

18 May 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water.

- Rabindranath Tagore



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Category: ECONOMY

1. Boon to ban: How the wheat export story changed in two months

Syllabus: Major Crops - Cropping Patterns in various parts of the country

Prelims: India's standing with respect to wheat production and exports

Mains: Impediments for India's attempts to increase wheat exports

Context:

- The Union government **banning the export of wheat.**

Background:

India's wheat exports:

- The [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#) had disrupted the global wheat supply chains given that these two countries alone accounted for a substantial portion of the global wheat production. This provided an opportunity for India to boost its own wheat exports to fill in the global shortage.
- Apart from increasing wheat exports to the current importers, India also sought to sign agreements with other countries to establish newer markets for Indian wheat. In this direction, India had even sent **trade delegations** to countries like Morocco, Tunisia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Turkey, Algeria and Lebanon to explore possibilities of boosting wheat exports.
- Wheat exports in the 2021-2022 financial year were estimated at 7.85 million tonnes, a quadrupling from 2.1 million tonnes in the previous year. **Competitive price, acceptable quality, availability of surplus wheat** and geopolitical reasons have resulted in a sharp rise in wheat exports from India. Exports this fiscal are expected to be almost **10 million tonnes worth \$3 billion.**

Reasons for the ban on wheat exports:

Decrease in production and procurement:

- The **extreme temperatures recorded in March and April across North India**, which has resulted in reduced wheat production, is one of the main reasons for the ban on wheat exports.
 - Maximum temperatures in Punjab, one of the prominent wheat-producing states was over 6°C higher than the usual, compared to the long period average. The actual maximum temperatures have been over the 40°C mark across the State in April.
 - The wheat production estimate for the crop year ending June has reduced from the previous **111.32 million tonnes (MT) to 105 MT**.
- The procurement of wheat has also been low compared to previous years.
- The decrease in production estimates and a considerable fall in wheat procurement have raised concerns that **domestic consumption may get impacted**.

Increase in domestic price:

- The domestic price of wheat and wheat flour has been on the rise with both **wholesale and retail inflation** reaching record highs. Given that wheat remains one of the important food grains, this price rise was adding to the burden of Indian households.

Food security concerns:

- India's pitch to boost wheat exports has been opposed by food security campaigners who have instead insisted on a more cautious approach. They emphasize that ensuring **sufficient availability of wheat grains for internal consumption and ensuring the stability of prices domestically** should be more important priorities rather than increasing exports.
- They have argued that the increase in exports should not be done at the cost of domestic consumption.

Nut Graf

While India's decision to ban wheat exports would be bad news for the global food security scenario, which has been badly affected by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the decision makes sense given the domestic compulsions of ensuring sufficient domestic availability of wheat and at affordable prices.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Symbolism and beyond

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood relations

Prelims: India-Nepal Relation, Kalapani issue, Buddhism

Mains: Significance of Nepal in India's neighbourhood policy and the scope to take the relationship forward.

Context: The article provides an insight into Prime Minister Modi's visit to Lumbini in Nepal on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti.

About the Visit:

- The visit by the Prime Minister of India was an attempt to establish a symbolic way to expand the India-Nepal relationship through religious diplomacy.
- The Prime Ministers of both countries led the foundation stone for the India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage in the Lumbini Monastic Zone.
- The centre has been jointly established with a shared vision to promote and propagate the values and principles of the Buddha's teachings. The objective is to find shared solutions to global problems.
- This centre is envisaged to play a role in challenging China's emerging influence in Nepal.
- The assertion by the Indian Prime Minister in the recognition of Lumbini as the birthplace of Gautama Buddha was welcomed and resolved the issues related to the actual birthplace of the Buddha to a certain extent.
- The visit was accompanied by the signing of MoUs between the two governments.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed for the development and implementation of the Arun- 4 hydropower project.
- Overall, the visit exemplified a sign of refurbishing the India-Nepal relationship after the situation became hostile due to the [Kalapani dispute](#).

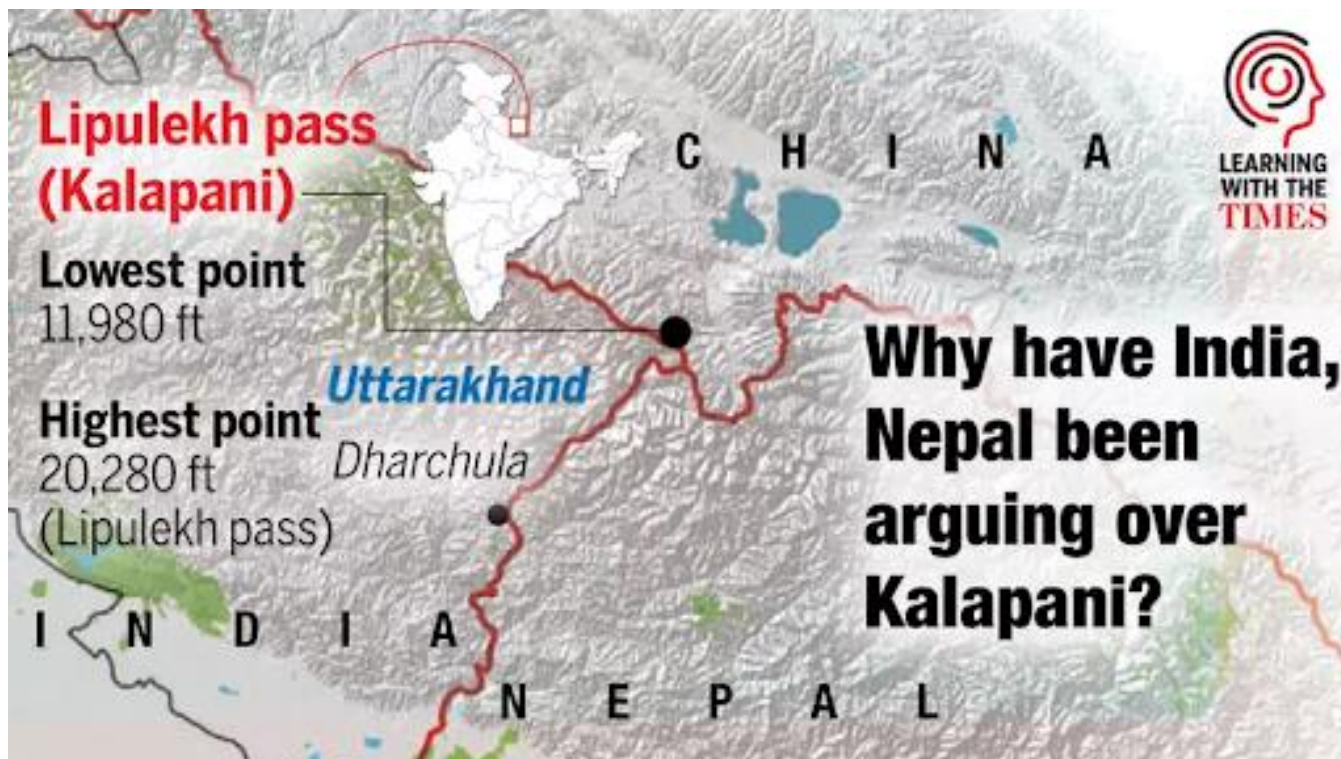


Image source: The Times of India

Significance of Lumbini:

- It highlights the strong cultural ties between the two countries that share a special relationship which was nurtured by the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in 1950.
- Lumbini is believed to be a holy place and according to Buddhist traditions, Queen Mahamayadevi gave birth to Siddhartha Gautama at around 623 B.C.
- It is believed that Lord Buddha was born in the gardens of Lumbini which transformed into a place of pilgrimage.
- Lumbini is recognised as the holiest and most important place in Nepal and it is listed as a World Heritage Site by [UNESCO](#).
- The visit took place at the eventful time of Vaishakha Buddha Purnima at Lumbini which was organised by the Lumbini Development Trust under the aegis of the Government of Nepal.
- In the light of art and culture, [Buddhism](#) has been an integral part of India's cultural heritage and a prominent thread of its diplomatic relationship with Nepal. Lumbini acts as the testimony to such a cultural bond.
- The construction of the Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage will be undertaken by the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) in association with Lumbini Development Trust and will be financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. The IBC is a grantee body under the Ministry of Culture, GoI.
- IBC is headquartered in New Delhi and was established in 2013 acting as an International Buddhist umbrella body serving as a common platform for Buddhists worldwide.

- Lumbini will house the symbolic Buddhist centre reflecting the enriching friendship between India and Nepal and the centre will be the first **Net Zero Emission** building in Nepal. It is significant for India to be at the forefront of such an initiative.

Way ahead

- There are a group of experts who believes that the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Nepal was an essential step but it served a limited purpose in the midst of a growing Chinese influence in the region. There needs to be a multidimensional approach that India must advocate to strengthen its ties with Nepal.
- India needs to develop new avenues of collaboration that involve developmental, economic and geopolitical subjects to offer dynamism to the relationship.
- The revival of the India-Nepal friendship must be taken forward with a focus on infrastructure development in Nepal which includes hydropower projects, transportation and connectivity that would benefit the citizens.
- This will pave the way for the Indian government to retain a substantial role in partnering with the Nepal regime in development, progress and opportunities.

Read more about [India - Nepal Relations](#) in the link shared.

Nut Graf

The India-Nepal partnership needs to be expanded to more meaningful economic and geopolitical areas beyond an emphasis only on cultural ties. This will embolden the relationship between the two countries and take it further.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Stagflation

Syllabus: GS 3, Economy

Prelims: Stagflation; Phillips curve

- Stagflation refers to an economic situation marked by **stagnant economic output and high price inflation**.
 - Stagflation was observed during the 1970s in the U.S. economy when it witnessed high inflation rates due to oil shock and negative economic growth.

- As per the traditional economic models characterized by Keynesian economists, an economy can either experience high inflation or stagnant economic output, but never both at the same time. This is also keeping in line with the observations made in the **Phillips curve which noted a negative relationship between unemployment and inflation**.
 - As per the Philips curve, when unemployment is high, inflation is low and when unemployment is low, inflation is high.

Read more on [stagflation](#) in the linked article.

2. It is Navy's primary objective to keep Indo-Pacific safe: Rajnath

Syllabus: GS 3, Defence and Internal Security

Prelims: Project-15B; Project-17A

Context:

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched two frontline warships at Mazagon Docks Limited (MDL) in Mumbai.

Details:

- The two ships launched include the following.
 - **Surat - Destroyer**. It is the fourth and last ship of **Project-15B**
 - The Visakhapatnam-class destroyers, also classified as P-15B, are a class of guided-missile destroyers currently being built for the Indian Navy.
 - **Udaygiri - Stealth frigate**. It is the third ship of **Project-17A**.
 - The Nilgiri-class stealth frigates, also known as Project 17A frigates, are being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders for the Indian Navy.
- Both these ships were indigenously developed.
- The defence minister in his speech noted the **importance of the Indo-Pacific region** both from strategic as well as economic points of view for India and highlighted the efforts being taken to develop a strong naval force for India.
- He stressed India's resolve to **keep the Indo-Pacific open, safe and secure** while supporting consensus-based principles, a rule-based and stable maritime order.

1. '1 in 6 global deaths in 2019 linked to pollution'

- A report recently published in The Lancet Planetary Health, notes that **pollution caused nearly nine million deaths in 2019, or about one in six deaths worldwide.**
- While the number of deaths from pollution sources associated with extreme poverty (such as indoor air pollution and water pollution) fell, deaths attributable to industrial pollution (such as ambient air pollution and chemical pollution) have increased.
- A report by The Lancet in 2019 noted that **air pollution caused the deaths of about 1.67 million Indians in 2019.**

2. 'Prepare for multi-domain challenges'

- Delivering an address at Defence Services Staff College in Wellington, Tamil Nadu, Vice-President, M. Venkaiah Naidu noted the multiple security challenges faced by India in the increasingly complex and unpredictable geopolitical environment.
- The Vice President noted that the **hybrid nature of conflicts with the increasing use of drones and cyber warfare** marked a paradigm shift in defence and India should plan accordingly.
- The Vice President emphasized the need to achieve **self-reliance in defence and aerospace technology.**

3. Russia jumps to fourth in India oil supply

- **Russia has become the fourth-largest oil supplier to India** in April 2022.
 - Russia was the 10th largest supplier to India in March. The upward trend in crude oil prices seems to have pushed India into buying more crude oil from Russia. Russia's share in India's oil purchases rose to a record 6% in April.
- **India is the world's third-largest oil consumer and importer.**

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the given statements with respect to the Dead Sea is/are correct? (Medium)

1. It is the lowest waterbody on Earth, with the lowest elevation on land.
2. The Dead Sea is bordered by the West Bank, Jordan, and Gaza Strip.
3. It is the world's largest hypersaline lake.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Dead Sea is bordered by Jordan to the east and Israel and the West Bank to the west. It lies in the Jordan Rift Valley, and its main tributary is the Jordan River.
- The Dead Sea is 306 m deep, the deepest hypersaline lake in the world.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to the National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC): (Medium)

1. The council is chaired by the Minister of Corporate Affairs.
2. It consists of non-official members, to be nominated by the Central Government.
3. The term of the non-official members of the Startup Advisory Council is five years.

Which of the given statements is/are incorrect?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) had constituted the National Startup Advisory Council to advise the Government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.
- The Council will be chaired by the Commerce and Industry Minister.
- Besides the ex-officio members, including nominees of the concerned Ministries/Departments/Organisations not below the rank of Joint Secretary, the council will also have several non-official members, representing various stakeholders such as founders of successful startups, veterans who have grown and scaled companies in India, persons capable of representing interests of investors, incubators and accelerators into startups, representatives of

associations of stakeholders of startups and representatives of industry associations. The term of the non-official members will be for a period of two years.

Q3. INS Surat and INS Udaygiri recently in news are: (Medium)

- a. Indigenous Aircraft Carriers of the Indian Navy
- b. Frontline warships of the Indian Navy
- c. Diesel-electric attack submarines being built in India
- d. Indigenously built submarines with Air-Independent Propulsion Technology

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched two frontline warships at Mazagon Docks Limited (MDL) in Mumbai.
- The two ships launched include the following.
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- Both these ships were indigenously developed.

Q4. Which of the given pairs is/are correctly matched? (Difficult)

Satellite navigation system	Country
1. NAVSTAR GPS	USA
2. NavIC	India
3. GLONASS	China
4. Galileo	Japan

Options:

- a. 1, 2 and 3 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1, 2, 3 and 4
- d. 1 and 2 only

Answer: d

Explanation:

- GLONASS is a Russian space-based satellite navigation system operating as part of a radio navigation-satellite service. It provides reliable positioning, navigation, and timing services to users on a continuous worldwide basis freely available to all.
- Galileo is a global navigation satellite system created by the European Union through the European Space Agency, operated by the European Union Agency for the Space Programme.

Q5. Lichens, which are capable of initiating ecological succession even on a bare rock, are actually a symbiotic association of (Medium) [UPSC 2014]

- a. algae and bacteria
- b. algae and fungi
- c. bacteria and fungi
- d. fungi and mosses

Answer: b

Explanation:

- A lichen is not a single organism, but the result of a symbiotic relationship between a fungus and algae or cyanobacteria.
- Fungi provide shelter, water and minerals to the algae and in return the algae provide food.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. What is Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network? How did it help in India's covid vaccination program? (250 words; 15 marks) (GS II -Governance)
2. Governments are as responsible towards preserving our past as they are for ensuring a better future. In this context, assess the government's efforts to give an impetus to museums in India. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS I- Art & Culture)