

19 Jul 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



A dream is not that which you see
while sleeping, it is something
that does not let you sleep.

- A.P.J Abdul Kalam



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A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and its stature in the modern world

Syllabus: Important international institutions, agencies and fora - their structure, mandate.

Prelims: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)

Mains: The status of SCO in the current geopolitics and its relevance for India

Context

Iran and Belarus are likely to be the two newest additions to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- It was initially started as the “Shanghai Five” in 2001 with **Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan** and **Tajikistan** as members.
 - With the induction of **Uzbekistan** as its member, “Shanghai Five” was renamed as **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** and came into force in 2003.
 - **India and Pakistan** joined SCO in 2017.
- **Observer status:** Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus and Mongolia
- **Aim:** Strengthening mutual trust among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, research and technology, and culture.
- **Focus areas:** Education, Energy, Transport, Tourism and Environmental conservation.

Read more about [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](#).

Organisational structure of SCO

- SCO has two permanent bodies -
 - The **SCO Secretariat** based in **Beijing**.

- The **Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** based in **Tashkent**.
- SCO also consists of the **Heads of State Council (HSC)** which is the supreme decision-making body of the organisation.
 - HSC meets every year to adopt decisions and guidelines on important issues related to the grouping.
- The **Heads of Government Council (HGC)** of SCO includes the Prime Ministers and leaders of the countries which also meet annually to decide on SCO's priority areas and multilateral cooperation strategy.
 - The council also discusses various economic, cooperation issues and the annual budget of the group.
- The Foreign Ministers Council discusses issues related to the day-to-day activities of the grouping, charting HSC meetings and issuing statements on various international problems.

The Stature of SCO in the current geopolitical scenario

- **The NATO factor** - Experts point out that China and Russia after Russia's invasion of Ukraine are trying to frame the grouping as a counter to the West-dominated NATO.
 - Hence the grouping has not found its supporters in the West.
- **Induction of Iran** - This indicates that Iran is seeking closer ties with countries like China and Russia in the wake of pressure from a few of the Western countries through sanctions.
 - The Iranian leadership was also seen talking about "looking towards the East".
 - This also applies to Belarus, which supported Russia's aggression in Ukraine.
- **Asia** - Experts feel that the organisation's strengthening, expansion and efficient functioning will be largely beneficial for Asia as a whole.

India and SCO

- India was conferred observer status in 2005 and was inducted as a full member in 2017.
- The SCO has provided a platform for India to engage with hostile countries like Pakistan and China to discuss various differences.
 - **Examples:** The Prime Minister of India held a bilateral meeting with his Pakistani counterpart in 2015 in Ufa.
 - The Foreign Minister of India got a chance to negotiate a five-point agreement with his Chinese counterpart during the Moscow conference in 2020.
- India's association with the SCO despite being part of the QUAD multilateral grouping highlights India's foreign policy of maintaining "**strategic autonomy and multi-alignment**".

***Nut graf:** The induction of Iran and Belarus as new members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has gained a lot of significance as this move shows the increasing international influence and acceptance of SCO.*

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. The five-day work week might be fading away

Syllabus: Indian Economy and issues relating to employment.

Mains: Critical evaluation of the implementation of a four-day work week for employees

Context

The Central government's new [labour codes](#) include rules for a flexible four-day work week. The new codes prescribe 48 hours of work per week.

Background

- The debate for a four-day work week against the traditional 40-hour, five-day work week has been in the news for many years.
- After the reduction of working hours in the 1920s and 1930s from over 60 hours a week to 40 hours, which was led by Henry Ford, the idea of lesser working hours for the same productivity through the use of advanced higher technology gained prominence.
- In 2019, Microsoft experimented with the adoption of a four-day work week in Japan.
- Very recently, many countries and companies across the world are experimenting with the idea of the "Four-day work week".
- Trials of a four-day work week in Iceland were successful and about 86% of its workers currently have the right to work on a four-day work week.

Outcomes of the experiments on the four-day work week

- As per Microsoft's experiments in Japan, there was a 40% increase in productivity which was mainly attributed to increased job satisfaction and lower fatigue.

- It was also found that a shorter work week led to higher efficiency in the form of lower office costs.
- Similar results were also found in New Zealand, where a trust management company reported a 20% increase in productivity in 2018 owing to a shorter work week.
- An experiment conducted between February and March across sectors in 2022 by Genius Consultants, in India, reported that 60% of the employers preferred a four-day work week and felt that it positively impacted employee productivity and well-being.

Benefits of a four-day work week

- A reduction in the number of workdays has proved to have **improved overall labour productivity** and **increased employee well-being**.
- Ensures better **work-life balance**.
- This also helps achieve **higher employer efficiency**.
- This move will also **benefit women professionals** and helps improve gender equality.
- A reduction in the number of working days will decrease commutation and transportation which in turn will have a **positive impact on the environment**.
 - This also includes lesser consumption of electricity.
- It is also seen as a means to **revive employment rates post the COVID Pandemic** and address the issue of increasing unemployment rates.

Drawbacks with the four-day work week

- Experts feel that an **increase in the per day work hours** as a result of a four-day work week will work against employee motivation to increase output.
 - Studies reveal that **productivity reduces post a certain number of hours a day**.
- It is seen that a reduction in the number of working days is **not effective in service sectors** such as education and health.
 - Further, it is also **not feasible for sales and marketing sectors** as it makes it difficult for them to convert leads, build customer relations and solve issues.
 - A reduction in the number of working days will also **impact individuals who are self-employed**.
- The Centre for Policy Studies, which researched the possible cost of implementing a four-day work week for public sector employees in the U.K., noted that it would cost about £17 billion as it required an expansion in the workforce to ensure stable productivity.
- Parkinson's law states that "**work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion**" this must be noted by the firms and countries that plan for a four-day work week.
- Implementation of a four-day work week would also **impact employees' current holiday entitlements**.

Nut graf: *The idea of implementing a “four-day work week” is seen as an option by various countries to address the concerns of increasing unemployment rate across the global economies post the pandemic. However, the policymakers and the companies must also acknowledge the current challenges associated with its implementation.*

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. India's climate imperative

Syllabus: *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation*

Mains: *Impacts of climate change in India and key recommendations to mitigate these impacts.*

Context

The article talks about the recent instances of adverse effects of climate change in India.

Adverse impacts of climate change in India

- Climate change-induced disasters have become frequent in India in recent years, which include:
 - The scorching heat waves across Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and New Delhi in 2022
 - Excessive rainfall in south India in 2021
 - Super [cyclone Amphan](#) that impacted West Bengal and Odisha in 2020
- Temperatures over the Indian Ocean have increased by about 1°C since the 1950s which has caused extreme weather events in the country.
- India is said to be the fourth most affected country due to climate migration.
- The prevalence of heat waves in the country has resulted in the death of over 17,000 people since the 1970s.
- It is estimated that the labour losses due to rising heat would amount to ₹1.6 lakh crores annually if global warming exceeds 2°C, with India being one of the most affected.

Recommendations

- **Increasing climate resilience**
 - Promotion of agricultural practices which are not water-intensive and do not cause afforestation, as these two are key causes of some of the extreme weather events in India.
 - The introduction of insurance schemes and effective implementation of some of the existing insurance schemes can help transfer the risks of extreme weather events from industrial, construction and agricultural workers to insurers.

- Diversification of crops and mixed farming can also help improve climate resilience.
- As the impact of floods and storms is aggravated by the ingress of the sea shore and coastline erosion in the low-lying areas, the States must be directed to avoid such construction in these areas.
- **Environment impact assessments**
 - It is important to assess flood-risk zones to manage vulnerable regions.
 - [Environment Impact Assessments](#) must be compulsory for all commercial projects.
 - Based on the Environment Impact Assessments, suitable houses and buildings can be constructed such that there is minimal impact in case of a disaster.
 - Example: Round-shaped houses can reduce the strength of the winds and roofs with multiple slopes can withstand strong wind.
- **Mitigate or prevent climate change**
 - Efforts to transition away from fossil fuels must be expedited.
 - Measures must be undertaken to protect and expand forest coverage.
 - India, being a signatory of the “Glasgow Declaration” on forest protection in 2021 must scale up the regulations which ensure the protection of forest lands.
- **Management of dams**
 - According to studies, close to 300 dams in India are over 100 years old and require restoration.
 - Timely management of dams can mitigate the adverse impact of [glacier](#) lake outbursts and floods.
 - Further, the government must ensure that dams are not constructed in eco-fragile regions and also put a check on activities like the dynamiting of hills, sand mining, and quarrying.
- **Increasing funding**
 - India’s contribution towards disaster management must be increased to 2.5% of its GDP.
 - Climate finance also attracts large-scale funding from institutions like the World Bank, the [IMF](#), and the Asian Development Bank.
- **Increased participation of States**
 - States must play an active role in making use of the centre’s resources, funding and technical expertise.
 - The [MGNREGA](#) funds can be utilised for the construction of climate resilient infrastructure that helps improve agriculture and waste management.
 - States must also extend financial assistance to local self-government resources for advancing climate adaptation.

Nut graf: *The frequency, magnitude and intensity of climate change-induced disasters have increased multifold in recent years in India and this calls for immediate attention towards increasing climate resilience in the country and preventing further degradation of the environment to mitigate the impact of climate change.*

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Growth and welfare

Context

- The Prime Minister of India cautioned against the culture of distributing freebies for votes.
- Calling it as “revvari” culture, the PM said that such activities would take the new India towards darkness.

To know more about the issue of freebie culture, refer to the following article

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis dated on 29th April 2022](#)

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Minority status in India is State-dependent, says SC

- The Supreme Court said that every individual in India can be a minority in one State or the other as the minority status of religious and linguistic communities is “State-dependent”.
- The court said that a religious or linguistic community that is a minority in a particular State, can inherently claim protection and the right to administer and run its own educational institutions under [Articles 29 and 30](#) of the Constitution.

To know more about the issue refer to the following article:

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis dated on 7th Jan 2020](#)

2. Panel on MSP, natural farming set up

- The Centre has finally constituted a committee headed by a former Union Agriculture Secretary to look into the issues of [minimum support price \(MSP\)](#) for agricultural produce.

- The Centre, while repealing the three farm laws, had promised that a committee would be set up to promote [zero budget-based farming](#), change crop patterns in accordance with the changing needs of the country, and make the MSP more effective and transparent.
- The committee consists of NITI Aayog Members, agricultural economists, representatives of the Central and State governments, members from farmer organisations, etc.

3. Russia said to seek Indian oil payments in UAE dirhams

- Russia is seeking payment in United Arab Emirates dirhams for oil exports to some Indian customers as Russia tries to insulate itself from Western sanctions.
- Russian oil major Rosneft is exporting crude through trading firms such as Everest Energy and Coral Energy into India which is currently Russia's second-largest oil importer after China.
- Russia replaced Saudi Arabia as the second largest oil supplier to India after Iraq for the second month in a row in June 2022.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with regards to the foreign trips of civil servants and political officials in India: (Level – Difficult)

1. The Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministry of External Affairs should be kept informed of the proposed foreign visit, only official and not private, of Chief Ministers and Ministers of State Governments/Union Territories.
2. Since 2016, applications can be made for e-political clearance, on the portal epolclearance.gov.in.
3. For union ministers, after getting political clearance from the MEA, additional clearance is needed from the Prime Minister, whether the trip is official or personal.

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministry of External Affairs should be kept informed of the proposed foreign visit, **either official or private**, of Chief Ministers and Ministers of State Governments/Union Territories.
 - Prior political clearance and FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) clearance are also mandatory.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, Since 2016, applications can be made for e-political clearance, on the portal epolclearance.gov.in.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, For union ministers, after getting political clearance from the MEA, additional clearance is needed from the Prime Minister, whether the trip is official or personal.
 - Lok Sabha MPs need clearance from the Speaker and Rajya Sabha members from the Chairperson of Rajya Sabha.

Q2. Consider the following statements with regards to the Indian President's elections: (Level – Medium)

1. The rule for securing 50 proposers and seconders was implemented by the ECI in 1974.
2. An elector cannot propose or second the nomination of more than one candidate.
3. The President's election is held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting is by open ballot.

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 candidate intending to contest the President's election files the nomination with a signed list of 50 proposers and 50 seconders.
 - The rule for securing 50 proposers and seconders was implemented by the EC in 1974.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, An elector cannot propose or second the nomination of more than one candidate.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, The President's election is held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting is by **secret ballot**.

Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: (Level – Medium)

1. India acquired the observer status in the grouping in 2005 and was admitted as a full member in 2017.
2. The SCO also has four observer states — Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus and Mongolia — of which Iran and Belarus are now moving towards full membership.
3. The SCO Secretariat has two permanent bodies — the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent.

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**, India acquired the observer status of SCO in 2005 and was inducted as a full member in 2017.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, The SCO currently also has four observer states — Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus and Mongolia.
 - Iran and Belarus are now moving towards full membership.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, The SCO secretariat has two permanent bodies — the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent.

Q4. Consider the following statements with regards to Monkeypox: (Level – Easy)

1. Monkeypox is a viral zoonosis (a virus transmitted to humans from animals) with symptoms similar to those seen in the past in smallpox patients, although it is clinically less severe.
2. Monkeypox virus infection has been detected in squirrels, Gambian poached rats, dormice, and some species of monkeys.
3. The first human case was recorded in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during a period of intensified effort to eliminate smallpox.

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**, Monkeypox is a viral zoonosis (a virus transmitted to humans from animals) with symptoms similar to those seen in the past in smallpox patients, although it is clinically less severe.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, Monkeypox is detected in various animal species such as rope squirrels, tree squirrels, Gambian pouched rats, dormice, non-human primates and other species.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, Monkeypox was first identified in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and had primarily occurred in central and west African countries during a period of intensified effort to eliminate smallpox.

Q5. The term 'West Texas Intermediate' sometimes found in news, refers to a grade of (Level – Easy) PYQ (2020)

- a. Crude oil
- b. Bullion
- c. Rare earth elements
- d. Uranium

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **West Texas Intermediate (WTI)** crude oil is a **specific grade of crude oil** and one of the main three benchmarks in oil pricing, along with Brent and Dubai Crude.
- WTI is known as a light sweet oil because it contains 0.24% sulfur, making it "sweet," and has a low density, making it "light." It is the underlying commodity of the New York Mercantile Exchange's (NYMEX) oil futures contract and is considered a high-quality oil that is easily refined.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. [The four-day work week is a welcome step towards gender equality and women's career progression. Comment. \(10 Marks, 150 Words\) \(GS-3; Economy\)](#)

2. Discuss the measures that India can take to combat climate change. (15 Marks, 250 Words)(GS-3; Environment)

