

**06 Jul 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis**



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**H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions**

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**A. GS 1 Related**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

**B. GS 2 Related**

**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**1. The status of China's Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia**

*Syllabus: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*

*Prelims: Major projects under the BRI framework*

*Mains: Challenges to India from the BRI projects in the South-Asian region.*

**Context:**

- At the recently concluded summit of G-7 leaders in Germany, the U.S. along with its allies unveiled the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Intelligence** which is being seen as a counter to China's [Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\)](#).
- In this context, the article examines the status of various projects under the BRI in different South Asian countries, given the strategic impact of these projects on India's interests in the region.

**Background:**

**Belt and Road Initiative:**

- The Belt and Road Initiative, formerly known as One Belt One Road (OBOR) is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013.
- The initiative envisions a Chinese-led investment of over \$1 trillion in partner countries by 2025. For projects under this initiative, China offers loans at commercial interest rates that the receiving countries have to pay within a fixed number of years.

- **More than 60 countries have now joined BRI agreements** with China. Under this initiative, infrastructure projects are being planned or under construction in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

### Status of the BRI in South Asian countries:

#### **Pakistan:**

- The **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** is the BRI's flagship project and its biggest one in a single country. This project envisions multiple projects involving energy, transport and communication systems.
- Some of the notable projects include the **development of the city of Gwadar into a smart port city**, a rail project linking Peshawar to Karachi and coal power plants.
- China has pledged \$62 billion in low-interest loans and financing from Chinese state-owned banks and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** for the BRI projects in Pakistan.
- There has been very less progress on the Gwadar Port project. Additionally, there have been protests against the project by the local residents due to the large security force deployment and also the activities of Chinese deep-sea trawlers in the region. Notably, Baloch nationalists have targeted the project and Chinese nationals involved in the project.
- There have been **disagreements on the pricing of power** generated by the Chinese thermal plants set up under the project.

#### **Sri Lanka:**

- There are multiple infrastructure projects under the BRI framework in Sri Lanka, with the most notable ones being the East Container Terminal, **Hambantota port, the development of the Colombo International Container Terminal**, the Central Expressway and the Hambantota International Airport among others.
- There have been recurrent **questions being raised on the financial viability of projects** being taken up under the BRI in Sri Lanka. For example, Sri Lanka has had to hand over the Hambantota port to a Chinese state-owned company on a 99-year lease, unable to service the huge loan it had taken to build the port. This aspect has been repeatedly pointed out by the west as **China debt-trapping countries** through its "predatory loans" and then forcing these countries to cede key assets to China.
- Also, Sri Lanka in the last couple of years has witnessed competition between India and China for projects in the country.

#### **Afghanistan:**

- Afghanistan has not comprehensively been brought into the BRI, despite a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with China in 2016.

- The promised Chinese investments into Afghanistan have not been met and as a result, the projects have not materialised so far and uncertainties around the planned projects have only deepened after the Taliban takeover.

#### **Bhutan:**

- Along with India, Bhutan remains the only other country in the region to **desist from being a part of the BRI.**

#### **Nepal:**

- Kathmandu formally joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017.
- The most notable projects include the **trans-Himalayan rail road from Nepal to China**, the construction of roads, the laying of power transmission lines and hydropower projects.
- Despite five years after signing the framework agreement, work has not been started on any of the projects thus far.

#### **Maldives:**

- One of the most prominent BRI projects undertaken in the Maldives is the two km long China-Maldives Friendship Bridge.
- There have been public protests in the Maldives against the large borrowing from China.
- The Maldives' current regime has tried to distance itself from the BRI, focusing more on its **'India First' policy.**

#### **Bangladesh:**

- Bangladesh joined the BRI in 2016.
- The most notable BRI projects in Bangladesh include the China-Bangladesh Friendship Bridges, the development of special economic zones, the Karnaphuli River tunnel project, up-gradation of the Chittagong port, and a rail line between the port and China's Yunnan province.
- Bangladesh has been promised the second-highest investment (about \$40 billion) in South Asia after Pakistan.
- Multiple projects under the BRI framework in Bangladesh have been delayed owing to the slow release of funds by China.

#### **Nut Graf:**

*China's growing collaboration with India's neighbours may not be conducive to India's interests in the long run as this leads to the advancement of China's strategic ambitions in ways that often are not*

compatible with India's interests. Also with China's increasing influence in South Asia, India is faced with the challenge of competing with China to maintain its prominence in the region.

### C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. The relentless march of FPIs to the exit gate

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

*Prelims: Difference between FPI and FDI*

*Mains: Factors contributing to the outflow of FPI from India and associated concerns*

#### Context:

- Foreign Portfolio Investors have been on a selling spree in India.
- While May 2022 saw sell-offs amounting to about ₹44,000 crores, **June 2022 sell-off stood at ₹50,000 crores.** This is the second-highest sell-off in a month since 1993, after March 2020. Notably, June is the ninth consecutive month that has witnessed a net sale of assets from FPIs- i.e., FPIs have sold more than they had purchased.

#### Foreign Portfolio Investment:

- Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) consists of **securities and financial assets like equities, bonds and mutual funds held by investors in another country.**
- Along with foreign direct investment (FDI), FPI is one of the common ways to invest in an overseas economy. FDI and FPI are both important sources of funding for most economies.
- Unlike FDI, FPI does not provide the investor with direct ownership of a company's assets. Hence the foreign portfolio investors are **just passive shareholders** and they do not exert any control over the companies whose shares they hold.
- Also, FPI is a **relatively more liquid asset** than FDI and is mostly volatile given that such investment allows the investor to enter or exit a stock at will and with ease.

#### Factors affecting the movement of FPI:

- **Economic growth prospects and the possibility of attractive returns in the destination economy** act as a major pull factor in attracting FPIs into an economy. On the converse,

deteriorating economic prospects in an economy act as a major push factor for the outward flow of FPIs.

- The **economic prospects of the source economy** are also a major determinant of the movement of FPIs. The dwindling of economic growth, low rate of return and rise in inflation rates of the developed countries such as the U.S.A. could push foreign investors to the emerging markets. FPIs show keenness to invest in assets when there is a favourable differential between the real interest rates on offer in the country they aim to invest in, and other markets such as the U.S.

### **Why are Foreign Portfolio Investors exiting the Indian market?**

#### **Dampened economic growth prospects:**

- The **economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic** has dampened the economic growth and development prospects of the Indian economy. The post-pandemic recovery in the Indian economy has been uneven given the recurrent waves of the pandemic being witnessed.
- Industrial production has not been able to register a full and final recovery from the pandemic mostly attributable to the [inflation](#) pressure. This has also led to the dampening of business confidence sentiment to a 27-month low in June 2022.
- **Consumption expenditure**, which is a critical aspect of economic growth has remained weak in the Indian economy.

#### **Inflation pressures in the Indian economy:**

- The geopolitical churn caused by [Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#) has led to a lot of uncertainty and has also **disrupted global supply chains**. The supply of important commodities like sunflower and wheat has been disrupted, leading to a rise in global prices for these crops. This has resulted in an acceleration of the overall inflation levels globally as well as in India. Inflation in India has stayed above the upper bound target of 6% level for five months running.
- High inflation rates are not suitable for sustained economic growth and development and it also impacts the real returns for a Foreign Portfolio investor.

#### **Depreciating rupee:**

- The **Indian rupee has been depreciating against the dollar**, which has seen a general strengthening against several other currencies. The rupee touched its record low of 79.33 against the U.S. Dollar recently.
- The depreciation of the Indian Rupee and the strengthening of the dollar adversely impact the ability of Foreign Portfolio investors to realize healthy economic returns on their investments in India. This is because, in such a scenario, the investor will be able to realize fewer dollars for a given quantum of rupee assets liquidated.

**Increasing interest rates in the U.S. economy:**

- The **U.S. Federal Reserve has been raising the benchmark interest rate** starting March this year in a bid to curtail the surging inflation in its economy. This has resulted in the narrowing of the differential between the interest rates in the U.S. and markets such as India.
- As a result, investors are preferring to shift their investments to developed economies such as the U.S.

For more information on the impact of global uncertainties on the growth prospects of the Indian economy refer to the following article:

[CNA dated March 24, 2022: Global uncertainties, India's growth prospects](#)

**Impact of the FPI sell-off in India:**

- The large sell-off by foreign portfolio investors in India has been contributing to the **depreciation of the Indian rupee**. This is because such investors sell rupees in exchange for their home market currency. As the supply of the rupee in the market rises, its value declines. The weaker rupee will lead to a **widening trade deficit** for India as with a weaker rupee, India will have to shell out more funds to import the same unit of goods.
- The large-scale sell-off by foreign portfolio investors has triggered a **significant decline in benchmark indices**, resulting in a drop in the market capitalisation of companies.

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

[CNA dated June 5, 2022: Why are FPIs dumping Indian stocks](#)

**Nut Graf:**

*The dampened economic growth prospects in the Indian economy along with the inflation pressures and depreciating rupee have made Indian assets 'risky'. These factors along with the narrowing of the differential between the interest rates in the U.S. and India have led to a large exodus of foreign portfolio investments from India. This does not augur well for a developing economy like India.*

D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY

## 1. Handcuffing, a judicial tap, and the long arm of the law

*Syllabus: GS: 2: Functioning of Judiciary*

*Mains: Critically analyze the working of police officers and the guidelines of the judicial bodies on functioning.*

### **Context:**

The article analyzes the recent directives issued by the Karnataka High Court on handcuffing.

### **Background:**

- The Karnataka high court has recently ruled that no individual, whether they be an accused in a case, an undertrial prisoner, or a convict, shall be handcuffed unless the reason for doing so is detailed in the case diary.
- The ruling was made while the Dharwad bench of the court was hearing a petition by one Suprit Ishwar Divate, a resident of Chikkodi in Karnataka's Belgaum district, who was handcuffed by the police in a cheque bounce case.
- In a dispute with another person, Divate was facing cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act for dishonouring cheques.
- Five criminal cases had also been filed against him and a non-bailable warrant was issued against him. He was arrested in this connection.
- Divate approached the HC seeking compensation of Rs 25 lakh for this act of the police. He also submitted video evidence of the act which the police themselves had recorded.

### **Guidelines issued by the High Court:**

#### **Reasons should be recorded:**

- No person whether he be an accused, under trial prisoner, or convict shall be handcuffed unless the reason for the same is recorded in the case diary and/or the relevant record as to why such a person is required to be handcuffed.

#### **Prior permission for undertrial:**

- As far as possible, permission to handcuff an under-trial prisoner would have to be taken prior to the production of the undertrial prisoner before the Court and obtain an order for handcuffing from the said Court.

- If no such permission is applied for and under trial prisoners were to be handcuffed, the concerned police officer would be taking a risk of such handcuffing being declared illegal and action being taken against him/her.

**Body cameras:**

- The court directed the Karnataka Director-General of Police (DGP) and Inspector-General of Police (IGP) to provide body cameras to all officers so that the manner of arrest of accused individuals can be recorded.
- These cameras are required to have active microphones too so that conversations at the time of arrest can be recorded, and these audio and video records will be required to be maintained for at least one year from the date of recording.

**Compensation:**

- It is an established principle that the relief of monetary compensation for an established infringement of the fundamental right guaranteed under [Article 21](#) of the Constitution is a remedy available in public law.
- The court held that there are a few considerations that have to be made while awarding the compensation, these considerations are as follows:
  - The court should take into consideration the loss/damage that might have been caused to the person who has been handcuffed.
  - The court should also consider the imposition of compensation as a deterrent to the Police Officers who do not discharge their duties in a proper manner and/or violate the applicable law. Additionally, although the State would be required to pay the compensation, the State would be at liberty to recover the same from the concerned defaulter(s).
- Thus, the court observed that compensation which is required to be paid as aforesaid being a Public Law Remedy, there cannot be a straitjacket formula that could determine the amount of compensation that has to be paid.
- The compensation which is required to be paid is by applying the principles of strict liability.

**The Supreme Court Vs The High Court:**

- In the case of the State of Maharashtra Vs Ravikant S. Patil, when the accused was handcuffed during undertrial, the Bombay High Court held the Inspector of Police responsible for violating Article 21 and ordered him to pay Rs. 10,000 as compensation to the prisoner.
- In this case, the Supreme Court said that the police officer was not personally liable as he had acted in his official capacity.
- Hence, as far as the compensation provided by the police officer is concerned, the judgment of the Supreme Court and the High Court do not match.

**Some challenges:**

- Many times, police officers face a lack of required infrastructure. Hence, the blame for non-compliance should not be shifted only to the police officers.
- It is an undisputed fact that a police station or reserve police line is unable to provide sufficient escort to jail authorities in the transportation of an undertrial prisoner. This happens because of a lack of manpower or urgent law-and-order duty.
- A report on Crime in India 2020 by the [National Crime Records Bureau](#) publication shows that in 2020, 810 cases of prisoner escape from police custody were reported.
- 117 cases were registered against the negligent police officers as well. The data is not very big in numbers but it clearly states that handcuffs are used generally to prevent prisoners' escape.

**Way Forward:**

- The state should provide the required equipment and personnel to the police stations.
- The reasons for using handcuffs should be justifiable. If any malice is found, the department should strongly deal with it.
- State governments should review the mobility of police, requirements of equipment and gadgets, and additional manpower on a periodic basis as directed by the Karnataka High Court.

**Nut Graf:**

*While handcuffs are mostly used to prevent a prisoner from escaping, the rampant use of handcuffs by police officers should be curtailed and as per the recent Karnataka High Court ruling, they should be used only when necessary and the reason for doing so is explicitly in the case diary.*

**Category: HEALTH****1. The Way to Control Tuberculosis**

*Syllabus: GS:2: Issues relating to health, education, and human resources.*

*Mains: Discuss the role of India's health management system in dealing with tuberculosis.*

**Context:**

The article analyzes the [Tuberculosis](#) disease, the TB control programs, and the challenges involved in controlling TB.

**Background:**

- Among all the endemic diseases, tuberculosis (TB) is considered the worst. According to data by the World Health Organization (WHO), it kills approximately 1.5 million people every year.
- TB affects the adults in their most productive years and leads to the impoverishment of the family as well as the nation.
- In the context of India, which is known as the TB capital of the world, more than 1,400 persons are killed every day due to TB.
- These estimates are gross estimates, there is no method to count the exact number in our health management system.

**Measures taken to control TB in India:**

- During the 1950s and 1960s, India was globally leading the research in epidemiology, transmission, and domiciliary treatment of TB.
- The National TB Control programme of 1962 was a district-based public-private partnership initiative.
- However, upscaling the model proved unsuccessful and it failed to control TB. After that, India lost self-confidence and started following the directives of the WHO under the Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP).
- Without considering the differences between the rich and poor countries, the WHO experts used a theoretical construct of TB control to design RNTCP.
- In 2018, India realized that the program is not sufficient to control TB.

**Flaws in the Program:****No monitoring:**

- The program is heavily funded by the government but there is no prescribed method of monitoring the trajectory of TB Control.
- In the National AIDS Control Program, the [Indian Council of Medical Research](#) has established a special task force that had a unique method named 'sentinel surveillance' to monitor the control trajectory.
- The WHO experts told to abandon it but the then Director General of ICMR, Dr. Sriram P. Tripathy, refused to follow this.
- Recently, India objected to the WHO estimates of Covid-led deaths in India. Similarly, the flaws of RNTCP should also be pointed out and the country's own strategy should be designed.

**Source reduction assumption:**

- The WHO assumed that the treatment of pulmonary TB patients alone will resolve the issue. It is known as source reduction under which the early diagnosis and treatment of a person carrying the TB infection are conducted.
- This is fallacious in the case of India because India is a highly populated country. In India, a person carries the TB infection in the lung in a dormant condition for life. In some cases, the immune system gets weakened and develops overt TB disease that is known as reactivation TB.
- Many diseases such as HIV infections, diabetes, undernutrition, chronic lung disease, damage due to pollution, smoking, and alcoholism lead to the reactivation of TB.
- Hence, treating the source alone is not the solution in the context of India.

**No people participation:**

- The WHO has ignored public participation in RNTCP. Under the AIDS control program, public education was prioritized because due to lack of public awareness, stigma and delay in seeking help will continue.

**TB Control:**

Treatment of microbe-led diseases includes three measures, control, elimination, and eradication.

**Control:**

- Control means the reduction in the burden of disease through interventions at a pre-determined level and a pre-stated time.
- According to the social trend, diseases that contain social determinants decline over time through better housing, nutrition, education, and income. The burden of TB had been falling by 1% to 1.5% per year globally.
- However, evidence should show that reduction happens because of interventions at the pre-determined and pre-stated times and not due to social trends.

**Elimination:**

- It implies zero frequency of new cases. In the case of India, latent TB is found hence, we cannot completely eliminate TB but we can aim for a high level of control by reducing the numbers from 200 lakh per year to 50 lakh per year.
- This will align with the Prime Minister's vision of eliminating TB by 2025.

**Eradication:**

- We can aim for high control as we have major assets by way of the RNTCP. States and districts have highly trained TB officers that are doing their jobs very well.

- Once the flaws are addressed, India will be able to control TB.

**Nut Graf:**

*Instead of blindly following the WHO-prescribed methods of combating TB in India, India should devise its own strategy after consulting all stakeholders and experts, taking into account the unique characteristics of the disease in the country, and take strong measures to combat this serious disease.*

**Category: ECONOMY****1. The matter of import**

**Syllabus: GS:3: Balance of Payment**

**Mains: Critically analyze the balance of trade scenario of the country.**

**Context:**

The article analyzes the trade deficit of India, the major imports and exports of the country, and the measures taken to reduce the deficit.

**Background:**

- According to the preliminary estimates of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the monthly merchandise trade deficit of India stood at \$25.6 billion in June.
- This happened for the third time in seven months and the second month in a row that the trade deficit of India has widened to its all-time high levels.

**The data on trade:****Export data:**

- The value of India's outbound shipments grew 16.8% in June 2022 which is marginally slower than the 20.6% growth in May 2022.
- The top four of India's most exported items are engineered goods, cotton yarn, drugs and pharma, and plastic products. They registered a contraction as compared to the previous year which is a worrying fact.
- If we compare the exports of petroleum products in June 2021 and June 2022, then there was an increase in June 2022 but it was about \$0.7 lower than in May 2022.

**Imports data:**

- The growth of exports was smooth, the imports have risen by over 51% to \$63.6 billion in June 2022. The shares of coal, petroleum products, and gold were higher in the total imports.

**Expectations in the near future:**

- It is expected that the slowdown in the growth of exports due to weaker global demand will be continued because of recessions or a sharp slowdown in growth in several developed markets.
- The domestic demand for oil, fertilizer, and gold is very inelastic and it is going to increase the global prices hence, the import bill is also likely to increase for the country.
- The import cost will be raised further by the weakening value of the rupee against the dollar.
- On 5th July 2022, the rupee was registered at 79.37 against the dollar. Some analysts expect that by the October-December quarter, the rupee will be 82 against the dollar.
- This is going to make the [current account deficit](#) more than double to around 3% of the GDP in 2022-23 as compared to 1.2% in 2021-22.

**Some major concerns:****The outflow of foreign capital:**

- India has robust forex reserves. Despite this, the persistent outflows of foreign capital from the Indian market have raised a concern about the [balance of payments](#) situation in the country.

**Coal imports:**

- It is expected that the imports of coal will hit harder as the domestic output will be hampered by the monsoons.

**Measures taken by the government:****Windfall tax:**

- A windfall tax is a one-off tax imposed by a government on a company. It is levied on an unforeseen or unexpectedly large profit, especially unfairly obtained.
- Now, international crude prices have risen sharply in recent months. The domestic crude producers sell crude to domestic refineries at international parity prices. As a result, domestic crude producers are making windfall gains.
- Taking this into account, a cess of Rs 23,250 per tonne has been imposed on crude as the windfall tax. This is going to help in reducing the [fiscal deficit](#) in India.

**Custom duties:**

- The government has also increased the custom duties to 15% from 10.75% by acknowledging that the gold imports were hurting the current account. This may end up hurting petroleum products.

**Way Forward:**

There is very little scope for the policymakers to keep the country out of this vicious cycle but the policymakers should avoid any kind of domestic inefficiencies that can further hurt the exports of India.

**Nut Graph:**

*The all-time high trade deficit, declining exports, increased import bills, and measures like imposing a windfall tax and increasing the customs duties do not paint a rosy picture of the Indian economy. If stringent and prudent measures are not taken by the authorities, the balance of payments condition will become very grave in the near future.*

**F. Prelims Facts****1. Navy eyes govt. route to buy carrier-based jets**

*Syllabus: GS Paper 3: Defence and internal security; Defence equipment/platforms.*

*Prelims: Aircraft carriers of India*

- **India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, Vikrant** is all set to be commissioned in the next month. It has been constructed by Cochin Shipyard Ltd.
- Currently, the Indian navy also has a Russian-origin carrier, **INS Vikramaditya, in service.**

**Context:**

- The Indian Navy is looking for an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with either France or the U.S. to procure new fighter jets to operate from its aircraft carriers. Recently, the trials of Rafale and F-18 Super Hornet had been done to prove their capability to operate from aircraft carriers.

**2. Woman mathematician from Ukraine wins Fields Medal**

*Syllabus: Current events of national and international importance*

**Prelims: Fields Medal****Fields Medal:**

- The **Fields Medal often described the Nobel Prize in mathematics**, is a prize awarded to mathematicians under 40 years of age at the International Congress of the International Mathematical Union.
- The International Mathematical Union is an international non-governmental and non-profit scientific organisation.

**Context:**

- Ukrainian mathematician Maryna Viazovska has been named as one of four recipients of the 2022 Fields Medal.

**G. Tidbits****1. Centre to soften punitive steps in environment cases**

- The Union Environment Ministry proposes to soften the provisions of the **Environment Protection Act (EPA)** by replacing a clause that provides for imprisoning violators with one that only requires them to pay a fine in case of violations that do not cause grave injury or loss of life.
  - Funds collected as penalties would be accrued in an “**Environmental Protection Fund**”.
- This is aimed at decriminalizing existing provisions of the EPA to remove any fear of imprisonment for simple violations.

**H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions****Q1. Consider the following statements with regards to Section 69(A) of the IT Act:**

1. It allows the Centre to issue blocking orders to social media intermediaries “in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the state....”
2. Blocking orders issued under the Act are usually confidential in nature.
3. Any such request for blocking access must be based on reasons given in writing.

**Choose the correct code: [Level - Easy]**

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 & 3 only
- c. 1 & 3 only

- d. All of the above

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Section 69(A) of the IT Act allows the government to issue blocking orders to social media intermediaries “in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the state...” Such a request must be based on reasons given in writing.
- Blocking orders issued under the Act are usually confidential in nature.

**Q2. ‘Karakalpakstan’, recently in the news is a place in: [Level - Difficult]**

- a. Turkmenistan
- b. Uzbekistan
- c. Tajikistan
- d. Kazakhstan

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Karakalpakstan is an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan. It occupies the whole northwestern part of Uzbekistan. The capital is Nukus.

**Context:**

- At least 18 people were killed in the Uzbek region of Karakalpakstan when protests erupted last week over plans to limit its autonomy.

**Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to the State Ranking Index for NFSA report:**

1. Odisha was given the highest ranking in the recently released first-ever edition of the index.
2. The report was prepared by the Department of Food and Public Distribution.
3. The ranking parameters include a focus on nutrition initiatives, coverage of NFSA, targeting, etc.

**Choose the correct code: [Level - Easy]**

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Union Food Minister Piyush Goyal released the first State Ranking Index for implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013. Among the 20 big states and Union Territories (UTs), Odisha topped the list while Goa came last. Tripura ranked first and Ladakh came last among the 14 smaller states and UTs.
- The State Ranking Index for NFSA report was prepared by the Department of Food and Public Distribution.
- The states and UTs were ranked based on three parameters for 2022. The first measures “coverage of NFSA, rightful targeting, and implementation of all provisions under NFSA” while the second “analyzes the delivery platform while considering the allocation of foodgrains, their movement, and last-mile delivery to Fair Price Shops (FPS)”. The third “focuses on nutrition initiatives of the department”.

**Q4. Consider the following statements with regards to the Fields Medal:**

1. The Fields Medal is awarded by the International Mathematical Union (IMU), an international non-governmental and non-profit scientific organisation that aims to promote international cooperation in mathematics.
2. The Fields Medal is awarded every four years to one or more mathematicians under the age of 40 in recognition of “outstanding mathematical achievement for existing work and for the promise of future achievement”.
3. No woman has ever won this medal.

**Choose the correct code: [Level - Medium]**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- The Fields Medal often described as the Nobel Prize in mathematics, is a prize awarded to mathematicians under 40 years of age at the International Congress of the International Mathematical Union.

- The International Mathematical Union is an international non-governmental and non-profit scientific organisation.

**Context:**

- Ukrainian mathematician Maryna Viazovska has been named as one of four recipients of the 2022 Fields Medal.

**Q5. With reference to ‘palm oil’, consider the following statements:**

1. The palm oil tree is native to Southeast Asia.
2. Palm oil is a raw material for some industries producing lipstick and perfumes.
3. Palm oil can be used to produce biodiesel.

**Which of the statements given above are correct? [Level - Medium]**

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

**Answer: b****Explanation:**

- Palm oil is derived from the oil palm tree, which is native to West Africa and grows best in tropical climates with abundant water. It was imported into SE Asia in the mid-19th century. Oil palm flourishes in the humid tropics and produces high yield when grown 10 degrees north and south of the equator. So, statement (1) is not correct.
- Palm Sludge Oil (PSO) is the floating residual oil that separates during the initial stage of POME discharge to the pond. The PSO is currently being categorised under sludge oil as it exhibits high Free Fatty Acids (FFA) and very low Deterioration of Bleachability Index (DOBI) values. Due to the inferior quality of PSO, this residual oil cannot be used directly as food source but normally being used for low-grade laundry soap formulation to substitute palm fatty acids distillate.
- Conventionally, Volatile short chain fatty Acid (VSCFA) has been widely used as raw material in the fragrant industry for the production of perfume via esterification process. So, statement (2) is correct.
- If refined, the PSO can be applied directly as boiler fuel, raw material for biodiesel production So, statement (3) is correct. Therefore, the correct answer is (b).

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The Environment Protection Act, 1986 is a landmark legislation for tackling environmental pollution in India. In this context, critically evaluate the proposed amendments to the Act. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS Paper 3/Environment and Ecology)
2. Examine the progress of China's Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia. How does it impact India's strategic interests in the region? (250 words; 15 marks) (GS paper 2/International Relations)

