

22 Jan 2023: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



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A. GS 1 Related

Category: Medieval History

1. Charaideo Maidams from Assam

1. Charaideo Maidams from Assam

Category: GS01-Medieval History

Syllabus: Ahom Dynasty

Mains: Ahom Dynasty and its contributions to India's Culture and History

Context: The Union government has decided to nominate Assam's Charaideo Maidams for **UNESCO** World Heritage Site tag.

Key Details:

- The Union government has decided to nominate Assam's Charaideo Maidams – the Ahom equivalent of the ancient Egyptian pyramids for the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.
- They represent the late medieval (13th-19th century CE) mound burial tradition of the Tai Ahom community in Assam.
 - These maidams are comparable to the pyramids because they are actually burial grounds of kings and queens of the **Ahom kingdom** which was established by Chaolung Siu Ka pha in the year 1228.
 - Usurping the Barahi tribe, Chau-lung Siu-ka-pha established the first capital of the Ahoms at the foothill of Patkai hills and named it Che-rai-doi or Che-tam-doi, meaning "a dazzling city above the mountain" in their language and consecrated site with a ritual.
 - 90 royal burials at Charaideo are the best-preserved, most representative, and comprehensive examples of this custom out of the 386 Maidams that have so far been excavated.
- In the ritual system and tradition of entombing a deceased Royal, Moi-Dams of Che-Rai-Doican be compared to the royal tombs of ancient China and the Pyramids of the Egyptians Pharaohs.

- It was shortlisted from among 52 sites across the country seeking the World Heritage Site tag.
- There is currently no World Heritage Site in the category of cultural heritage in the northeast.
- The nomination of the Charaideo Maidams has attained significance at a time when the country is celebrating the 400th birth anniversary of Lachit Barphukan.
- Owing to a lack of care for the remaining, most of the unprotected maidams are getting damaged owing to natural causes and encroachment. Incidents of robbery have also been reported near the site.





Image Source: The Hindu

Burial Practice:

- The Ahom rule lasted for about 600 years until the British annexed Assam in 1826.
- After the 18th century, the Ahom rulers adopted the Hindu method of cremation and began entombing the cremated bones and ashes in a Moidam at Charaideo.
- With the shift of Ahom capital south and eastwards, Moidams have been seen in different parts of Northern Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Northern Burma, Southern China and Northeast India – together defining the region where Tai-Ahom culture prevailed.
- In this entire region, the cluster of Moidams in Charaideo distinguishes itself in scale, concentration and being located in the most sacred land of the Tai-Ahoms.
- The Ahom rulers adopted the Hindu practise of cremation after the 18th century, and later entombed the cremated bones and ashes in a Moidam at Charaideo.

Nut Graf: *The moidams in Charaideo which are also famously known as the 'Pyramids of Assam' are chosen as India's nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage tag. The moidams preserved by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Assam State Archaeology Department act as a significant time capsule.*

Read more on [UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India](#)

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India-China Border Dispute

Category: GS02-International Relations

Syllabus: India and its Neighborhood – Relations

Mains: Increasing tensions between India and China

Context: China is building a new dam in Tibet near the Indian border.

Key Details:

- New Satellite images revealed by Damien Symon, a geospatial intelligence researcher at Intel Lab shows China constructing a dam on the Mabja Zangbo river in Tibet, close to the tri-junction.
 - The images show the activity since May 2021 in the Burang county of Tibet that shares its border with Nepal.
 - The dam is around 16 km north of the tri-junction and is opposite the Kalapani area of Uttarakhand.
- The Mabja Zangbo originates in the Nagari county of Tibet, flows through Nepal into the Ghaghara river before joining the Ganga in India.



Image Source: Mint

Implications:

- This development could be a matter of concern to India and Nepal as China could use this dam to divert and store water which could lead to a scarcity in the regions dependent on the Mabja Zangbo river and also lead to lower water levels in rivers such as the Ghaghara and the Karnali in Nepal.

- Dams close to the border could be used by China to strengthen its claim on the disputed areas in the region.
- In 2021, China announced that it would construct a massive dam on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo to generate up to 70 GW of power, three times that of the country's Three Gorges dam, which is the world's largest hydropower plant in terms of installed capacity.
 - The Yarlung Zangbo, as the Brahmaputra is known in Tibet, originates in the Himalayas in Tibet, enters India in Arunachal Pradesh, passes through Assam and then Bangladesh, before emptying into the Bay of Bengal.
 - This was among several other hydropower projects announced by China to generate clean energy and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.
- In addition to using water as leverage, the possibility of a military establishment by China near the tri-junction cannot be ruled out as the country had developed the same in the Yarlung Zangbo river near Arunachal Pradesh.
- China has also built dozens of villages in uninhabited stretches of the Line of Actual Control which the experts say is Beijing's aim to claim the territory along the disputed boundary.

Nut Graf: *China is constructing a dam on the Mabja Zangbo river in Tibet, close to the strategic tri-junction area between India, Nepal and China. This could be used to divert or restrict the waters of the Mabja Zangbo river which will raise concerns regarding China's future control on water in the entire region.*

Read more on [Recent Border Clash Between India and China](#)

Read more on [India-China Relations](#)

Category: Social Justice

1. Employment days under MGNREGS

Category: GS02-Social Justice

Syllabus: Welfare schemes and the performance of these schemes

Mains: Challenges associated with the implementation of the MGNREGA scheme

Context: Employment days under MGNREGS at a five-year low

Key Details:

- The average days of employment provided per household under the [Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme \(MGNREGS\)](#) is at a five-year low in financial year 2022-23
- The average days of employment provided per household is 42 days in this FY, while it was 50 days in 2021-22, 52 days in 2020-21, 48 days in 2019-20 and 51 days in 2018-19.
- The demand for work under the programme has decreased this fiscal year compared to the two pandemic years, when a sizable population relied on MGNREGS to make up the income gap brought on by job loss.
- However, a number of scholars and activists claim that the programme has been beset by structural issues that deter people from participating.

Various issues associated with the scheme:

- Poor allocation of funds has led to suppression of work demand and delays in wage payments. These supply constraints have led to workers getting routinely discouraged from doing NREGA work.
- The introduction of unnecessary technical complexities like an app for attendance at worksites has caused more hardships for workers.
- Critics have also often complained that the cost of providing work has increased significantly since the scheme first started.
- There have been concerns about the poorer States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar not being able to utilise the scheme optimally but economically better performing states like Kerala have been utilising the scheme efficiently for asset creation.
 - There are at least nine States and union territories which have utilised less than 70% of projected person days.
 - With low utilisation, financial outlay for the underperforming States is expected to further shrink in the upcoming financial year.
 - Person days under MGNREGS is defined as the total number of work days by a person registered under the scheme in a financial year.
- Other challenges such as fake job cards and fake beneficiaries, corruption, late uploading of muster rolls and a huge pendency in the payment of wages are interfering with MGNREGS implementation.

Nut graf: *Despite the criticism of being an inefficient instrument of shifting income to the poor, the MGNREGA scheme has remained a crucial safety net for rural households and its significance was particularly highlighted during the COVID pandemic. Therefore, it has become essential to address and resolve various challenges associated with the scheme in order to make it much more efficient and reach out to a larger number of beneficiaries.*

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Why is China's population shrinking?

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interest.

Mains: China's changing demography and its consequences.

Details:

- According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, China's population fell by 8,50,000 in the year 2022. This is the first decline since 1961.
- It is highlighted by the Demographers that with China's population now having peaked, India would become the most populous country in 2023.
- Since 1980, birth rates in China are declining. In 2022, the total number of births was 9.56 million. This is a more than 10% drop from 2021.
- For the first time the number of births fell below the number of deaths(in 2022).

Also read: [Changing Population Dynamics: Sansad TV Perspective Discussion of 19th Jan 2023](#)

Causes for Decline:

- One Child Policy:
 - The policy imposed forced abortions and high penalties.
 - The government of China defends the policy citing that it saved the country from additional 400 Million births.
 - However, experts reject this view citing that due to increasing economic development family size decreases. They also highlight the consequences like the ageing population.
- Marriage Preferences:
 - Barclay Bram of the Asia Society Policy Institute has pointed out in the research paper that "young Chinese are marrying later, having fewer children, or forgoing having children altogether".
 - It should be noted that the number of couples who married in China dropped from around 13.46 million to 8.14 million between 2013 and 2020.
- Child Preferences of the married couple:
 - Couples are choosing to have fewer children and starting their families later.
 - From 1990 to 2020, the average age of first-time parents rose from 24.1 to 27.5.

China's response to the declining population:

- One Child policy was abandoned by the Chinese Government in 2016 to arrest the declining trend.
- The two-child policy was also introduced. However, it failed to garner a response. As per a survey, it was found that the policy failed due to the high cost of education and healthcare.
- In 2021 a "three-child policy" was rolled out. It covered financial inducements for families with three children.
- The Politburo also promised to address economic factors like cracking down the expensive private education companies.
- However, a global trend of personal preferences for smaller families is a major issue.
- Some scholars suggest that a more realistic policy would be to increase the retirement age.

Impact of declining population on China's economy:

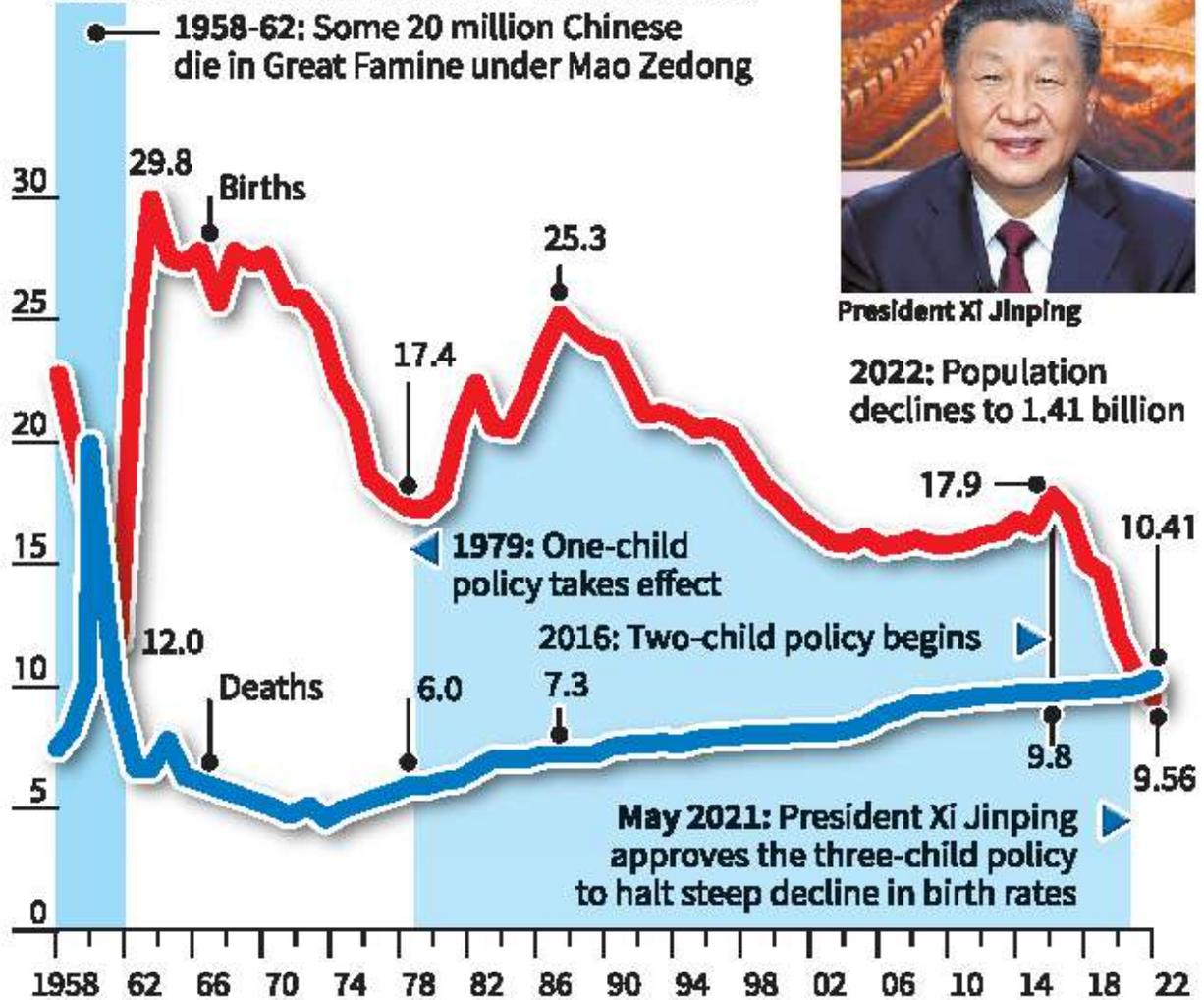
- The working age(16-59) population of China is declining. The number stood at 875 million or 62% of the total population at the end of 2022. This is down by around 75 million from 2010.

- The above-60 population comprises 20% of the total population with an actual figure of 280 million. It is an increase of around 30 million. According to the Chinese government, the above-60 population would account for 35% of the total population by 2050.
- China's National Working Commission on Ageing predicts that healthcare expenditure on this section will surge to 26% of the GDP by 2050, up from 7% in 2015.
- One of the major issues is the shrinking economic potential of the population.
- The size of China's workforce (peaked in 2011) is likely to drop from 925 million to 700 million in 2050. It should be noted that with increasing wages, many factories are shifting to Bangladesh and Southeast Asia.
- Several articles in Chinese media show that India will become the world's most populous country with a demographic and labour force profile similar to that of China in the 1980s.

Declining strength

China has announced that the country's population had fallen by 8,500,000 in the year 2022. For the first time the number of births fell below the number of deaths, a more than 10% drop from 2021.

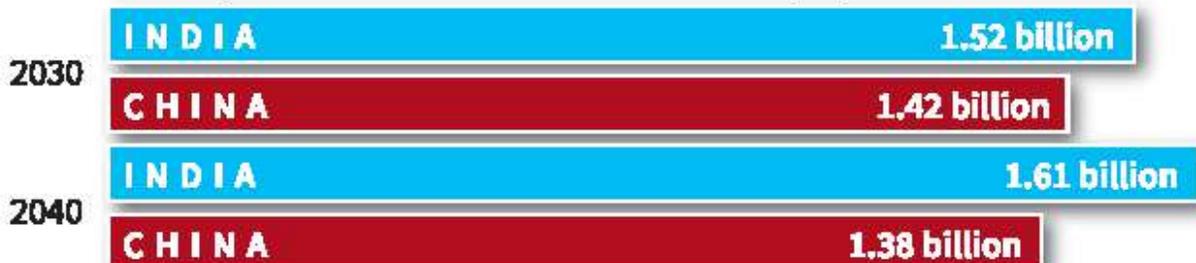
Number of births and deaths in China (millions)



President Xi Jinping

2022: Population declines to 1.41 billion

2023: India expected to overtake China as the most populous nation



Related Link:

[Two-Child Policy in India | UPSC Notes](#)

Nut Graf:

The birth rate in China fell below the death rate for the first time. This highlights the falling working-age population, which will have a serious impact on the demography and economy of the country. India would become the most populous country in the world in 2023 with a high demographic dividend.

Category: HEALTH

1. India's plan to eradicate measles, rubella

Syllabus: Issues related to health.

Mains: Eradication of Measles and Rubella.

Prelims: Measles and Rubella.

Details:

- India intends to eliminate measles and rubella (MR) by 2023. It should be remembered that it missed its earlier target of 2023 due to various reasons like the pandemic.
- A much earlier target of 2015 was also missed. The 2023 target was finally set in 2019.

For more information on Measles and rubella, read here: [Measles and Rubella Vaccination Campaign – MR Vaccine Campaign. UPSC Notes.](#)

Background Details:

- The measles virus is responsible for the deaths of more than 1 lakh children globally every year.
- Similarly, rubella is a leading cause of birth defects.
- Both measles and rubella are vaccine-preventable. For instance, in the last two decades, the measles vaccine is estimated to have averted nearly 30 million deaths globally.
- The symptoms of both diseases include rash and fever.
- In October 2022, an outbreak of measles occurred in Maharashtra, especially in Mumbai. As per the media reports, 15 children died due to infection.
- It was highlighted by the virologist Dr. Jacob John that the 2022 outbreak was an epidemiological compensation for the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). However, experts opine that it will ramp up herd immunity and help in achieving the necessary targets of the vaccination programme.

Steps taken by India to eliminate Measles and Rubella:

- During the period of 2010 to 2013, the Indian government conducted a phased measles immunization programme in 14 states for children of the age group of 9 months to 10 years. Nearly 119 million children were vaccinated.
- In 2014, [Mission Indradhaush](#) was launched to vaccinate the unvaccinated population.

- During 2017–2021, Government adopted a national strategic plan for measles and rubella elimination. It also introduced the rubella-containing vaccine (RCV) into the routine immunization programme.
- A nationwide measles-rubella supplementary immunization activity (SIA) catch-up campaign was also launched.
- The number of laboratories in the measles-rubella network also doubled.

Associated Risks and Way Forward:

- Under 1-year population is a serious challenge. But if the tempo of the second dose of vaccination coverage is maintained at 95% then the target to eliminate MR can be achieved.
- District-wise approach should be adopted to not only test for MR but also conduct robust fever and rash surveillance.
- Adequate support in the form of timely salaries and better service conditions should be provided to the ground-level staff like village health nurses, ASHA workers, Anganwadi, and [Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\)](#) workers.

Also read: [ASHA Workers UPSC Notes – About, Pandemic Response, Number of Workers, Challenges, Latest News, and FAQs](#)

Conclusion:

World Health Organization (WHO) is positive on India's endeavour to eliminate measles and rubella by 2023. It has been highlighted that "A threat of infection anywhere is a threat everywhere."

Related Link:

[Immunisation Drive in India – Universal Immunization Programme](#)

Nut Graf:

India is aiming to eliminate Measles and Rubella by 2023. World Health Organization is of the view that by increasing surveillance India can achieve its target. A district-wise approach can also help considerably in this direction.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Bar Headed Goose

Syllabus: Biodiversity and Environment

Prelims: Migratory Birds in India

Context: Forest Department personnel in Karnataka raided an actor's farmhouse and seized four Bar-headed geese on the grounds that he was possessing them in violation of the law.

Bar-headed goose:

- The bar-headed goose (*Anser indicus*) is a goose that breeds in Central Asia in colonies of thousands near mountain lakes and winters in South Asia, as far south as peninsular India.

- They have an extremely large range and can be found in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam. They have also been introduced to Canada and Spain.
- Although it lays eggs in a ground nest it is known for the extreme altitudes it reaches when migrating across the Himalayas.
 - It survives this extreme journey through the powerful and constant flight that helps the body generate heat, which is retained by down feathers. The species also has a special type of haemoglobin that can absorb oxygen more quickly than other birds.
- The bar-headed goose migrates over the Himalayas to spend the winter in parts of South Asia (from Assam to as far south as Tamil Nadu).
- The modern winter habitat of the species is cultivated fields, where it feeds on barley, rice and wheat.
- The summer habitat is high-altitude lakes where the bird grazes on short grass.

Conservation Status:

- **IUCN** conservation status of bar-headed goose is classified as 'Least concern'
- They are listed in Schedule 2 of the **Wild Life Protection Act, 1972**.
 - Animals under this list are also accorded high protection with the prohibition on their trade. Offences under these are prescribed the highest penalties.



Image Source: eBird.org

G. Tidbits

1. Wagner Group

- The U.S. recently designated Russia's Wagner group as a "transnational criminal organisation," putting it in league with Italian mafia groups and Japanese and Russian organised crime.
- Declaring Wagner a "Transnational Criminal Organization" under US executive order 13581 would freeze any US assets of Wagner and prohibit US nationals from providing funds, goods or services to the group.
- It is controlled by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a businessman and has about 50,000 fighters in Ukraine, 80% of them drawn from prisons.
 - Latest move by the U.S. puts more pressure on the private Russian army fighting in Ukraine.
- The designation will also allow a wider application of sanctions against the group's sprawling global network, which includes mercenary operations as well as businesses in Africa and elsewhere.

- Since 2015, Wagner Group mercenaries have been in Syria, fighting alongside pro-government forces and guarding oilfields.
- There are also Wagner Group mercenaries in Libya, supporting the forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar.
- The Central African Republic (CAR) has invited the Wagner Group to guard diamond mines, and it is thought to be guarding gold mines in Sudan.
- The government of Mali, in West Africa, is using the Wagner Group against Islamic militant groups.
- The US also accuses Wagner for dealing with North Korea on arms purchases.
 - The arms transfers from North Korea are in direct violation of UN Security Council resolutions.
- The European Union imposed sanctions on Wagner in 2021 and named individuals linked to the group for their involvement “in serious human rights abuses, including torture and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and killings”.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. With respect to Sambar deer, which of the following statements is/are correct? (Level-Medium)

1. It is a large deer native to the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.
2. It is listed as a vulnerable species on the IUCN Red List

Options:

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both
4. None

CHECK ANSWERS:-



Q2. Consider the following Pairs: (Level-Difficult)

Mudras Meaning

1. Abhaya mudra It symbolises the Buddha's enlightenment under the bodhi tree
2. Bhumisparsha Mudra It symbolises protection, peace and dispelling of fear
3. Karana Mudrā A gesture to keep away from evil and other negative influences.
4. Varada mudra It symbolises charity, compassion and boon-granting.

How many pairs given above are correctly matched?

1. Only one pair
2. Only two pairs
3. Only three pairs
4. All four pairs

CHECK ANSWERS:-

-
-

-
-
-

Q3. Which Amendment was a consequence of the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka?
(Level-Difficult)

1. 7th Amendment
2. 9th Amendment
3. 13th Amendment
4. 14th Amendment

CHECK ANSWERS:-

-

Q4. With respect to All India Kisan Sabha, which of the following statements is/are correct? (Level-Difficult)

1. It was founded in 1936 at Indian National Congress (INC) Meerut Session as All India Kisan Congress.
2. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was the head of the Sabha.
3. It wanted to abolish landlordism and to distribute the land free of cost to agricultural and other rural labourers.

Options:

1. 1 and 2 only
2. 2 and 3 only
3. 1 and 3 only
4. 1, 2 and 3

CHECK ANSWERS:-

-

-

-

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Q5. Consider the following statements: (Level-Difficult)

1. They live in the rainforests and mountains of northern Brazil and southern Venezuela
2. They are the largest relatively isolated tribe in South America.
3. They consider all people to be equal, and do not have a chief.

The above statements best describe:

1. Huron
2. Mohegan
3. Ojibwa
4. Yanomami

CHECK ANSWERS:-

-
-
-

Q6. Which of the following types of light are strongly absorbed by plants?
(PYQ-CSE-2007) (Level-Medium)

1. Violet and orange
2. Blue and red
3. Indigo and Yellow
4. Yellow and violet

CHECK ANSWERS:-

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Q1. In the context of China's population problem, discuss the opportunities India has a nation? (10 marks, 150 words) (GSI- Indian Society-Population and Associated Challenges)

Q2. "The poor performance of MGNREGA on key indicators should be a wakeup call for policy makers" Comment? (15 marks, 250 words) (GSII-Governance)

IAS General Studies Notes Links

[How Many Union Territories Are There In India In 2021](#)