

29 Jun 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you don't have the strength

- Theodore Roosevelt



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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China's interventions in the Horn of Africa

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

Prelims: Horn of Africa

Mains: Details about China's interests and its projects in the Horn of Africa and the significance of China's increased presence in the region.

Context

China and Horn of Africa's first Peace, Governance and Development Conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Horn of Africa

- The North-Eastern region of Africa which includes countries like **Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia** is known as the Horn of Africa as these countries form a horn-like landmass over the Somali peninsula.
- A few sources also include parts or all of Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, and Uganda in the definition of Horn of Africa.
- This region is surrounded by the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean.



Image Source: ResearchGate

Read more about the [Horn of Africa](#) in the linked article.

China's Interests in the Horn of Africa

- China's interests are mainly focused on four areas namely infrastructural projects, financial assistance, natural resources and maritime interests.
- **Infrastructural projects**
 - China fully funded the \$200 million **African Union headquarters** in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.
 - China has further made several investments in the railway sector like in the construction of the **Addis-Djibouti railway** line that provides connectivity to land-locked Ethiopia with the ports in the Red Sea.
 - China has also invested in the **Mombasa-Nairobi rail link** in Kenya and has also helped with railway projects in Sudan. Further, it has constructed several infrastructural projects in Somalia, including hospitals, roads, schools and stadiums.
 - In Djibouti, 14 infrastructural projects are funded by China.
 - China also boasts of a profitable military hardware market in Ethiopia.

- **Financial assistance**

- In terms of financial assistance, Ethiopia is one of the top recipients of Chinese investments among African countries and Ethiopia also owes about \$14 billion to China.
- China accounts for around 67% of Kenya's bilateral debt.
- In 2022, China vowed to extend a \$15.7 million assistance package to Eritrea.

- **Natural resources**

- China's key interests include the abundant presence of oil and coal in the region.
- China has invested over \$400 million in Mombasa's oil terminal (Kenya).
- China has also shown keen interest in other minerals like gold, iron ore, precious stones, chemicals, oil and natural gas in Ethiopia.
- China has been investing in South Sudan which is a rich source of petroleum products since 1995.

- **Maritime interests**

- China's first and only military base outside its mainland is in Djibouti.
- China has also shown its willingness to develop Eritrea's coast.
- The U.S. has speculated that China is looking to increase its military presence in the region by building military bases in Kenya and Tanzania.

Recent projects of China in the Horn of Africa

- In January 2022, China's Foreign Minister reiterated China's focus on increasing the infrastructural investments in African countries and rejected the accusations of debt-trap diplomacy by China.
- China's Foreign Minister said that China's objectives in Africa include:
 - Controlling the pandemic
 - Implementing a Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) outcomes
 - Upholding common interests and fighting hegemonic politics.

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)

- The FOCAC was formed in 2000.
- **Objective:** Equal consultation, enhancing understanding, expanding consensus, strengthening friendship and promoting cooperation.
- The FOCAC promotes China's role in the infrastructural and societal development of the Horn.
- There have been four FOCAC summits held to date and the latest one was held in 2021 in Dakar, Senegal.
- The four resolutions adopted to date include the Dakar Action Plan, the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035, the Sino-African Declaration on Climate Change and the Declaration of the Eighth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC.

- At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, China donated about 3,00,000 vaccines to Ethiopia and Uganda, and 2,00,000 vaccines to Kenya and Somalia.
 - China's vaccine diplomacy has also helped Sudan and Eritrea.
- China has also initiated the "China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035" with an aim to transform the health sector, alleviate poverty, improve trade and investments, and enhance digital innovation.
 - The vision also focuses on green development, capacity building, improving people-to-people exchanges and facilitating peace and security in the continent.

Response by the countries in the Horn of Africa to Chinese presence

- Despite the worry of being surrounded by China's projects, the governments in Africa have largely shown interest in interacting with China.
- During the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian administration appreciated China for respecting Ethiopia's sovereignty.
- Further, Kenya has defended Chinese projects in the country and has held that the China-Africa partnership is mutually beneficial.
- Uganda also has said that China gives access to its markets, in a fashion similar to the U.S. or Europe.
- The [East African Community](#) (EAC) Secretary-General also held that the EAC would welcome Chinese investors to work in East Africa for the prosperity of the people.

Significance of China's interventions in the Horn of Africa

- Peace and stability are mutual requirements for China and Africa.
 - **For Africa**, Chinese investments help to create a stable environment which could further help the countries achieve their peace and development objectives.
 - **For China**, conflict in the region comes at a heavy cost as several Chinese nationals are working in the region and the region also is very significant to China in terms of trade and revenue.
- China's move towards peace in Africa indicates a shift in its "principle of non-intervention".
- Also, the recent developments show that China is focussing on multifaceted growth in Africa. These interventions in the region help to project its status as a global leader.
- For Africa, China's presence is seen as an alternative to the Western and European powers which have been severely criticised by the African governments.
- These African countries have interacted better with countries like China and Russia as they do not conform to Western standards of democracy.

Nut Graf:

Through its extended interventions in the Horn of Africa, China has sent a message that it has set large objectives to achieve not just in the region but the whole of Africa. China's growing presence in the region will impact the flourishing India-Africa relations and require India to intensify its efforts to engage with Africa at the regional, bilateral and people-to-people levels.

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Bring the shine back on government jobs

Syllabus: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Mains: Issues with Government Jobs in India and Recommendations

The plight of Government Jobs:

- According to the [National Crime Records Bureau](#), one Indian person committed suicide every hour in 2019 as a result of joblessness, poverty, or insolvency.
- Haryana terminated the employment of almost 2,000 contractual health employees (nurses, sweepers, security guards, and paramedics) employed during the epidemic in May 2022.
- Many hospitals in Delhi have laid off hundreds of nurses, paramedics, lab technicians, and other contractual personnel.
- Additionally, in 2022, about 8,300 panchayat and rural development contractual personnel in Assam protested.
- Around 200 contractual employees of Chhattisgarh's state energy department were canned-charged and arrested in 2022.
- Several jobless individuals in India protested in January 2022 about reported problems in the railway employment procedure, and more recently, demonstrations occurred in India over the [Agnipath program](#).

Issues with Government Jobs:

- First, vacancies in the government are not being filled at a sufficient pace.
 - As per official data, there were over 60 lakh vacancies in the government across all levels in July 2021.
 - The government has sought to push for recruitment of 10 lakh people in a mission-mode over 1.5 years. However, this would fall short of the size of the problem.
- Second, where vacancies are being filled, they are notably skewed towards contractual jobs.
 - In 2014, about 43% of government employees had non-permanent or contractual jobs, as per the Indian Staffing Industry Research 2014 report. By 2018, the share of government employees in this category had risen to 59%.
 - Some States have sought to give a push for increasing contractual employment, where such employees are not offered allowances and typical benefits.
 - Such employees could be regularised only after five years and only after passing a rigorous performance appraisal.
 - Any dependent of a deceased employee, if appointed to such posts, would also have to go through similar appraisals.

Recommendations:

- **Expanding public service:**
 - Instead of increasing contractual employment, the government should focus on improving public services.
 - Expanding public service provisioning will also result in the establishment of high-quality employment and skilled workers, providing us with social stability.
 - An effort to improve public health, for example, would result in the production of societal assets.
 - A drive for a comprehensive basic services programme including public healthcare would complement insurance-based models such as [Ayushman Bharat](#).
 - Such expenditure, on the other hand, will eventually enhance consumer demand and have substantial multiplier effects, while generally enhancing productivity and quality of life in India's towns and villages.
- **Job opportunities**
 - Concentrate on industries with high job-creation potential. Consider the generation of renewable energy - for example, rooftop solar power generating, solar panel module manufacturing, and end-of-life servicing.
 - Meanwhile, there is tremendous possibility for growing waste-water treatment capacity, which will result in the creation of employment.
 - Adoption of electric cars and fostering green mobility will necessitate substantial personnel, resulting in the creation of 'green employment.'

- Furthermore, we must continue to promote urban farming, which has major job opportunities in permaculture, gardening, and nursery management.

Conclusion:

- More physicians, teachers, and engineers are needed in our public sector, whereas fewer data entry clerks are required.
- The Administrative Reforms Commission's proposed reforms should be our first move.
- This is the moment to create capacity for an efficient civil service capable of meeting today's issues, such as providing a corrupt-free welfare system, operating a contemporary economy, and delivering progressively superior public goods.
- Our ethos should be improved public service delivery through better remuneration.

Nut Graf:

Government jobs, once regarded as the most secure and pleasant form of employment, are now losing their sheen, thanks to the largely contractual employment offered. Instead of expanding contractual employment, governments should seek to bolster public services.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**1. A problematic provision**

Syllabus: Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

Prelims: Section 62(5) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951

Mains: Critical Evaluation of Section 62(5) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951

Background:

- Recently, the members of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly were scheduled to convene at the Vidhan Sabha to elect the members of the Vidhan Parishad.
- The members, who are in prison in connection with money laundering offenses, approached the court that they should be temporarily released to cast votes in the election.
- The plea was rejected, first by a special Judge under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, then by the Bombay High Court, and finally by the Supreme Court.
- Section 62(5) of the [Representation of the People Act, 1951](https://byjus.com/representation-of-the-people-act-1951/), prevented the two MLAs from casting their votes.

What is Section 62(5) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951?

- Section 62(5) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 states that no person shall vote at any election if he is confined in a prison, whether under a sentence of imprisonment or transportation or otherwise, or is in the lawful custody of the police.
- The provision in this subsection shall not apply to a person subjected to [preventive detention](#) under any law for the time being in force.
- Section 62(5) does not use conviction as the yardstick for disenfranchisement; it uses confinement.
- As a result, **undertrial prisoners cannot vote**. Neither can persons detained in civil prisons for failing to repay a debt.

Issues with the Section 62(5) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951

- A person who has been convicted of a criminal charge and has obtained bail may vote under Section 62(5) of the RPA Act of 1951. This puts Section 62(5) squarely in conflict with Article 14 of the Constitution (equality before the law to all persons).
- To be lawful, a legislation must fulfil a set of fundamental conditions under Article 14 whenever it treats two groups of people unequally. Section 62(5) discriminates against a certain group of persons by denying them the right to vote.
- Persons convicted of certain grave crimes or those condemned for a minimum period of time might have been disenfranchised under the clause.

Global Examples:

- In the U.K., for instance, only convicts sentenced to prison for four years or more cannot vote.
- In Germany, only persons convicted of certain political offenses are disenfranchised.
- Where the law formerly restricted all prisoners from voting (Canada, for instance), constitutional courts intervened and struck it down for being arbitrary and disproportionate.

Supreme Court Observation:

- In the past, the Supreme Court has observed that the intent of this provision is to maintain the integrity of elections by excluding 'persons with criminal background' from participating in them.
- Recently, the Supreme Court observed that it is open to reconsidering the constitutionality of the provision.
- The reason for this shift is that the voters who were deprived in this instance were not seeking to act as ordinary citizens but as constitutional functionaries.

Conclusion:

- A constitutional examination into Section 62(5) based only on the former question is doomed to fail.
- The Supreme Court must reconsider the matter in light of all of the circumstances, and Parliament must replace the clause with a more narrowly worded version that disenfranchises only particular groups of convicts.
- Residents of MLA seats indirectly exercise their franchise in Vidhan Parishad elections through voting for MLAs. By barring the two MLAs from voting, the court unwittingly deprives all of their constituents of the right to vote.

Nut Graf:

Current provision under Section 62 of the RPA Act has snatched away the right to vote from an undertrial who is presumed to be innocent and from a civil offender, but has granted it to a criminal convict (out on bail) whose guilt has been determined.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits**1. Coast Guard squadron in Porbandar**

- The Coast Guard commissioned the 835 Squadron (CG) of indigenous Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH)-Mk IIIs at the air enclave in Porbandar.
- The ALH helicopters have been indigenously developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL).
- ALH Mk-III helicopters are equipped with state-of-the-art equipment such as advanced radar and electro-optical sensors, the Shakti engine, a full glass cockpit, a high-intensity searchlight, advanced communication systems, an automatic identification system and search and rescue (SAR) homer.
 - These features enable the helicopters to undertake maritime reconnaissance and carry out SAR at extended ranges even while operating from ships during both day and night.
- The aircraft also has the ability to switch roles from an offensive platform with a heavy machine gun as well as carrying a medical intensive care unit to facilitate the transfer of critically ill patients.

2. India's imports from Russia soar amid sanctions

- India's crude oil imports from Russia increased by 286% and coal imports increased by 345% in the January-April 2022 period.
- About 7.5% of India's fuel needs such as crude oil, coal, natural gas, etc. were sourced from Russia in April 2022 compared to just 2% or less in the previous years.
- Russia is now ranked as the sixth-largest import partner for India and it had occupied the 20th rank in the previous years.

3. SHARE OF TOTAL IMPORTS

Overall, 4% of India's imports came from Russia in April and May 2022 (FY23), a significant increase from around 1% in the years before. No other country's share has increased considerably in this period. China's share in India's imports came down

Country	FY 23	FY22	FY21	FY20	FY19	FY18
China	12%	15%	17%	14%	14%	16%
UAE	8	7	7	6	6	5
U.S.	7	7	7	8	7	6
S. Arabia	6	6	4	6	6	5
Iraq	6	5	4	5	4	4
Russia	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Indonesia	4	3	3	3	3	4
Australia	3	3	2	2	3	3
Singapore	3	3	3	3	3	2
S.Korea	3	3	3	3	3	4
Switzerland	3	4	5	4	4	4
Hong Kong	3	3	4	4	3	2
Germany	2	2	3	3	3	3

4. RANKING IN TOTAL IMPORTS

The table lists the ranking of countries based on their share in India's overall imports. Russia was ranked 20th or above in many previous years but jumped to the sixth position in the April-May 2022 (FY23) period

Country	FY 23	FY22	FY21	FY20	FY19	FY18
China	1	1	1	1	1	1
UAE	2	2	3	3	3	4
U.S.	3	3	2	2	2	2
S. Arabia	4	4	5	4	4	3
Iraq	5	5	7	5	5	6
Russia	6	20	21	20	24	15
Indonesia	7	9	11	9	10	7
Australia	8	11	14	15	12	9
Singapore	9	8	9	10	9	17
S.Korea	10	10	10	8	8	8
Switzerland	11	6	4	7	6	5
Hong Kong	12	7	6	6	7	12
Germany	16	12	8	11	11	10

SOURCE: COMMERCE MINISTRY

Image source: The Hindu

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to the GST Council? (Level – Difficult)

1. GST Council is a joint forum of the Centre and the states that was set up by the President as per Article 279A (1) of the amended Constitution.
2. Recommendations of the GST Council are binding on the Union and the States.
3. Article 246A confers simultaneous or concurrent powers on Parliament and the state legislatures to make laws relating to GST.

How many of the given statements is/are INCORRECT?

- a. One statement only
- b. Two statements only

- c. All the three statements
- d. None of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, As per Article 279A (1) of the amended Constitution, the GST Council has to be constituted by the President.
 - As per Article 279A of the amended Constitution, the GST Council will be a joint forum of the Centre and the States.
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, In the Union of India Anr. vs Mohit Minerals Pvt. Ltd case, the Supreme Court ruled that “the recommendations of the GST Council are **not binding** on either the Union or the States”.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, Article 246A confers simultaneous or concurrent powers on Parliament and the state legislatures to make laws relating to GST.

Q2. “Hermit” recently seen in the news is (Level – Medium)

- a. Cyber Espionage Group
- b. Malware
- c. Spyware
- d. Private search engine

Answer: c

Explanation:

- ‘Hermit’ is the latest sophisticated spyware in the news, and it is said to have targeted iPhones and Android devices in Italy and Kazakhstan.
- Hermit’ spyware has been developed by an Italian vendor named **RCS Lab**.
- Hermit spyware works similar to Pegasus by NSO Group which can record audio on the device, carry out unauthorised calls, and other unauthorised activities once installed on a device.

Q3. How many of the following is/are the e-governance initiatives of the Government of India? (Level – Medium)

- 1. PADMA
- 2. PRAGATI
- 3. e-Kranti
- 4. DARPAN

Options:

- a. 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. All four
- d. 1 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

- **Payroll Automation for Disbursement of Monthly Allowances (PADMA)** is an automated Pay & Allowances module for the Indian Coast Guard.
 - PADMA makes use of the latest technology to provide a seamless and timely disbursal of Pay & Allowances to Indian Coast Guard personnel.
 - This module has been developed under the aegis of Defense Accounts Department and will be operated by Pay Accounts Office Coast Guard in Noida
- **Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation (PRAGATI)** is a unique integrated and interactive platform through which the Prime Minister oversees the implementation of various government schemes, grievances, state and central related projects & programmes by directly interacting with all stakeholders through Videoconferencing on a single platform.
- **e-Kranti: National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)** envisages “transforming e-Governance for Transforming Governance”
 - Its mission is “to ensure a Government-wide transformation by delivering Government services electronically to the citizens through integrated and interoperable systems via multiple modes, while ensuring efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs.”
- **DARPAN** is an online tool that can be used to monitor and analyze the implementation of critical and high-priority projects of the State.
 - It facilitates the presentation of real-time data on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of selected schemes/projects to the senior functionaries of the State Government as well as district administration.

Q4. Which of the given statements with respect to Ekalavya Model Residential Schools is/are Correct? (Level – Medium)

1. It is a scheme for model residential schools for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes across India.
2. These are set up by grants provided under Article 275(1) of the Constitution.
3. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, Ekalavya Model Residential Schools is a scheme for making model residential schools for **Indian tribals (ST- Scheduled Tribes)** across India.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, Grants were provided for the construction of schools and recurring expenses to the State Governments under Grants under **Article 275 (1)** of the Constitution.
- **Statement 23 is correct**, The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Q5. With reference to the cultural history of India, the memorizing of chronicles, dynastic histories and Epictales was the profession of who of the following? (Level – Difficult) PYQ (2016)

- a. Shramana
- b. Parivraaj
- c. Agrahaarika
- d. Maagadha

Answer: d

Explanation:

During the Gupta period, memorizing chronicles, dynastic histories or epic tales was the work of a different group of people, the **Sutas and Magadhas**, who were the descendants of priestly families of the Vedic period.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Examine China's expanding geopolitical presence in Africa and highlight how Indian and Chinese involvement in Africa differs in intent, methods and outcomes. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS II - IR)
2. Instead of expanding contractual employment, the Government should seek to bolster public services. Substantiate. (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS II - Governance)

