

## 5 Dec 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



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## A. GS 1 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

#### 1. Traffickers are moving online in search of victims

*Syllabus: Issues related to children and women.*

*Mains: Trafficking through online mediums.*

*Prelims: Human Trafficking.*

#### Details:

- Due to the COVID-19-induced lockdown many have remained confined to the digital world. As a result, traffickers are targeting gaming platforms, online classrooms, matrimonial sites, dating and chat apps, and loan apps for potential victims.
- Women and children of states which are already known as hotbeds of trafficking like Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh are being abused, blackmailed, and trafficked using Web applications.
- A study was conducted by Space2Grow and CyberPeace Foundation in the above four states and the following observations were made:
  - Nearly 44% of the respondents began using the Internet after the [COVID-19](#) outbreak.
  - It was also observed that 98% of the participants used cheaper devices like smartphones to access the Internet.
  - Approximately 51% use it for school/college purposes, over 56% used it for social media, about 42% for e-commerce, and almost 35% for online gaming.
  - Out of those who felt uncomfortable during an online interaction, nearly 53% of candidates responded by blocking the sender.
  - Around 31% told the sender that they were uncomfortable, 25% ignored them, 21% deleted the posts, almost 16% deleted their social media accounts, and 8% relented to the sender's request.
  - It is this 8% who are at extreme risk according to experts.
- The method of attackers include luring somebody through relationships, blackmailing them by morphing their social media photographs, and offering loans that are difficult to pay back in cash.

- As per the U.S.-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's Cyber tipline report for 2021, India accounts for approximately 4.69 million reports of online abuse of children out of the 29.3 million reports worldwide. It is the highest in the world.
- Predators are using new and innovative technologies and digital platforms like gaming sites, instant loan apps, and deep fake technology. They use tactics like trust-building, desensitization, coercion, etc.

### Way Forward:

- There is a need to increase awareness among women and children.
- Moreover, better training for law enforcement agencies and technology platforms is also required. The capability of law enforcement officials should also be enhanced.
- Creation of a legal deterrence through enhanced detection mechanisms for the online and human interface is also crucial.
- It is also important to change the discourse of child porn as an organized economic crime as it is a thriving multi-billion-dollar industry.
- More initiatives like Digital Shakti should be launched. The government launched Digital Shakti to create awareness about women's safety in the online world.

***Nut Graf:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the traffickers have moved online and they target and exploit women and children using the digital space. India is a leading country in such exploitation. It is important to increase awareness about the issue of trafficking through online mediums.*

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. Afghanistan open for investment by India, say Taliban

***Syllabus:** India and its neighborhood relations.*

***Mains:** India - Taliban relations.*

### Details:

- It was reported that a [Taliban](#) delegation had met the head of mission of the Indian Embassy in Kabul and invited its teams to build and sustain infrastructure projects in Afghanistan.
- Afghan Minister of Urban Development has communicated that Afghanistan is open to Indian investment including urban infrastructure.
- It should be noted that several Indian companies were earlier involved in building and maintaining health and electricity infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. However, as the Taliban forces took over Afghanistan, these companies were evacuated in August 2021.

- It should be noted that the relationship between the Taliban administration and India has remained undefined because India has not recognized the current administration in Kabul.
- Indian public and private sector entities invested around \$3 billion in the infrastructure sector of Afghanistan in the past two decades.

***Nut Graf:** The investment in Afghanistan is under threat after the return of the Taliban. Taliban have expressed the need for Indian investment to build and sustain infrastructure projects in the country.*

## **2. OPEC+ to continue present output, despite fresh sanctions on Russia**

***Syllabus:** Global groupings and agreements affecting India's interest.*

***Mains:** OPEC+ meeting and Western Sanctions on Russian crude.*

***Prelims:** OPEC+.*

**Context:** OPEC+ meeting after the new sanctions on Russian crude by the western bloc.

**Details:**

- Major oil-producing nations led by Russia and Saudi Arabia agreed to maintain their present output levels ahead of the new sanctions against Russia.
  - As per the fresh sanctions, the EU, [G7](#), and Australia have agreed to a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil, alongside an EU embargo on maritime deliveries of Russian crude oil.
  - It will restrict the seaborne shipments of Russian crude to the European Union. It should be noted that Russian crude accounts for two-thirds of the bloc's oil imports.
  - The sanctions are an attempt to deprive Russia's war chest of billions of euros.
- The representatives of the 13 members of the [Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries \(OPEC\)](#) led by Riyadh agreed to sustain their October decision. It was decided by the member countries that the production would be cut by two million barrels per day until the end of 2023.
- The reason cited for the production cut was the market consideration and stabilization of the global oil market.
- It remains to be seen how the sanctions will impact the Russian supply.
- It should also be noted that due to soaring inflation and China's weaker energy demand in the backdrop of COVID-related restrictions, the two global crude benchmarks remained close to their lowest level of the year.

**Nut Graf:** The OPEC+ member countries have decided to continue with their October decision of production cut on the backdrop for new sanctions against Russian Crude. However, there exists an environment of uncertainty, which will be clear only after the rollout of sanctions.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: INDIAN ECONOMY

#### 1. Why has the Reserve Bank of India introduced an e-rupee?

**Syllabus:** Banking Sector.

**Mains:** Digital rupee.

**Prelims:** e-rupee.

**Context:** Reserve Bank of India launched the digital rupee on a pilot basis.

#### Details:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched the digital currency on a pilot basis in a few major cities in India. The digital rupee will be offered by some specific public and private banks.
- The digital rupee can be used for both person-to-person as well as person-to-merchant transactions.

For more information on RBI, read here: [RBI - Reserve Bank of India \[UPSC Indian Economy Notes\]](#)

#### Digital Rupee:

- The e-rupee (or digital rupee) is a digital currency issued by the central bank of India. They are held electronically in a digital wallet overseen by RBI.
- It is recognized as a legal tender by the RBI and thus should be accepted by everyone in the country as a medium of exchange.
- However, it should be noted that it is different from the deposits held in the bank as they will not be paid any interest by the central bank. Though deposits held in banks can be converted to digital rupees and vice-versa.

### Need for Digital Rupee:

- According to RBI digital rupee will make the rupee a more attractive currency in comparison to [cryptocurrencies](#) which gradually lose value over time due to debasement by the central bank.
- Central banks across the world are trying to release their own digital currencies as cryptocurrencies can threaten their sovereignty.
- Moreover, it would be easier and more economical to produce digital currency in contrast to physical cash notes.
- Additionally, digital transactions are more easily traceable by authorities in comparison to physical transactions.

### Associated Risks:

- There are apprehensions that the introduction of central bank digital currencies internationally might disrupt the overall banking system.
- In the case of low-interest rates offered by banks, a large number of people might convert their bank deposits into digital currencies as they would not lose much in terms of interest income. This would considerably reduce the cash holdings of banks and hinder their capacity to create loans.
  - The ability of banks to create loans is determined by the amount of cash held in their vaults.
- The e-rupee would also play a critical role in the transition towards a cashless society.
- An increase in the use of the digital rupee could ultimately free banks from having to maintain sufficient cash deposits before they expand their loan books. In such a scenario banks will be freed from the risk of bank runs which usually serves as a check on the unrestricted expansion of loan books.
- Critics are of the view that the introduction of the digital rupee could act as a deterrent to economic growth if legitimate economic activities are deemed illegal by governments.
- It is also argued that the future of central bank digital currencies as a substitute for private cryptocurrencies may be overblown. It should be noted that the popularity of private cryptocurrencies was because it was considered a better store of value and exhibited more stable purchasing power than [fiat currencies](#).

**Nut Graf:** The digital rupee has been launched by the Reserve Bank of India on a pilot basis in select cities. It has the potential to change the banking system and the economic trajectory of a country. There are also some concerns associated with it, which need to be addressed in a timely manner.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*



## E. Editorials

### Category: ENVIRONMENT

#### 1. Poor soil management will erode food security

*Syllabus: Environment conservation.*

*Mains: Soil degradation and conservation.*

*Prelims: World Soil Day.*

**Context:** December 5 is recognized as World Soil day.

**Details:**

- World Soil Day (WSD) is annually observed on December 5. The theme of WSD 2022 is 'Soils: Where food begins.' It aims to raise awareness about the importance of maintaining healthy soils, ecosystems, and human well-being through sustainable soil management.
- Importance of Healthy soil:
  - They are essential for human survival.
  - Healthy soil supports healthy plant growth and enhances both nutrition as well as water percolation to maintain groundwater levels.
  - Soils also regulate the climate of the planet by storing carbon and are the second largest carbon sink after the oceans.
  - Moreover, they maintain a landscape that is more resilient to droughts and floods.
  - Soil health is critical for healthy food production as the soil is the basis of food systems.

**Soil Degradation and its consequences:**

- The major threats to soil are nutrient loss and pollution, which are responsible for undermining food and nutrition security globally.
- The main drivers of soil degradation are agriculture, mining, industrial activities, waste treatment, fossil fuel extraction, and processing and transport emissions.
- The causes of soil nutrient loss are soil erosion, runoff, leaching, and the burning of crop residues.
- Soil degradation directly or indirectly impacts 29% of India's total land area. Consequently, it threatens agricultural productivity, water quality, biodiversity conservation, and the socio-economic well-being of land-dependent communities.

- Approximately 3.7 million hectares of land suffer from nutrient loss in soil (that is depletion of soil organic matter).
- Moreover, uncontrolled fertilizers and pesticide usage and irrigation with contaminated wastewater also add to soil pollution.

### **Soil Conservation strategy of India:**

- A five-pronged strategy has been adopted by the Government of India which involves:
  - Making soil chemical-free
  - Saving the biodiversity of soil
  - Improving Soil Organic Matter(SOM)
  - Sustaining soil moisture
  - Mitigating soil degradation and preventing soil erosion.
- SOIL HEALTH CARD(SHC): Indian Government launched the scheme in 2015. SHC helps in assessing the current status of soil health. It also provides soil health indicators and associated descriptive terms to guide farmers to make necessary changes in the soil.
- PRADHAN MANTRI KRISHI SINCHAYEE YOJANA(PMKSY): The scheme was launched to prevent soil erosion, regenerate natural vegetation, strengthen rainwater harvesting, and ensure the recharging of the groundwater table.
- Moreover, [National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture \(NMSA\)](#) includes several subschemes that promote indigenous practices like organic farming and natural farming, thereby reducing chemical dependency and reducing the monetary burden on small and marginal farmers.
- The [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) also undertakes various activities to support the Indian government in conserving soil. For instance,
  - FAO is collaborating with the National Rainfed Area Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW) to develop forecasting tools using data analytics to help farmers in making informed choices in crop cultivation, especially in rainfed areas.
  - The FAO and the Ministry of Rural Development together support the Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission's (DAY-NRLM) Community Resource Persons to increase the adoption of sustainable and resilient practices.
  - The FAO works in 8 target States (Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Punjab, and Haryana) to enhance crop diversification and landscape-level planning.
  - The FAO, the Andhra Pradesh government, and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) are working together to support farmers in sustainable transitions to agroecological approaches and organic farming.



**Way Ahead:**

- Communication links between all the stakeholders should be strengthened for the management and restoration of degraded soil.
- Timely dissemination of evidence-based information is also required.
- Successful conservation practices and clean and sustainable technologies should be provided to all targeted beneficiaries.
- Citizens can contribute by planting trees, developing and maintaining kitchen gardens, and consuming seasonal and locally sourced food.

***Nut Graf:** Soil degradation can have irreparable impacts on both human and ecosystem health. India has taken several initiatives in this direction which should be sustained and improved to ensure healthy soil and eventually a healthy planet.*

**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****1. China's moves in the Indian Ocean**

***Syllabus:** India and its neighborhood relations.*

***Mains:** China's initiatives in Indian Ocean Region.*

***Prelims:** China-Indian Ocean Region Forum.*

**Context:** First China-Indian Ocean Region Forum was convened in Kunming, China.

**Details:**

- China's top development aid agency- China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) convened the first "China-Indian Ocean Region Forum".
- It is a Chinese initiative that focuses on the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), highlighting China's growing strategic interests in the region.
- China-Indian Ocean Region Forum is described as the first high-level official development cooperation forum jointly held by China and countries in the Indian Ocean Region.
- A Joint Press Statement was released by the forum that said China proposed to establish a marine disaster prevention and mitigation cooperation mechanism between China and other countries in IOR. It further noted that all parties agreed to "strengthen policy coordination, enhance development cooperation, improve disaster resilience, and boost economic benefits through marine resources like fisheries, tourism, renewable energy, and shipping in a sustainable manner.

- It was reported that the forum was attended by representatives of nineteen countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Iran, Oman, South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius, Djibouti, and Australia.
- However, Australia and Maldives subsequently released statements emphasizing that their participation was not official.

**India's stand:**

- The official spokesperson of the forum said that India is a major country in the Indian Ocean region and was invited to the forum. He further said that China is looking forward to meeting India at the next forum.
- However, India views China's recent moves (including the recent [visit of Yang 5](#) to Sri Lanka) in the region cautiously.
- Furthermore, India supports the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as an already established platform for the region. IORA has 23 members with 10 dialogue partners including China, Japan, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S.

**China's plan for Indian Ocean Region:**

- The forum has highlighted Beijing's growing interest in IOR which is crucial for sea routes, trade, and China's economic interest.
- The stepped-up regional diplomacy comes at a time when China is enhancing its military presence in the waters of the IOR.
  - China's first overseas military facility was established in Djibouti (near the Horn of Africa).
- China's tracking vessels, military ships, and submarines are visiting ports in the IOR with much greater frequency.
- It was also reported in the past that PLA Navy would deploy six aircraft carriers to secure China's maritime interests and that two of them will be based in the IOR.

**Nut Graf:** *China-Indian Ocean Region Forum is the recent initiative of China that reflects its growing interest in the Indian Ocean region. India on the other hand is quite apprehensive of the initiative and instead supports the already-established Indian Ocean Rim Association.*

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. German Minister changes stance on 'UN role in Kashmir dispute'

*Category: GS 2, International Relations.*

*Syllabus: India-Germany relations.*

*Prelims: India-Germany relations.*

**Context:** External Affairs Minister of Germany is on a two-day visit to India.

**Details:**

- In a reversal from earlier comments on the role of the [United Nations](#) in resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, Germany's External Affairs Minister has said that it was a "bilateral" dispute between the two nations.
- It was also said that Germany understands the "economic constraints" of partners like India referring to India's decision regarding Russian oil imports despite western sanctions and an oil price cap.
- The issue of Russian oil imports would be taken up in a discussion between the Indian and German External Affairs Minister.
  - There is a twenty-fold increase in imports of Russian oil to India in the past 10 months.
- The Foreign Minister's visit comes ahead of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's visit to India in early 2023 for the biannual India-Germany summit.

## G. Tidbits

### 1. India scores highest-ever ranking in aviation safety

- India has achieved 48th rank in the global aviation safety ranking by the [International Civil Aviation Organization \(ICAO\)](#). This is the highest-ever rank for India.
- In 2018, India was ranked 102.
- In the rankings, Singapore holds the first position followed by UAE and South Korea in second and third position respectively.
- India is ahead of China which is placed in 49th position.
- It should also be noted that India's aviation sector is gradually coming back to its growth trajectory after being severely hit by the pandemic.

## 2. In rare gesture, Iran shuts morality police

- After more than two months of protests, Iran has scrapped its morality police. The move represents a rare concession to the protest movement.
- Women-led protests were held due to the death of a 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin, three days after her arrest by the morality police in Tehran.
- Demonstrators burned their mandatory hijab head coverings and shouted anti-government slogans. There was an increase in the number of women who failed to wear hijab, specifically in Tehran.
- Authorities have monitored adherence to the strict dress code for both women and men, since the 1979 Islamic Revolution (when Iran's U.S.-backed monarchy was overthrown).
- The morality police formally known as the "Gasht-e Ershad" or "Guidance Patrol" was established by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to spread the culture of modesty and hijab. They began patrols in 2006 to enforce the dress code which necessitates women to wear long clothes and prohibits ripped jeans, shorts, and other apparel deemed "immodest".

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. How many of the following volcano/es sit along the Pacific "Ring of Fire"? (Level-Difficult)**

1. Mount Semeru
2. Mount Etna
3. St Helens
4. Taal Volcano

Options:

- a. One only
- b. Two only
- c. Three only
- d. All the four

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- The Ring of Fire is a string of volcanoes and sites of seismic activity, or earthquakes, around the edges of the Pacific Ocean. Roughly 90% of all earthquakes occur along the Ring of Fire, and the ring is dotted with 75% of all active volcanoes on Earth.
- Mount Semeru, Saint Helens, and Taal volcanoes are located in Pacific Ring of fire.
- Mount Etna is an active stratovolcano located on the east coast of Sicily, Italy. It lies above the convergent plate margin between the African Plate and the Eurasian Plate.

**Q2. 'Tiangong' recently seen in news is: (Level- Medium)**

- A modular space station being built as a collaborative project involving space agencies of SCO nations.
- Chinese Lunar Exploration Program.
- A Chinese space station being built in low Earth orbit.
- South Korea's space mission to Mars.

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Tiangong is a space station developed by China and operated by China Manned Space Agency in low Earth orbit between 340 and 450 km above the surface.

**Q3. Which of the following denotes the extent of inflation in the Indian Economy excluding the inflation in food and fuel? (Level - Medium)**

- Headline inflation
- Underlying inflation
- Shrinkflation
- Core inflation

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Core inflation represents the change in the costs of goods and services. It does not include food and energy inflation as these are very volatile and fluctuate frequently.
- Core inflation = Headline inflation – (Food and Fuel) inflation.

**Q4. How many of the following is/are correctly matched? (Level - Difficult)**

Sea Port Projects	State
1. Vadhavan Port Project	Maharashtra
2. Vizhinjam Port Project	Tamil Nadu
3. Tadadi Port Project	Karnataka
4. Sagar Port Project	West Bengal

Options:

- One only
- Two only
- Three only
- All four

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Vadhavan is a major port near Dahanu in Maharashtra.
- Vizhinjam International Transshipment Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport is being developed in Kerala's capital Thiruvananthapuram.
- A huge multipurpose port at Tadadi is proposed to be constructed at the estuary of Aghanashini.

- Sagar Port is a proposed seaport in Sagar Island, West Bengal.

**Q5. What is the application of Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT) Technology? (Level-Medium)**

- a. Production of biolarvicides
- b. Manufacture of biodegradable plastics
- c. Reproductive cloning of animals
- d. Production of organisms free of diseases

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) is a laboratory technique for creating a viable embryo from a body cell and an egg cell. The technique consists of taking an enucleated oocyte (egg cell) and implanting a donor nucleus from a somatic (body) cell.
- It is used in both therapeutic and reproductive cloning.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. China has rapidly expanded its economic, military and diplomatic influence in the Indian Ocean over the last two decades. Examine how it affects Indian interests and discuss the counter-measures being taken by India to protect its traditional sphere of influence. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS-2; International Relations)
2. Soil health is critical for all life forms on earth. Evaluate the threats arising out of soil degradation and examine measures being taken by India to conserve soil health. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS-3; Environment and Ecology)