

## 30 Sep 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS 1 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

Category: GOVERNANCE

### 1. The draft Telecommunication Bill, 2022

*Syllabus: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation*

*Prelims: About draft Telecommunication Bill, 2022*

*Mains: The need for a new draft Telecommunication Bill and the key features and significance of the draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022*

Context: The Ministry of Communications recently notified the draft of the Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022 for public comments.

Draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022

- Through this draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, the government has attempted to update the existing regulatory framework in line with the latest advancements and address newer challenges in the sector.
- The changes in the existing regulatory framework were much needed as the three key legislations dealing with the sector domain are said to be old and outdated.
- The existing laws include the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933 and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful) Possession Act, 1950.
- The draft Indian Telecommunication Bill seeks to repeal these laws and restructure the regulatory framework of the telecommunications sector in the country.

Draft bill on Over-the-top (OTT) services

- Over-the-top (OTT) communication services are those services that provide real-time person-to-person telecommunication services.
  - Examples: Online messaging platforms such as Whatsapp, Telegram, Messenger, Google Meet, etc.

- These service platforms utilise the network infrastructure of Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) such as Jio, Vodafone-Idea and Airtel and facilitate various services that actually compete with these TSPs such as online voice calls, video calls and messaging services.
  - TSPs have raised concerns about these features being detrimental for them as they impact their sources of revenues and further that these OTT service platforms are not mandated to deal with infrastructure and licensing costs that the TSPs have to undertake.
  - The TSPs have sought the government to establish a level playing field with OTT services.
- The latest draft Bill broadens the definition of “telecommunication services” to include OTT communication services.
  - This means that the OTT telecommunication services might also be subjected to similar licensing conditions as TSPs.
  - As per the existing framework, TSPs are required to be issued a Unified Access Service Licence (UASL) for them to provide telecom services in the country.
  - If OTT service platforms are mandated to obtain the same licence, they would be subjected to various conditions like collecting “know your customer” details of the users, adhering to encryption regulations and providing legal access to the equipment and networks for the government.

#### Key features of the bill that ensure consumer protection

- The draft Bill proposes to make the identity of the person communicating through any form of services available to users while receiving such communication.
  - This means that the name of the person initiating the communication will also be displayed to the user along with the phone number.
  - This proposal is aimed at cutting down the incidence of spam and fraud calls and messages.
- The draft Bill also mandates the licence holders to identify the users of its service through a verifiable mode of identification and has introduced penal provisions of ₹50,000 fine and suspension of operation of the specific mobile number or barring the individual from using the telecom service for a certain duration to ensure that a user provides correct details.
- Additionally, the draft Bill also mentions that commercial communications which are advertising in nature should be initiated only after the prior consent of a subscriber.

#### Impact of the draft bill on the position of TRAI

- Earlier in 2018, the [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India \(TRAI\)](#) had notified the “Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations”. However, spam communications and the arbitrary sharing of user information and details continue to be rampant.

- The inclusion of these safeguards in the draft bills means that undertaking strict actions against violators is taken out of the purview of TRAI and the government is empowered to do so.
- The government is no longer mandated to ask for recommendations from the TRAI before issuing licences.
  - The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) would not be required to refer the recommendations of TRAI back to TRAI for reconsideration.
- It also dilutes the power of the TRAI to requisition from the government information or documents that are necessary to make such recommendations.
- Experts feel that the dilution of the powers of TRAI is not in line with the international practices where telecom regulators are entrusted with a greater degree of autonomy to ensure investor confidence and consumer protection.

#### The draft Bill on internet shutdowns

- Through the draft Bill, a specific provision facilitating the government to order a suspension of internet power has been introduced for the first time in the Indian legal framework.
- At present the suspension of internet services is done under the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency and Public Safety) Rules, 2017 under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.
- However, this provision has attracted a lot of criticism from civil societies and activists.

#### Other key features

- The draft Bill provides clarity about the existing confusion on the allocation of spectrum. The Bill also simplifies the process for restructuring, merging or demerging.
  - It says that auction is still the primary route for allocation of the spectrum and that administrative processes are to be followed when spectrum is to be allocated for certain government functions such as defence or transportation.
  - The draft bill also allows the TSP to exploit its spectrum resource completely by facilitating sharing, trading, leasing, surrendering or returning unutilised spectrum.
- Regarding the issue of the right of way (the legal provisions for establishing telecom towers), the bill says that the land owned by a public entity should be available expeditiously unless there is an express ground of refusal.
- The draft bill also provides that the funds under the [Universal Service Obligation Fund](#) can be used for other purposes like providing urban areas connectivity, research, etc.

*Nut graf: The introduction of the Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022 is said to be a significant move for the telecom sector as the existing legislations for the sector are outdated, with the most recent one being enacted over 70 years ago. The latest draft Bill provides an opportunity to keep up with the latest advancements and newer challenges in the sector.*

## 1. SC axes 51-year-old curb, single women get equal abortion rights

*Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections*

*Prelims: Facts about Abortion Laws in India*

*Mains: Significance of the court's judgement on providing equal abortion rights to single women*

Context: The Supreme Court held that single women with pregnancies between 20 and 24 weeks are entitled to access the same safe and legal abortion care as married women.

### Details

- A three-judge Supreme Court Bench withdraws a 51-year-old restriction in the abortion law which prohibited unmarried women from undergoing abortions that are up to 24 weeks old.
- The existing Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 barred unmarried women who were pregnant for 20 to 24 weeks from terminating a pregnancy with the help of registered doctors.
- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said that “the rights of reproductive autonomy, dignity and privacy give an unmarried woman the right of choice as to whether or not to bear a child on a similar footing as that of a married woman.”
  - He also opined that the laws must not decide the beneficiaries of a law on the basis of narrow patriarchal principles about what constitutes permissible sex as it would lead to discriminatory classifications.
- The Supreme Court by saying that a single woman may have suffered the same “change in material circumstances” as a married pregnant woman, held that restrictions on single women from accessing abortion are discriminatory in nature.

### The court on unsafe abortions

- The apex court pointed out that about eight women die every day in the country on account of unsafe abortions.
- Close to 67% of the abortions carried out between 2007 and 2011 in the country were considered unsafe abortions.

*Nut graf: In a historic judgement, the Supreme Court has ensured that single women get equal abortion rights by lifting a 51-year-old ban on single women accessing abortions with pregnancies up to 24 weeks. The SC opined that the artificial distinction between married and unmarried women amounted to discrimination.*

### C. GS 3 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

#### 1. India lacks a complete paediatric cardio-care service

*Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health*

*Prelims: About Congenital Heart Disease (CHD)*

*Mains: Prevalence of Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) in India and the issues associated with paediatric cardio-care services in India*

Context: This article talks about the issue with paediatric cardio-care services in the country.

#### Background

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, U.S., Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) is responsible for about 28% of all congenital birth defects and is the cause of nearly 6%-10% of all infant deaths in India.
- However, according to paediatricians, timely medical interventions can help save over 75% of these children and help them lead normal lives.

## Congenital Heart Disease (CHD)

- Congenital Heart Disease refers to birth defects due to some errors in the development of the heart.
- CHD can affect the blood flow through the heart to the rest of the body.
- It is mainly caused due to infections in the mother like rubella, chromosomal abnormalities and administration of harmful drugs during the first three months of pregnancy.
- Symptoms of CHDs include “Cyanosis” - bluish discolouration of skin/nails/lips/tongue, troubled breathing when a baby is feeding, rapid heartbeat, tiredness and sleepiness.

## Data on the prevalence of Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) in India

- As per the Paediatric Cardiac Society of India (PCSI), the prevalence of congenital cardiac anomalies is about one in every 100 live births.
  - It is estimated that approximately 2,00,000 children are born with CHD every year.
- However, only about 15,000 infants receive the required treatment every year.
- Further, about 30% of infants born with complex defects require surgical intervention to survive their first birthday but only 2,500 operations can be performed each year.
- Reports also show that infants are waitlisted till 2026 for cardiac surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).
- Due to the absence of any national policy for the treatment of cardiovascular diseases in children in India, a large number of infants are kept outside the ambit of treatment.
  - This has resulted in the addition of thousands of children to the existing pool of children awaiting surgery.

## Key reasons for the increasing burden of Congenital Heart Diseases (CHD) in India

- Issue of funding: Experts feel that the aspect of paediatric cardiology care service is neglected in the country because it is considered economically unviable as it is resource intensive and requires a lot of investment in infrastructure.
- Challenges associated with hospitals/centres offering neonatal cardiac services: At present, there are about 22 hospitals and less than 50 centres in India which provide infant and neonatal cardiac services.
  - The geographical distribution of these centres/hospitals is also a huge cause of concern as there is a large-scale disparity in their distribution.
  - According to a 2018 report by the cardiology department of AIIMS, about 70% of these centres are located in South India.

- Further, most of these centres are located in regions with a lower burden of CHD.
  - Example: Kerala has 8 such centres for about 4.5 lakh annual childbirths but States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with over 48 and 27 lakh births per annum respectively do not have any such centres.
- Scarcity of doctors/specialists: According to studies, for over 600 districts with a 1.4 billion population, there are only about 250 paediatric cardiologists in India, whereas the U.S. had about 2,966 paediatric cardiologists in 2019.
  - The doctor-to-patient ratio in India is very poor with only one doctor being available for a population of 50 lakhs as compared to one per 29,196 population in the US.
  - States and UTs like Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Punjab, Bihar and Odisha have a reported high CHD burden but do not have any paediatric cardiologists in the government sector.
  - There are only four paediatric cardiologists in 38 government hospitals in Delhi.
- Economic challenges: Poverty is said to be one of the major challenges for treatment.
  - Transporting sick neonates to centres that are far away for diagnosis and treatment has become a huge financial burden for parents.
- Lack of equipment: The lack of crucial equipment required for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases in the unborn is also a huge roadblock.
- Lack of awareness: Lack of general awareness about early symptoms of CHD among parents is also a key cause of concern.

#### Path ahead

- An article by the Department of Cardiothoracic Cardiology of AIIMS published in 2018 notes that paediatric cardiology has still not become a priority area due to the competing demands for resources.
- An NGO called Child Heart Foundation which is helping underprivileged children with CHD has raised the need for foetal echocardiography.
  - Experts believe that antenatal detection of congenital defects is critical for neonatal care but certain defects are not visible in normal ultrasonography.
  - Foetal echocardiography is performed on a woman pregnant for 18 to 24 weeks and it helps in better visualisation of the structure and function of the heart.
- Further, the Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Scheme was expected to extend financial aid to over 10 crore poor families but it has still not started.
  - However, states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh have started with some initiatives.
  - Kerala's "Hridayam (for little hearts)" programme aims to extend services like early detection and support to children with CHD.
  - The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme offers free specialised surgeries.



*Nut graf: As per reports, over 2,00,000 children in India are born with Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) annually, however, most of these children can be saved through early detection and timely medical interventions. This requires the immediate focus of the government and other healthcare organisations and an improvement in the overall paediatric cardio-care services.*

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. UNESCO lists 50 iconic Indian textiles

*Syllabus: GS-1; Indian Heritage and Culture; Salient aspects of Art Forms*

*Prelims: Iconic heritage textile crafts of India.*

Context: UNESCO published a list of 50 exclusive and iconic heritage textile crafts of India.

#### Details

- UNESCO's "Handmade for the 21st Century: Safeguarding Traditional Indian Textile" mentions the history and legends behind the textiles, description of the complicated and secret processes in their making, causes for reducing popularity and also recommends various strategies for their preservation.
- As per UNESCO, the key challenge to protecting the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the South Asian region is the lack of proper inventory and documentation.
- The publication of [UNESCO](#) aims to bridge this gap and lists 50 textiles as exclusive and iconic heritage textile crafts of India by undertaking extensive research.

#### Some important textiles documented include

- Toda embroidery and Sungadi of Tamil Nadu
- Himroo weaves of Hyderabad in Telangana
- Bandha tie and dye weaving of Sambalpur in Odisha
- Khes from Panipat in Haryana
- Chamba rumals of Himachal Pradesh
- Thigma or wool tie and dye of Ladakh
- Awadh Jamdani from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh
- Ilkal and Lambadi or Banjara embroidery from Karnataka
- Sikalnayakanpet Kalamkari from Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu
- Kunbi weaves from Goa
- Mashru weaves and Patola from Gujarat
- Himroo from Maharashtra

- Garad-Koirial of West Bengal

## G. Tidbits

### 1. European Union grapples with runaway energy prices

- The European Union (EU) is looking for immediate measures to tackle the problem of skyrocketing energy prices with the recent “sabotage” of gas pipelines from Russia.
- Energy ministers of the EU are expected to meet in Brussels to consider an emergency European Commission proposal that includes cutting power use in the bloc, imposing windfall levies on energy companies and discussing a price cap on wholesale gas supplies.
- The EU’s sanctions on Russia against its aggression on Ukraine, which include moving away from Russian oil starting in December, have made Russia employ retaliatory actions such as reducing its natural gas supplies.
  - Further, the unexpected leaks on the undersea Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines from Russia to Germany have aggravated the crisis.
- There has been severe inflation in the energy bills among European countries and the European Commission is trying to leverage the COVID-era cooperation to forge a common EU approach to energy.

### 2. Senior citizens, families to see small gains in small savings

- The Union Government announced increases of 0.1-0.3% points in interest rates payable on five small savings instruments (SSIs) such as the Kisan Vikas Patra, Senior Citizens’ Savings scheme and time deposits for 2 and 3 years, for the quarter starting October 1st.
- The rate for Kisan Vikas Patra has been increased to 7% from 6.9% and the Senior Citizens’ Savings scheme has been raised to 7.6% from 7.4%.
- The rates remain unchanged for seven other designated small savings schemes such as the Public Provident Fund (PPF) at 7.1%, and the Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme at 7.6%.
- The returns on SSIs are linked to market yields on G-secs with a lag and are fixed on a quarterly basis at a spread of 0-100 basis points over and above G-sec yields of comparable maturities.
  - Experts feel that the decision to increase the rates on just five SSIs means that the returns on schemes, such as the PPF, will be negative in the coming quarter in relation to the formula.
  - The RBI in August 2022 had observed that the increase in yields on government securities had turned “the spread between the existing interest rates” and formula-based rates “negative for most small saving schemes”

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with regards to IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity) number: (Level – Medium)

1. Every phone or mobile broadband device has this unique 13-digit code that precisely identifies the device.
2. Mobile phone manufacturers assign IMEI numbers to each device based on ranges allotted to them by the Global System for Mobile Communications Association.
3. Dual SIM phones will have two IMEI numbers.

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is not correct, Every phone or mobile broadband device has a unique 15-digit code called the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) that precisely identifies the device.
- Statement 2 is correct, Mobile phone manufacturers assign IMEI numbers to each device based on ranges allotted to them by the Global System for Mobile Communications Association.
- Statement 3 is correct, Dual SIM phones will have two IMEI numbers.

Q2. Consider the following statements with regards to the Pacific Island countries: (Level – Difficult)

1. The Pacific Island Countries are a cluster of 14 states which are located largely in the tropical zone of the Pacific Ocean between Asia, Australia and the Americas.
2. Some of them have Exclusive Economic Zones larger than that of India.
3. Some of the major nuclear weapon test sites of the U.S., the U.K. and France were located here due to the remoteness of these islands from the Soviet Union and major population centres of the world.

Choose the correct code:

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

d) All of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct, The Pacific Island Countries are a group of 14 islands that are located in the tropical region of the Pacific Ocean between Asia, Australia and the two Americas.
- Statement 2 is correct, Despite these countries being some of the smallest and least populated countries, they have some of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the world.
  - Some of them have Exclusive Economic Zones larger than that of India.
- Statement 3 is correct, Due to the remoteness of these States from major population centres of the world and the Soviet Union, a few major nuclear weapon test centres of the nuclear powers such as the U.S., the U.K. and France were located in these countries.

Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to the Small Savings Schemes: (Level – Medium)

1. Interest rates on small savings schemes are reset on a quarterly basis, in line with the movement in benchmark government bonds of similar maturity.
2. The interest earned by the depositors is linked to the market.
3. Collections from all small savings instruments are credited to the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF).

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct, Interest rates on small saving schemes are reset on a quarterly basis, in line with the movement in benchmark government bonds of similar maturity.
- Statement 2 is not correct, The interest earned by the depositors through Small Savings Schemes is fixed.
- Statement 3 is correct, All deposits under small savings schemes are credited to the 'National Small Savings Fund' (NSSF).

Q4. Consider the following actions which the Government can take to reduce the Current Account Deficit: (Level – Easy)

1. Devaluing the domestic currency.
2. Reduction in the export subsidy.
3. Adopting suitable policies which attract greater FDI and more funds from FIIs.

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

The current account deficit is a measurement of a country's trade where the value of the goods and services it imports exceeds the value of the goods and services it exports.

Government can reduce the Current Account Deficit by devaluing the domestic currency and by adopting suitable policies which attract greater FDI and more funds from FIIs.

Reduction in the export subsidy actually hampers export growth thereby negatively impacting the Current Account Deficit.

Q5. Recently, India signed a deal known as 'Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field' with which of the following countries? (Level – Medium)

- a) Japan
- b) Russia
- c) The United Kingdom
- d) The United States of America

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field was signed between India and Russia on 5th October 2018 in New Delhi.
- The two countries intend to develop a project of six nuclear power units of Russian design at a new site in India, further enhance cooperation in the third countries and bring in new prospective nuclear technologies together with joint construction of nuclear power plants.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In light of the recent judgment of the Supreme court, discuss the issues surrounding abortions in India? (150 words; 10 marks) (GS-2; Social Justice)
2. “ There is an energy war looming in Europe”. Elucidate. (150 words; 10 marks) (GS-2; International Relations)

