

04 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, Denmark to strengthen green strategic partnership

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Mains: Significance of India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership

Context:

During the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Denmark, both the countries agreed to further strengthen the Green Strategic Partnership.

What is the India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership?

- The India - Denmark joint declaration of the “Green Strategic Partnership” was signed in 2020.
- The Green Strategic Partnership builds on and consolidates the existing agreement between India and Denmark to establish a Joint Commission for Cooperation.
- The partnership is a win-win agreement aimed at strengthening cooperation on global challenges and opportunities, with a focus on a bold implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Know more about the [India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership](#) in CNA dated Oct 10, 2021.**

Significance of India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership:

- India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership has a focus on green hydrogen, renewable energy and wastewater management.
- A number of agreements covering sectors such as green shipping, animal husbandry and dairying, water management, energy, and cultural exchange were inked after the bilateral talks.

- Know more about the [significance of the India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership](#).

Recent developments during the visit:

- **Shipping:** The two Prime Ministers welcomed the Letter of Intent on the establishment of a Centre of Excellence on Green Shipping, which will further strengthen bilateral maritime cooperation.
- **Agriculture:** The two leaders also agreed to expand the cooperation on agriculture by a Joint Declaration of Intent establishing among others a Centre of Excellence on Dairy.
- **Health:**
 - India and Denmark also confirmed their continued collaboration in the field of [antimicrobial resistance](#).
 - India conveyed its acceptance of the Danish invitation to join the International Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance Solutions (ICARS) as a Mission Partner.
 - The Danish Prime Minister confirmed Danish accession to the Global Digital Health Partnership on India's invitation to improve public health and well-being through evidence-based digital technologies.
- **Climate Change:** The leaders welcomed the international agreement at [COP-26](#) on the need for accelerated climate action to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Nut Graf

Nordic countries are important partners for India in sustainability, renewable energy, digitisation and innovation. India's Green Strategic Partnership with Denmark will help in expanding India's multifaceted cooperation with the Nordic region. The partnership will benefit both countries to meet present and future demands through a holistic and sustainable approach.

C. GS 3 Related**Category: SECURITY CHALLENGES****1. Lapsus\$: how two teenagers hacked big tech firms**

Syllabus: *Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges*

Mains: *Threat of cyber attacks*

Context:

Authentication platform Okta had confirmed a cyber attack from cyber-crime group Lapsus\$.

Background:

- The cyber-crime group Lapsus\$ is said to be based in South America. The group is relatively new but has successfully breached major firms like Microsoft.
- Recently, Lapsus\$ shared screengrabs of authentication platform Okta's internal systems on messaging platform Telegram.
- Okta confirmed that hackers had tried intruding into its system three months earlier.

Techniques Used in Hacking:

- The tactics used for hacking by Lapsus\$ include phone-based social engineering, SIM-swapping to facilitate account takeover, accessing personal email accounts of employees at target organizations, and paying employees, or business partners to get their multifactor authentication (MFA) approval.
- The hackers used **Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP)** to compromise and control the computer through the RDP session.
 - RDP is a protocol or technical standard that provides a user with a graphical interface to connect to a desktop computer remotely.
 - The user uses RDP client software for this purpose, while the other computer must run RDP server software.
- Hackers spam a target with MFA prompts and call the organization's help desk to reset a target's credentials. On obtaining an employee's credentials they connect to that person's organization's VPN (virtual private network) to exploit unpatched vulnerabilities to intrude into internal servers.

Nut Graf

A cybercrime group targeted several organizations in the United Kingdom and South America along with software giant Microsoft. This is a matter of global concern as hackers can intrude into computer networks of governments, technology firms, and healthcare organizations threatening the sovereignty and integrity of nations.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Turkey's foreign policy reset

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Mains: Change in Foreign Policy of Turkey and its strategic aspects

Change in Foreign Policy of Turkey:

- The war in Ukraine has encouraged Turkey to quickly reset relations with its West Asian neighbours to cope with the serious geopolitical challenges emerging from the conflict.
- Recently, Israeli president Isaac Herzog visited Turkey ending a decade of strained ties, largely on account of Turkey's support for Palestinian interests.
- The special prosecutor in Turkey transferred the criminal case against 26 Saudi nationals to the kingdom itself closing this sensitive and divisive matter with Saudi Arabia.
- Saudi Arabia reciprocated by removing the ban on the import of Turkish goods.

Strategic Aspect of Turkey's Foreign Policy Change:

- **Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia is one key regional player in the Middle East region. Recently, President of Turkey visited the UAE for bilateral and economic cooperation which will help Saudi to counter rivals or disruptors. Better relations between both states would open new economic, political and defense opportunities, where Saudis may retain their traditional regional role and effectively deal with security challenges.
- **Russia:** Russia provides 52% of Turkey's gas imports and 65% of its grain requirements. Russia is also constructing a nuclear power station that in 2030 will meet 30% of Turkey's energy needs. Though Turkey's official media has criticized the [Russian attack on Ukraine](#), Turkey has refused to join its western allies in imposing economic sanctions on Russia.
- **Ukraine:** Ukraine provides nearly 15% of Turkey's grain imports and also sends annually a million tourists to the country. So far, Turkey described the Ukraine conflict as a "war" and, in terms of the Montreux Convention of 1936, the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits have been closed for naval shipping. It has also not sent any fresh arms shipments to Ukraine.
- **Turkey's Efforts In Russia-Ukraine War:** Turkey co-sponsored the [UN General Assembly](#) resolution that "deplored" the Russian invasion. Turkey hosted the second round of Russia-Ukraine peace talks in Istanbul, amidst some hints of progress at that time. Peace talks have

halted since then; western nations are pursuing efforts to pull Turkey more deeply into their alliance.

- **Regional geopolitics around the Black Sea:** The sinking of the flagship Russian Black Sea fleet has highlighted the strategic significance of the Black Sea. Through its Black Sea fleet, Russia is anxious to project power in the Mediterranean Sea. These Russian concerns and ambitions impinge on Turkey's interests.
- **NATO Allies and Western criticisms:** Turkey's NATO allies hope that faced with the challenge of an expansionist Russia, Turkey would return as a compliant member of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Turkey remains uncomfortable with periodic western criticisms of the Turkish President's authoritarian ways.

Nut Graf

As the Russia-Ukraine war continues and there are increasing domestic and regional pressures on Turkey to sustain in the conflicted geopolitical environment, Turkey is focusing on boosting bilateral economic ties, and cooperation in promoting regional stability, particularly in matters of the east Mediterranean.

Category: POLITY

1. Bill assent, a delay and the Governor's options

Syllabus: *Separation of Powers between various organs, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions.*

Prelims: *Article 200 of the Indian Constitution*

Mains: *Constitutional position of the Governor; arguments against delay in providing assent to state bills by the Governors.*

Background:

- The Tamil Nadu State Assembly had passed the **National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) Bill** (linked to an all-India pre-medical entrance test) and sent it to the [Governor](#) for assent.
- The Governor returned the NEET Bill to the Assembly for reconsideration of the Bill. Subsequently, the state Assembly held a special session and passed the bill again and presented it

to the Governor for his assent. The Governor has not assented to the Bill so far even though it has been more than two months.

- One of the arguments being made by Raj Bhavan is that the Indian Constitution has not fixed any timeline within which to act. This has resulted in a confrontation between the elected government and the State Governor.
- In this context, this article written by P.D.T. Achary, former Secretary-General, Lok Sabha argues against this approach of the Governor.

Arguments against the Governor's stand:

Constitutional position of Governor:

- In the constitutional set-up of India, the **Governor is only a constitutional head, and the executive power of the State is to be exercised by the Council of Ministers**. Hence, although **Article 154(1)** of the Constitution vests in the Governor the executive power of the State, the Governor can act only on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- This view has also been upheld by the judiciary in the **Shamsher Singh vs State of Punjab (1974)** case where the Supreme Court held that the President and Governor would exercise their formal constitutional powers only upon and in accordance with the advice of their Ministers save in a few well-known exceptional situations.
- The [Sarkaria Commission](#) report notes that as long as the council of ministers enjoys the confidence of the Assembly, its advice to the Governor, unless unconstitutional, must be deemed as binding on the governor. This view was upheld by a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court (the **Nabam Rebia case, 2006**).

For more information on this issue refer to the following article:

[CNA dated Mar 9, 2022: The office of the Governor](#)

Constitutionally impermissible:

- Article 200 of the Indian Constitution provides for the following four options for a Governor when a Bill passed by the state legislature is presented for assent:
 - The Governor can give his assent.
 - The Governor may withhold assent.
 - The Governor may reserve the bill for the consideration of the President.
 - The Governor may return the Bill to the legislature with the request that it may reconsider the Bill or any particular provision of the Bill. The Governor can also suggest any new amendment to the Bill.

Mandatory assent to reconsidered bills:

- Article 200 of the Indian Constitution explicitly states that the House or Houses shall reconsider the returned bill from the Governor and if the Bill is passed again by the House or Houses with or without amendment and presented to the Governor for assent, the Governor shall not withhold assent. This means the Governor is constitutionally bound to give assent to the Bill. This has not been followed in the case of the NEET bill wherein the Tamil Nadu Assembly had held a special session and passed the bill again after the Governor had requested reconsideration, and presented it to the Governor for his assent. The Governor has not assented to the Bill so far.

No scope for the indefinite holding of assent:

- Though Article 200 does not lay down any time frame for the Governor to take action under this Article, it does not mean that the Governor can postpone a decision indefinitely. By clearly and unambiguously stating the options for the Governor to exercise, **non-action is not an option contained in Article 200**. Thus, if the Governor does not exercise any of those options he/she will not be acting in conformity with the Constitution.
- With its provision for definite choices through the words "... it shall be presented to the governor and the governor shall declare....", the article indicates that the Constitution requires the Governor to act without delay upon the presentation of the Bill.

An undemocratic option:

- Withholding of assent, though an option, is not normally exercised by Governors because the withholding of assent to a Bill by the Governor, an appointee of the President, neutralises the actions of an elected legislature enjoying the support of the people. The Governor withholding assent to a bill passed by the state's legislature would amount to **overlooking the will of the legislature** as expressed through the Bill.
- Also, a constitutional authority like Governor cannot circumvent a provision of the Constitution by taking advantage of an omission.
- The article argues that such an option **would be undemocratic and against federalism**.
 - Notably in the United Kingdom, even though it is not a Republic, it is unconstitutional for the British monarch to refuse to assent to a Bill passed by Parliament. This signifies the value attached to the will of the people represented by the elected Parliament.
- In Australia, the refusal of assent to a Bill by the crown is considered repugnant to the federal system as it amounts to the overlooking of the will of the states by the Central government.
- A constitutional authority like the Governor circumventing a provision of the Constitution by taking advantage of an omission does not augur well for the prestige of the Office of Governor as well as the Constitutional order.

Nut Graf

The delay in taking action on the NEET bill by the Governor of Tamil Nadu goes against the principles of democracy and federalism envisaged in the Indian Constitutional setup.

2. The court's burden

Syllabus: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Judiciary

Mains: Challenges being faced by the Judiciary and corresponding recommendations.

Context:

- A **joint conference of Chief Ministers and Chief Justices of High Courts** was recently inaugurated at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi.
 - The first Chief Justices' conference was held in November 1953 and till date 38 such conferences have been organised. The 39th edition of the event was held six years after the 38th such conference was held in 2016.
- The joint conference is an occasion for the executive and the judiciary to come together to create frameworks for simple and convenient delivery of justice and to discuss steps required to overcome the challenges facing the justice system.

Details:

Judicial infrastructure:

- The Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana citing the **severe lacunae in judicial infrastructure** for courts in India, had proposed a **national judicial infrastructure corporation**.
- Such a special purpose vehicle, vested with statutory powers to plan and implement infrastructure projects for the judiciary, would have been immensely effective in augmenting infrastructural facilities for the judiciary and thus help improve access to justice.

For more information on this topic refer to the following article:

[CNA dated Dec 6, 2021: Judicial infrastructure, a neglected case](#)

- This proposal by the Chief Justice of India has not found favour with many Chief Ministers fearing that a national body would undermine the state's stakes and powers in the implementation of the scheme.
- They have instead pushed the **idea of State-level bodies** for the same purpose, wherein they would enjoy a greater say in the implementational aspects.

Recommendations:

Push for a national body:

- Given the experience of allocated funds for judicial infrastructure going unspent in many States, it remains to be seen how far the proposed State-level bodies would be successful in identifying needs and speeding up the implementation of infrastructural projects.
- Thus, **a national body may be better placed to plan the up-gradation of judicial infrastructure** and this needs to be realized.

Addressing other challenges:

- Apart from the infrastructural deficit, a **chronic shortage of judges and the increasing litigations** are other major challenges.
 - There has been a lack of adherence to timelines with respect to appointments to judicial vacancies from the government's end. This is contributing to the chronic shortage of judges.
 - The absence of well-considered legislation remains a major concern. The absence of impact assessment, absence of forethought and broad-based consultation or basic scrutiny of constitutionality before the passing of legislation is contributing to the increasing number of cases in the judiciary. Litigation spawned by government action or inaction constitutes a huge part of the courts' case burden.

For more information on this issue refer to the following article:

[CNA dated Dec 27, 2021: Executive shows a trend to disrespect court orders: CJI](#)

- The conversation between the judiciary and the executive at the level of Chief Justices and Chief Ministers should focus on bringing an atmosphere of cooperation so that **timely judicial appointments** and **judicial impact assessment of legislation** are seen as common concerns.

Nut Graf

Closer cooperation between the judiciary and the executive is inevitable to address the challenges being faced by the judiciary and also prepare a roadmap for an effective judicial system in the country.

F. Prelims Facts

1. India slips to 150 in press freedom index

Syllabus: Miscellaneous

Prelims: World Press Freedom Index 2022

Context: Recently, the World Press Freedom Index was released.

World Press Freedom Index 2022

- The World Press Freedom Index was released by Reporters Without Borders.
- **India's Rank:**
 - India ranked 150 out of 180 countries.
 - Attacks on press freedoms had seen an exponential rise in India.

Know more about the [World Press Freedom Index](#).

G. Tidbits

1. April exports cross \$38 bn, deficit widens

- India's merchandise exports increased by 24.2% from 2021.
- However, the trade deficit has expanded as imports grew at a faster 26.6% pace.
- Higher oil imports were entirely responsible for the trade deficit's rise. High logistics costs and the unprecedented surge in raw material prices are hurting all sectors.

Trade tango

India's merchandise exports rose by 24% (year-on-year) to \$38 billion in April, while imports outpaced them by increasing 27% to \$58 billion

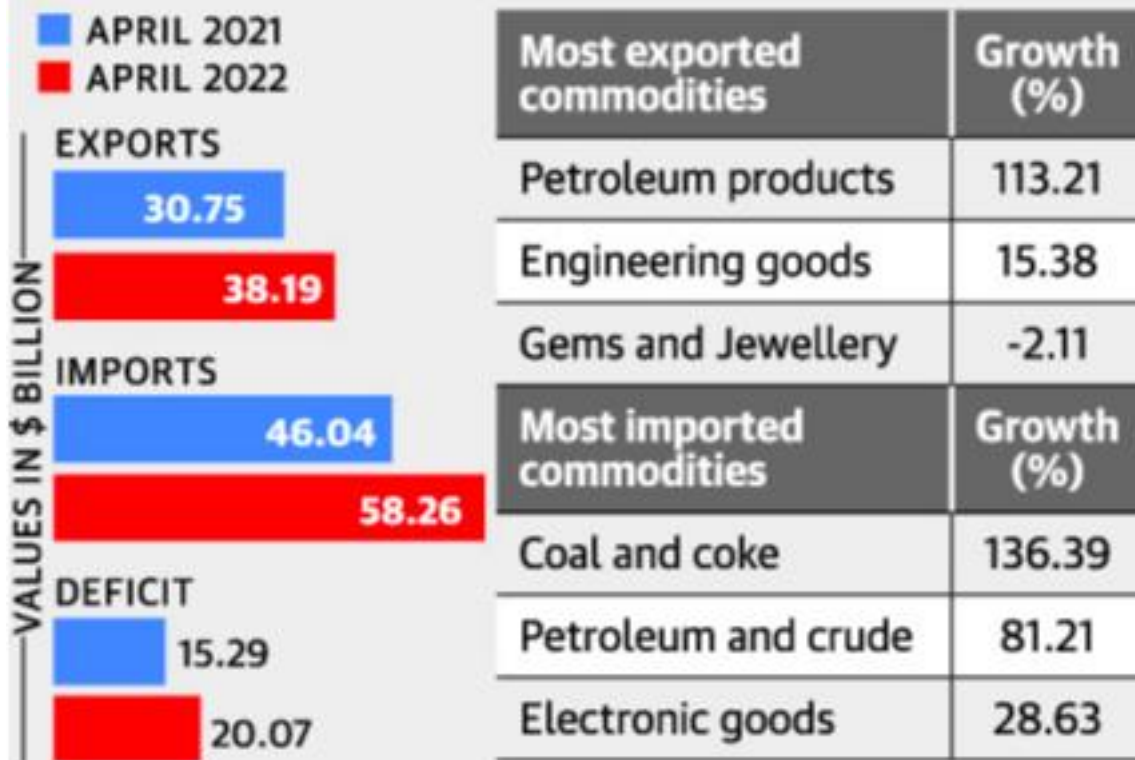


Image source: The Hindu

2. From nutrition to traditional wisdom

- Maharashtra Gene Bank (MGB) is a collaborative process of knowledge generation, documentation, validation and propagation of successful community-driven practices of conservation of biodiversity.
- The country's first gene bank project has the potential to use modern scientific methodology to separate the chaff from the grain from the massive pool of traditional Indian wisdom.
- It can also scout and introduce crop cultivars and livestock breeds for better adaptation to climate change and variability.

3. In a Hot Mess

- In March and April, extremely hot temperatures were recorded across India.
- The average temperature in March (33.1 degrees Celsius) was the hottest in the last 120 years.
- **Impact of intense heat waves:**
 - Extreme heat led to a substantial increase in forest fires.
 - Power demand reached the highest levels in a decade.
 - The extreme weather has adversely affected the production of essential crops such as wheat and fruits.

4. Joblessness on the rise in India

- India seems to be witnessing a **joblessness crisis**.
 - The number of **new non-farm jobs** generated between 2013- 2019 was only 2.9 million, when at least 5 million were joining the labour force annually (NSO's Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)).
 - There has been a massive **increase in joblessness of at least 10 million due to COVID-19**, on top of the 30 million already unemployed in 2019.
 - There has been a **negative growth in manufacturing employment** between 2011 and 2020 despite schemes like 'Make in India'.
 - As against the claim that between 2017-18 and 2019-20, the worker participation rate (WPR) and labour force participation rate (LFPR) was rising, showing improvement in the labour market, this rise was caused mostly by **increasing unpaid family labour**, mostly by women.
 - MSMEs which are employment-intensive have been hit hard by the pandemic. This does not augur well for non-farm employment generation in India.
- As against the progressive structural change trend of reducing the proportion of the population indulged in agriculture and allied activities with time, in India between 2019 and 2020, the **absolute number of workers in agriculture increased from 200 million to 232 million**. This resulted in the **depressing of rural wages**.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the given statements is/are correct?

1. Antimicrobial Resistance specifically relates to resistance to antibiotics.
2. Kerala was the first state in India to adopt a comprehensive policy on Anti Microbial Resistance.
3. International Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance Solutions (ICARS) was initiated and established by India in 2021.

Options: [Difficulty Level: Medium]

- a. 1 only

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. Antimicrobials – including antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics – are medicines used to prevent and treat infections in humans, animals and plants. **Hence statement 1 is not correct.**
- The state of Kerala became the first Indian state to launch an Action Plan for containing Antimicrobial Resistance in 2018. **Hence statement 2 is correct.**
- In November 2018, the Danish Government formally announced its ambition to establish ICARS. In November 2021, ICARS became an independent, self-governing organisation, following the Danish Ministry of Health appointing the inaugural Board of Directors. **Hence statement 3 is not correct.**

Q2. Which of the given statements is/are INCORRECT?

1. India has set up its first gene sanctuary in Sikkim.
2. The Indian seed vault is located at Tanglang La in the Himalayas.
3. Svalbard Global Seed Vault is a secure backup facility for the entire world's crop diversity.

Options: [Difficulty Level: Difficult]

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- India has set up its first gene sanctuary in the Garo Hills of Assam for wild relatives of citrus. **Hence statement 1 is not correct.**
- The Indian Seed Vault is a secure seed bank in Ladakh, India, located in a high-altitude mountain pass on the Chang La seed vault. **Hence statement 2 is not correct.**

- On the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen, in the remote Arctic Svalbard archipelago, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault is a secure backup facility for the world's crop diversity. The Seed Vault stores duplicate seeds from genebanks all over the world for long periods of time. **Hence statement 3 is correct.**

Q3. *Shigella sonnei* - recently seen in the news, is: [Difficulty Level: Difficult]

- a. A bacteria that causes contagious intestinal infection.
- b. An oil-eating bacteria which is widely being used as a tool for Bioremediation.
- c. An alga that can digest low-density plastic sheets.
- d. A soil fungus which uses enzymes to rapidly break down plastic materials.

Answer: a

Explanation:

Shigella sonnei bacteria has been found to cause food poisoning in people. It is a bacteria that causes contagious intestinal infection. **Hence option A is correct.**

Q4. Which of the given statements with respect to the Press Freedom Index is/are correct?

1. It is an annual ranking of countries compiled and published by Transparency International based on its own assessment of the countries' press freedom records in the previous year.
2. The ranking also is an indicator of the quality of journalism.
3. India is ranked 150 in the Press Freedom Index 2022 edition.

Options: [Difficulty Level: Medium]

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The World Press Freedom Index was released by **Reporters Without Borders**. **Hence statement 1 is not correct.** It mainly evaluates three things-
 - **Pluralism of the press.** In other words, the index examines whether a country's media organisations have varied leanings or whether they lean towards a particular paradigm.
 - **Independence of the press.** In other words, the index examines whether a country's press is stopped from reporting the truth.

- **Legislative framework.** In other words, the index tries to examine if the government of a country is actively threatening the media, by employing predatory laws and activities. Basically, the index tries to know how safe a journalist is in a country.
- **Hence statement 2 is not correct.**
- India is ranked 150 out of 180 countries in World Press Freedom Index 2022. Attacks on press freedoms had seen an exponential rise in India. **Hence statement 3 is correct.**

Q5. Which one of the following best describes the term “Merchant Discount Rate” sometimes seen in the news? [UPSC 2018] [Difficulty Level: Medium]

- a. The incentive given by a bank to a merchant for accepting payments through debit cards pertaining to that bank.
- b. The amount paid back by banks to their customers when they use debit cards for financial transactions for purchasing goods or services.
- c. The charge to a merchant by a bank for accepting payments from his customers through the bank's debit cards.
- d. The incentive given by the Government, to merchants for promoting digital payments by their customers through Point of Sale (PoS) machines and debit cards.

Answer: c

Explanation:

The merchant discount rate is a fee that merchants must take into account when calculating their overall costs. Local and e-commerce merchants will typically charge different fees and have different service level agreements. Merchants must set up this service and agree to the rate in order to accept debit and credit cards.

Hence option C is correct.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. What is Labour Force Participation Rate? How effective is it in measuring the unemployment rates in India? (250 words; 15 marks) [GS III (Economic Development)]
2. Elaborate on the issues plaguing the lower judiciary in India and the reasons behind these lacunas. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS II (Polity)]