

14 Nov 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. New regulations for awarding PhDs

Category: GS02-Governance

Syllabus: Government Policies

Mains: Policy interventions for quality PhDs in Indian Universities

Context: The University Grants Commission (UGC) recently announced new regulations on PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) degrees.

Introduction:

- The [UGC](#) on November 7, 2022 notified the University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedures for Award of PhD Degree) Regulations, 2022.
 - These rules will replace the rules notified in 2016.
- Under the new rules, UGC has made a series of significant modifications to the eligibility requirements, admissions process, and evaluation methodologies governing doctoral programmes in colleges and universities.

Key Changes:

- **Evaluation and assessment criteria:** To award the degree, UGC has waived the need to mandatorily publish a research paper in a peer-reviewed journal.
- **Eligibility criteria for admissions:** Students who have completed a four-year undergraduate course will be eligible for direct admission to a doctorate programme.
 - Candidates should have a minimum of 75 per cent marks in “aggregate or its equivalent grade on a point scale wherever the grading system is followed”.
 - In case the candidate does not have 75 per cent marks in a four-year undergraduate program, she has to pursue a one-year master’s programme and score at least 55 per cent.

- **Entrance Exams:** Universities and colleges will be free to admit students through the NET (National Eligibility Test)/JRF (Junior Research Fellowship) qualification route as well as entrance exams at the level of the institutions.
 - If an individual institution can hold its own entrance tests to admit students, then the candidates need not write the NET or similar exams. The “entrance test shall consist of 50 per cent research methodology and 50 per cent subject specific”
- **MPhil Criteria:** New regulations also completely abolished MPhil, which has been a gateway for PhD programmes, in line with the recommendation in the [National Education Policy 2020](#).
- **Course work:** New regulations leave the description of course work more open ended and says that all PhD scholars “shall be required to train in teaching/ education/ pedagogy/ writing related to their chosen PhD subject.”
 - They can also now be assigned 4-6 hours per week of teaching/research assistantship for conducting tutorial, or laboratory work and evaluations.
 - Earlier, the description was more detailed, with at least four credits assigned to courses on research methodology among other criteria.
- **Part-time PhDs:** The UGC now allows part-time PhDs.
 - Working professionals can now enroll in part-time PhD programmes by submitting a “No Objection Certificate (NOC)” from the appropriate authority in the organization where the candidate is employed.
 - This practice was disallowed under the 2009 and 2016 regulations.
- **Evaluation of research scholars:** PhD scholars will be required to undertake research work after completing their course work, make a presentation and produce a draft dissertation or thesis.
 - If the evaluation of the submission is satisfactory, the candidate will have to defend the thesis in a public oral examination.
 - They will not have to publish a research paper in a refereed journal and make two paper presentations in conferences or seminars before submitting the thesis.
- **International Students:** Universities and colleges have been allowed to frame their own rules governing admissions of international PhD students.

Significance of these changes:

- Waiving the mandatory rule to publish a research paper in a peer-reviewed journal will curb unethical practices such as pay-to-publish or plagiarism.
 - Publishing papers in journals often lead poor candidates to pay to get published like their peers, as well as put them at a disadvantage as they wouldn’t have contacts to get published.
 - Instead students shall be motivated and trained to publish in peer-reviewed journals and present at conferences.

- Allowing Universities to frame their own rules governing admissions of international PhD students will result in better autonomy, effective governance and leadership which is a common feature of all world-class institutions globally.
- New requirement for PhD scholars, irrespective of discipline, to train in teaching / education/ pedagogy/ writing related to their chosen subject during their doctoral period tends to improve the quality of doctoral education and research.
- A four-year Bachelors course will allow some students to pursue Masters abroad without studying for one more year. This is expected to attract younger students for research.

Concerns:

- There is a limited availability of quality journals but far more researchers.
 - As per the Scopus database of scientific publications 2020, India accounted for only 4.52% of total research papers in the world though it accounts for 12% of the global faculty pool.
- Discontinuing MPhils, along with the introduction of four-year BA course and 2-year MA course with multiple exits will hurt socially disadvantaged groups who may not be able to pay for longer-duration courses and may have to exit earlier, which will put them at a disadvantage in the job market.
- There are also concerns over diminishing scholarships and fellowships to support PhD scholars as well as severe shortage of teachers, impacting the number of research supervisors available.

Nut Graf: Over the years, annual enrolment figures in PhD programs have risen, but it still accounts for a very small share of the higher education pie. New regulations on PhD degrees by the UGC are intended to provide stronger research support and good quality PhDs through research universities.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. France's security involvement in Africa

Syllabus: *Effect of Policies & Politics of Developed & Developing Countries on India's Interests*

Mains: *Global Efforts against terrorism*

Context: On November 9, 2022, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the end of Operation Barkhane in Africa.

What is Operation Barkhane?

- France began its military operations in Sahel in January 2013. Initially, Operation Serval was started primarily to target Islamic extremists linked to al-Qaeda who took control of northern Mali.
- In 2014, the mission was expanded, renamed 'Operation Barkhane' and was aimed at counter-terrorism.
- The objective was to assist local armed forces to prevent the resurgence of non-state armed groups across the Sahel region.
 - Around 4,500 French personnel were deployed with the local joint counter-terrorism force.

Sahel region of Western Africa:

- The recent announcement comes after the French soldiers withdrew from Mali on August 15, 2022.
- The development also marks a strategic shift for the French military forces deployed in the Sahel region of Western Africa, which are assisting several countries to contain jihadist insurgencies.
- The Sahel region consists of the vast semi-arid and mostly inhospitable region of Africa, separating the Sahara Desert to the north and tropical savannas to the south.
- It includes parts of Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

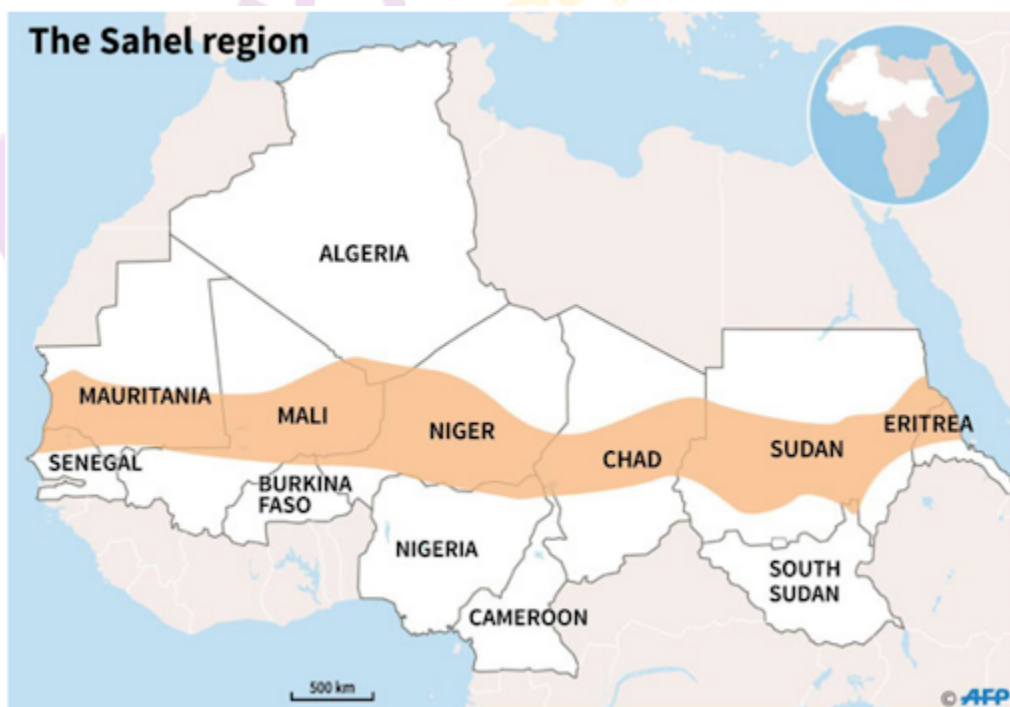


Image Source: euractiv.com

Has France achieved its objectives?

- French operations had two objectives in the Sahel.
 - To liberate Mali from the insurgency in the north and to see through counter-terrorism operations in West Africa, including the neutralisation of key terrorists.
- In its major successes, France regained Mali's northern regions from the extremists in 2014 through Operation Serval.
- In 2020, Abdel Malek Droukdel and Bah Ag Moussa, key leaders of al-Qaeda were killed in French-led operations.
- The success of Operation Serval led to the inception of Operation Barkhane aimed at counter-terrorism in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Chad. However, Operation Barkhane saw a series of failures.
- The region witnessed the growth of new groups affiliated to terrorist organisations, including the Islamic State despite the operation.
- The failure of the operation led to a humanitarian crisis.
 - According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the violence had claimed 5,450 lives across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in just the first half of 2022, recording a significant increase from the previous years.
- Operation Barkhane's unfulfilled objective to resolve the region's insurgencies sparked an increase in civilian support to the military and has contributed to the subsequent political uncertainties in the Sahel.

Why did France end its operation?

- France's relations with the military rulers grew hostile after a series of coups in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea.
 - Mali recently expelled the French ambassador when he disagreed with the junta's decision to remain in power until 2025.
 - France was also insolent about Malian authorities negotiating a peace deal with insurgent groups.
- Anti-French sentiments and questions over France's intentions erupted in the region, with a further demand for France's withdrawal as Operation Barkhane was widely perceived as a failure.
- France, and other Western countries claim that the Wagner Group, a private military company close to Russia, is playing a major role in fuelling the insurgency and discrediting French withdrawal.
 - For Africa, the Wagner Group is an alternative that engages with military governments, without abiding to human rights and democratic standards.

How will this affect Islamist insurgent groups and militant violence in Mali?

- Armed violence is likely to continue apace or even increase following the Western withdrawal from Mali.
- Despite Operation Barkhane's inability to alter the strategic trajectory of the conflict, it has served as tactical and operational disruptors to militant groups, and will now be absent.
- This decrease in military pressure comes as militancy is on the rise in Mali. Violence linked to militant Islamic groups like Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims—JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) rose 70 percent in 2021 compared to 2020.
- A decrease in military pressure against this hegemony will allow JNIM to further consolidate its political control, enforce its conservative ideology, and complicate any efforts by the Malian state to reestablish control of these areas.
- The current withdrawal, coupled with the Malian government's signals of openness to negotiations with militant groups, could offer an opportunity for dialogue between Mali and JNIM.
- The "security vacuum" left by the departing French forces would likely increase local violence, particularly violence against civilians.

Nut Graf: France has formally ended its decade-long operation to fight Islamist insurgents in the Sahel over several differences and failure of the operation. France is reducing the exposure and visibility of its military forces in Africa and focusing on cooperation and support, mainly in terms of equipment, training, intelligence and operational partnerships for countries in the Sahel region.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Data localisation requirements

Syllabus: IT and Computers; Cyber Security

Mains: Global practices and concerns regarding Data Localisation

Introduction:

- Data plays an increasingly important role as an economic and strategic resource. It can be used to make decisions with economic impacts, environmental impacts or effects on health, education or society in general.

- Data localisation refers to various policy measures that restrict data flows by limiting the physical storage and processing of data within a given jurisdiction's boundaries.
- Most countries mandate data created within their borders to remain stored within its borders. Such stringent laws, while allowing governments and their law enforcement agencies to work more efficiently, will result in hindrance of global trade and increase the operational costs of businesses.

Need for data localisation:

- The requirement of data localisation strengthens the protection of personal data. The personal and financial data which is available on the cloud is subject to foreign surveillance.
- India being one of the most powerful markets in terms of data creation and use, the need for data localisation is essential.
- Law enforcement agencies in India face a lot of difficulties in getting timely access to data that may be stored elsewhere by businesses operating in India. Therefore, data localisation is necessary to address this issue.
- Due to the increasing number of digital payments in the country, storing data information in India will help in better monitoring and safety.
- India would have a competitive edge for their local companies, in the case of localised data. The information capital available to the domestic market and company in specific will be profitable for them.
- Job opportunities within the country will rise for the data analytics sector and thus, witness economic development.

Global Standpoint on Data Localisation:

- In the absence of global rules for the digital economy, competing national frameworks have become the dominant force shaping the cross-border flow of information online.
- Obligations under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), obligates businesses in the EU to keep the data secured within the boundaries of the EU.
 - If in any case such data are to be transferred to a different country, they need to have similar protections like those that exist in the EU.
- Russia has stricter laws pertaining to the cross-border flow of data and emphasises keeping data within the Russian Federation. Russia has data localization requirements for all personal data.
- Kazakhstan requires all data for servers on the country's specific (.kz) domain.
- Australia requires health records to be stored locally.
- Canada requires public service providers to follow data localization requirements.
- China has data localization requirements that affect all personal, business, and financial data.

- USA requires data related to the country's citizens to be processed and/or retained in that country. The data covered by these laws can range from all personal data to only specific types of data such as health or financial information.
- In 2017, Vietnam passed a cyber security legislation requiring all foreign online service providers to store data of citizens exclusively in local data centres.
- In 2018, based on the recommendations of the Justice Srikrishna Committee, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mandated companies to locally store and process sensitive data belonging to Indian users of various digital payment services.

Challenges with Data Localisation:

- When data is stored within the country, then the government will have to work on the functioning and effectiveness of payment system operators, incurring a much higher operational cost than usual.
- Foreign firms are unwilling to comply as it would require them to spend money on infrastructure in the form of servers and buildings, and, of course, on employing local professionals to manage it.
- Lack of proper infrastructure required to collect and manage data. These barriers to the free flow of data may hurt businesses by increasing delays and higher costs of collaborative research or partnerships outside India.
- Misuse and surveillance of personal data:
 - Critics not only caution against state misuse and surveillance of personal data, but also argue that security and government access is not achieved by localisation.
- Localisation of data can address foreign misuse, but the threats and risks involved in the domestic management of data are valid concerns.
- Could be a time-consuming process, where easy and profitable offshore cloud host services are available.

Way Forward:

- In this age of rapid technological growth, governments should shift to alternate standards (such as encryption) rather than enforcing strict measures on data localisation that could restrict trade and innovation.
- A multiple stakeholder approach can help in addressing various problems with data localisation along with jurisdictional issues in case of cybercrimes and online defamation.
 - In the effort of bringing some order to irregular and varied data localisation laws restricting data flows, some governments are exploring data regulation through trade agreements.
 - At the multilateral level, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) has several provisions that establish legal obligations on governments to allow the processing and transmission of data within and across borders.

- The 'glocalization' approach can be applied here, wherein laws can be harmonised globally, but by paying attention to local interests.
- The security of domestic systems for storing data must be assessed to protect sensitive data.

***Nut Graf:** Data protection is crucial for individual users and also at a larger scale economically and strategically. World needs a forward-looking, futuristic mechanism, a legally backed data protection framework to reap the benefits of a digitised economy and larger job creation, unleashing growth and international cooperation.*

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INDIAN POLITY

1. A sense of an ending

***Syllabus:** Indian Constitution; Judgement and cases.*

***Mains:** Remission and premature release of convicts.*

Context: Release of the remaining convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

Details:

- The [Supreme Court](#) has ordered the premature release of six remaining convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. This is said to be the end of the tragic episode of India's involvement in the internal strife of Sri Lanka.

Background Details:

- Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in May 1991 by a suicide bomber. The news of the assassination caused sorrow and revulsion.
- A trial court verdict in 1998 sentenced all accused to death. This was not well accepted by the Supreme Court. The 1999 judgment acquitted 19 of them of conspiracy charges and released them.
- Of the remaining seven, one (who was recruited as a chaperone to the suicide bombers) got the benefit of commutation in the year 2000.

- However, the prolonged incarceration of the 7 convicts(4 on death row and 3 serving life terms) evoked a sense of sympathy among the general public. Political parties in Tamil Nadu made efforts for their release. As a result in 2014, Supreme Court commuted the death sentence to the life of the four convicts.
- The mastermind of the assassination is already dead and only the local collaborators and mid-level operatives were arrested. There was a belief that 31 years of punishment was enough for these middlemen in the plot.
- Tamil Nadu cabinet adopted a resolution in 2018 to release the convicts under [Article 161](#) of the constitution. However, the then Governor did not act for a long time and forwarded it to the Centre for further opinion.
- Earlier this year, the court found no constitutional basis for the Governor's action and ordered the release of one convict (A.G. Perarivalan). This same benefit has now been extended to other convicts as well.
- However, it should not be forgotten that the kin of the victims has suffered a lot. Thereby highlighting that this occasion should be seen as an opportunity to freshly evaluate the premature release of convicts and the review of the remission system.

***Nut Graf:** The prolonged incarceration of the convicts of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case has seen various development over the years. Their release is said to be the culmination of due process in the vibrant legal system. However, there exist some flaws in the remission process that needs review.*

Category: INDIAN ECONOMY

1. Saving the precious

***Syllabus:** Issues relating to water resources.*

***Mains:** Status of Groundwater resources and conservation.*

Context: Ministry of Water Resources released a report on India's groundwater situation.

Details: National Compilation on Dynamic Groundwater Resources of India.

- A report- National Compilation on Dynamic Groundwater Resources of India, was made public by the Ministry of Water Resources that gives information about the groundwater situation in India.
- The total groundwater recharge is defined as the amount of groundwater stored. It is 437.60 billion cubic metres (bcm) for the entire country. Out of which nearly 239.16 bcm has been extracted.
- The recent (2022) assessment shows that groundwater extraction in India was the lowest since 2004 when it was 231 bcm.

Assessment Year	Annual Groundwater recharge	Extraction
2022	437.60 bcm	239.16 bcm
2020	436 bcm	245 bcm
2017	432 bcm	245 bcm

- The report explicitly states that the improvement in the status of groundwater is marginal and can be attributed to natural conditions and changes in methodology that the Central Ground Water Board and States adopt for the survey. For instance, the number of groundwater blocks, or wells, used in the survey was relatively more in the 2022 assessment.
- It was observed that the percentage of blocks where the groundwater was ‘critically’ low was approximately 14%. This figure is similar to the situation of previous years.
- The states/UTs having a large number of blocks with critical groundwater levels are Haryana, Punjab, western Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. The indiscriminate extraction of groundwater has depressed the water table in these regions despite having replenishable systems.
- Rajasthan and Gujarat have endangered blocks owing to the arid climatic conditions and limited recharging capacity.
- Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and parts of Karnataka also have low groundwater availability because of the inherent characteristics of crystalline water-storing aquifers.

Way Ahead:

- It should be noted that there is no central law governing groundwater usage and different states have their own set of laws and regulations.
- It was recommended in the draft National Water Policy that there needs to be a shift from the cultivation of water-guzzling crops. The report also prioritized recycled [water](#) over freshwater for industrial usage.
- Water should not be considered a free and private resource and instead should be priced and utilized equitably.
- The climate crisis should be seen as an opportunity by the political class to build consensus and disincentivize its wasteful consumption.

Nut Graf: *The groundwater situation in India has marginally improved but there is a huge regional disparity across the country owing to different reasons. The situation is still critical and shift in policy measures are required to save precious resource of water.*

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. ASEAN-India Science & Technology Fund

- India recently announced an additional contribution of USD 5 million to the [ASEAN](#)-India science and technology fund to enhance cooperation in sectors of public health, renewable energy and smart agriculture.
- ASEAN-India Science & Technology Collaboration formally started in 1996 with the establishment of the ASEAN India S&T working group (AIWGST).
- The collaborative S&T projects and activities between India and ASEAN were supported through ASEAN India Fund (AIF) till 2008.
- In 2008, a dedicated ASEAN India S&T Development Fund (AISTDF) with an equivalent amount of USD 1 million was established jointly by the Ministry of External Affairs and Department of Science and Technology (DST) to support R&D (Research and Development) projects and associated project development activities.
- The AISTDF was enhanced to an equivalent amount of USD 5 million through an announcement by the Prime Minister of India on the sidelines of the ASEAN-India Summit in Malaysia in November 2015.

2. T20 World Cup 2022

- England beat Pakistan in the finals at Melbourne Cricket ground to win the 2022 ICC Men's T20 World cup.
- It was the eighth ICC Men's T20 World Cup tournament.
- It was played in Australia from 16 October to 13 November 2022.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. The 2012 Cape Town Agreement is associated with which of the following aspects?
(Level- Difficult)

- a) Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
- b) Illegal trade of wild animals
- c) Pollution abatement in the marine economy
- d) Sustainable management of urban areas

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Cape Town Agreement was adopted by the IMO in 2012 to help combat illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing.
- The agreement is aimed at facilitating better control of fishing vessel safety by flag, port and coastal states.

**Q2. Which among the following countries is not a member of the East Asian Summit?
(Level- Medium)**

- a) Russia
- b) USA
- c) Papua New Guinea
- d) New Zealand

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Established in 2005, it is a forum of 18 regional leaders for strategic dialogue and cooperation on the key political, security, and economic challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region.
- Papua New Guinea is not a member of [East Asia Summit](#).



Q3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to genetically modified crops? (Level- Difficult)

1. Among countries with the largest area under genetically modified crops, India stands third behind the USA and Brazil.
2. As of 2022, less than 50 countries have accepted the use of genetically modified crops.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is incorrect**, India has the world's fifth largest cultivated area under genetically modified (GM) crops. The United States has the largest area of genetically modified crops worldwide, followed by Brazil, Argentina and Canada.
- **Statement 02 is incorrect**, As of 2022, More than 70 countries have accepted the use of GM crops.

Q4. Consider the following statements about India's international agricultural trade. (Level- Medium)

1. Vegetable oils account for the largest proportion among India's agri-import items.
2. Marine products account for the largest proportion among India's agri-export items.
3. India has witnessed a net trade surplus in international agricultural trade in the last decade.

Which among the following statements are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, Almost 60% of India's total agri imports is accounted for by vegetable oils. Their imports were valued at \$19 billion in 2021-22, and imports have increased by more than 25% in the first half of this fiscal. Vegetable oils are today the country's fifth biggest import item after petroleum, electronics, gold, and coal.
- **Statement 02 is correct**, Marine products account for the largest proportion among India's agri-export items followed by non-basmati rice and basmati rice.
- **Statement 03 is correct**, India has consistently maintained net trade surplus in the agricultural products over the years. It has witnessed a net trade surplus in international agricultural trade in the last decade.

TABLE 1 INDIA'S AGRICULTURAL TRADE (IN \$ MN)				TABLE 2 INDIA'S TOP AGRI-IMPORT ITEMS (IN \$ MN)			
	Exports	Imports	Surplus		2021-22	Apr-Sep 2021	Apr-Sep 2022
2012-13	41.73	18.98	22.75	Vegetable oils	18991.62	8862.38	11097.72
2013-14	43.25	15.53	27.72	Fresh fruits	2460.33	1101.08	1237.86
2014-15	39.08	21.15	17.93	Pulses	2228.95	835.35	595.78
2015-16	32.81	22.58	10.23	Spices	1299.38	658.37	755.27
2016-17	33.70	25.64	8.05	Cashew	1255.46	755.62	1412.52
2017-18	38.90	24.89	14.01	Natural rubber	1032.71	442.99	542.18
2018-19	39.20	20.92	18.28	Alcoholic beverages	693.23	319.28	435.80
2019-20	35.60	21.86	13.74	Raw cotton	559.55	297.25	1081.16
2020-21	41.90	21.65	20.24	TOTAL*	32422.30	15119.78	19309.05
2021-22	50.24	32.42	17.82				
Apr-Sep 21	22.98	15.12	7.86				
Apr-Sep 22	26.77	19.31	7.46				

Image Source: Indian Express

Q5. Consider the following statements:(CSE-PYQ-2019) (Level- Medium)

1. The Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959 exempts several posts from disqualification on the grounds of 'Office of Profit'.
2. The above-mentioned Act was amended five times.
3. The term 'Office of Profit' is well-defined in the Constitution of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, The Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959 lists certain offices of profit under the central and state governments, which do not disqualify the holders from being an MP or MLA/MLC respectively. There is no bar on how many offices can be exempted from the purview of the law.
- **Statement 02 is correct**, Parliament has amended the Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959, five times to expand the exempted list.
- **Statement 03 is incorrect**, The expression '[office of profit](#)' is mentioned in Article 102 and Article 191 of the Constitution, however, it has not been defined anywhere in the Constitution.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. [Will data localisation requirement be a barrier to digital trade? Critically Examine.](#) (15 Marks; 250 Words) (GS-3; Science and Technology)
2. [Write a note on University Grants Commission \(Minimum Standards and Procedures for Award of PhD Degree\) Regulations, 2022.](#) (10 Marks; 150 Words) (GS-2; Governance)