

24 May 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. India to join Biden's new trade initiative for Indo-Pacific region

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

Prelims: Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) - Member countries and focus areas.

Mains: Significance of IPEF

Context:

- The Indian Prime Minister along with the U.S. President, Japanese Prime Minister, and leaders of 10 other countries, participated virtually in the launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in Tokyo.

Details:

Membership:

- The IPEF grouping includes **seven out of 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**. It does not include Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos.
- All the **four Quad countries** - India, U.S., Japan and Australia along with **New Zealand** are members of the IPEF.

Focus areas:

- The four main pillars of the proposed framework include **trade, supply chain resiliency, clean energy and decarbonisation, and taxes and anti-corruption measures.**

- Notably, the IPEF's contours are still to be formally agreed upon and negotiations for the same are to begin.

Significance of the new framework:

- The new framework with its focus on trade could help strengthen economic ties between the member countries. This gains more significance given the fact that the member nations represent about 40% of global GDP.
- The measures focussing on supply chain resiliency would help build a more **inclusive and flexible economic framework in the region**. More resilient supply chains would also help counter **inflation** pressures.
- The focus on clean energy and decarbonisation would contribute to the global **climate action** efforts.

India's take:

- India has signalled its readiness to be part of the new economic initiative and would be actively taking part in the proposed negotiations.
- There have been repeated clarifications from the U.S. officials stressing that the IPEF **won't be a free trade deal** nor are countries expected to discuss reducing tariffs or increasing market access. This gains significance in the backdrop of India's decision to walk out of the 15-nation RCEP ([Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership](#)).
- One of the focus areas of IPEF would be to set and follow **standards for the digital economy and cross-border data flows and data localisation**. Notably, India has had strong differences with the U.S. and its partners on this issue.

Nut Graf

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity offers huge potential for strengthening cooperation between the member countries in diverse areas. This is seen as an attempt to counter the increasing influence as well as assertiveness of the Chinese in the Indo-Pacific region with its focus on ensuring resilient supply chains.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. World may have lost 11.2 crore jobs: ILO

Syllabus: Inclusive Growth and issues arising from it.

Prelims: International Labour Organisation (ILO) Monitor

Mains: Linkage between decent employment and economic and social development

Context:

- The ninth edition of the **International Labour Organisation (ILO) Monitor** on the “world of work” was released recently.

Details:

- The report notes multiple challenges or points of concern with respect to work or job opportunities.
 - There has been a **drop in the number of hours worked globally** in the first quarter of 2022. In fact, it has dropped to levels noted before the pandemic. This could be considered **indicative of job losses**. According to the report, about 11.2 crore jobs might have been lost during this period.
 - The growing divergence between richer and poorer economies in the post-pandemic economic recovery remains a point of concern given that the lack of decent job opportunities in low- and middle-income countries will only adversely impact the socio-economic development in these countries.
 - The **gender gap in the employment scenario** continues to remain a major point of concern in lower-middle-income countries including India. The number of women who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic is larger as compared to the number of men. Hence, the pandemic seems to have exacerbated the already substantial gender imbalances in employment.
 - The fresh lockdowns in China and the conflict between Ukraine and Russia which would lead to **global supply chain disruption** and the global rise in the prices of food and fuel which would add to **financial turbulence and potential debt distress** could add more pressure to the current situation.

Recommendations:

- Given the direct link between work and standard of living, countries must adopt a humane approach to address the dire situation.
- The focus should be on the **creation of decent jobs and ensuring decent wages**. Implementing minimum wage and living wage will be critical. The focus should be on improving the purchasing capacity of the workers.
- **Ensuring social security** for all workers should also be pursued.

Nut Graf

Ensuring enough job opportunities with decent living wages is a sine qua non for socio-economic development of India.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY

1. Why vaccine mandates are essential

Syllabus: Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

Prelims: Related constitutional articles and provisions

Mains: Arguments for and against the vaccine mandates

Background:

- The Supreme Court in a recent verdict upheld the government's current vaccination policy. However, it termed the restrictions imposed on unvaccinated individuals as being **disproportionate** as it amounted to ingression on an **individual's bodily integrity and personal autonomy under [Article 21](#) of the Constitution**.
 - The vaccine mandates of some states require partial or full vaccination of individuals as a precondition for accessing public spaces, services, or using public transportation.

For more information on this refer to the following article:

[CNA dated May 3, 2022: No one can be forced to get vaccinated: SC](#)

- The Supreme Court used the **test of proportionality** to scrutinise the vaccine mandates introduced by the government.

Proportionality test:

- The proportionality test is a standard of review used to keep a check on the unsubstantiated infringement of bodily integrity and privacy of an individual by the state.
- The following conditions need to be satisfied for any state action to pass the proportionality test.
 - State action should be **sanctioned by law**
 - The state action should have a **legitimate aim**
 - The extent of interference should be **proportionate** to the need for such interference meaning the absence of any other less restrictive measure which can be employed

Arguments against the Court observation on vaccine mandate:

Vaccine mandate in line with the proportionality test:

- States are empowered to act on issues concerning ‘**public health**’ as it is a subject mentioned under Entry 6 of the State List of Schedule VII of the Constitution. **The Disaster Management Act of 2005 and the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897** provide the required legislative backing for state action during medical emergencies.
- The vaccine mandate has proven to be effective in **preventing serious illnesses and reducing deaths** in persons infected with COVID-19. Also, it will help prevent future mutations of the virus. Hence there exists a legitimate aim behind vaccine mandates.
- The vaccine mandate cannot be said to be disproportionate. There seems to be no other less restrictive measure which could help stop the spread of the pandemic.

Community interests over individual rights:

- The court’s view that the States’ vaccine mandates are disproportionate could undermine community interest.
- In times of epidemics, a **community has the right to protect itself from the disease** which threatens the safety of its members. This right is more important than individual rights.
- Even the Indian Supreme Court in the **Asha Ranjan v. State of Bihar (2017)** case had prioritised community interests over individual interests.
- Also, there have been many cases of imposition of vaccine mandates to safeguard the community interests of the society in other countries as well like the U.S. The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld such vaccine mandates.

Could undermine the fight against the pandemic:

- The Court’s observation holding the vaccine mandates to be disproportionate until the time infection rates remain low would adversely impact India’s fight against the pandemic and its ability to restrict the **development of newer mutations**.
- Also, such an approach would be reactionary and not proactive as required in such scenarios. This also threatens to **overburden the healthcare system**.

Obligation on the state to protect the right to health:

- India is a signatory to the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**. Article 12 of this treaty mandates a country to take all possible measures to progressively realise the enjoyment of the “highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” of its citizens. Mandating vaccination is a step in this direction.
- **The Right to Health** is a part and parcel of the Right to Life and therefore right to health is a fundamental right guaranteed to every citizen of India under **Article 21 of the Constitution of India**.

Nut Graf

The Supreme Court's view on the vaccine mandate threatens to derail India's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and needs to be relooked.

Category: HEALTH

1. Meeting family planning goals

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

Prelims: Total Fertility Rate; Mission Parivar Vikas

Background:

- According to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS), there has been a **reduction in the Total Fertility Rate** from 3.4 in 1990-92 to 2.0 in 2019-21.
- This could be mainly attributed to the success of India's family planning programme which has helped improve access to contraceptives.

Government initiatives:

- **Mission Parivar Vikas** has been able to enhance access to high-quality family planning choices. It has been successful in increasing the **modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (mCPR)**, especially among female non-users from vulnerable communities.
- In present times there is a wide range of options available for contraceptives. Apart from barrier methods such as male and female condoms and oral contraceptive pills (COCP), there are also injectable contraceptives available now.

Recommendations:

- While there has been impressive progress, the article makes the following suggestions.

Involving youth population:

- As per the NFHS-5 and the 2022 report by the United Nations Population Fund, there has been a rise in adolescent childbearing in some States. This requires improving access to family planning services to even the youth population. This will help address the low mCPR in youth in some districts in India.

Capacity building among health workers:

- Building capacity among health workers in using the **Family Planning Logistics Management Information System** will empower them to ensure better availability of and access to contraceptives by marginalised communities.
 - Family Planning Logistics Management Information System is a dedicated software for family planning commodities across all the levels of health facilities.

Customizing interventions:

- Family planning interventions need to be tailored around the diversity of contexts, health needs, and populations for whom the intervention is to be implemented. This will ensure better effectiveness of such interventions.

Promoting male engagement:

- Involving men in the family planning discourse should be mainstreamed given that this would not only be gender neutral but also more effective.

Involving the private sector:

- There is the need to leverage the capabilities of the private sector to improve service delivery in terms of family planning. The private sector can offer innovative solutions in family planning, thereby improving the community's access to services.

Nut Graf

Ensuring access to contraceptives and ensuring high levels of modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (mCPR) will remain an important intervention in India's family planning programme.

1. Centre reconstitutes Inter-State Council

Syllabus: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive

Prelims: Inter-State Council - Composition, functioning and associated Constitutional provisions.

Context:

- Reconstitution of the Inter-State Council.

Details:

- Article 263 of the Indian Constitution provides for an [Inter-State Council](#).
- The Inter-State Council works to promote and support cooperative federalism in the country.

Details:

- The Committee has been reconstituted with **Prime Minister as Chairman** and Chief Ministers of all States and six Union Ministers as members.
- Ten Union Ministers have been made permanent invitees to the Inter-State Council. The **standing committee of the Inter-State Council** has also been reconstituted with Union Home Minister being made the Chairman. The standing committee would have continuous consultations and process matters for consideration of the council before they are taken up in the council.

G. Tidbits

1. The devastation in Dima Hasao and its after-effects

- The heavy rains in **Dima Hasao, Assam** and the consequent landslides have severely affected an important railway line passing through this district.
 - Dima Hasao straddles the **Barail mountain range** between the Brahmaputra and Barak River basins.
- This railway link is of vital importance for both **trade and travel**.
 - Dima Hasao is the geographical link to a vast region comprising southern Assam's Barak Valley, parts of Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.
 - This railway track is also vital for **India's Look East policy** that envisages shipping goods to and from Bangladesh's Chittagong port via Tripura's border points.

2. ASHA workers earn WHO's global plaudits

- **ASHAs (accredited social health activists)** were one of the six recipients of the **WHO's Global Health Leaders Award 2022**.
- ASHAs were introduced under the [National Rural Health Mission, 2005](#) and constitute India's frontline health workforce. The 10-lakh strong workforce act as a crucial link between the community and the health system.

3. A new billionaire every 30 hours during the pandemic

- A new **Oxfam brief, titled "Profiting from Pain"** notes the wealth of billionaires in the world has risen amid the pandemic. The total wealth of the world's billionaires is now equivalent to 13.9% of the global GDP, up from 4.4% in 2000.
- **Gender inequalities have also deepened** as women were disproportionately pushed out of employment and have had to face the gender pay gap as well.
- The report recommends **tax measures** to stop deepening income disparities and permanent wealth taxes.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following are the features of Karst topography? (Difficult)

1. Ponor
2. Cave in Section
3. Sink Holes
4. Uvalas

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- A landscape that is characterized by numerous caves, sinkholes, fissures, and underground streams, Karst topography usually forms in regions of plentiful rainfall where bedrock consists of carbonate-rich rock, such as limestone, gypsum, or dolomite, that is easily dissolved.
- A ponor is a natural opening where surface water enters into underground passages; they may be found in karst landscapes.
- Cave formation is prominent in areas where there are alternating beds of rocks (shales, sandstones, quartzites) with limestones or dolomites in between or in areas where limestones are dense, massive and occur as thick beds.
- A sinkhole is a depression or hole in the ground caused by some form of collapse of the surface layer. These are depressions in the limestone/dolomitic region. A great variation is seen in the sizes of sinkholes with areas from a few sq. m to a hectare and with depths from less than half a metre to thirty metres or more.
- Uvalas are types of enclosed topographic depressions and they are characteristic of karst regions on Earth.

Q2. Which of the given statements is/are correct? (Medium)

1. Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) is India's first automated national-level gas exchange for trading in natural gas in the country.
2. The Exchange operates under the regulatory framework of the Energy Regulatory Commission.
3. GAIL (India) Limited is the first Exploration and Production (E&P) company in India to trade domestic gas on IGX.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Indian Gas Exchange Ltd. (IGX) is India's first automated national level Gas Exchange to promote and sustain an efficient and robust Gas market and foster gas trading in the country. The exchange features multiple buyers and sellers to trade in spot and forward contracts at designated physical hubs.
- The Exchange operates under the regulatory framework of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB).

- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is the first gas producer company in India to trade domestic gas on IGX.

Q3. Which of the given statements is/are incorrect? (Difficult)

1. Vitamin D is essential for maintaining calcium homeostasis.
2. In humans, vitamin D3 can be produced endogenously in the skin following ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation.
3. Cancer, Parkinson's disease and dementia are the diseases associated with Vitamin D deficiency.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 2 only
- d. None of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Vitamin D plays an important role in calcium homeostasis and bone metabolism, with the capacity to modulate innate and adaptive immune function, cardiovascular function, and proliferation and differentiation of both normal and malignant keratinocytes.
- Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) is synthesized in the skin by the reaction of 7-dehydrocholesterol with UVB radiation, present in sunlight with a UV index of three or more.
- Cancer, Parkinson's disease and dementia are the diseases associated with Vitamin D deficiency.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to the Investment Incentive Agreement recently signed between the Indian and the US Governments: (Medium)

1. It is the first-ever Investment Incentive Agreement signed between India and the US.
2. The agreement is a legal requirement for U.S. International Development Finance Corporation to continue providing investment support in India.

Which of the given statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation:

- India and the United States recently signed an Investment Incentive Agreement (IIA) in Tokyo, Japan. This IIA supersedes the Investment Incentive Agreement signed between the two countries in the year 1997.
- The agreement is the legal requirement for U.S. International Development Finance Corporation to continue providing investment support in India.

Q5. There is some concern regarding the nanoparticles of some chemical elements that are used by the industry in the manufacture of various products. Why? (UPSC-2014) (Medium)

1. They can accumulate in the environment and contaminate water and soil.
2. They can enter the food chains.
3. They can trigger the production of free radicals.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- A nanoparticle is defined as a particle of matter that is between 1 and 100 nanometres (nm) in diameter.
- Adverse impact:
 - They accumulate in the environment and contaminate water and soil.
 - They enter food chains.
 - They trigger the production of free radicals.
 - They can cross cell membranes and reach the blood and other organs as well.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. “The Indian Government has shown a new vigour in the last few years towards joining new trade agreements.” Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS III- Economics)

2. The success of India's family planning program depends on changing the male mindset and having them take more responsibility. Do you agree? Elaborate. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS I-Indian Society)

