

## 27 Jul 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



### TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |
|--|
| <b><u>A. GS 1 Related</u></b>  |
| <b><u>B. GS 2 Related</u></b>  |
| <b><i>INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS</i></b>  |
| <a href="#">1. The killing of activists in Myanmar and its aftermath</a>               |
| <b><u>C. GS 3 Related</u></b>  |
| <b><i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i></b>   |
| <a href="#">1. Power tariff revisions and the state of DISCOMs</a>                     |
| <b><u>D. GS 4 Related</u></b>  |
| <b><u>E. Editorials</u></b>  |
| <b><i>ECONOMY</i></b>  |
| <a href="#">1. Whose GDP is it anyway?</a>   |
| <b><u>F. Prelims Facts</u></b>   |
| <a href="#">1. India adds five more Ramsar sites</a>                                   |
| <a href="#">2. Light-mantled Albatross</a>   |
| <b><u>G. Tidbits</u></b>   |
| <a href="#">1. Can promises of 'irrational' poll freebies be curbed, SC asks govt.</a> |
| <a href="#">2. 2 BSF personnel killed in anti-UN protest in Congo</a>                  |
| <a href="#">3. Third parties joining CPEC is inherently illegal: India</a>             |
| <b><u>H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions</u></b>                                       |
| <b><u>I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions</u></b>   |

**A. GS 1 Related**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

**B. GS 2 Related****Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****1. The killing of activists in Myanmar and its aftermath**

*Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries*

*Mains: The impact of international pressure on the military junta regime in Myanmar and the latest developments in Myanmar.*

**Context**

Myanmar's junta executed pro-democracy activists.

**Latest developments in Myanmar**

- Post the [military coup in Myanmar in 2021](#), the military (Tatmadaw) seized power in the country.
  - The military junta led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing formed the State Administrative Council (SAC).
- There has been a massive protest which is called the 'spring revolution' against the military regime.
- A parallel government called the **National Unity Government (NUG)** has been set up which also has an armed division called the **People's Defence Force (PDF)**, which is supported and trained by several armed ethnic groups fighting against the junta.
- Recently, four pro-democracy activists were executed by the junta for devising and participating in anti-regime activities.
- Reports suggest that over 113 people have been sentenced to death for their role in the armed resistance against the regime since the coup in 2021.
  - Further, the junta has killed over 2000 civilians in total and has arrested about 14,000 political prisoners, of which over 11,000 are still detained in prison.

- Recently a section within the Tatmadaw has questioned the actions and capabilities of the leadership and some of the military and police officials have supported and joined the pro-democracy movement.
- The regime is facing a strong resistance movement, ethnic conflicts, terror attacks and a failing economy.
  - According to the [World Bank](#), Myanmar's economy has contracted 18% in 2021 and GDP in 2022 is expected to be 13% lower than in 2019.

### **Implications of the recent executions**

- The opposition led by the PDF has increased its resistance against the regime and has called the executions unforgivable. The leaders of PDF have said that "the junta will have to pay the price legally for the executions".
- The execution of leaders of the pro-democracy movement has provided a big momentum to the anti-regime movement.
- The move by the Junta has been criticised by various countries and international organisations including Cambodia, the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ([ASEAN](#)) (Myanmar is also a member of ASEAN).

### **The impact of international pressure on the junta**

- The criticism and the following economic sanctions imposed by countries such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, the U.K., and the European Union have failed to make a significant impact on the regime.
- The military regime has resisted the external pressure from both within the region and the rest of the world.
- The junta leadership also did not honour the ASEAN's five-point consensus for the peace and stability of Myanmar which they had agreed to implement.
- Further, the friendship and support from Russia, China and Thailand have helped the junta on various international platforms such as the United Nations Security Council and have also helped the junta sustain against the sanctions.

### **Path ahead**

- Experts believe that democracy will remain a far-fetched dream for Myanmar.
- The promised elections by 2023 are unlikely to happen at the moment.
- Even if the elections are conducted, it is said that the junta will come back to power through its proxies such as the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) with the help of a rigged election.

**Nut graf:** The executions of prominent leaders of the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar by the Junta have acted as a catalyst for the anti-regime movement and the pro-democracy movement that aims to topple the current regime.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: INFRASTRUCTURE

#### 1. Power tariff revisions and the state of DISCOMs

**Syllabus: Infrastructure: Energy**

**Mains: The State of DISCOMs in India and the need for revision of power tariffs.**

#### Context

Recently the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) filed a petition with the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission to increase the power tariffs.

#### Details

- Tangedco urged for an increase in the retail power tariff by about 10% to 35%.
- If the proposal is accepted, this will be the first hike in about eight years.
- The government has supported the proposals to increase the tariff and has said that the proposed power tariff increase will not affect one crore domestic consumers and people living in hutments out of a total of around 2.39 crores.

#### The State of DISCOMs in India

- As per the Niti Aayog's report in August 2021, several DISCOMs (Power Distribution Companies) are facing losses every year.
  - The total losses incurred were said to be nearly ₹90,000 crores in the financial year 2021.
- Because of significant losses, DISCOMs are not able to pay for generators, about ₹67,917 crores were estimated to be overdue as of March 2021.
- Further, DISCOMs are not able to pay their dues because the power tariffs are not reflective of costs.

#### Need for revision of power tariffs

- Increasing losses, increase in the outstanding loan amounts and the consequent increase in interest burden on the DISCOMs require an increase in the power tariffs.
- State-owned DISCOMs such as Tangedco are not able to bridge the gap between the Average Cost of Supply (ACS) and the Average Revenue Realised (ARR) to zero by 2018-19 as specified under the [Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana \(UDAY\) scheme](#) which aims to improve the health of state-owned DISCOMs
- Further, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed the commercial banks that before lending to any State-owned power utility including DISCOMs, the banks should ensure that the entity has filed a tariff revision petition by November 30th every year.
- However, despite the Centre's prescription for periodical revision of retail power tariff, the States have not implemented the same.
  - States like Andhra Pradesh and Kerala increased the power tariff rates recently after about 20 years and 3 years respectively.
  - The Bihar Electricity Regulatory Commission rejected the proposal for a hike.
  - States like Punjab and Tamil Nadu are extending free electricity to domestic users.
- Distribution of free or subsidised power supply to agriculture is also seen as a reason for the state of DISCOMs.

#### Government initiatives to improve the health of DISCOMs

- In order to assist DISCOMs, the Centre in May 2020, announced a **Liquidity Infusion Scheme (Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan)**, under which loans worth ₹1,35,497 crores have been sanctioned.
- The Central government approved the **Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)** that provides result-linked financial assistance to DISCOMs to strengthen supply side infrastructure based on meeting pre-qualifying criteria and achieving basic minimum benchmarks.
  - The scheme has an outlay of Rs 3,03,758 Crore over 5 years i.e. FY 2021-22 to FY 2025-26.

Read more about the [Power Crisis in India in CNA dated May 10, 2022.](#)

***Nut graf:** The promises of various political parties to offer free and subsidized power to users pose a significant threat to the operation of DISCOMs which are already overburdened by dues. In this context, the hike in the power tariffs by respective States is the need of the hour.*

#### D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

#### E. Editorials



## 1. Whose GDP is it anyway?

*Syllabus: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment*

### Context:

- The Union government will soon be releasing the current fiscal year's first quarter's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth numbers. In this context, the article analyses the efficacy of GDP as a viable economic parameter.

### Concerns with the usage of GDP as the only economic parameter of significance:

- Though GDP offers a simple metric to measure the economic progress of a nation and compare it across nations, there are serious concerns about the sole dependency on GDP numbers.

### Does not reflect the interests of the common citizenry:

- India's employment elasticity has been decreasing since the 1980s.
  - Employment elasticity is a measure of the percentage change in employment associated with a 1 percentage point change in economic growth. The employment elasticity indicates the ability of an economy to generate employment opportunities for its population as per cent of its growth (development) process.
- One percent of GDP growth today yields less than one-fourth the number of good quality jobs that it did in the 1980s. As a result, there has been a considerable decline in the creation of new jobs. Hence the correlation between formal sector jobs and GDP growth has weakened considerably over the years.
- Hence GDP growth numbers carry little significance for a common person whose primary concern remains the access to good employment opportunities, specifically, a high-quality formal sector job that ensures the dignity of work, good income and job security, which can help ensure sufficient income for the people.

### Not comprehensive measure:

- While GDP growth numbers are indicative of the average growth rate of the country, they may not imply inclusive growth. Also, the fast-growing economies may still be unable to provide prosperity and social mobility for their people.

- Also, GDP overlooks parameters such as poverty levels and hence it may not be a measure of societal well-being.

### **Neglect of social issues:**

- The compulsive chase for GDP growth at all costs can be counter-productive. This can lead to the deflection of attention away from social issues. This can in the long run trigger a backlash among the general public against governments. This can lead to social disharmony and cause economic disruptions which will only further adversely impact the economic prospects of the country.
- A case in point is Sri Lanka's current economic and political crisis.

### **Recommendations:**

- The administration should seek to overhaul India's economic performance measurement framework, by moving away from the excessive reliance on GDP growth numbers towards a more comprehensive measurement framework of economic and social performance. This could involve multiple indicators rather than just one metric.

### **Nut Graf**

*The sole dependency on GDP number as a metric for measuring economic growth and development is not recommended given that GDP may not be a measure of societal well-being as it tends to overlook social issues and may not imply inclusive growth.*

## **F. Prelims Facts**

### **1. India adds five more Ramsar sites**

**Syllabus:** GS-3, Environment; Conservation

**Prelims:** Ramsar Convention and the Ramsar sites of India

#### **Context**

India has added five more Ramsar sites.

#### **Details**

- The five newly added wetlands of international importance include:

- **Karikili Bird Sanctuary, Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest and Pichavaram Mangrove** in Tamil Nadu
- **Sakhya Sagar** in Madhya Pradesh
- **Pala Wetlands** in Mizoram
- With this, the Ramsar sites in India have been increased from 49 to **54 sites**.
- Wetlands, according to the MoEFCC, are an “area of marsh, fen, peatland or water; whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres, but does not include river channels, paddy fields, human-made water bodies/tanks specifically constructed for drinking water purposes and structures specifically constructed for aquaculture, salt production, recreation and irrigation purposes.”
- To be named a Ramsar site, the wetland must adhere to at least one of nine criteria as defined by the [Ramsar Convention](#).
- India’s Ramsar wetlands cover over 11,000 sq.km which accounts for about 10% of the total wetland area in the country across 18 States.
- With 54 sites, **India has the most number of sites among all the South Asian countries**.
- The U.K. (175) and Mexico (142) have the most number of Ramsar sites.

Learn more about [Ramsar sites in India](#).

## 2. Light-mantled Albatross

*Syllabus: GS-3, Environment; Conservation*

*Prelims: Light-mantled Albatross*

### Context

The Light-mantled Albatross was spotted for the first time in Asia on the Rameswaram coast in Tamil Nadu.

### Light-mantled Albatross





Image Source: ebird.org

- Light-mantled Albatross is a bird species native to the Antarctic seas.
- The species shows broad oceanic or marine habits, and it maintains a circumpolar distribution in the Southern Ocean.
- Light-mantled albatrosses have nasal tubes on the upper bill called **naricorns**, though with albatrosses these are on the sides of the upper mandible rather than the top.
- They also have a **salt gland** above the nasal passage which excretes a concentrated saline solution to maintain osmotic balance, due to the amount of seawater imbibed.
- It is known to breed on various sub-Antarctic islands, such as
  - Macquarie Islands, Heard Island and McDonald Islands of Australia
  - South Georgia Island which is a British Overseas Territory
  - Prince Edward Islands of South Africa
  - Iles Kerguelen and Iles Crozet of France
  - Auckland, Campbell, and Antipodes Islands of New Zealand
- IUCN Status: **Near Threatened**

### G. Tidbits

#### 1. Can promises of ‘irrational’ poll freebies be curbed, SC asks govt.

- A Supreme Court Bench led by the Chief Justice of India flagged the issue as “serious” and asked for measures to curb the promise of “freebies” to entice voters.
- The Supreme Court asked the Centre to discuss with the Finance Commission if there is a way to prevent the political parties from promising and distributing “irrational freebies” during election campaigns.

- Experts feel that the Finance Commission which is an independent body can take into account the debts of each individual State and find out whether the offers of freebies would be viable for them while making allocations to the States.

**To read more about the issue refer to the following article:**

**[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis dated 29 Apr 2022](#)**

## **2. 2 BSF personnel killed in anti-UN protest in Congo**

- Two Border Security Force (BSF) personnel, part of the [United Nations Peacekeeping](#) contingent, were killed in violent armed protests in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Two BSF personnel were working in Beni and Butembo as a part of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO).
- According to MONUSCO, the attacks against its personnel, facilities and operations constitute war crimes subject to proceedings before international courts.

## **3. Third parties joining CPEC is inherently illegal: India**

- India has held that the efforts of broadening [China Pakistan Economic Corridor](#)'s (CPEC) scope are "inherently illegal" even as China and Pakistan held a meeting to bring other countries into the CPEC.
- Any actions of broadening CPEC directly infringe on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity as India has been opposing projects by the CPEC in the parts of Indian territory that have been illegally occupied by Pakistan.
- CPEC consists of infrastructure projects which aim to connect China's mainland with the Gulf countries by passing through the Himalayan range in Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

### **H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions**

**Q1. Which of the following is not a member of the Developing eight countries (D-8) grouping? (Level – Difficult)**

- a. Sri Lanka
- b. Pakistan
- c. Turkey
- d. Nigeria

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- D-8, also known as [Developing-8](#), is an organization for cooperation among Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey.
- The establishment of D-8 was announced through the Istanbul Declaration of Summit of Heads of State/Government on June 15, 1997.
- Sri Lanka is not a member of the D-8 grouping. Hence **option a** is the correct answer.

**Q2. Consider the following statements about the World Economic Outlook report: (Level – Medium)**

1. It is published by the International Monetary Fund.
2. It analyzes and predicts global economic developments during the near and medium term.
3. It is usually published four times a year.

**Which of the above statements are correct?**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 is correct**, [World Economic Outlook report](#) is published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- **Statement 2 is correct**, World Economic Outlook report presents IMF economists the analyses of global economic developments during the near and medium term.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, It is usually published **two times** a year.

**Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to organic farming: (Level – Difficult)**

1. India currently ranks first in terms of certified area of organic agriculture globally.
2. India has the highest number of certified organic farmers in the world.
3. The Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana aimed to promote organic farming provides for technical assistance and it does not provide any kind of monetary support.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, According to the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Statistics 2022, India is currently ranked **fourth** in terms of certified area of organic agriculture globally.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, India is ranked first in the number of certified organic farmers in the world.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, the [Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana \(PKVY\)](#) launched in 2015 aims to promote organic farming and provides technical assistance along with **financial assistance** of Rs. 50,000 per hectare/3 years.

**Q4. Consider the following statements about the International Space Station: (Level – Easy)**

- 1. It is jointly run by the space agencies of the U.S., Russia, Europe, Japan, China and Canada.
- 2. It is placed in high earth Orbit.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The [International Space Station \(ISS\)](#) is a manmade space station or artificial satellite that is habitable for humans in space.
  - ISS is jointly run by **NASA** (USA), **Roscosmos** (Russia), **European Space Agency** (ESA-Europe), **JAXA** (Japan) and **the Canadian Space Agency** (Canada).
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, ISS is placed in **low earth orbit**.

**Q5. Who among the following Mughal Emperors shifted emphasis from illustrated manuscripts to album and individual portrait? (Level – Medium) PYQ (2019)**

- a. Humayun
- b. Akbar
- c. Jahangir
- d. Shah Jahan

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- **Jahangir** was especially fond of art and architecture.
- He commissioned, catalogued and preserved many artworks. He also kept a zoo where he documented each species of animal. He was exposed to European artworks through the Jesuits who visited his court and encouraged his court painters to adopt European styles as well.

### I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The promise of irrational freebies to entice voters during elections is a serious concern. Examine, in the light of recent observations by the Supreme Court on this issue. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Polity]
2. The sole dependency on GDP number as a metric for measuring economic growth and development is not recommended given that GDP may not be a measure of societal well-being. Critically discuss. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-3, Economy]