. security umbrella in the region:

- The bedrock of the partnership between the U.S. and its Gulf allies was America’s security guarantees in return for the seamless supply of oil. However, the U.S. has failed to live up to its security promises in the midst of **attacks on Saudi Arabia and UAE by Yemen’s Houthis backed by Iran**.
- This has forced the regional players with **common security interests** to come together under a new collective security model.

Different perspectives on the Iran nuclear deal:

- While the U.S. sees the revival of the nuclear deal with Iran as the best way to tackle Iran’s nuclear ambitions, the Gulf countries and Israel argue that removing the sanctions on Iran would eventually strengthen Iran’s standing in the region. This they argue could be used by Iran to not only build its own conventional military capabilities but also would result in Iran stepping up support for its **proxies like Hezbollah and the Houthis**.
- The **shared concerns vis-a-vis Iran** are pushing the Arab countries closer to Israel.

Recommendations:

- While the emergence of a new collective security model is a natural reaction to the U.S.’s declining security role and the possibility of a stronger Iran, Israel, Arab countries and the U.S. should seek some kind of detente with Iran to ensure lasting peace and security in the region.

The U.S.'s declining security role and the possibility of a stronger Iran with the finalization of the nuclear deal is leading to the emergence of a new collective security model comprising Israel and the Arab countries.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Identity and privacy

This article discusses the major concerns with the proposed **Prisoners' identification Bill**. This topic has been previously discussed in the following article.

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis of 29th March 2022](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. IMEX-22

Syllabus: GS 3; Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Prelims: Facts about IMEX-22 and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

Context

Maritime exercise, **IMEX-22**, was held in Goa between March 26 to 30 2022.

IMEX-22

- IMEX-22 is the first edition of the maritime exercise conducted by the regional grouping [Indian Ocean Naval Symposium \(IONS\)](#).
- The exercise saw the participation of 16 countries of the 25 member nations of IONS.
- The exercise is said to provide a crucial platform for regional navies to collaborate and collectively respond to natural disasters in the region.
- The exercise further paves the way for improving regional cooperation.

G. Tidbits

1. Import of plastic bottles for waste processing allowed

- The Environment Ministry has allowed the import of containers made of polyethylene terephthalate, as plastic waste.
- The import of plastic bottles for waste into India was banned in 2019.
- The ban was revoked after several representatives of companies in the business requested permission to import, saying that there was very little waste available for them in India.
- However, critics opine that major measures are needed to increase the collection of local waste within the country and be recycled first, before importing waste from other countries.
 - They feel that there is no shortage of polyethylene terephthalate waste in India.
 - About 14 lakh tonnes of such plastic are consumed annually in India out of which 2.8 lakh tonnes of plastic waste never gets collected.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. ISRO's 'Project NETRA', recently seen in the news, is best defined as:

- an early warning system in space to detect debris and other hazards to Indian satellites
- an early warning system in space to detect any harmful object coming towards the Earth, specifically India
- a part of India's indigenous navigation system
- a program to ensure 24×7 surveillance of India's border areas

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **The Network for Space Objects Tracking and Analysis (NETRA) project** is an initiative by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to develop an early warning system in space to detect debris and hazards to the Indian satellites and space assets.

Q2. Consider the following statements with regards to Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana:

- Beneficiaries are offered reimbursement of their medical expenditures upto Rs. 5 Lakh per family.
- The funding for the scheme is shared – 60:40 for all states and UTs with their own legislature, 90:10 in Northeast states and Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand and 100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.
- The National Health Authority (NHA) has been constituted as an autonomous entity under the Society Registration Act, 1860 for the effective implementation of PM-JAY in alliance with state governments.

Choose the correct code:

- 1 & 2 only
- 2 & 3 only
- 1 & 3 only
- All of the above

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The scheme offers eligible families an insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh per annum per family.
 - However, **PMJAY provides cashless and paperless** access to services for the beneficiary and **hence reimbursement cannot be availed**.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, the funding for the scheme is shared – 60:40 for all states and UTs with their own legislature, 90:10 in Northeast states and Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand and 100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.

- **Statement 3 is correct**, The National Health Authority (NHA) has been constituted as an autonomous entity under the Society Registration Act, 1860 for effective implementation of PM-JAY in alliance with state governments.
 - The State Health Agency (SHA) is the nodal agency responsible for the implementation of AB PM-JAY in the State.

Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to the International Space Station:

1. The space station flies at an average altitude of 400 miles above Earth.
2. An international partnership of five space agencies from 15 countries operates the International Space Station.
3. It can be seen from Earth without the use of a telescope by night sky observers who know when and where to look.

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The space station flies at an average altitude of **400 kilometres** above the Earth.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, Five different space agencies representing 15 countries built the International Space Station and continue to operate it today.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, It can be seen from Earth without the use of a telescope by night sky observers who know when and where to look.

Q4. The Vital-Vidhvansak, the first monthly journal to have the untouchable people as its target audience was published by

- a. Gopal Baba Walangkar
- b. Jyotiba Phule
- c. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
- d. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Vital-Vidhvansak (Destroyer of Brahmanical or Ceremonial Pollution) was the first monthly journal to have the untouchable people as its target audience.

- It was published by **Gopal Baba Walangkar**.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India's journey from chronic food shortage to surplus producer and partnering with the WFP has lessons for the developing world. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Agriculture]
2. The signing of Abraham Accords has led to shifting of the geopolitical fulcrum in West Asia. Examine. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-2, International Relations]

