

**DAILY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
ANALYSIS**



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

08 JANUARY 2024

1 - Asia-Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023:

GS II

International Issues:

- **Context:**

- Recently, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has launched the Asia-Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and Trends, which said 74.1% of Indians were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021.

- **What are the Key Highlights of the Report?**

- **Global:**

- The prevalence of undernourishment in the Asia and the Pacific region decreased to 8.4% in 2022 from 8.8% of the previous year, equivalent to around 12 million fewer undernourished people than in 2021, but 55 million more than in 2019, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- With 370.7 million undernourished people, the Asia and the Pacific region represents half of the world's undernourished people.
- Southern Asia accounts for almost 314 million of the region's undernourished people. This represents 85 % of undernourished people in the Asia and the Pacific region.
- There are more severely food insecure individuals in Southern Asia than any other subregions.
- Women across the subregions, except for Eastern Asia, tend to be more food insecure than men.

- **India related:**

- Inability to Afford Healthy Diet: 74.1% of Indians were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021, in 2020, the percentage was 76.2.
- Comparison with Neighboring Countries: Pakistan had 82.2% and Bangladesh had 66.1% of their populations facing difficulties in accessing healthy food.
- Regional Nutrition and Food Security: 16.6% of India's population is undernourished.
- India has a lower prevalence of moderate or severe and severe Food Insecurity compared to the world since 2015.
- Children's Health: Stunting affected 31.7% of children under five, while wasting (low weight for height) was prevalent in 18.7% of children under five.
- The WHO global nutrition target for childhood wasting is less than 5%.

- Stunted growth and development are the result of poor maternal health and nutrition, inadequate infant and young child feeding practices, and repeated infections interacting with a variety of other factors over a sustained period.
- Women's Health: 53% of the country's women aged between 15 to 49 had anaemia, which was the largest prevalence rate in India in 2019.
- Anaemia impairs health and well-being in women and increases the risk for adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes.
- Obesity and Nutrition Indicators: 1.6% of the country's adults are obese as of 2000, according to the FAO. The figure has increased to 3.9% by 2016.
- Exclusive Breastfeeding: On exclusive breastfeeding among infants 0–5 months of age, India has improved the prevalence with a percentage of 63.7%, which is higher than the world prevalence – 47.7%.
- India has the highest prevalence of low birthweight in the region (27.4%), followed by Bangladesh and Nepal.

- **What is the Food and Agriculture Organization?**

- **About:**

- FAO is a specialised agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- World Food Day is celebrated every year around the world on 16th October. The day is celebrated to mark the anniversary of the founding of the FAO in 1945.
- It is one of the UN food aid organisations based in Rome (Italy). Its sister bodies are the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

- *Source → The Hindu*

2 - India's Coal Plants: SO₂ Emission Control:

GS III

Environmental Conservation:

- **Context:**

- Recently, an analysis by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) has found less than 8% of India's coal-based power plants have installed the SO₂ emission reduction

technology recommended by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to keep Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) emissions in check.

- According to a 2019 Greenpeace study, India is the largest emitter of SO₂ in the world.
- **What are the Technologies to Reduce SO₂ Emissions?**
- **Flue Gas Desulfurization (FGD):**
 - FGD is the process of removing sulphur compounds from the exhaust emissions of fossil-fueled power stations.
 - This is done through the addition of absorbents, which can remove up to 95% of the sulphur dioxide from the flue gas.
 - Flue gas is the material emitted when fossil fuels such as coal, oil, natural gas, or wood are burned for heat or power.
- **Circulating Fluidized Bed Combustion (CFBC):**
 - CFBC Boiler is an environment-friendly power facility to reduce the discharge of pollutants such as nitrogen oxide and sulphur oxide by injecting air and lime at the same time for burning.
 - A bed of solid particles is said to be fluidized when the pressurised fluid (liquid or gas) is passed through the medium and causes the solid particles to behave like a fluid under certain conditions. Fluidization causes the transformation of the state of solid particles from static to dynamic.
- **What are the Key Findings of the Study?**
 - Only a combined capacity of 16.5 Gigawatts(GW) of coal plants have installed FGDs and Circulating Fluidised Bed Combustion (CFBC) boilers equivalent to 5.9 GW across India.
 - The CREA analysis found that 92 % of the country's coal power plants function without FGDs.
 - Blanket extension of the deadline for all coal power plants without checking on their progress by MoEF&CC and Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) played a major role in derailment of emission controls from coal-based electricity generation units.
 - The MoEF&CC introduced emission standards in 2015 for regulating PM, SO₂, NO_x, and Hg (Mercury) emissions.
 - The deadline has been extended four times for units in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) and three times for most other units across the country.
 - India's energy generation installed capacity stands at 425 GW. The thermal sector holds a predominant position within the overall installed capacity, encompassing coal (48.6%), gas (5.9%), lignite (1.6%) and a minimal share (<0.2%) from diesel.

- **What is the Categorisation of Power Plants for Installing FGD?**

- In 2021, the MoEF&CC divided the categories of coal-power plants based on geography to enforce deadlines.
- Category A is demarcated to coal-based power plants within a 10-kilometer radius of the National Capital Region (NCR) and of cities with a million-plus population.
- Category B is within a 10 km radius of critically polluted areas or non-attainment cities.
- Category C is the remaining plants throughout the country.
- The majority of the country's power plants belong to Category C, with the longest deadlines.

- **Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA):**

- CREA is an independent research organisation focused on revealing the trends, causes, and health impacts, as well as the solutions to air pollution.
- It uses scientific data, research and evidence to support the efforts of governments, companies and campaigning organisations worldwide in their efforts to move towards clean energy and clean air.

- **Way Forward:**

- **Accelerate FGD Implementation:**

- Prioritise and expedite the installation of FGD technology in coal-based power plants. Encourage and incentivize the adoption of this technology to ensure compliance with emission standards set by the MoEF&CC.

- **Expand CFBC Implementation:**

- Provide support and incentives for power plants to adopt CFBC technology, aiming for a broader implementation to enhance environmental sustainability.

- **Stricter Enforcement and Monitoring:**

- Strengthen regulatory mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing emission standards. Implement strict penalties for non-compliance with deadlines and emission regulations.

- **Research and Development (R&D):**

- Invest in research and development to explore and implement advanced technologies that go beyond current standards. Foster innovation in clean energy solutions and emission control technologies to make coal-based power generation more sustainable.

- *Source* → *The Hindu*

3 - Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023 by WHO:

GS II

International Issues:

- **Context:**

- Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) has released a report titled-The Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023, revealing critical findings and insights regarding road traffic fatalities and safety across the globe.

- **What are the Key Highlights of the Report?**

- **Road Traffic Fatalities:**

- Road traffic deaths worldwide decreased by 5% between 2010 and 2021, totaling 1.19 million fatalities annually.
- 108 UN member nations reported a drop in road traffic deaths during this period.
- India witnessed a 15% increase in fatalities, rising from 1.34 lakh in 2010 to 1.54 lakh in 2021.

- **Countries with Significant Reductions:**

- Ten countries succeeded in reducing road traffic deaths by over 50%: Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, Denmark, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.
- Thirty-five more countries made notable progress, reducing deaths by 30% to 50%.

- **Regional Distribution of Deaths:**

- 28% of global road traffic deaths occurred in the WHO South-East Asia Region, 25% in the Western Pacific Region, 19% in the African Region, 12% in the Region of the Americas, 11% in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and 5% in the European Region.
- Low- and middle-income countries bear a disproportionate burden, with 90% of deaths occurring in these nations despite having only 1% of the world's motor vehicles.

- **Vulnerable Road Users:**

- 53% of all road traffic fatalities are vulnerable road users, including pedestrians (23%), riders of powered two- and three-wheelers (21%), cyclists (6%), and users of micro-mobility devices (3%).
- Pedestrian deaths rose by 3% to 274,000, while cyclist deaths increased by nearly 20% to 71,000 between 2010 and 2021.
- However, deaths among car and other 4-wheeled light vehicle occupants slightly decreased, making 30% of global fatalities.

- **Progress on Safety Standards and Policies:**

- Just six countries have laws that meet WHO best practice for all risk factors (speeding, drink-driving, and use of motorcycle helmets, seatbelts and child restraints) while 140 countries (two-thirds of UN Member States) have such laws for at least one of these risk factors.
- A limited number of countries have legislation covering key vehicle safety features and require safety inspections for road users.

- **Call for Action:**

- Global Motor-Vehicle Fleet Growth is expected to double by 2030, urging the need for robust safety regulations and infrastructure improvements.
- The report sets a baseline for efforts to meet the United Nations Decade of Action 2021–2030 target to halve road traffic deaths by 2030.

- **What are the Initiatives Related to Road Safety?**

- **Global:**

- **Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety (2015):**

- The declaration was signed at the second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety held in Brazil. India is a signatory to the Declaration.
- The countries plan to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.6 i.e., to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.

- **Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030:**

- The UN General Assembly adopted resolution "Improving global road safety " with the ambitious target of preventing at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030.
- The Global Plan aligns with the Stockholm Declaration, by emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to road safety.

- **The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP):**

- It is a registered charity dedicated to saving lives through safer roads.
- **India:**
- **Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019:**
 - The Act hikes the penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, juvenile driving, etc.
 - It provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
 - It also provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the Central Government.
- **The Carriage by Road Act, 2007:**
 - The Act provides for the regulation of common carriers, limiting their liability and declaration of the value of goods delivered to them to determine their liability for loss of, or damage to, such goods occasioned by the negligence or criminal acts of themselves, their servants or agents and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- **The Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2000:**
 - The Act provides for the control of land within the National Highways, right of way and traffic moving on the National Highways and also for removal of unauthorized occupation thereon.
- **National Highways Authority of India Act, 1998:**
 - The Act provides for the constitution of an authority for the development, maintenance and management of NHs and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- *Source → The Hindu*

4 - India Imposes Onion Export Ban:

GS III

Agriculture related issues:

- **Context:**

- Recently, the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has announced a ban on onion exports until March 2024, issuing a notification converting the export policy of onions from 'Free' to 'Prohibited'.
- The current supply shortage, caused by early depletion of 2022-23 rabi season stocks and anticipated lower kharif 2023 output, along with increased festive demand, has led to a significant rise in onion prices.
- The government has also revised the stock limit for wheat, the stock limit has been halved to 1,000 tonnes for wholesalers, and for retailers to 5 tonnes.

- **Why has the Government Banned Export of Onion Price?**

- **Price Control:**

- By restricting onion exports, the government aims to prevent price surges or fluctuations within the domestic market.
- To combat spiraling prices, the Centre had imposed a Minimum Export Price of USD 800 per tonne on onions in October 2023. Earlier, in August, the government imposed a 40% export duty on onions.
- Onions have a history of significant price volatility, and an export ban helps in stabilizing prices, making them more affordable for local consumers.

- **Addressing Scarcity:**

- Factors like adverse weather conditions, lower production, or increased demand can lead to a scarcity of onions within the country.
- By banning exports, the government ensures that the available supply is directed towards meeting domestic demands first.

- **Food Security:**

- Onions are a staple in Indian cuisine, and any scarcity can impact food security. By curbing exports, the government ensures that the population has access to this essential food item without facing shortages or unaffordable prices.

- **What are the Key Facts About Onion?**

- Onion is an important horticultural commodities grown worldwide for their culinary purposes and medicinal values.
- India is the second largest producer of onion after China.
- Maharashtra, Karnataka, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are the major onion producing states.
- Maharashtra ranks first in Onion production with a share of 42.53% followed by Madhya Pradesh with a share of 15.16% in 2021-22 (3rd Advance Estimate).

- **Why has the Government Put Stock Limits on Wheat?**

- The revised stock limits aim to prevent hoarding practices by entities involved in wheat stocking. By imposing stricter limits, the government intends to discourage artificial scarcity and ensure a fair distribution of wheat across various stakeholders.
- Excessive hoarding can lead to an imbalance between supply and demand, causing price fluctuations that may negatively impact consumers.
- Regulating wheat stocks ensures that sufficient quantities remain available in the market to meet the country's food requirements. It helps maintain food security by preventing shortages and ensuring access to this staple food item for consumers.

- **What is the Current Scenario of Wheat Distribution Across the Country?**

- India is the world's second-biggest wheat producer after China. But it accounts for less than 1% of the global wheat trade. It keeps a lot of it to provide subsidised food for the poor.
- Major wheat-growing states in India are Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Gujarat.
- Major Export Destinations (2022-23): Bangladesh, Indonesia, Korea Rep., United Arab Emts and Yemen Republic.

- *Source → The Hindu*

5 - Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions:

- **Context:**

- Recently, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the abrogation of Article 370 by the Centre in 2019 and also recommended setting up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to look into alleged violations of human rights by both state and non-state actors in Jammu & Kashmir.

- **What is a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?**

- **About:**

- A Truth and Reconciliation Commission, also known as a 'truth and justice commission' or simply, a 'truth commission', is an official mechanism to not just acknowledge, but also reveal, wrongdoings by a government or sometimes non-state actors.

- **Objective:**

- The truth commission is one that is focused on the past, rather than in ongoing events.
- It investigates a pattern of events that took place over a period of time.
- The commission engages directly and broadly with the affected population, gathering information on their experiences;
- It is a temporary body, with the aim of concluding with a final report.
- Commission is officially authorized or empowered by the state under review.

- **Which Nations have Already Established TRC?**

- The two best known and most consequential commissions are considered to be set up in South Africa, Australia and Canada.
- In India's neighborhood, truth commissions have been set up in Sri Lanka and Nepal.
- In South Africa, the first post-apartheid government of President Nelson Mandela established a TRC in 1995 with the aim of uncovering the truth of human rights violations during the decades of apartheid.

- **Article 370:**

- Article 370 in the Indian constitution gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, a region disputed by India, Pakistan and China.
- It was drafted by N Gopaldaswami Ayyangar, a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, and was added to the constitution as a 'temporary provision' in 1949.
- It allowed the state to have its own constitution, flag and autonomy over most matters except defense, foreign affairs and communications.
- It was based on the terms of the Instrument of Accession, which was signed by the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, in 1947 to join India after an invasion by Pakistan.

- **Source** → *The Hindu*



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