

29 May 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



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Category: SOCIETY

1. Heritage to sustainability, UN-Habitat lays out plan for Pink City

Syllabus: Developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies

Prelims: About UN-Habitat

Mains: Key challenges associated with rapid urbanisation and various recommendations

Context

The UN-Habitat has identified issues associated with Jaipur city and has laid out a plan to increase sustainability in the city.

UN-Habitat

- UN-Habitat established in 1978 is a United Nations programme for human settlements and sustainable urban development.
- It has its headquarters in **Nairobi**, Kenya.
- UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and collaborative action to leave no one and no place behind.
- India is a member of UN-Habitat and the two are working closely to strengthen its catalytic role in the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Read more about [UN-Habitat](#).

Details

- UN-Habitat has recognised multi-hazard vulnerabilities, urban sprawl, weak urban mobility and green-blue disconnect as issues plaguing Jaipur.
- UN-Habitat has based its findings on sustainable cities integrated approach pilot project and a “sustainable urban planning and management” component was implemented in partnership with the Jaipur Development Authority and Jaipur Greater Municipal Corporation.
 - The project has received funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF-6) to estimate the carbon sequestration potential of Indian cities.

Findings of the project

- Jaipur got an overall sustainability rating of three on the Urban Sustainability Assessment Framework (USAF) based on the information collected for 87 of its 131 parameters.
- Experts have pointed out urban sectors which require maximum attention.
- Controlling urban sprawl (rapid expansion of cities) is said to be the major challenge in Jaipur and the UN-Habitat emphasised the idea of a compact city with re-development and re-densification of the existing urban areas.
- Jaipur has weak access to a public transportation system, with less number of buses and poor route delineation.
- Jaipur witnessed extreme levels of drought during summer and also urban floods.
- The newly developed areas in Jaipur lack green cover which has resulted in the urban heat island effect that has disrupted biodiversity.

Recommendations

- Experts recommended measures that increase the green cover, strengthen urban biodiversity, and thereby enhance the quality of life for citizens.
- To address the challenges of urban sprawling, the UN-Habitat emphasised the idea of a compact city with re-development and re-densification of the existing urban areas.
 - Experts also recommended that linking the distance from the main city to the development charges imposed on citizens could be considered as an indirect measure to curb development on the city's outskirts.
- To improve the situation of public transportation, fare integration for different modes of transport and enhancing the non-motorised transport infrastructure would make movement convenient, and reduce traffic and vehicle emissions.
- The 800 dry wells in Jaipur's Walled City could be used for rainwater harvesting and raising the water table, mitigating urban floods and ensuring efficient utilisation of water resources.
- Eco-trails with plantations along natural drainage channels and railway tracks are recommended in the city.
- Experts from the Tourism & Wildlife Society of India (TWSI) said that the urban development authorities should measure oxygen produced and carbon dioxide released each day in each urban complex and plan the green cover accordingly and also select the species of plants with utmost caution since only indigenous, broad-leaved and tap-root trees produce more shade and oxygen.

Nut Graf

As urbanisation is taking place at a rapid rate in most of the regions in India, the governments at all levels and urban development authorities must focus on achieving sustainability in these cities.

B. GS 2 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

Category: SECURITY

1. Twin hurdles hinder India's maritime role

Syllabus: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Mains: Challenges associated with India's Maritime capabilities and the way forward.

Context

This article talks about the challenges that have limited India's ability to expand its ability in maritime security and surveillance.

Background

- Recently the [QUAD](#) grouping (India, Japan, Australia and the US) proposed the **Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) initiative** aimed at information sharing and maritime surveillance in the region.
 - The Indo-Pacific MDA initiative is designed to work with the regional allies to respond immediately to humanitarian and natural disasters and combat illegal fishing.
 - The Indo-Pacific MDA initiative will work in consultation with Indo-Pacific nations and regional Information Fusion Centres in the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands and extend technology and training to ensure improved maritime domain awareness that promotes stability and prosperity.
 - IPMDA initiative plans to build a faster, wider, and more accurate maritime landscape of real-time activities in partners' waters and integrate three key regions in the Indo-Pacific namely the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and the IOR.
 - IPMDA is in line with Quad's vision of "catalysing joint efforts towards concrete results that help to make the region more stable and prosperous".
- Also, there has been an increased interest and requests from many countries to deploy **International Liaison Officers (ILO)** at the **Indian Navy's [Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region](#) (IFC-IOR)**.

Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)

- IFC-IOR is an initiative of the Indian Navy and was established by the Government of India at Gurugram in 2018

- IFC-IOR aims to further Maritime Safety and Security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- IFC-IOR envisages addressing the need to promote collaboration for maritime safety and security in view of the region's importance with respect to world trade and security.
- The Centre hosts International Liaison Officers (ILOs) from partner countries. IFC at present has 21 partner countries and 22 multi-national agencies as partners

International Liaison Officers (ILO)

- Liaison officers from partner countries are based at the IFC full time.
- They collaborate and work closely with their counterparts from other countries to increase maritime domain awareness in the region.
- At present, the Centre has hosted ILOs from 10 partner nations such as Australia, France, Japan, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles Singapore, the UK, and the US.

Twin challenges that hinder advancing India's maritime role

- Infrastructure constraints
 - Despite the increased interest from other countries to post ILOs at IFC-IOR, the Centre is unable to induct them due to infrastructure constraints.
 - Approval from the Defence Ministry for the expansion has been pending for two years.
- Delays in deploying Indian LOs at other centres
 - Posting Indian Liaison Officers at other facilities in other countries is equally important, but there is a huge delay currently in such postings.
 - Proposals to deploy Indian naval LO at the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar, the Regional Coordination Operations Centre in Seychelles and the European-led mission in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH) in Abu Dhabi have been pending for a long time.

The need for addressing these challenges

- The sphere of information sharing for MDA has significantly increased among the QUAD countries and other littoral states in the wake of the increasing naval influence of China in the region.
- Posting ILOs play a key role as they bring in local expertise and in enhancing collaboration and cooperation with other agencies in their home countries.
- It is important that nations in the neighbourhood join India's information-sharing framework as it increases India's strategic influence and showcases to the world that these nations are aligning with India for their security needs.
- The overall improvement in the linkages of the IFC-IOR with the other IFCs will ultimately help IFC-IOR become the database for all maritime information in the IOR.

Nut Graf

The imitations in infrastructure and the delays in posting of ILOs are causing a major setback to India's maritime security advancements and these challenges have to be immediately resolved as the potential of this initiative will be dampened if the countries lose their interest in this initiative.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials**Category: ECONOMY****1. Price rise and GST**

Syllabus: GS III, ECONOMY, Issues related to planning, growth, development

Prelims: GST, GST Council

Mains: The role of GST in strengthening the Centre-State relationship and maintaining the tax buoyancy.

Context: The article puts forth a profound analysis of the need to revise the Goods and Services Tax rates and the impact of price rise on the tax inflows.

An Overview:

- The Goods and Services Tax was introduced as an indirect tax levied on the supply of goods and services with the motto of one nation, one tax.
- Gradually, there were questions raised on the stability and structure of the GST that invited intervention by the Supreme Court.
- Moreover, there is inadequate clarity on the actual jurisdiction of the [GST Council](#).
- The court ruled that the decisions taken by the GST Council are recommendations with persuasive values and are not binding.

Read more about the issue in [CNA](#) dated 25th May 2022.

- There were discussions of revising the GST regime to address the issues of complex taxes imposed on different products due to structural anomalies and to reduce the multiple tax slabs.

- The GST council was tasked to offer a roadmap and suggest changes in the GST rate structure in the short and long terms.

Concerns about the existing GST structure:

- The existing GST structure entails five broad tax rates of zero, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28% with a cess levied over and above the 28% on some 'sin' goods.
 - Sin goods are those which cause harm to society and deteriorate the health of their consumers.
 - Goods like alcohol, tobacco, candies, drugs, soft drinks, coffee, sugar, fast foods, and so on are categorised under sin goods.
 - Some sin goods like cigarettes, pan masala, and aerated drinks, have a tendency to attract cess.
- The multiple tax rates increase the complexity of the tax regime and are compounded by aberrations in the duty structure through their supply chains with some inputs taxed more than the final product.
- There were reports that observed an increase in the GST revenues which were termed as a sign of recovery by the government due to measures taken to tighten the regulations imposed on tax evaders. **However, there is another factor for the record-breaking collection of GST revenues which is the uncontrolled price rise.**
- The wholesale price [inflation](#), which captures producers' costs, has been over 10% for a year and peaked at 15.1%.
- The rise in inflation faced by consumers has been at an eight-year high of 7.8%.
- The government had put forth that the new indirect tax system was based on a revenue-neutral tax rate of 15.5% but the actual revenues were nosedived and took the effective tax rate to 11.6%.
- Irregular rate cuts approved by the council impacted the collection of revenues.

Ways Suggested:

- The government must calibrate its policies to bring effective tax reforms in the country that will contribute to economic growth.
- It is expected that the government will provide top priority to collect more revenues apart from just simplifying the tax structure in the hope of boosting compliance.
- The actual fiscal space of the states will be determined once the period for assured compensation to the states expires. There will be two sets of Group of Ministers (GoMs):
 - To examine more schemes and technologies available to improve tax compliance.
 - To rationalise tax rates to correct the anomalies and consider the merger of different tax slabs.
- Experts emphasised that higher GST revenues shall not be confused with a rise in consumption which is reported to be 2% above the pre-pandemic levels.

- It has been further illustrated that the rise in prices of commodities served as the single most important factor for higher tax inflows along with higher imports, compliance tweaks and a boon in the consumption of goods and services.
- The process of rationalisation of the GST regime will have to consider several factors like the maintenance of high GST rates is imperative for high revenue collections.
- Any merger of GST rates might impose high taxes on some products resulting in the ripple effects on prices.
- This is why there is a need to identify the proper time to rationalise the tax slabs and structure.
- The issue of inflation is a substantial hurdle that the Council needs to address and tackle.
- There are macro-level compulsions rooted in the aftermath of the pandemic, and the disruption in the supply chain due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, for which the prices of goods and services are anticipated to stay high.
- It is evident that the enforcement of a simpler GST regime will take a longer time.

Nut Graf

Considering the significance of the price rise of goods and services in the maintenance of high tax inflows, it is inevitable that the introduction of a simpler and rationalised GST regime will be a time-consuming process.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**1. Is the Indo-Pacific bloc limited in scope?**

Syllabus: *GS II, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, Regional groupings and agreements involving India*

Prelims: *Indo-Pacific Region, IPEF*

Mains: *Importance of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework to strengthen the trade relations in the Indo-Pacific.*

Context: The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) for Prosperity was launched as a new trade initiative by the US at the Quad Summit in Tokyo.

Important highlights:

- The IPEF was witnessed by 13 participating countries including India.
- This culminated in the onset of a new economic bloc in the [Indo-Pacific Region](https://byjus.com).

- The IPEF engages Australia, Brunei, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.
- This group represents 40% of the world's GDP.
- There has been some scepticism associated with the launch of the IPEF that questions the roles, responsibilities and functions of the trade deal.
- According to the officials, IPEF is not a traditional trade deal.

Understanding the IPEF:

- This trade deal has been an attempt by the Biden administration to bring together the countries in the Indo-Pacific and function with the idea of an alternative trading arrangement.
- The framework is based on the conceptual underpinnings of a connected economy, resilient economy, clean economy and a fair economy. These form four pillars of IPEF.
- The IPEF intends to set standardised norms to facilitate trade without more market access for its members.
- It will not negotiate lower tariffs.
- It will allow the members to adopt a pick and choose attitude towards joining only the desired pillars of IPEF.

Read more about [IPEF](#) in the linked article.

America's interests:

- The IPEF is an excerpt from the decade-old Pivot to Asia programme of the US.
- This is a step to re-imagine the Indo-Pacific as a geographical construct that includes America.
- It has been perceived as the stepping stone of America's entry into the trade administration of the Indo-Pacific.
- The IPEF will comprise India and the seven countries of the [ASEAN](#) along with the major countries of the large trade bloc of Asia, the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership). This exemplifies the growing prominence of the US in the Asian sphere of trade.
- The IPEF is a testimony to the Asian vision of the US and its agenda to tackle an aggressive China.

Way ahead for India:

- India's participation in the IPEF retains it in the room on Asian trading arrangements.
- By extending its agreement to take part in the IPEF, India has nullified the criticism of being overtly protectionist.
- As India's foreign policy has inculcated the traits of legitimate flexibility, the country has been open to expanding its trading networks by indulging in bilateral trade agreements like the first-

ever trade agreement with the United Arab Emirates and its active measures to complete the trade deals with the UK, Canada and Australia.

- Joining the IPEF has been another significant initiative by India to express its willingness to expand, explore and innovate trade relations with the spirit of multilateralism.
- The IPEF will also broaden the avenues for India to counter China's virtual control over Asian trade.
- Therefore, it is of enormous importance that India is the only country in South Asia which has been invited to the grouping and there is a huge possibility of expansion of its membership in the IPEF.

Read about the issue in [CNA](#) dated 24th May 2022.

Nut Graf

It is imperative to analyse the difference between the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and the major existing trade agreements in Asia along with deep scrutiny of the effectiveness of the new trade deal in keeping alignment with the norms of a free, fair, open and a resilient Indo-Pacific.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Coccoliths fossils

Syllabus: Science and Technology - developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Prelims: About Coccoliths

Context

A team of scientists has found a remarkable type of fossilization which are microscopic imprints, or 'ghosts,' of single-celled plankton called coccolithophores.

Details

- Declines in the presence of coccolith fossils have been documented from past global warming events, which suggest that these planktons were adversely affected due to climate change and ocean acidification.
- However, recent studies found abundant ghost fossils from three Jurassic and Cretaceous warming events (94, 120 and 183 million years ago), proving that coccolithophores were more resilient to climate change than perceived.
- After the death of coccoliths, their calcareous exoskeletons drop to the seafloor and accumulate in large numbers forming rocks such as chalk. Deposition of mud squashed the coccolith plates

and the hard coccoliths were pressed into the surfaces of pollen, spores and other soft organic matter.

- Later, acidic waters in the rock dissolved away the coccoliths, leaving behind just their imprints which are regarded as the “ghosts”.

Coccolithophores

- Coccolithophores are single-celled, eukaryotic marine plants or phytoplanktons.
- Coccolithophores surround themselves with a microscopic plating made of limestone (calcite)
- Despite being microscopic organisms, Coccolithophores can be abundantly present in the ocean, being visible from space as cloud-like blooms.

Know more about [Coccolithophores in PIB dated Jun 25, 2020.](#)

G. Tidbits

1. Men face sex selection cases in Odisha

- 13 individuals were arrested in Odisha on charges of their involvement in the determination of the sex of the foetus.
- They will be proceeded under the charges of pre-natal sex-determination and female foeticides.
- Pre-natal sex determination is banned in India under the [Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act of 1994.](#)

2. Bihar to authorise exploration of country's 'largest' gold reserve

- The Bihar government has decided to permit the exploration of “India’s largest” gold reserve in the Jamui district.
- According to the Geological Survey of India (GSI) survey, nearly 222.88 million tonnes of gold reserves (which accounts for about 44% of the total gold reserves in the country), including 37.6 tonnes of the mineral-rich ore, are present in the district.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Nano urea? (Level – Difficult)

1. Developed indigenously, it is the first such product in the world approved for usage by farmers.

2. This fertilizer which comes in the form of a powder is broadcasted on the ground near the root zone of the plants.
3. Similar nano fertilizers are available for the other frequently used phosphate and potash-based fertilizers.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, Nano urea has been developed indigenously by IFFCO (Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited) and will be the world's first Nano Urea Liquid approved for usage by farmers.
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, Nano Urea comes in the form of Liquid and is sprayed on leaves, which then enters through stomata and other openings and is assimilated by the plant cells.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, Nano fertilizers are currently made from ammonium humate, ammonia, urea, peat, plant wastes, and other synthetic fertilizers.

Q2. Which of the following personalities first used the slogan “Inquilab Zindabad” (Long live revolution)? (Level – Medium)

- a. Ashfaqullah Khan
- b. Bhagat Singh
- c. Hasrat Mohani
- d. Ramprasad Bismil

Answer: c

Explanation:

- “Inquilab Zindabad” translated as “Long Live Revolution” was coined by Moulana Hasrat Mohani in the year 1921.
- It was one of the most famous slogans during the Indian freedom struggle.
- Bhagat Singh and his associate B.K. Dutt raised this popular slogan after bombing the Central legislative Assembly Delhi in April 1929.

Q3. Which of the following Pacific Islands is located closest to India based on the longitudinal position? (Level – Difficult)

- a. Samoa
- b. Solomon Islands
- c. Hawaii
- d. Fiji

Answer: b

Explanation:

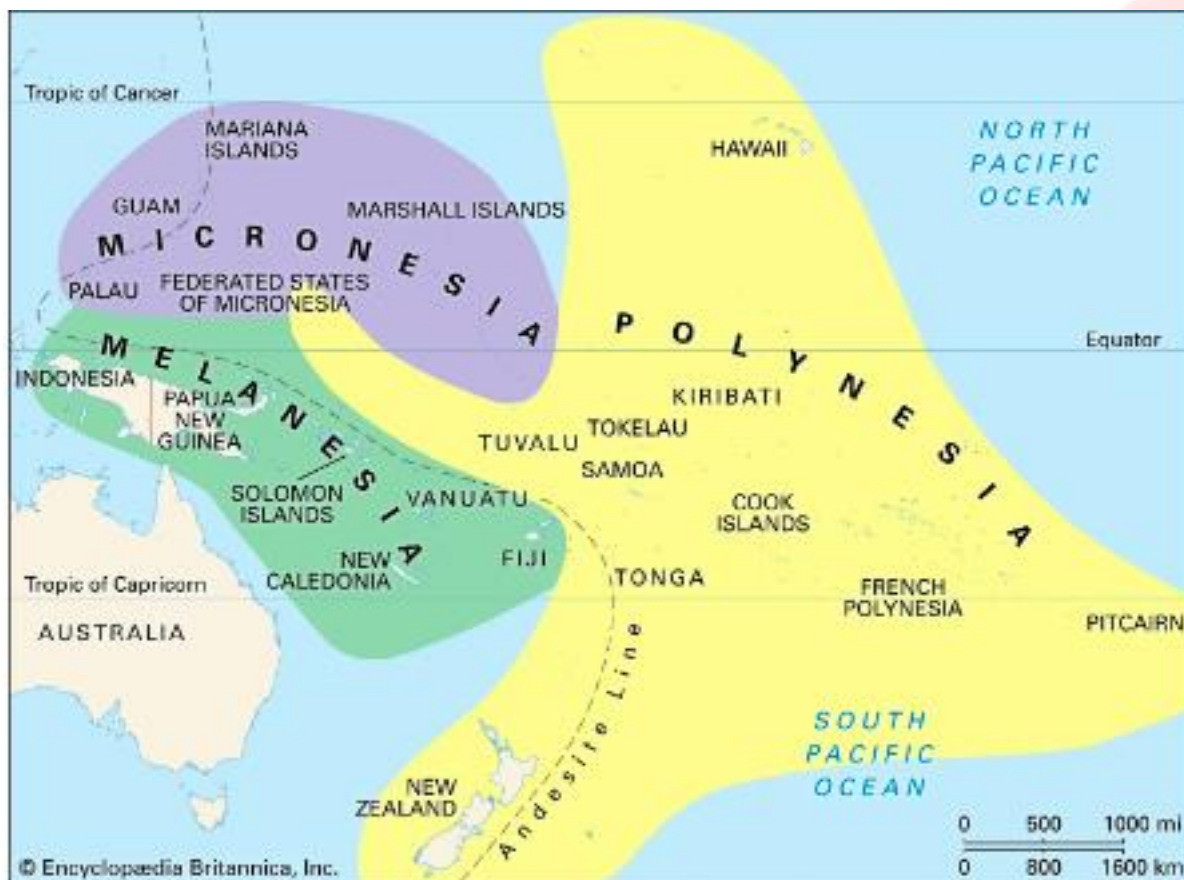


Image Source: Encyclopædia Britannica

Q4. Which of the following statements about V.D. Savarkar is/are correct? (Level – Medium)

1. V.D. Savarkar served as the President of Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943 and was the founder of the Abhinav Bharat Society and India House in London.
2. One of the main literary works of V.D. Savarkar is the “The History of the War of Indian Independence”.

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, V.D. Savarkar served as the President of Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943 and he founded the Abhinav Bharat Society along with his brother Ganesh Damodar Savarkar in 1904.
 - India House in London was founded by **Shyamji Krishna Varma**
- **Statement 2 is correct**, V.D. Savarkar authored the book “The History of the War of Indian Independence” which described the Indian Revolt of 1857.

Q5. Consider the following: (Level – Difficult) [UPSC 2019]

- 1. Carbon monoxide
- 2. Methane
- 3. Ozone
- 4. Sulphur dioxide

Which of the above are released into atmosphere due to the burning of crop/biomass residue?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

Burning of crop/biomass residue emit gases such as **sulphur dioxide (SO₂)**, oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), carbon dioxide (CO₂), **carbon monoxide (CO)**, black carbon (BC), organic carbon (OC), **methane (CH₄)**, volatile organic compounds (VOC), non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHCs), **ozone (O₃)**, aerosols, etc.

1. Evaluate the success of Goods & Service Tax (GST) and examine if there is a need for the government to restructure India's Goods and Services Tax? (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS III - Economy)
2. With Asia already having major trade agreements in place, how is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) different? (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS III - Economy)

