



Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts

- Winston Churchill



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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The European Union's ban on Russian oil

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

Mains: Significance of the import ban on Russian oil by the European Union and its impact on various stakeholders.

Context

The members of the [European Union](#) as a part of sanctions against Russia's invasion of Ukraine agreed to ban 90% of Russian crude oil by the end of 2022.

Details

- The proposal to ban the import of crude oil from Russia was originally proposed by the President of the European Commission.
- The proposal to ban all Russian oil, seaborne and pipeline crude and refined oil required the acceptance of all the 27 member countries to be enacted.
- A "compromise deal" has also been agreed upon which exempts the imports of pipeline oil to a few countries in Europe.

EU draws its shutters on Russian oil

The European Union has agreed to ban most of the oil imports from Russia in what is its sixth package of sanctions against the Kremlin.



EU IMPORTS OF RUSSIAN OIL
Figures in million barrels per day



EU proposing complete ban in 6-8 months - covers more than two-thirds of imports

Germany, Poland pledge to halt imports by end of 2022

Total effect of EU action: Russian crude oil sales to EU could be reduced by 90% by end of 2022

Source: Bloomberg

© GRAPHIC NEWS

Image source: The Hindu

What is the “compromise deal” agreed upon?

- The EU countries have agreed upon a “temporary exemption” from the oil embargo for countries that import Russian crude via pipeline.
- Although EU countries have agreed to ban all seaborne imports of Russian crude, which constitutes nearly 66% of the EU’s oil imports from Russia, countries such as Germany and

Poland have promised to phase out their pipeline imports from Russia by the end of 2022. This move would terminate 90% of Russian oil imports.

- However, the landlocked countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia as well as Bulgaria (which is not landlocked) are permitted to continue their imports through the **Druzhba pipeline** which is the world's largest oil pipeline network.
 - These countries are heavily dependent on Russia's oil and have no alternative means readily available to compensate for the ban.
 - Hungary imports 65% of its oil via pipeline from Russia, the Czech Republic imports 50% of its total oil imports from Russia while Slovakia imports 100% of its oil from Russia and Bulgaria gets 60% of its oil from Russia.
 - Further, Hungary has received a guarantee that it can consider seaborne imports from Russia in case of a disruption to its pipeline supplies.
- This was regarded as a legitimate exemption as the pipelines do pass through the war zone in Ukraine.

Reasons for the ban on the import of Russian oil

- The Russian economy relies majorly on its energy exports, particularly on the EU as they pay billions of dollars every month to Russia for its crude and refined products.
- As the Ukrainian President claimed that the EU importing oil from Russia is the same as supporting Russia's war, the EU has been trying since the onset of the war to block this massive revenue inflow that can impact the Russian economy and thus roll back its military offensive.
- The EU members have reached a consensus regarding their import of Russian oil based on two objectives namely:
 - Reducing fossil fuel dependence and replacing them with renewables
 - Reducing their dependence on Russia for their energy needs to achieve greater strategic autonomy and energy security

Other elements in the recent set of sanctions

- The sanctions include the cutting off **Sberbank** which is Russia's largest bank that holds 33.33% of Russian banking assets from the [SWIFT messaging system](#).
- A ban on three Russian-owned broadcasting networks from the EU.
- Sanctions on people who have been involved in war crimes in Ukraine.
- Ban on EU-based companies that offer insurance, financing and other services related to the transport of oil to Russian ships.

Impact on Russia

- Experts estimate that a 66% drop in European imports would result in a loss of 1.2-1.5 million barrels a day in oil, and one million barrels in refined products, which might result in an annual loss of about \$10 billion to Russia
- Considering Russia's limited storage infrastructure, the drop in demand would force Russia to find other markets as it is difficult to find other buyers on such short notice and during the time of war Russia might have to cut its production by about 20-30%.
- The ban on EU-based firms that offer insurance and other services that support Russian exports is expected to impact Russia's ability further to divert its oil to non-EU destinations.
- Asian importers such as India have compensated for some of the excess inventory at discounted prices and it is still unclear if the fresh ban would have any impact on Russian military operations in Ukraine.

Impact on European Countries

- Experts predict a rise in inflation in Europe as countries are already facing a cost-of-living crisis.
- The Europeans have been normalised to take cheap Russian energy for granted, and if inflation rises further, the European countries might face the risk of losing public support for these harsh sanctions.
- EU leaders are trying to balance the pressure to take stringent actions against Russia's military aggression without impacting the lifestyle of its citizens.

Impact of sanctions on the imports of Russian gas

- Europe's dependence on Russian gas is much deeper compared to Russian oil.
- Russian gas constitutes about 40% of Europe's total natural gas imports.
- Thus, EU countries have exempted the import of gas from Russia from the ban, i.e. European countries will continue to import gas from Russia.
- But, the European countries have banned oil imports from Russia since crude is more expensive than natural gas.

India's response to these sanctions

- India has increased its crude oil purchases from Russia at discounted prices.
- The announcement of the EU ban has resulted in an increase in oil prices as Europe looks for alternate sources for its requirements and as the prices are expected to stay high India is expected to continue its policy of buying discounted oil from Russia.
- With Russia offering discounts of \$30-35 per barrel, India is expected to make the most of the cheap Russian oil.

Nut Graf

The ban on Russian oil by the European Union has gained significance as the move was regarded as

unthinkable considering the high dependence of European countries on Russian energy. However, it is to be seen how this embargo would impact Russian military operations in Ukraine.

2. How the Indus Treaty was signed

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

Prelims: Facts about Indus Water Treaty

Mains: The detailed history of Indus Water Treaty and its significance

Context

This article written by India's former High Commissioner to Karachi discusses how the Indus water treaty was negotiated.

Indus Water Treaty

- The treaty was signed between India and Pakistan in 1960 and was brokered by the World Bank.
- According to the treaty, India got control over the three eastern rivers of the Indus basin, namely: **Ravi, Beas and Sutlej.**
- Pakistan got control over the three western rivers namely: **Indus, Chenab and Jhelum.**

Know more about [Indus Water Treaty](#) in the link.

Historical background

- The Indus water dispute was one of the key challenges that impacted relations between India and Pakistan post the partition as the line dividing the two countries cut across the Indus canal systems developed over centuries.
- The World Bank intervened and acted as a mediator between the two countries and resolved the deadlock.

Challenges of demarcating boundaries

- As there were negotiations regarding the sharing of the waters, officials from both countries faced the challenges of demarcating the boundaries since there were disputes over the interpretation of the [Radcliffe line](#).
- In 1959, two teams were commissioned by India to address these challenges.
- The discussions between the Indian and Pakistani officials highlighted the spirit of friendship and cordiality which was earlier unheard of in Pakistan.

- The Indian contingent was led by Sardar Swaran Singh and General Khalid Shaikh led the Pakistani team.
 - The principal advisor on the Indian side was M.J. Desai, and on the Pakistani side was Sikander Ali Baig.
- The key goal of the exercise was to achieve maximum agreement with no undue advantage to any of the countries and it was relatively easier to find a solution as the teams accepted each other's claims and several problems were resolved.
- However, a few issues were unmanageable, such as the dispute of the Rann of Kutch.
 - As both sides did not accept to give it away, it was decided to leave it for further negotiations via regular diplomatic channels.
 - Later, Pakistan sent a raiding force into the territory which was halted by the Indian Army and the dispute ended in international arbitration, due to which India agreed to give up a part of the disputed area to Pakistan.
- Meanwhile, in September 1959, the then President of Pakistan Ayub Khan had taken a bold decision to stop over in New Delhi during one of his visits to Dacca and meet the Indian Prime Minister.
 - The two leaders issued a statement in which they emphasised the need to conduct relations in a rational and planned manner.
 - It was also said that the current issues should be settled in accordance with justice and fair play, in a spirit of friendliness and cooperation.

Indian Prime Minister's visit to Pakistan

- As the discussions for the negotiations on the distribution of the canal waters were drawing to a close, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru reciprocated Ayub Khan's stopover at Delhi and demonstrated the friendly relations that were developing between the two countries.
- The Indian Prime Minister's visit started on a low key with the welcome at Karachi being formal and correct, but not enthusiastic but the Indus Waters Treaty was signed on the same evening.
 - Nehru signed on behalf of India, Ayub Khan on behalf of Pakistan, and William Iliff, the vice-president of the [World Bank](#), on behalf of the Bank.
- However, the discussions that followed proved to be unproductive as neither side was ready for major concessions on the trade and economic fronts.
 - Pakistan offered to divert the waters of the Indus River to the drought-prone areas in Rajasthan by installing a barrage in the lower reaches of the river and also to supply the Sui natural gas from Balochistan to the Bombay region.
 - The Indian side agreed to consider the proposal that enabled Pakistan to run a train connecting Lahore and Dacca (Bangladesh) across India.
- Cooperation in the military fields was also discussed.
 - Under this, India highlighted its concern regarding Chinese activities on the northern border of Kashmir and Pakistan promised to study the question with its military advisors.

- Later, Pakistan handed over a significant part of the territory in the northern part of Kashmir to China in return for the Chinese support of Pakistan's claim for the annexation of Jammu and Kashmir.

Nut Graf

The Indus Water Treaty is said to be one of the biggest achievements between the two countries to date as it highlighted the spirit of friendship and cordiality between the two countries. However, other bilateral discussions between the countries have seen limited success due to Pakistan's demands for significant concessions on Kashmir.

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials**Category: HEALTH****1. A case for community-oriented health services**

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

Mains: *Role played by ASHAs; Challenges and recommendations for improving their effectiveness*

Context:

- India's **Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) volunteers** have received the World Health Organization's **Global Health Leaders Awards 2022**.

Background:

- India launched the ASHA programme in 2005-06 for only rural areas as part of the **National Rural Health Mission**. Subsequently, this was extended to urban areas as well with the launch of the National Urban Health Mission in 2013.
- Currently, India has around one million ASHA volunteers.

Significant contributions made by the ASHA workers:

- ASHAs workers have made significant contributions towards enabling **increased access to primary health-care services**; i.e. maternal and child health, for both rural and urban populations, with a special focus on difficult-to-reach habitations and also the poor and the underserved in India.
- They have played an important role in increasing routine immunisation coverage; reducing maternal mortality; improving newborn survival and greater access to treatment for common illnesses.
- ASHAs have become pivotal to nearly every health initiative at the community level and are integral to **demand-side interventions for health services** in India.
- Working with the Anganwadi workers (AWW) and Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), they have been able to facilitate health and nutrition service delivery to the community.
- They have been active participants in platforms such as **village health, sanitation and nutrition committees** for coordination and service delivery.

Strength of the ASHA programme:

- The involvement of key village stakeholders in the selection of ASHAs has resulted in ensuring **community ownership of the initiative**. This has increased people's participation and also improved accountability on the part of the ASHAs.
- Given that the ASHAs come from the same village they work in, they enjoy **better community connect and acceptance**. This has helped increase their effectiveness.
- The performance-based incentives for ASHAs can ensure better accountability among the ASHAs.

Challenges/concerns:

- ASHA workers **do not have a fixed salary** as performance-based incentives remain the major component of their payment. Only a few Indian states offer a fixed amount of salary to ASHA workers.
- The **payment for ASHA workers continues to remain low** and is often delayed.
- This has resulted in dissatisfaction, regular agitations and protests by ASHAs in the many States of India.

Recommendations:

- The recent global recognition for India's ASHAs should be used as a chance to iron out the challenges in the programme and in this direction, the article makes the following recommendations.

Higher wages:

- There is a need to ensure higher remuneration for ASHAs. The performance-based incentives should be prioritized.

Capacity building and career progression:

- Institutional mechanisms should be built in to create ample opportunities for capacity-building and avenues for career progression for ASHAs. ASHAs should be provided opportunities to **move to cadres such as ANM, public health nurses and community health officers**. This would act as a major incentive for the ASHA workers.

Providing social security:

- ASHAs and their families should be **considered for health insurance** and other such social welfare schemes.

Regularization of the posts:

- Calls for regularisation of the temporary posts and making ASHAs permanent government employees should be given a thought.
- This will, apart from acting as an incentive to the ASHA workers, also help cover up for the extensive shortage of staff in the health workforce in the primary health-care system in India.

Nut Graf

ASHA workers have a critical role in ensuring a people-centric primary healthcare service. In this respect, all necessary policy measures should be ensured to empower the ASHA workers further.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. The challenge of reforming death penalty sentencing

Syllabus: Important Supreme Court Judgments

Prelims: Bachan Singh case

Context:

- The Supreme Court's recent judgment in **Manoj and Ors. vs State of Madhya Pradesh**.

Background:

- There have been growing **concerns over the fairness of administering the [death penalty in India](#)** which has also been acknowledged by the judgments of the Supreme Court of India, by former judges, lawyers, researchers, etc.
- The **arbitrariness in death penalty** sentencing procedures by the lower courts remains a major concern. The guidelines as set forth in previous landmark SC judgements like the **Bachan Singh case** are often ignored and not adhered to.
 - The constitutionality of the death penalty was upheld in 1980 in Bachan Singh vs State of Punjab. The judgment emphasised ‘**individualised sentencing**’ and called upon courts to **consider the ‘crime’ and the circumstances**’ of the accused for sentencing. These had to serve as mitigating factors.

Details:

- The Supreme Court in the “Manoj” case noted that very less relevant information about the accused is available and noted how this information is vital for a fair sentencing process.
- The Supreme Court also noted that information such as early family background that brings out any history of violence or neglect (also known as remote factors or experiences) is a relevant mitigating factor.

Significance of the judgment:

- The consideration of past social histories, behaviours and life circumstances of the accused will provide **a comprehensive understanding of the accused**. Thus, it would be an important step towards realising an ‘individualised sentencing enquiry’ as envisaged in the Bachan Singh case.
- The judgment indicates a **shift towards an evidence-based inquiry**, to sentencing that invites expert opinions and reports from a wide range of disciplines. This can help ensure just sentencing.
- The judgment **expands the scope of mitigating factors** by considering pre-offence details such as socio-economic status, education, family background and also post-offence details such as the conduct of the prisoner in prison. This will provide ample scope for mitigation of the death penalty sentencing.

Recommendations:

- Lower courts must be made to comply with the Supreme Court’s decision in the ‘Manoj’ case.
- The lower courts should be equipped enough to understand the rich information that would be made available to them. They can take the **help of non-legal expertise into courtrooms**.

Nut Graf

The decision in the Manoj case is indeed a positive step towards a more meaningful and informed death penalty sentencing inquiry.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. GST collections jumped 44% to almost ₹1.41 lakh crore in May

- Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues in May 2022 have increased by 44% to ₹1,40,885 crore compared to a year earlier (2021).
- While goods imports yielded 43% higher taxes, the receipts from domestic transactions and services imports also increased at a similar pace.
- This is said to be only the fourth time the monthly GST collection breached the ₹1.4 lakh crore mark since the start of GST and the third month at a stretch since March 2022.
- April's figure was higher than May, as it included taxpayers filing their quarterly-based taxes, while the revenue growth from domestic transactions, including imports of services, outpaced revenues from goods imports after several months in May.
- As many states such as Karnataka (60%), Maharashtra (50%) and Gujarat (46%) witnessed increased revenues faster than the 44% national average and sustained momentum of activity in the absence of another COVID breakout and major disruptions, the centre's GST inflows are expected to exceed Budget estimates by ₹1.15 lakh crore thereby absorbing a part of the Centre's higher subsidy bill.

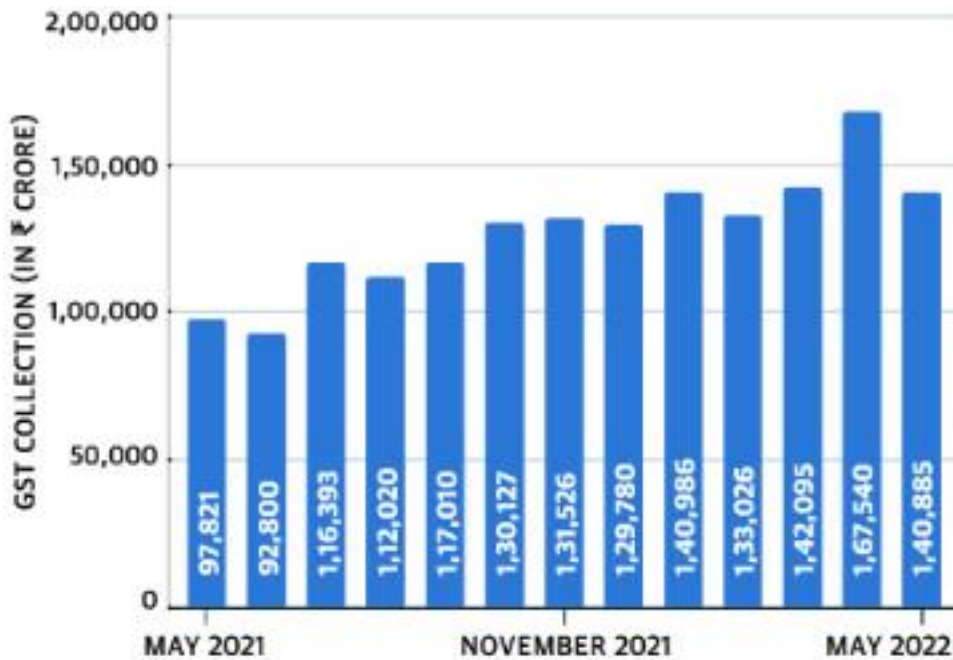


Image source: The Hindu

2. Campaign on to boost vaccine coverage

- The two-month **Har Ghar Dastak 2.0 campaign** was started to expedite COVID-19 vaccination coverage by including all eligible beneficiaries through door-to-door campaigns.
- The focus will be on individuals in old-age homes, schools and colleges, prisons and brick kilns.
- The national COVID-19 vaccination drive has currently ensured that 193.57 crore doses have been administered across the country and about 96.3% of all individuals over 15 years of age have received at least one dose.

3. HAL to convert passenger aircraft into fuel tankers

- Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) has signed an agreement with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) to convert six Boeing-767 civilian aircraft into mid-air refuellers for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- As the IAF has been looking to procure mid-air refuellers, the Boeing-767s will be converted from civil to military certification and HAL is expected to float a global tender to purchase second-hand B-767s from the market.
- Mid-air refuelling significantly improves the range and payload of fighter jets and allows the aircraft to stay in the air much beyond their normal limits allowing better exploitation of the platform's capabilities.

- Further, HAL is looking at ways to convert the Boeing-747s of Air India for a dedicated cargo role.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with regards to international trains: (Level – Easy)

1. The Samjhauta Express ran between India & Pakistan.
2. The Thar Express provided direct connectivity between India & Pakistan on the basis of the Simla agreement.
3. The Maitree Express connects India with Nepal.

Choose the correct code.

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, The Samjhauta Express is a bi-weekly train that operated between Delhi and Attari in India and Lahore in Pakistan.
 - Samjhauta in Hindi means "agreement" and "accord".
- **Statement 2 is correct**, The Thar Express was an international passenger train that ran between Jodhpur in the Indian State of Rajasthan and Karachi Cantonment of Karachi in Pakistan.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, The Maitree Express connects India with **Bangladesh**.

Q2. The 'Har Ghar Dastak' campaign is associated with which of the following? (Level – Medium)

- a. The census exercise
- b. Mission Indradhanush
- c. Polio vaccination
- d. Covid-19 vaccination

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **'Har Ghar Dastak'** is a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to IMF's Extended Fund Facility: (Level – Difficult)

1. The EFF was established to provide assistance to countries experiencing serious payment imbalances because of structural impediments or slow growth and an inherently weak balance-of-payments position.
2. Amounts drawn under an EFF are to be repaid over 4½–10 years in 12 equal semi-annual instalments.
3. Extended arrangements are typically approved for periods of three years, but may be approved for periods as long as 4 years to implement deep and sustained structural reforms.

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct,** The **Extended Fund Facility (EFF) of IMF** was set up to provide assistance to countries experiencing serious payment imbalances because of structural impediments or slow growth and an inherently weak balance-of-payments position.
 - EFF provides support for comprehensive programs including the policies needed to correct structural imbalances over an extended period.
- **Statement 2 is correct,** Amounts drawn under an EFF are to be repaid over 4½–10 years in 12 equal instalments every six months.
- **Statement 3 is correct,** Extended arrangements are generally approved for periods of three years, but may be approved for periods as long as 4 years to implement deep and sustained structural reforms.

Q4. Consider the following statements with regards to the National Green Tribunal: (Level – Easy)

1. The members of the NGT shall hold office for a term of five years and are not eligible for reappointment.
2. The Tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure 1908, but shall be guided by principles of 'natural justice'.

3. NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of the filing of the same.

Choose the correct statements:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, The members of the NGT hold the office for a term of five years and are not eligible for reappointment.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, The NGT is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but is guided by principles of “natural justice”.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, The NGT is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of the filing of the same.

Q5. Consider the following statements: (Level - Difficult) [UPSC 2021]

1. In India, there is no law restricting the candidates from contesting in one Lok Sabha election from three constituencies.
2. In the 1991 Lok Sabha Election, Shri Devi Lal contested from three Lok Sabha constituencies.
3. As per the existing rules, if a candidate contests in one Lok Sabha election from many constituencies, his/her party should bear the cost of by-elections to the constituencies vacated by him/her in the event of him/her winning in all the constituencies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, According to Section 33(7) of The **Representation of the People Act**, a candidate can contest from a maximum of **two constituencies** (more constituencies were allowed until 1996 when the RPA was amended to set the cap at two constituencies).
- **Statement 2 is correct**, In 1991, Haryana deputy chief minister Devi Lal contested three Lok Sabha seats namely Sikar, Rohtak and Ferozepur, as well as the Ghirai assembly seat.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, The costs of the by-elections in such cases are borne by the **Election Commission Of India**.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Examine the challenges in reforming the death penalty sentencing. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS II - Polity)
2. Analyse the significance of the Indus Water Treaty. Should India consider using it as a leverage against Pakistan for its sponsorship of terrorism? (250 words; 15 marks) (GS II - International Relations)