



## **CURRENT AFFAIRS COMPENDIUM – APRIL 2024**

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# AAGAZ 2026

## MAIN FEATURES

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## **National Current Affairs**

### **FSSAI Advisory to e- commerce platforms**



**Recently:** FSSAI issued an advisory to all e-commerce **Food Business Operators ("FBOs")**, wherein, the FSSAI directed all e-commerce FBOs to ensure appropriate categorization of food products being sold on their websites.

- This direction comes after the food safety authority observed that e-commerce players are erroneously categorising certain milk, cereals and malt-based beverages as health drinks or energy drinks on their platforms.

#### **What is the issue?**

- The FSSAI observed that food items licensed as '**Proprietary Food**' under categories such as dairy based beverage mix, cereal based beverage mix, or malt-based beverage are being marketed on e-commerce platforms under labels such as '**Health Drink**' or '**Energy Drink**'.



What are Proprietary Foods?

- Proprietary Foods are those food items that are not standardized under the **Food Safety and Standards (Food Product Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011**.
  - They are also not standardized under **Food Safety and Standards (Health Supplements, Nutraceuticals, Food for Special Dietary Use, Food for Special Medical Purpose, Functional Food, and Novel Food) Regulations, 2016**.
  - However, they **use standardised ingredients**.
- 
- The Advisory stated that the term '**Energy Drink**' is only allowed for products:
    - Licensed under **Food Category System (FCS) 14.1.4.1** and **14.1.4.2** (Carbonated and Non-carbonated water based flavoured drinks).
    - Standardized under sub-regulation **2.10.6 (2)** of **Food Product Standards and Food Additives Regulations 2011** (Caffeinated Beverage).
  - The Advisory further clarified that the term '**Health Drink**' is **not defined** under the **Food Safety and Standard Act, 2006**.
  - Therefore, the FSSAI has advised all e-commerce FBOs to promptly rectify this misclassification by removing or de-linking such drinks or beverages from the category of 'Health Drinks / Energy Drinks'.
  - Subsequent to the Advisory, the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** issued an advisory dated April 10, 2024 to e-commerce platforms to take down **Bourn Vita and other beverages** from 'Health Drinks' section.
  - According to the advisory, **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** after its inquiry under **Section 14** of **Commission of Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005**, concluded that there is no health drink defined under FSS Act 2006, rules and regulations submitted by FSSAI and Mondelez India Food.

- NCPCR is a **statutory body** constituted under **Section (3)** of the Commission of Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act 2005.
- The manufacturers of these brands will have to withdraw all the advertisement inventories showing their products as 'healthy' and 'nutritional'.

### **The Bourn Vita Controversy:**

- Twelve months ago, Bourn Vita faced controversy due to its high level of sugar content.
- **Revant Himatsingka**, who calls himself **@foodpharmer** on social media, with **2.1M followers** on Instagram (currently), had flagged the product's high sugar content, in his video posted on April 1, 2023.
  - The influencer asserted that the powder supplement contains high amounts of sugar, cocoa solids, and potentially hazardous colorants, which may pose significant health threats to children, including the potential risk of cancer.
- This drew the ire of **Mondelez India**, the company that owns Bournvita and he had to delete the video following a legal notice from the company on April 13.
- Shortly after the controversy, the NCPCR instructed the brand **to cease all 'misleading' advertisements** that touted various health benefits associated with the drink.

### **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):**

- It is a statutory body established in **2008** under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 ("FSS Act")**.
- It operates under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**.
- The FSSAI is responsible for regulating and supervising the safety and standards of food products to ensure their quality and hygiene.
- It formulates regulations, sets standards for food products, and regulates their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale, and import.
- It is **headquartered in New Delhi** and has four regional offices located in **Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai**.

- It consists of a **chairperson and 22 members**.
- The **State Food Safety Index (SFSI)**, was developed in **2018** in collaboration with the FSSAI aimed to motivate the States and Union Territories to improve their performance and work towards establishing an appropriate food safety ecosystem.
- **Shri Apurva Chandra** is the **current chairperson** of FSSAI.

### **The Great Nicobar Project**



**Recently:** The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)** plans to invite bids for the first phase of the proposed **international container transshipment terminal** at Great Nicobar in the **Bay of Bengal** by July if the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) returns to power.

- Meanwhile, the project is **facing opposition** from a group of anthropologists, social scientists, environmentalists and scholars of tribal studies.

- The groups have written a letter to the Chairman, **National Commission of Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** and **Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda**, demanding immediate scrapping of the Great Nicobar project.

### **What is the Greater Nicobar Project?**

- It is a **Rs 75,000 crore** “greenfield city” which includes:
  - An International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT),
  - A greenfield international airport,
  - A **450 MVA** (Megavolt-Ampere) gas and solar-based power plant over **16,610 hectare** on the island,
  - A township for the personnel who will implement the project.
- The project is being spearheaded by **Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO)** based in **Port Blair**, under a vision plan conceived by the **NITI Aayog**.
- A total **166.1 sq km** along the southeastern and southern coasts of the island have been identified for project along a coastal strip of width between **2 km and 4 km**.
- Some **130 sq km** of forests have been sanctioned for diversion, and **9.64 lakh trees** are likely to be felled.
- The project will be implemented over **30 years** and is expected to bring more than **three lakh** people to the island during that time.
- The **Union Environment Ministry** in November 2022 gave an **in-principle (Stage 1) clearance** for the diversion of **130.75 square km** of forest in Great Nicobar Island for the project.
  - However, the **National Green Tribunal overturned** the clearance in **April 2023**.
- The NGT had constituted a high-powered committee headed by the **Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)**, to revisit the environmental clearance provided for the project and submit its proceedings within **two months**.
- The expressions of interest are likely to be evaluated and finalised only after the project gets clearance from this committee.
- Tenders for the **Rs 18,000 crore first phase** of the transshipment terminal at Nicobar were expected to be invited in **February 2024**.
  - However, criticism by local non-governmental organisations and media over the projects and its impact on the **Shompen tribes** delayed the process of inviting tenders.

- According to an official of the MoPSW, the government has received expressions of interest (EoIs) from **11 players** for the **Rs 41,000-crore** international transshipment port project.
  - These include **Larsen and Toubro Ltd, Afcons Infrastructure Ltd, and JSW Infrastructure Ltd.**

### **The Great Nicobar Island:**

- Great Nicobar, the **southernmost** of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has an area of **910 sq km**.
- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are a cluster of about **836 islands** in the eastern Bay of Bengal, the two groups of which are separated by the **150-km wide Ten Degree Channel**.
  - The **Andaman Islands** lie to the **north** of the channel, and the **Nicobar Islands** to the **south**.
- **Indira Point** on the southern tip of Great Nicobar Island is **India's southernmost point**, less than 150 km from the northernmost island of the Indonesian archipelago.
- Great Nicobar is home to:
  - Two national parks – **Campbell National Park (North) and Galathea National Park (South)**.
  - A biosphere reserve.
  - The Shompen and Nicobarese tribal peoples.
- The Great Nicobar Island has tropical wet evergreen forests, mountain ranges reaching almost **650 m** above sea level, and coastal plains.
- Fourteen species of mammals, 71 species of birds, 26 species of reptiles, 10 species of amphibians, and 113 species of fish are found on the island, some of which are endangered.
- The **leatherback sea turtle** is the island's flagship species.
- The ecologically rich island was declared a **biosphere reserve in 1989** and included in **UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme in 2013**.

### **Concerns:**

Impact on the inhabitants:



- The island has a total area of a little more than **900 sq km**, with nearly **850 sq km** designated as a **tribal reserve** under the **Andaman and Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation, 1956**.
- There are two main tribes that reside on the island - **Shompen and Nicobarese tribal people**.
- The **Shompen** are **hunter-gatherers** who depend on forest and marine resources for sustenance.
- The **Nicobarese**, who lived along the **west coast** of the island were mostly relocated after the 2004 tsunami.
- **More than half** of the project area lies over the **Tribal Reserve Area** of the island, the riparian and forested regions of which are currently in use by the forest-dwelling **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group**, the **Shompen**.
- The Shompen rely on the rainforest for existence and have little contact with the outside world.
  - Many academics believe that the Shompen could die from diseases if they come into contact with outsiders.
- The project area also covers parts of the south-eastern and western coast where the coastal dwelling Scheduled Tribe, the Great Nicobarese, have their ancestral villages”

#### Ecological Impact:

- The project covers **15%** of the thickly forested Great Nicobar Island, one of the **largest, single forest diversions** in recent times, and nearly a quarter of all the forest land diverted in the past three years across the country.
- The proposed massive infrastructure development in an ecologically important and fragile region, including the falling of almost a million trees, has alarmed many environmentalists.
- The loss of tree cover will not only affect the **flora and fauna** on the island, it will also lead to **increased runoff and sediment deposits** in the ocean, impacting the **coral reefs** in the area.
  - Coral reefs, already under threat from warming oceans, are of enormous ecological importance.
  - India has successfully translocated a coral reef from the **Gulf of Mannar to the Gulf of Kutch** earlier.
  - The Coral reefs in the project area will also have to be relocated in the similar manner.
- The **Galathea Bay** in the island is a nesting ground for birds and the project area is part of **Coastal Regulation Zones-IA and IB**.
- **India's National Marine Turtle Action Plan**, released in February 2021, names Galathea Bay in the list of **“Important Marine Turtle Habitats in India”**.
  - The turtle nesting sites will be disturbed due to the project, dolphins and other species will be harmed by dredging.

- The **Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary** was **de-notified as a wildlife sanctuary** by the government to give environmental clearance for the proposed port project.
  - Two weeks after the denotification, the MoEFCC declared a **zero- extent eco-sensitive zone** for the Galathea and Campbell Bay National Parks.
  - This made the pristine forest land along the central and south-eastern coast of the island available for the project.

### **National Green Tribunal:**

- **Formation:** The National Green Tribunal has been established in **2010** under the **National Green Tribunal Act 2010**.
  - During the summit of **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992**, India vowed to provide judicial and administrative remedies to the victims of the pollutants and other environmental damage.
- This is the first body of its kind that is required by its parent statute to apply the **polluter pays principle** and the principle of sustainable development. (**SDG 13** talks about Climate Action).
- India is the **third** country following **Australia and New Zealand** to have such a system.
- **Aim:** Effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

Enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected with the same.

- It draws inspiration from **Article 21** of the Constitution i.e., Protection of life and personal liberty, which assures the citizens of India the right to a healthy environment.
- The Tribunal **shall not be bound** by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- The Tribunal is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally **within 6 months** of filing of the same.

- Currently, it has **five** places of sitting: **New Delhi** (the Principal Place of Sitting), **Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai**.

**Members and Chairperson:** The tribunal has a chairperson, Judicial Members and Expert members.

- The Chairperson of the NGT is a retired Judge of the Supreme Court.
- The chairperson can hold office for a period of **three years** or till the age of **sixty- five years**, whichever is earlier, and is not eligible for reappointment.
- On 18 October 2010, **Justice Lokeshwar Singh Panta** became its first Chairman.
- **Honourable Justice Prakash Shrivastava** is the incumbent chairman of NGT.
- Other Judicial members are **retired Judges of High Courts**.
- Expert members should have a professional qualification and a **minimum of 15 years of experience** in the field of environment/forest conservation and related subjects.
- Each bench should have at least **one judicial member** and **one expert member**.

### **India's indigenous High Speed Bullet Trains**



**Recently:** India has initiated the development of an indigenous bullet train capable of surpassing speeds of **250 kilometres per hour (kmph)**.

- This train is expected to outpace all existing trains currently operating on the Indian Railways network.

### **What are High- Speed/Bullet Trains?**

- **Japan's Shinkansen** high-speed trains are referred to as bullet trains due to their appearance and speed.
- Bullet train is a term generally used to describe any train of speed above **250 km/h**.
- A railway system designed for speeds above **250kmph** is generally called high speed.
  - Sections of these routes may have lower speed limits for safety reasons.
- **China** boasts the world's longest high-speed railway network with **42,000 km** of such tracks.
- **Japan, Spain, France and Germany** are the others where tracks dedicated for high-speed trains stretch over **1,000 km**.
- The first high-speed rail system, the **Tōkaidō Shinkansen**, began operations in **Honshū, Japan**, in **1964**.
  - Due to the streamlined spitzer-shaped nose cone of the locomotive, the system also became known by its English nickname **bullet train**.
  - It had a speed of **210kmph**.
- In **1977**, sections of the **Florence-Rome line** became **Europe's first high-speed railway** at top speed of **250kmph**.
- The **national French rail company** started its first full high-speed line, between **Paris and Lyons**, on September 27, **1981**, with top speed of **260kmph**.
- India's journey towards high-speed rail began with the introduction of the **Shatabdi Express in 1988**, followed by the **Rajdhani Express** and **Gatimaan Express**.
- India does not have a high- speed rail network yet.
- Construction of the **Mumbai- Ahmedabad high- speed rail corridor** that started in **2017**, is underway and is expected to be completed by **2028**.
  - India is currently relying on Japanese technology for the bullet trains that will operate on the **Ahmedabad to Mumbai** line.

- The **Shinkansen E5** series bullet trains, which India plans to deploy on the **Mumbai-Ahmedabad route**, can reach speeds of up to **320 kmph**.
- The **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** is providing a soft loan of approximately **Rs 40,000 crore** for the **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail project**, with the total project cost exceeding **Rs 1.08 lakh crore**
- India has several **semi- high speed rail networks** running at a speed of **160kmph**. These are called **Vande Bharat Express** and **Gatimaan Express**.

### **About the recent Project:**

- It is being built on the **Vande Bharat platform** that can already clock a maximum speed of **220 kmph**.
- The designs for this high-speed train are currently being developed at the Indian Railways' **Integral Coach Factory (ICF)**, a Railways Production unit located in **Chennai**.
- The (proposed) variant Vande Bharat trains can now reach from zero to **100 kmph in 52 seconds** while the existing bullet trains do this in **54 seconds**.
- The made-in-India bullet trains will operate on the recently announced **north, south, and east corridors**.
  - These corridors will complement the **western corridor**, which was developed in collaboration with Japan and utilizes Japanese technology.
- The **National High Speed Rail Corp. Ltd (NHSRCL)**, responsible for implementing India's first bullet train project, recently announced the completion of **300 km of pier work**.
- The land acquisition process for the entire **508 km** stretch was finalized in January.

### **Vande Bharat Express:**

- Vande Bharat is **India's indigenous Semi- High-Speed Train**, showcasing the country's technological capabilities.
- The project aligns with the **Make in India initiative**, promoting domestic manufacturing and self-reliance.
- The **first** Vande Bharat Express train was flagged off on **February 15, 2019**, on the **New Delhi-Kanpur-Allahabad-Varanasi** route.



- On **September 24, 2023**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off **nine Vande Bharat trains** via video conferencing.
- The Vande Bharat Express can run up to a maximum speed of **160 kmph** and has travel classes like Shatabdi Train but with better facilities.
- **Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai**, has been the force behind a completely in-house design and manufacture, computer modelling and working with a large number of suppliers for system integration in just **18 months**.
- The Indian Railways introduced the new avatar of **Vande Bharat: Vande Bharat 2.0** and the first train was flagged off by the Prime Minister on **September 30, 2022** from **Gandhinagar to Mumbai**.
- It can attain maximum speed up to **180 kmph**, and is lighter, weighing **392 ton** instead of the earlier **430 ton**.

### Expansion in India's OCI Card norms



**Recently:** After providing a relaxation in extending OCI card privileges to overseas Indians in **Suriname**, India is considering expanding the scheme to other countries, including **Fiji**.

- In **2023**, India announced that the eligibility criteria for overseas Indians in **Suriname**, a South American country, would be relaxed.

- This meant that eligibility went up from the **fourth generation to the sixth generation** of the original Indian immigrants who arrived in Suriname.
- In **March 2024**, India approved a special provision to make **7th-generation Indian-origin Mauritians** eligible for the Overseas Citizen of India Card.

### **About India's Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) Scheme:**

- The Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Scheme was introduced by amending the **Citizenship Act, 1955** in **August 2005**.
- This move came in response to persistent demands for "**dual citizenship**" particularly from the Diaspora in North America and other developed countries.
- The Scheme was launched during the **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention 2006** at **Hyderabad**.
  - The Pravasi Bhartiya Divas is observed annually on **January 9<sup>th</sup>**.
- An Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) is a person who is technically **a citizen of another country having an Indian origin**.
- They were citizens of India on **26th January 1950** or thereafter except who is or had been a citizen of **Pakistan, Bangladesh** or such other country.
- Prior to **2011**, the External Affairs Ministry was running a separate scheme for **Person of Indian Origin (PIO)**.
  - They are Indian-origin people up to four generations, except those living in **Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Afghanistan**.
- In **2015** it was merged, and all PIOs were converted to OCI status.

### **Who is eligible to apply for registration as OCI cardholder?**

- As per **Section 7A** of the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, following categories of foreign nationals are eligible for registration as Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Cardholder:-
  - (a) Any person of full age and capacity:
    - (i) Who is a citizen of another country, but was a **citizen of India** at the time of, or at any time after the commencement of the Constitution i.e. **26.01.1950**; or

- (ii) Who is a citizen of another country, but **was eligible to become a citizen of India** at the time of the commencement of the Constitution i.e. on **26.01.1950**; or
- (iii) Who is a **citizen of another country**, but belonged to a territory that became part of India after **15.08.1947**; or
- (iv) Who is a **child or a grandchild or a great grandchild** of such a citizen; or
- (b) A person, who is a **minor child** of a person mentioned in (a) above; or
- (c) A person, who is a **minor child**, and whose **both parents are citizens of India** or one of the parents is a citizen of India; or
- (d) A **spouse** of foreign origin of a **citizen of India** or spouse of foreign origin of an **Overseas Citizen of India Cardholder** registered under section 7A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 and whose marriage has been registered and subsisted for a continuous period of **not less than two years** immediately preceding the presentation of the application. Such spouse shall be subjected to prior security clearance by a competent authority in India.

### **Rights and Benefits:**

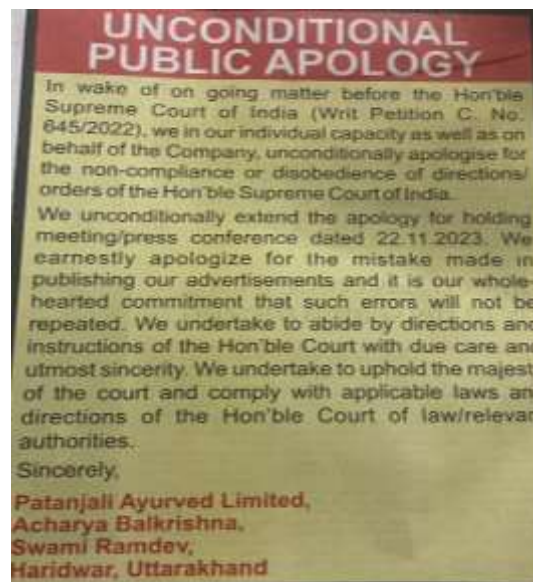
- A registered Overseas Citizen of India is granted multiple entry, multi-purpose, life-long visa for visiting India.
- He/She is **exempted from registration** with Foreign Regional Registration Officer or Foreign Registration Officer for any length of stay in India.
- He/ She is entitled to **general parity with Non-Resident Indians** in respect of all facilities available to them in economic, financial and educational fields.
  - The above benefits are not given in matters relating to the acquisition of **Agricultural land or Farm house** or Plantation properties.
- An OCI card allows you to apply for a **driver's license, PAN card** or open a bank account in India.
- If you remain an OCI for **5 years**, you can attain **Indian citizenship** and then live in India for a period of one year including short breaks.
- Special immigration counters are provided at all international airports in India for OCI card holders.
- An OCI cards holder can open special bank accounts in India just like NRIs and make investments.
- OCI is not to be misconstrued as 'dual citizenship'. A person with OCI status is **not an Indian citizen**.

- They **do not have voting rights** and cannot contest elections or hold any constitutional office.
- They are **not entitled** to the rights conferred on a citizen of India under **Article 16** of the Constitution with regard to equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.

### **The Goan Passport Revocation Issue:**

- Recently, The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued a directive to passport authorities, enabling individuals from **Goa and Daman & Diu** who had their Indian passports revoked after acquiring Portuguese citizenship to obtain a "**revocation order**."
- Goa is an erstwhile Portuguese colony and people born in Goa before **19th December 1961** and two future generations have the option to register as Portuguese citizens.
  - Goa was **liberated** from Portuguese rule in **1961**.
- Many Goans have transcribed their births in the **Central Registry in Lisbon** and acquired Portuguese citizenship.
- A memorandum issued by the MEA in **November 2022** led to the revocation of the passports of a number of people.
- The memorandum categorizes cases related to **passport surrender certificates**, and one particular category has resulted in the revocation of passports for some Goans.
  - Under **section 10 (3) (b) of the Passport Act of 1967**, passports obtained by **hiding the fact of having another country's citizenship** can be **cancelled** even if they were not used for travel.
- Earlier, passport authorities used to impose a penalty for surrendering an Indian passport and issuing a surrender certificate.
- A '**surrender certificate**' issued by passport-issuing authorities has so far been a **requirement** for those who want to **apply for OCI cards**.
- However, on account of the revocation of their passport, these individuals couldn't avail this option.
- Current memorandum of MEA, instructing passport authorities to issue '**revocation certificates**' instead of surrender certificates in cases where Indian passports were **obtained by concealing information**.
- This will allow Indian nationals from former Portuguese territories who acquired Portuguese citizenship to apply for Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI).

## **Patanjali and its crisis**



**Recently:** the Directorate General of **GST Intelligence (DGGI)** in **Chandigarh** has imposed a hefty penalty of **Rs 27.5 crore** on Patanjali Foods for an irregularity in **Input Tax Credit (ITC)**.

- The notice comes a day after the **Uttarakhand** govt suspended the licences for **14 products** sold by Patanjali Ayurved and Divya Pharmacy.
  - The products whose licences have been suspended are - Swasari Gold, Swasari Vati, Bronchom, Swasari Pravahi, Swasari Avaleh, Mukta Vati Extra Power, Lipidom, Bp Grit, Madhugrit, Madhunashini Vati Extra Power, Livamrit Advance, Livogrit, Eyegrit Gold and Patanjali Drishti Eye Drop.
- Trapped in the tussle, **Baba Ramdev and Acharya Balkrishna** also published a new **public apology** in the newspapers on **April 24**.
  - This was ordered by the **Supreme Court** for not complying with its directives regarding misleading advertisements against Patanjali Ayurved.



- This marks their **second apology**, and notably, the new advertisement is bigger, following the court's inquiry into the size of their first apology compared to the ads for their products.

### **The ITC Issue:**

- Input tax credit means at the time of paying tax on output, you can reduce the tax you have already paid on inputs.
- Input tax credit mechanism is available to you when you are covered under the **GST Act**.
- This means if you are a manufacturer, supplier, agent, e-commerce operator, aggregator or any of the persons mentioned, registered under GST, you are eligible to claim input tax credit for tax paid by you on your purchases.
- The penalty by DGGI Chandigarh stems from the detection of a **Rs 20-crore** irregularity in ITC.
- In case of a fake ITC claim, a penalty can be imposed up to the **amount of the ITC claim along with interest**.
- In this case, the wrong ITC claim was Rs 20 crore, and the penalty amount is **Rs 27.5 crore** – inclusive of interest — hence, the total amount stands at **Rs 47.5 crore**.

### **The Supreme Court matter:**

- **Indian Medical Association (IMA)** filed a petition at the apex court in **August 2022** after Patanjali published an advertisement titled:-
  - "Misconceptions spread by allopathy: save yourself and the country from the misconceptions spread by pharma and medical industry."

**Allopathic Medicine:**

- Allopathic medicine is a system in which medical doctors and other health care professionals **treat symptoms and diseases using drugs, radiation, or surgery.**
  - Allopathy is an archaic and derogatory label originally used by **19<sup>th</sup>-century homeopaths** to describe heroic medicine, the precursor of modern- evidence based medicine
    - The term was coined by the creator of the creator of Homeopathy, **Samuel Hahnemann, in 1810.**
  - WHO define Allopathy as the broad category of medical practice that is sometimes called **biomedicine, conventional medicine, mainstream medicine, orthodox medicine, or Western medicine.**
- 
- The petition details other instances where Ramdev called allopathy a **"stupid and bankrupt science"**.
    - He made claims about allopathic medicine being responsible for Covid-19 deaths.
  - The IMA also accused Patanjali of contributing to vaccine-hesitancy during the pandemic by spreading false rumours.
  - The IMA claimed that the advertisement was in direct violation of the **Drugs & Other Magical Remedies Act, 1954 (DOMA)**, and the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**
    - The publishing of false and misleading advertisements is an offence under both statutes.
  - Under **Section 4** of the **DOMA**, there is a prohibition against publishing misleading advertisements relating to a drug.
    - This is described as an advertisement that "directly or indirectly gives a false impression regarding the true character of the drug."
    - Publishing a misleading advertisement can result in up to **six months' imprisonment** or a fine for **first offense**, and up to **one year of imprisonment** for **second offense.**
  - **Section 89** of the **CPA** contains even more stringent punishments for false or misleading advertisements.
    - The punishment includes imprisonment up to **two years** and a fine up to **ten lakh rupees** for the **initial offense.**

- For subsequent offenses, the penalties increase to imprisonment up to **five years** and a fine up to **fifty lakh rupees**.

### **Patanjali Ayurved:**

- Patanjali Ayurved is an Indian multinational conglomerate holding company, based in **Haridwar**.
- Patanjali Ayurved Limited was **established in 2006** with a thought of rural and urban development.
- It was founded by **Baba Ramdev** and **Acharya Balkrishna**.
- It has more than **47000 retail counters, 3500 distributors**, multiple warehouses in **18 states** and proposed factories in **6 states**.
- As the group is already present in markets like the **US, Canada, the UK, Russia, Dubai and some European countries**.

### **Indian Medical Association (IMA):**

- IMA is the largest represented organisation of doctors of modern system of medicine in India.
- It was **established in 1928** as the **All India Medical Association**, and was renamed the **Indian Medical Association in 1930**.
- Previously stationed out of **Calcutta**, the IMA is headquartered in **New Delhi**.
- It has a membership of **3.5 lakh doctors** spread over in **28 State Branches, 5 Union territorial Branches** and **1702** local branches in almost all the districts of India.
- In **2022, Sahajanand Prasad Singh** was listed as the national president for the organization.
- IMA, in the year **1946** helped in organisation of the World body of medical Associations, namely, **World Medical Association (WMA)** and thus became its Founder member.
  - **Dr. Ketan Desai** was installed as WMA President in **2015**.

## Medical Termination of Pregnancy



**Recently:** In order to improve the implementation of the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 2021**, city-based gynaecologist **Dr Nikhil Datar** has submitted crucial suggestions to the **Bombay high court (HC)**.

- These recommendations come in response to concerns about the practical application of the amended act, particularly regarding the termination of pregnancies **beyond 24 weeks**.
- HC on April 25 allowed Dr Datar's patient, a **37-year-old** Thane resident to terminate a **27-week pregnancy** at a private hospital due **to foetal abnormalities**, setting a unique precedent.

### About the case:

- The 37-year-old woman had obtained the approval of the civic-run **JJ Hospital's medical board** to terminate her pregnancy due to a **congenital heart abnormality** in the foetus.

- She wanted to undergo the procedure **Dr Nikhil Datar**, an obstetrician and gynaecologist at private hospital **Cloudnine**.
- However, she learnt that the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act mandates terminations **beyond 24 weeks** to occur solely at **government hospitals** or government-approved institutions.
- Private hospitals are also not permitted to seek approval to perform such procedures.
- Adding to her concerns, the JJ Hospital medical board's report indicated that if the baby were **born alive** during the procedure, it would require admission to the **neonatal intensive care unit**.
- Fearing the birth of a **live baby**, she sought selected **foetal reduction**.
- In response, she challenged this restriction as a violation of her constitutional **Right to Life**, highlighting the emotional distress of being forced to deliver a foetus with severe abnormalities.
- The woman approached the Bombay High Court and a Division Bench of **Justices AS Chandurkar and Jitendra Jain**, allowed the plea to undergo the procedure at Cloudnine Hospital.

### **India's laws on abortion:**

- The termination of pregnancy in India is governed by the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP Act)**.
- MTP Act was first enacted in **1971**.
- The latest amendment to the act was in **2021**.
- Previously, the MTP Act only applied to **married women**.
- However, the **2021 amendment** expanded its coverage to include **unmarried women** as well.
- Gestation period – It is the period of time between conception and birth.
- The Act allows termination of pregnancy in **three stages** –
  - Up to **20 weeks**, it's permitted with **one doctor's advice**.
  - Between **20-24 weeks**, it's allowed exceptionally based on **two registered medical practitioners'** recommendations for specific categories.
  - After **24 weeks**, a **medical board** in approved facilities decides on termination, considering substantial **foetal abnormality**.
- Specific categories of exceptions are listed in **Section 3B** of the MTP Act rules.



- Exceptions include cases such as rape involving minors, pregnancies involving women with disabilities, and changes in a woman's marital status during pregnancy.
- The Act mandates that abortion should be performed exclusively by **doctors with specialization in gynaecology or obstetrics**.
- The Act maintains the confidentiality of women seeking abortion.
- Breach of confidentiality will lead to **Fine and/or imprisonment of 1 year**.

### **Judicial Stance on Termination Beyond 24 Weeks:**

- In several instances, the courts have allowed abortion beyond the usual limits
- August 2022 - a special sitting was held to permit the termination of pregnancy for a rape survivor at **27 weeks and three days**.
  - However, the current case differs in that the woman's marital status suggests consensual conception, rather than a "forced" pregnancy.
- There have also been cases where the court overruled a medical board's decision to deny termination.
  - One such case is '**Bhatou Boro v. State of Assam**' (2017), involving a minor **rape survivor's** pregnancy of **over 26 weeks**.

### **What are the suggestions submitted by Dr Nikhil Datar:**

- Dr Datar's suggestions address various gaps in the current framework, including limitations in the **form used by Medical Boards** to provide opinions on termination.
  - He pointed the absence of a designated column in **Form "D"** for the Medical Board to specify the method of termination.
- Dr Datar said even after the amendment, the Act does not give clarity on the **intention** with regards to the foetus while terminating the woman's status of being pregnant.

- This means that the act only talks about the **“termination”** which the separation of the foetus from the women’s body but it is unclear of the aftermath, that if the foetus would be born as a “live child” or be killed.
- He mentioned a **Guidance Note** issued by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** requires foeticide to be performed before the actual act of abortion.
  - According to Dr Datar, this is **not often followed** in government hospitals and most often is unknown to many of them.
- He highlighted concerns about the ambiguous **definition of “medical termination of pregnancy”** in the MTP Act, which does not distinguish between premature delivery and abortion.
  - He suggested specific directions by the **Medical Board** to prevent potential complications.
- He also pointed out potential **inadequacies in infrastructure** and manpower in hospitals with permanent Medical Boards.

### **Global Trend:**

- Globally, there has been a trend towards liberalisation of abortion laws and increased access to abortion services.
- Since the early 1990s, nearly **60 countries** across the world have eased abortion laws to expand the grounds under which abortion is legal.
- Only **four countries**, namely the **U.S., El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Poland** have removed legal grounds for abortion during this time period.
- Most notably, the U.S. Supreme Court eliminated the constitutional right to abortion in **2022**.
  - The **US** overturned the landmark judgement of **Roe v Wade (1973)**.
  - It made abortion a constitutional right allowed abortion up to the point of foetal viability.
  - Foetal Viability - the time after which a foetus can survive outside the womb.

## **Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh**



**Recently:** Recently, **D Gukesh, the 17-year-old Grandmaster (GM)** from **India**, became the **youngest winner of the FIDE Candidates** tournament in **Toronto**.

- He achieved this feat with a draw against **American Hikaru Nakamura**.
- With this win, he also became the youngest World Championship challenger and also the only Indian after **Viswanathan Anand** to win the tournament.
- Gukesh used black pieces to hold rival **Hikaru Nakamura** to a draw and grabbed the win.
- He won the first place with a total of **9/14 points**.

### **Who is D Gukesh?**

- **Gukesh Dommaraju** scripted history by becoming the youngest man to win the prestigious Candidates tournament and earn the right to challenge for the **World Championships crown** later this year.
- Gukesh will face **Ding Liren from China**, the reigning world champion, for the **world titler**.
- **Magnus Carlsen** and **Garry Kasparov** were 22 when they became the world champions.

#### D Gukesh career:

- Gukesh comes from **Chennai** and in a very short career, he has made many firsts. He was also **India's youngest grandmaster** at the age of **12 years and seven months and 17 days**.
- He went past Anand as India's top ranked player for the **first time in 26 years**.
- His first international success came from winning the **U-9 Asian Schools Chess Championship in 2015** which also earned him the **Candidate Master (CM) title**.
- The chess prodigy won the **U-12 World Youth Chess Championship in 2018**.
- Additionally, He secured **five gold medals** at the **2018 Asian Youth Chess Championships** in various formats: **U-12 individual rapid and blitz, U-12 team rapid and blitz, and U-12 individual classical**.
- He completed the requirements for the International Master (IM) title in **March 2018**.
- In **January 2019**, he became the second youngest GM in the world at the age of 12 years, seven months, and 17 days, narrowly missing **Sergey Karjakin's record by 17 days**.
  - The record was later beaten by **Abhimanyu Mishra**, making Gukesh the third youngest.
- At the **44th Chess Olympiad 2022** in **Chennai**, he finished with **nine points out of eleven** to earn an individual gold medal and lead India to a **bronze-medal finish**.
- He also became the youngest player to beat **Magnus Carlsen** at the **Aim Chess Rapid tournament**, since the **Norwegian** became World Champion.
- Carrying the momentum into 2023, Gukesh became the youngest ever player to reach a rating of **2750**.

#### Other performers:

- **R Praggnanandhaa, Grandmaster from India**, secured the **fifth spot** in the Candidates Tournament by accumulating **7 points**.

- In the Women's Candidates Tournament, Indian contenders **Koneru Humpy** and **R Vaishali** clinched a joint second position with **7.5 points each**, alongside **China's Lei Tingjie**.
- **Tan Zhongyi of China** won the Women's Candidates Tournament, securing the chance to challenge the current Women's World Champion, **Ju Wenjun**, also from **China**.

### **What's the Candidates Tournament:**

- The Candidates Tournament is an **eight-player event** that is held to determine the challenger for the **World Chess Championship**.
- It's the second-best chess tournament and players have to qualify for the event, with no **wild cards or invitations given**.
- In the four months of 2024, the position of India's top ranked chess player in the live ratings has switched constantly between **five players**.
  - They were **Viswanathan Anand, Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi** and **Vidit Gujrathi**.
- In FIDE's rankings list for **April 2024**, there were all of them (five Indian men) among the **top 25**.
- In the women's ranks, there were three Indians among the **top 15** - **Vaishali Rameshbabu, Humpy Koneru** and **Aleksandra Goryachkina**.

### **World Chess Championship:**

- The **World Chess Championship**, the first of which was held in **1886**, takes place over **best-of-14 classic games**.
- The time control is **120 minutes for the first 40 moves**, followed by **60 minutes for the next move**, and then **15 more minutes** for the rest of the game.
- The matches are administered by the World Chess Federation (FIDE).

### **FIDE:**

- The **International Chess Federation or World Chess Federation** formed in **1924**, commonly referred to by its French acronym FIDE, is an international organization based in **Lausanne, Switzerland**.

- It connects the various national chess federations and acts as the governing body of international chess competition.
- **All India Chess Federation (AICF)** from India was founded in **1951** and is affiliated to FIDE, the world body for chess.

### **EVM- VVPAT Issue**



**Recently:** The Supreme Court on April 26 rejected a plea for **100%** verification of **Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)** slips with the **Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) count**.

- The **Supreme Court** also said **no to going back** to the old way of using paper ballots for voting, which is something opposition parties wanted in the past few years.

### **VVPAT & EVM:**

- The VVPAT is an independent system attached to the **EVM** that allows voters to check if their votes were cast as intended.
- When a vote is cast, a slip is printed containing the **serial number, name, and symbol** of the candidate.
- This information is shown to the voter - from behind a transparent screen - for **seven seconds**. Afterward, the machine stores it in a sealed box.



- In the event of alleged discrepancies, the paper slips can be cross-checked against the votes recorded electronically to see if the declared result is, in fact, valid.
- During the hearings, the poll panel explained that there is a **4MB flash memory** in each VVPAT machine which stores the party symbols.
- This unit, or the **SLU (Symbol Loading Units)**, will be kept in locked storerooms with the EVMs, the court ordered.

#### EVM units:

- An EVM has two units - **the control unit** and the **voting unit**. These are linked by a cable.
- The control unit is with the polling officer while the voting unit is kept where people cast their votes and is usually covered on all sides for privacy.
- The VVPAT is attached to the **ballot unit (BU)** or **voting unit** of the EVM.

#### History of VVPAT:

- The idea of the VVPAT machine first emerged in **2010**, when the EC held a meeting with political parties to discuss the EVM and ways to make the polling process more transparent.
- After discussing the idea, the EC referred the matter to its Technical Expert Committee.
- A prototype was prepared by the **two PSUs** that manufacture EVMs – **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Electronics Corporation of India (ECIL)**.
- Subsequently, field trials were held in **Ladakh, Thiruvananthapuram, Cherrapunjee, East Delhi and Jaisalmer in July 2011**.
- Finally, after fine-tuning the design, holding more trials and taking feedback from political parties, the expert committee approved the design of the VVPAT in **February 2013**.
- The **Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961** were amended in **2013** to allow for a printer with a drop box to be attached to the EVM.
- In **Subramanian Swamy vs ECI (2013)**, The SC ruled that a paper trail was indispensable for free and fair elections, and ordered the government to provide funding for the roll-out of VVPATs.

- The VVPAT was used for the first time in all **21 polling stations** of the **Noksen Assembly constituency** of **Nagaland** in **2013**.
- After that the EC decided to introduce VVPATs in a phased manner.
- From **June 2017**, **100% of VVPATs** began to be used in polls, and the **2019 Lok Sabha elections** became the first general election to have 100% of EVMs being attached to VVPATs.

### **The Previous Issues:**

- A bunch of petitions before the court had sought a direction to **cross-verify every vote cast** on EVMs with paper slips generated by the VVPAT system.
- The court earlier said it was not the controlling authority for elections and could not dictate the functioning of the poll body, a constitutional authority.
  - It had also wondered if it can act on mere suspicion.
- The EC asked the **Indian Statistical Institute** in **2018** to determine a statistically reliable sample size for auditing VVPAT slips alongside EVM results.
  - The EC also met political parties to discuss the issue, where demands for **10% to 100%** counting emerged.
- In **February 2018**, the EC mandated the counting of VVPAT slips of **one randomly selected polling station per Assembly constituency**.
- This was increased to **five polling stations** per Assembly seat, following a **Supreme Court** judgment in **April 2019** on a petition filed by TDP leader **Chandrababu Naidu**.
- Meanwhile, the ISI report to the EC in **March 2019** recommended that a random sample of **479 EVMs** be selected for counting of VVPAT slips.

### **The recent case:**

- There are **three pleas taken**:
  - That we should return to the **paper ballot system**

- That the printed slips on the VVPAT machine should be given to voters to verify and put in the ballot box for counting
- There should be **100% counting of VVPAT slips** in addition to electronic counting.
- The petitioner represented by **Prashant Bhushan**, the **Association for Democratic Reforms**, had sought 100% counting.

### Judgement:

- For the voters, the SC judgment has brought in absolutely no change.
- Voting will continue to take place using EVMs, with **100%** of the machines attached to a VVPAT unit.
- Moreover, as per the existing provisions, VVPAT slips of **five randomly selected Assembly constituencies** or segments would be counted to verify with the count of the EVMs.
- While not much has changed for the EC in terms of how it organises polling, the apex court directed the EC to adopt some new procedures post-polls.
- In a first, the court gave directions to the EC to seal and store the **symbol loading units (SLUs)** for **45 days after declaration of results**.
  - SLUs are memory units that are first connected to a computer to load election symbols onto it, and then used to enter symbols of the candidates on the VVPAT machines.
  - These SLUs are to be opened, examined and dealt with in the same way as EVMs.
  - According to EC sources, **one to two SLUs** are used to load symbols onto VVPATs per Assembly constituency.
- These will now be stored for **45 days** in case there are any election petitions regarding them.
- Moreover, the SC has enabled candidates to seek verification of the EVMs — again a first.
- Candidates coming **second or third** can ask for a verification of the burnt memory **semi-controllers** in **5%** of EVMs per Assembly segment of each Parliamentary constituency.
- This verification will be done after a written request is made by the candidate and would be carried out by a **team of engineers of the EVM manufacturers**.
- According to the judgment, candidates or representatives can identify EVMs by the **polling station or serial number**.
- The request for verification has to be made within **seven days** of the declaration of results.

- Candidates will have to bear the expenses, which would be refunded in case the EVM is found to be tampered with, the court said.
- Apart from these two directions, the court said that the EC may “examine” the suggestion that VVPAT slips can be counted using a **counting machine**, rather than by humans.
- VVPAT slips could have a **barcode printed** on them, making it easier for machine counting, it was suggested during the hearing.
  - The court said since this was a technical aspect that would require evaluation, it had refrained from commenting either way.

#### What ahead?

- Petitioners dissatisfied with the ruling have the option to challenge it through **review and curative processes** before the Supreme Court.
- A review petition, protected under **Article 137**, must be filed within **30 days of the judgment**.
- The court considers new evidence, identifiable errors, and other compelling reasons during review.

### **Karnataka Hookah Ban**



**Recently:** The **High Court of Karnataka** upheld the ban on the **sale and use of hookah** in **public places**.

- The court cited research documents that indicate a **one-hour hookah session** is equivalent to **smoking 100 cigarettes**.
- The Court also said that even '**herbal**' **hookah** cannot be left unregulated merely because it does not contain **tobacco**, as it contains **molasses**, which is a **prohibited substance** under the **Karnataka Prohibition Act, 1961**.

### **The ban:**

- The Karnataka health department issued a notification February 7, banning the **sale and consumption of hookahs** in order to protect '**public health**'.
- The notification states that **hookah bars violate fire safety laws** and makes food items "**unsafe for public consumption**".
- Shortly afterwards, on February 20, the Karnataka government introduced a bill which proposed to prohibit the opening of **hookah bars** "in any place", along with other restrictions.
- The **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) (Karnataka Amendment) Bill 2024** was introduced in the Assembly by Home Minister **G Parameshwara** amends the **central Act of 2003**.
- The Karnataka amendment to the COTPA introduces **Section 4A** which states: "No person shall either on his own or on behalf of any other person open or run any hookah bar in any place, including the eating house or pub or bar or restaurant by whatever name it is called".
  - Hookah bar means "an establishment or place where people gather to smoke tobacco from a communal hookah or narghile, which is provided individually," according to the text of the bill.
- The Karnataka government introduced the bill to ban hookah bars with a prescription of imprisonment for **one to three years** and fines of up to **Rs 1 lakh as punishments for violations**. The bill was later passed by the assembly.
- The amended law also prohibits the use of tobacco products in public places and the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products to people below the age of **21 years**.
- It also states that violators will be booked under **COTPA, 2003** and various other state and central laws.
- The exceptions are in a hotel having **30 rooms or a restaurant with a seating capacity of 30 persons or more**, and in airports, where, the bill says, a separate provision for smoking area or space may be made.

- In a few days after the notification was issued, several restaurant owners approached the Karnataka High Court to challenge this notification.

### **Why was it challenged?**

- It was argued by the petitioners that it is **"illegal interference"** as the only prohibitions in the COTPA are on public smoking, advertisement of tobacco products, and sale to underage persons.
- Hookah smoking, the petition points out, isn't banned by the COTPA so long as it takes place in the designated smoking area, as described in Section 4 of the COTPA.
- The petition also claims that the Karnataka health department did not have the **legal authority** under the COTPA to issue the notification.
- As a result, it was claimed that the notification violates the rights of business owners under **Article 19(1)(g)** of the Constitution which gives citizens the right "to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business."

### **Government's Arguments:**

- The state government claimed that they have the authority to issue this notification as it falls under the heading of **"Public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries"** under **Entry 6** of the State List, contained in the **7th Schedule** of the Constitution.
- Laws can be enacted by state legislatures on subjects included in the **State List**.
- Moreover, the government referred to **Article 162** of the Constitution.
- This article gives state governments **"executive power"** in matters where the legislature can make laws, thereby granting them the power to issue the notification banning hookah sale and consumption.
- The government also relied upon **Article 47** of the Constitution, which places a duty on the government to "endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health."
- **Article 47** is a **"Directive Principle of State Policy"** under the Constitution.
- These serve as guiding principles for states and the centre to create laws, but are not in and of themselves enforceable against citizens if they are contravened.



- On the specific subject of hookah bars, the state government claimed that there were no designated smoking areas in these establishments, and claimed “entire floors are marked as designated areas for hookah smoking.”

### **Court’s judgement:**

- The HC held that **Article 47** was intrinsically linked with the right to life with dignity under **Article 21**.
- On **article 19**, the court held that this freedom can be subject to certain **reasonable restrictions** including the prohibition of certain occupations, trades and businesses, if it is “in the general interest of the public”.
- The court also held that a directive principle such as **Article 47** can be used to justify a restriction on citizens’ rights under **Article 19(1)(g)**.
- Under **Section 31 of COTPA**, the Centre can make further Rules to carry out the provisions of the Act.
- In **2008**, the **Prohibition of Smoking in Public Places Rules** were brought into force.
- Justice Nagaprasanna relied on **Rule 4(3)** which, after an amendment in **2017**, states “No service shall be allowed in any smoking area or space provided for smoking”.
- The court asked whether hookah smoking “is plain smoking which can be permitted in a designated area or it is a product of service that needs to be rendered”.
  - To answer this question, the court compared hookah smoking to smoking a **cigarette**.
- It found that while “smoking zones created in designated places do not give any other service except creation of a smoking zone”, hookah smoking “needs rendering of services in the designated area, as it requires external human hand to place all the apparatus on the tables like food or alcohol would be served on those tables”.
- Referring to the hookah's inception during **Mughal Emperor Akbar's reign** in India **500 years ago**, the court noted from presented research documents that it contains many toxins akin to cigarettes.
- Additionally, there is a possibility of the spread of certain diseases as people in a group use the same mouthpiece of a hookah.
- Thus, the court held, “the very act of preparation to smoke hookah tobacco, cannot but be held to be a **service**”, and the state is only implementing a prohibition against “service” that is already in place.

### **Similar bans:**

- The **Siddaramaiah-led government** has also imposed a ban on the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products within a radius of **100 meters of any educational institution**.
  - Violation of the rule might attract a fine of Rs **1,000**.
- The action by Karnataka government comes on the backdrop of 'alarming data' shared by **WHO Global Adult Tobacco Survey-2016-17 (GATS-2)**, which claimed that **22.8 per cent of adults in Karnataka use tobacco**, with **8.8 per cent** being smokers.
  - The report also stated that as much as **23.9 per cent of adults** in the state are passive smokers.
- In **February 2024, Telangana** government passed a similar bill banning all **hookah parlours** across the state.
- Even **Haryana**, last year, announced a ban on serving hookah to customers in hotels, restaurants, bars and commercial establishments across the state.
- Identical amendments were enacted in **Maharashtra and Rajasthan**, in **2018** and **2020** respectively.
- The **Tamil Nadu** legislature enacted an identical amendment in **2022** as well, which is pending challenge at the **Madras High Court**.

### Surat Unopposed Elections



**Recently:** The BJP's candidate, **Mukesh Dalal**, from the **Surat Lok Sabha constituency** in **Gujarat** has been declared elected unopposed.

- This follows the rejection of the nomination paper of the candidate set up by the **Congress party** and the withdrawal of nominations by other candidates.
- This means **Gujarat's second largest city** will not go to the polls on May 7.

### **What has happened in Surat?**

- A total of **10 candidates** filed nominations for the Surat Lok Sabha constituency, which was set to go to polls with the other **25 seats in the State** on the **third phase** on **May 7**.
- On Sunday, the **Returning Officer** rejected the candidature of the main Congress candidate, **Nilesh Kumbhani**, citing discrepancies in the signature of the proposers.
- The Congress candidate for Surat Lok Sabha, failed to produce any of his **three proposers** to the election officer, resulting in the cancellation of his nomination.
  - Kumbhani's three proposers, **Jagdish Savaliya**, **Dhruvin Dhamelia**, and **Ramesh Polara**, are both relatives and business partners of the candidate, raising doubts within political circles about Kumbhani's intentions.
- The nomination form of **Suresh Padsala**, the substitute candidate for the Congress, was also invalidated.
- The Returning Officer said that papers were rejected after the proposers of both candidates claimed that they did not sign the papers endorsing their candidature.
- In another dramatic turn, **eight candidates** including **four Independents** and a **BSP nominee** withdrew their nomination papers on the last date for withdrawal of candidature.
- This was followed by the **district collector-cum-election officer** declaring the sole remaining candidate, **BJP's Mukesh Dalal**, elected to fill the Surat parliamentary constituency seat.

### **What is the law?**

- **Section 53 (3)** of the **Representation of the People Act, 1951** deals with the procedure in **uncontested elections**.
- According to this provision, if the **number of such candidates is less than the number of seats** to be filled, the returning officer (RO) shall forthwith declare all such candidates to be elected.

- Simply put, A candidate wins a Lok Sabha, Assembly, or panchayat election uncontested if they're the only one running in that constituency, avoiding the need for a vote.
- In this regard, the RO's actions are governed by **Section 33** of the Act which pertains to the presentation of nomination papers and requirements for a valid nomination.
- The Election Commission explains "uncontested elections and unopposed returns" in detail in its **handbook for Returning Officers (Edition 2) in August 2023**.
  - "If in any constituency there is only one contesting candidate, declare that candidate to have been duly elected immediately after the last hour for withdrawal of candidature.
  - In that event, a poll is not necessary," the handbook says.
- However, the rules add that the date mentioned in the declaration has to be the date on which the result of the election is declared and not the date on which the declaration is dispatched.
- As per the RP Act, an elector above **25 years of age** can contest Lok Sabha election from any constituency in India.
- The proposer(s) of the candidate should however be **elector(s)** from that respective constituency where the nomination is being filed.
- In case of a recognised party (national or State), the candidate needs to have **one proposer**.
- Candidates set up by unrecognised parties and independents need to be subscribed by **ten proposers**.
- A candidate can file up to **four nomination papers** with **different set of proposers**.
  - This is to enable the acceptance of nomination of a candidate even if one set of nomination paper is in order.
- **Section 36** of the RP Act sets out the law with respect to the scrutiny of nomination papers by the Returning Officer (RO).
- It provides that the RO shall not reject any nomination for a defect that is not of a substantial character.
- However, it specifies that signature of the candidate or proposer found not genuine is grounds for rejection.

### NOTA v. Unopposed Election:

- While the **NOTA (none of the above) option** has been in force since **2013**, the **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961**, allows electors to decide not to vote through **Rule 49-O**.
- The presiding officer would have to make a remark in the "remarks column" of the Register of Voters stating that the elector has decided not to record his or her vote.
- Afterward, the presiding officer would obtain the signature or thumb impression of the elector against such a remark.
- There is a difference between an elector exercising Rule 49-O and one using the NOTA option.

- In the case of the former, the likelihood of such an elector compromising his or her secrecy is high, as there is a procedure to be followed manually at a polling booth.
- However, in the case of the latter, there is no such issue.
- But, according to the Handbook for ROs, the NOTA votes are not to be taken into account for calculating the total valid votes polled for the return of the security deposit.
- The EC's stand has been that the person getting the largest number of votes in any constituency will still be declared the winner, regardless of the number of NOTA votes.
- But, with respect to local bodies' polls, the situation is different, at least in **Maharashtra**.
- Through an order in **November 2018, the Maharashtra State Election Commission** stated that NOTA would be regarded as a fictional electoral candidate for the polls to urban local bodies.
- Wherever NOTA receives the highest votes, the Commission would opt for a re-poll.
- There have been instances wherein votes obtained by political parties were lower than the NOTA votes.
- But, a section of activists and constitutional experts has been critical, calling NOTA a "toothless tiger" with no implications on the results.

### What is the legal recourse?

- In the instant case, however, the Congress party has alleged that the proposers were coerced to backtrack on their signatures.
- It has approached the **Election Commission (EC)** seeking to set aside the decision of the RO and restart the election process.
- However, it is unlikely that the Election Commission would act on this request.
- **Article 329(b)** of the Constitution, read with the Representation of the People Act, specifies that no election shall be called into question except by an election petition before the concerned **High Court**.
- One of the grounds on which such an election petition can be filed is **improper rejection of nomination papers**.
- Hence, the legal recourse available is to file an election petition in the **Gujarat High Court**.
- The RP Act provides that High Courts shall endeavour to conclude such trials within **six months**, which has mostly not been followed in the past.

**History:**

- Dalal is only the **29th MP** since **1952**, when the first elections were held, to have won uncontested, including through bypolls.
- The most MPs elected unopposed in a single election were in **1952, 1957, and 1967**, at **five each**.
- Since 1952, **J&K** has seen the most MPs elected unopposed at **four**.
- Only **eight states** have sent more than one legislator to Parliament uncontested, including **Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh**.
- At **20**, the **Congress** has seen the most MPs get elected unopposed. The **National Conference (NC)** and **Samajwadi Party (SP)** follow with two each.
- Just **one Independent Candidate** has won the parliamentary election unopposed. **Dalal** is the first BJP MP in this list.
  - In the first election of **1952**, **Anand Chand** became the first and only independent candidate to be elected unopposed.
- Only two Lok Sabha seats have seen an MP elected unopposed more than once — **Sikkim** and **Srinagar**.



## **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

### **Bulgaria and Romania Join Schengen Zone**



**Recently:** Romania and Bulgaria partially joined Europe's **ID-check-free travel zone**, marking a new step in the two countries' integration with the European Union.

- After **13 years** of negotiations to join the Schengen area, there is now free access for travellers arriving by **air or sea** from both countries.
- However, land border checks will remain in place due to opposition primarily from **Austria** which has long blocked their bid over illegal migration concerns.

#### **What is Schengen Zone?**

- Schengen is an area encompassing European countries that have officially **abolished border controls** at their mutual borders.
- It was created in **1995** and is named after the **1985 Schengen Agreement** and the **1990 Schengen Convention**, both signed in **Schengen, Luxembourg**.
  - The Schengen Area was first established separately from the European Communities, when consensus could not be reached among all EC member states on the abolition of border controls.
  - The Schengen Agreement was supplemented in **1990** by the Schengen Convention, which proposed the **abolition of internal border controls** and a common visa policy.
  - The Agreements and the rules adopted under them were entirely separate from the EC structures, and led to the creation of the **Schengen Area** on **26 March 1995**.
  - The Agreement and its related conventions were incorporated into the mainstream of European Union law by the **Amsterdam Treaty** in **1997**, which **came into effect** in **1999**.
- It is comprised of **29 members** (including **Bulgaria** and **Romania**).
- **25** out of the 27 European Union (EU) countries are a part of the zone. **Ireland** and **Cyprus** are the 2 EU countries that are not included.
- In addition, **four non-EU countries** are also part of the Schengen area: **Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein**.
- All EU citizens can stay in another EU country as a tourist for up to **three months** with a valid passport or identity card.
- Also, they can live in another member state for work, with the **right to be treated in the same way** as nationals of that country.
- Entrepreneurs benefit from freedom of establishment and students have the right to study anywhere in the EU.
- The Schengen rules abolish internal border controls, while harmonising and reinforcing protection of the area's external borders.
- Once inside the Schengen area, people can travel from one country to another without being subjected to border checks.

#### **Romania and Bulgaria's bid to join the zone:**

- Bulgaria and Romania have been trying to become a part of the Schengen area for years.

- The **European Commission** first confirmed that both countries were ready to become part of the Schengen area in **2011**.
- However, their membership was rejected by the **Council of Ministers** in **September 2011**, with the Dutch and Finnish governments citing concerns about shortcomings in anti-corruption measures and in the fight against organised crime.
- Although the original plan was for the Schengen Area to open its **air and sea** borders with Bulgaria and Romania by **March 2012**, and its **land borders** by **July 2012**, continued opposition from **Germany, Finland and the Netherlands** has delayed the two countries' entry to the Schengen Area.
- On **4 October 2017**, the European Parliament voted for access of Bulgaria and Romania to the **Schengen Information System**, on which they gained full access on **1 August 2018**.
- **Austria** vetoed Romania and Bulgaria's admission into the Schengen zone at the **end of 2022** but allowed **Croatia full accession**.
  - **Bulgaria and Romania** joined the EU in **2007** and **Croatia** in **2013**.

#### How will the current accession work?

- According to the **Romanian** government, Schengen rules will apply to **four sea ports and 17 airports**, with the country's **Otopeni airport** near the capital **Bucharest** serving as the **biggest hub** for Schengen flights.
- **More staff** ranging from border police to immigration officers will be deployed to airports to support passengers and detect those who want to take advantage to leave Romania illegally.
- **Random checks** will also be carried out to expose people with false documents and combat human trafficking, including of minors.
- The lifting of border control is expected to facilitate operations at **Bulgaria's four international airports**, which in 2023 saw nearly 11 million passengers.
- The airport in the capital, **Sofia**, serves as the biggest hub for Schengen flights which constitute **70%** of all flights.
- Bulgaria and Romania both hope to fully integrate into Schengen by the end of the year, but Austria has so far only relented about allowing them to join by air and sea.

#### India:

- The European Commission has introduced a new **visa "cascade" regime** for Indian nationals seeking Schengen visas.

- This new regime, effective from **April 18**, replaces the standard rules of the Visa Code and offers **significant advantages** for Indian travellers.
- Under the new rules, Indian nationals residing in India can be issued long-term, multi-entry Schengen visas valid for **two years** after lawfully obtaining and using **two visas** within the previous **three years**.
- This initial two-year visa can then be followed by a **five-year visa**, provided the passport has sufficient validity remaining.
- This extended validity allows travellers to move freely within the Schengen area for short stays of up to **90 days** within any **180-day period**.
- This move is part of the **EU-India Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility**, aiming to strengthen cooperation between the EU and India on migration policy.
- While these Schengen visas grant freedom of travel across the Schengen area, they do not permit employment.
- Therefore, holders must abide by the rules and regulations governing their stay in the Schengen area.

### Dubai's world's largest airport terminal



**Recently:** Dubai has recently started a groundbreaking airport project aimed at creating the world's largest capacity airport upon its completion, as per the recent announcement made by its ruler **Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**.

- The airport is envisaged to become **"the world's largest"** terminal, with an estimated cost of nearly **\$35 billion** and with this Dubai is aimed to be the "world's airport, its port, its urban hub, and new global centre.

**About the project:**

- The Al Maktoum International Airport project, with an estimated cost of AED 128 billion (approximately **\$34.85 billion** or nearly Rs 2.9 lakh crore), is a strategic initiative of the Dubai Aviation Corporation.
- The new terminal is projected to be **five times** larger than the current Dubai International Airport.
- It is designed to accommodate up to **260 million passengers** annually.
- Over the next decade, all operations at Dubai International Airport will gradually shift to Al Maktoum International Airport.
- The new airport will boast **five parallel runways** and accommodate space for **400 terminal** or aircraft gates.
- An entire city will be built around the airport in **Dubai South**, as the ambitious project will also lead to a demand for housing for a million people.
- Once completed, it will be the new home of flagship carrier Emirates and its **low-cost airline Flydubai**, along with all airline partners connecting the world to and from Dubai.

**Armenia and Azerbaijan Conflict**



**Recently:** Armenia and Azerbaijan on **April 23** came a step closer toward normalizing relations after a bitter conflict over territory, as experts in both countries worked to **demarcate their boundaries** and the first border marker was placed.

- In Armenia, protests erupted, and demonstrators blocked roads in the northeastern region that the proposed border would run through.
- Earlier this month, **Russia** began **withdrawing its forces** from Karabakh, where they have been stationed as peacekeepers under a truce brokered by Moscow that ended the 2020 war.

### **The Current Status:**

- The two nations are working toward a **peace treaty** after Azerbaijan regained **full control** of the Karabakh province which had been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces since the **1990s**.
- A **six-week war in 2020** resulted in Azerbaijan retaking large parts of the breakaway region.
- In **September 2023**, Azerbaijani forces launched a lightning blitz that forced Karabakh's Armenian authorities to capitulate in negotiations mediated by Russian forces.

- Several days ago, Armenia and Azerbaijan reached an agreement over a stretch of border that would cut through **four Armenian villages** in the **Tavush province**.
  - This means that Armenia would cede some territory to Azerbaijan.
  - These villages were taken over by Armenian forces in the 1990s, forcing their ethnic Azerbaijani residents to flee.
- But Armenian residents of nearby villages worry they will end up isolated from the rest of the country and that some houses could fall into Azerbaijani territory.
- The area has **strategic importance** for landlocked Armenia.
- Several small sections of the **highway to Georgia** – a vital trade artery – could be handed over.
- The delimited border will run close to a major **Russian gas pipeline**, in an area that also offers advantageous military positions.
- But lingering territorial claims have continued to threaten a fresh escalation.
- Baku has claims over **four more villages** located in exclaves deeper in Armenian territory.
- It is also demanding the creation of a **land corridor** through Armenia to connect the mainland to the **Nakhichevan exclave** and onwards to close ally **Turkey**.
- Recently, **Kazakhstan** is acting as a **mediator** between Armenia and Azerbaijan and negotiations will be held between the two countries in **Almaty** regarding the signing of a peace treaty.
  - Kazakhstan has a solid experience in mediating the Karabakh conflict since **1991**, especially during Kazakhstan's **OSCE chairmanship** in **2010**.
  - Kazakhstan's officials have always maintained an impartial stance towards both parties to the conflict, which in turn fosters great trust in **Astana** from both **Baku and Yerevan**.

### What is the conflict?

- **Christian majority Armenia** and **Muslim majority Azerbaijan** have been in a state of near conflict for centuries, initially over religion but more recently concerning territorial disputes.
- In **1920**, Armenia became part of the **Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic**, which was later part of the Soviet Union in **1922**.
  - **Transcaucasian** was comprised of **Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia**.



- In **1922**, all of **Transcaucasia** became part of the **Soviet Union (USSR)**. Before that, it was called the **Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR)**.
- ADR was the first modern parliamentary republic in the Muslim world.
- In **1920**, the Soviet Union created **Nagorno-Karabakh** as an autonomous region within Azerbaijan.
  - But its population is predominantly made up of ethnic Armenian, having close cultural, social, and historical ties with Armenia.
- The conflict between Azeris and Armenians goes back to almost a century, when the Ottomans attacked the South Caucasus during World War I with the help of the Azeris.
  - They targeted ethnic Armenians during this attack, and the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia descended into a full-blown war in 1920.
- In the final days of the Soviet Union, Nagorno-Karabakh's majority Armenian-Christian population held a referendum to break away from the Shia-majority Azerbaijan.
- As the **Soviet Union disintegrated** in **1991**, Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent countries, and Armenian rebels **declared Nagorno-Karabakh an independent territory** (although not recognised internationally).
- By **1993**, most of Nagorno-Karabakh was under Armenian control.
- The **war** between the two parties **lasted till 1994** and killed around 30,000 people.

### **The Peace Initiatives:**

- In **1994**, Azerbaijan and Armenia entered a **ceasefire brokered by Russia**, but international borders for the countries were not demarcated.
- The **Minsk Group**, co-chaired by **Russia, the U.S., and France**, was created by the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)** in early **1990** to arrive at a peaceful resolution for Nagorno-Karabakh.
- None of the three suggested peace proposals could last.
- The **Madrid Principles of 2007, modified in 2009**, proposed:
  - Giving control of seven Karabakh districts to Azerbaijan.
  - Self-governance to the region.
  - A corridor link with Armenia.

- An opportunity to the region's inhabitants to express their will.
- return of refugees, and setting up of a peacekeeping operation.
- The Madrid Principles weren't accepted, even after another modification in 2011.
- A **four-day war** between Azerbaijan and Armenia broke out in **2016**. The Minsk Group met again in **2017 in Geneva** but failed to arrive at a resolution.

### **The 2020 resurgence and recent developments:**

- In 2020, **Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev** launched an offensive to take Nagorno-Karabakh back, leading the country into a fierce war with Armenia that lasted **six weeks** and killed more than 2,000 people.
- The Azeri forces attacked Armenian defences and **took back 40% of Nagorno-Karabakh**.
- **Azerbaijan was backed by Turkey**, and while **Armenia's ally Russia** did little to support it, it helped broker a ceasefire.
- Despite the ceasefire, Azerbaijan did not give up attempts to capture Nagorno-Karabakh.
- In **December 2022**, it blockaded **Lachin Corridor**, the main road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia and the rest of the world, adding to the economic misery of the **1,20,000 people** of the region.
- Former International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor **Luis Moreno Ocampo** warned there was a "reasonable basis" to believe Azerbaijan was committing a genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh, terming starvation an **"invisible genocide weapon"**.
- On September 19, days after an agreement to reopen the Lachin Corridor for aid deliveries sparked hopes of easing the crisis, Azerbaijan launched an "anti-terrorist" offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh and claimed to have regained full control over the region.
- While Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev is being hailed as a hero in his country, **Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan** is facing protests at home.
- The future of about 1.2 lakh Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh is at stake, with reports of many leaving and fleeing to Armenia, fearing persecution.

### **India's stand and ties with the two countries:**

- On the conflict, India has always steered clear of taking sides.
- India has ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Importantly, the region is central to its plans of **connectivity through the south Caucasus region**.
- In modern times, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, India **recognised the independence of Armenia and Azerbaijan** and established diplomatic relations.
- Because of the geographical location of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the region is important as a viable corridor for India's connectivity with Russia and Europe through Central Asia and Iran.
- Armenia and Azerbaijan are members of the **International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, which India is keen to develop.
- India supports Armenia's proposal to include Iran's Chabahar port in INSTC.

#### Relations with Armenia:

- India's ties with Armenia date back millennia.
- Historians have suggested that when **Assyrian warrior queen Semiramis** invaded India in **2000 BC**, some Armenians accompanied her.
- According to literary evidence, Indian settlements in Armenia were established by two princes (**Krishna and Ganesh** escaping from Kannauj) in **149 BC**.
- The **first guidebook** to Indian cities in Armenian was written in the **12th century**.
- A few Armenian traders had come to Agra during the Mughal Empire.
  - Emperor Akbar, who is believed to have an **Armenian wife Mariam Zamani Begum**, granted them privileges and considerable religious freedom.
- In the **16th century**, Armenian communities emerged in **Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Agra**. Today, the vestigial community is mainly settled in **Kolkata**.
- The **diplomatic relations** between India and Armenia started in **1992**.
- **India opened its embassy** in Armenia in **1999**, has a treaty relationship, and has received as many as three Heads of State. There have been two visits from India at the level of Vice President.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi met his Armenian counterpart in New York in September 2019, which was followed by the External Affairs Minister's visit to Yerevan in 2022.
- Armenia publicly endorses India's position on the resolution of the Kashmir issue on a bilateral basis and supports India's aspiration for a permanent seat in the expanded UN Security Council.
- Armenia bought military radar named **SWATHI** from India in **March 2020**.
- In 2022, a **\$250 million deal** was signed between India and Azerbaijan to supply Armenian armed forces with PINAKA multi-barrel rocket launchers (MBRL), anti-tank munitions, and ammunitions and warlike stores.

#### Relations with Azerbaijan:

- The historical ties between India and Azerbaijan have been more recent.
- The '**Ateshgah**' fire temple in the vicinity of **Baku** is an **18th-century** monument, with a much older history, and has wall inscriptions in **Devanagari and Gurmukhi**.
- **India's Permanent Mission in Baku** was opened in **1999** and **Azerbaijan's representative centre** was opened in New-Delhi in **2004**.
- The **first bilateral agreement** was signed in June **1998**.
- Azerbaijan is a partner of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**, and India is a member of SCO.
- Azerbaijan's proximity to Pakistan has been perceived as an irritant in the ties.
- There has not been a single visit at the level of Head of State/ Government between India and Azerbaijan.
  - In 2018, India's External Affairs Minister visited Baku, Azerbaijan, which was the first time such a visit had happened.
- India's Nobel laureate **Rabindranath Tagore**, former President **Dr S. Radhakrishnan** (as Vice President in 1956) and **former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru** (in 1961) had visited the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic.

#### Ties with other countries:

- Azerbaijan gets a lot of support from Turkey and other Muslim-majority countries, like Pakistan.
  - **Pakistan doesn't even recognize Armenia as a country.**

- Russia has good relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia.
  - **Armenia is more reliant on Russia**, and Russia has a military base there.
  - Armenia and Russia are also part of the **Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)** that was formed in **2002**.
- **Turkey supports Azerbaijan** due to their cultural ties and a desire to expand Turkish influence in former Ottoman territories.
- **Turkey and Israel** usually don't get along, but they both support and **provide weapons to Azerbaijan**.
  - Israel's military and security companies see opportunities in supplying arms to Azerbaijan.

## 75- Years of NATO



**Recently:** The North- Atlantic Treaty Organization observed its **75<sup>th</sup> anniversary** on **4<sup>th</sup> April 2024**.

- Foreign Ministers gathered at NATO Headquarters to mark 75 years of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

## What is NATO?

- It is a political and military alliance of **32 countries** from **Europe and North America** that guarantees the freedom and security of its members, cooperates with partners and responds to threats and crises.
- It was formed on **4 April 1949** with the signing of **Washington Treaty**.
- Washington Treaty gets its power from **Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, 1945**, "which reaffirms the inherent right of independent states to individual or **collective defence**."
- The alliance is headquartered in **Brussels, Belgium**.
- NATO has since 2014 been led by **Jens Stoltenberg**, a former prime minister of **Norway**.
- The treaty has **14 articles** by which all NATO members must abide.
- The most important is **Article 5**, which declares that an attack against one member state is an attack against them all.
- The only time the article has been invoked so far was following the **September 11, 2001** attacks on the US. NATO forces were sent to **Afghanistan** and deployed for nearly **20 years**.
- NATO says it has an '**open door**' policy and any European country can join as per **Article 10**.
- Currently, **three** partner countries have declared their aspirations to NATO membership: **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine**.

### History:

- The atomic bombing of **Hiroshima and Nagasaki** meant the end of **World War II (1939 – 1945)**, but it also signalled the start of a new era and a new worry for the world.
- In **Europe**, the **Soviets and the Americans** confronted each other from their occupation zones.
- **Germany** was divided into **four zones**, as was **Berlin**, the German capital that was squarely in the **Soviet zone**.
- The Soviets wanted Germany to be the **communist centerpiece** of Europe.
- With Germany a **Soviet satellite**, **Josef Stalin** could see western Europe falling under the domination of the USSR.
- The Soviet Union launched a coup in **Czechoslovakia** in **1948**, placed a communist government in power in **Poland** and extended its sway to every **Eastern European country** it occupied since **1945**.
- In **June 1948**, the Soviet imposed a land blockade of Berlin in hopes of starving the Western allies out of Berlin.
- In response, the allies launched the **Berlin Airlift** — a nonviolent strike back at an aggressor.
- Against the backdrop of escalating Soviet provocations, talks on the **North Atlantic Treaty** commenced in early **1949**, underscoring the urgent need for collective defense in Western Europe.

- A **1948 collective-defense alliance** between **Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg** was recognized as inadequate to deter Soviet aggression after **World War II**.
- In **1949**, the **U.S. and Canada** agreed to join their European allies in an enlarged alliance.
- After WWII, European nations realized they needed the U.S. and Canada for credibility in collective defense and on **April 4, 1949**, they joined their allies in signing the treaty in **Washington**.

### **Members:**

- The mutual-defence alliance was first established after World War II, with **12 founding members** that are
  - Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- NATO currently consists of **32 member states** – 30 **European and two North American (USA and Canada)**.
- This year's NATO Day comes just weeks after **Sweden** joined as the **thirty-second member** of the Alliance despite **Turkey's initial opposition in March 2023**.
- **Finland** became **NATO's 31st member state** last year, having abandoned a longstanding policy of military nonalignment.
  - This Finland addition brought **one of Western Europe's** most potent militaries into the alliance.
  - Simultaneously, it extended NATO's commitment to collective defence to a country sharing an **830-mile border with Russia**.



ALBANIA (2009)	GREECE (1952)	POLAND (1999)
BELGIUM (1949)	HUNGARY (1999)	PORTUGAL (1949)
BULGARIA (2004)	ICELAND (1949)	ROMANIA (2004)
CANADA (1949)	ITALY (1949)	SLOVAKIA (2004)
CROATIA (2009)	LATVIA (2004)	SLOVENIA (2004)
CZECHIA (1999)	LITHUANIA (2004)	SPAIN (1982)
DENMARK (1949)	LUXEMBOURG (1949)	SWEDEN (2024)
ESTONIA (2004)	MONTENEGRO (2017)	TÜRKIYE (1952)
FINLAND (2023)	NETHERLANDS (1949)	UNITED KINGDOM (1949)
FRANCE (1949)	NORTH MACEDONIA (2020)	UNITED STATES (1949)
GERMANY (1955)	NORWAY (1949)	

### Warsaw Pact -

- The Warsaw Pact was a collective defence treaty established by the **Soviet Union** and **seven** other **Soviet satellite states** in Central and Eastern Europe that were:
  - Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania (**Albania withdrew in 1968**).
- The Soviet Union formed this alliance as a **counterbalance** to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- In **December 1954**, a meeting involving these **eight nations** occurred in **Moscow** for the treaty.
  - This agreement led to the establishment of a unified command structure for the armed forces of the member states, with its headquarters located in **Moscow**.
- Formally known as the **Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance**, the Warsaw Pact was created on **14 May 1955**, immediately after the accession of West Germany to the Alliance.
- It complemented the **Council for Mutual Economic Assistance**, which was the **regional economic organisation** set up by the **Soviet Union** in **January 1949**.
- The Warsaw Pact embodied what was referred to as the **Eastern bloc**, while NATO represented the **Western bloc**.

- The Warsaw Pact was declared at an end on **25 February 1991** and the **Czechoslovak President, Vaclav Havel**, formally declared an end to it on **1 July 1991** following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### **Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO):**

- Less than a year after the end of Warsaw pact, **Russia and five of its allies** signed a new **Collective Security Treaty**, which came into force in **1994**.
- It declared itself the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, a **full-blown military alliance** in **2002**.
- Today it has **six members: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan**. **Uzbekistan** had quit the alliance in **2012**.
- In **2007**, it agreed to create a **3,600-strong** peacekeeping force and two years later, it established a **rapid-reaction force comprising 20,000 elite personnel** who are kept on high alert.
- The alliance has also held joint exercises, including a series of high-profile **"anti-terrorism" drills**.
- For Russia, the CSTO is a useful tool to tighten its **grip on Central Asia**, against both Western and Chinese encroachments.
- It justifies Russian military facilities in member countries, while also giving Russia a veto over any other foreign bases in the region.

### **Rwanda Genocide**



**Recently:** The **Qutub Minar** was lit up with the colours of the **Rwandan national flag** on **April 7**.

- This gesture was made in solidarity with the people of the east-African nation, commemorating the **100-day massacre** that claimed the lives of **800,000 people** in **1994**.
- **Secretary (Economic Relations) Dammu Ravi** of the **Ministry of External Affairs** represented India at the **30th** commemoration of the genocide in the Rwanda capital, **Kigali**.
- Rwanda's President **Paul Kagame** and his wife led **37 visiting leaders** at a wreath laying ceremony at a genocide memorial in the **capital Kigali** that contains the remains of some **250,000 people**.
  - The memorial was built in **2004** by a collective effort of the government, the people of Kigali and a non-profit trust.

### **Rwanda:**

- Rwanda is a small **land-locked** country in **east-central Africa**, **4,000 miles (6,500km) south-east** of the **UK**.
- It borders **Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania** and **Uganda**.
- The indigenous population consists of **three ethnic groups**.
  - **The Hutus**, who comprise the **majority of the population (85%)**, are traditionally farmers of **Bantu origin**.
  - **The Tutsis (14%)** are traditionally a pastoral people who arrived in the area in the **15th century**. Until **1959**, they formed the dominant caste under a feudal system based on **cattle-holding**.
  - **The Twa (1%)** is thought to be the remnant of the earliest settlers of the region.
- **Paul Kagame** is the current President and hopes to win a **fourth term** in **2024**, which would extend his presidency to nearly **three decades**.
  - He won the last presidential election in **2017** for a **7-year term** with nearly **99% of the vote**.

### **History:**

- Prior to the colonial era, **Tutsis** generally occupied the **higher strata** in the social system and the Hutus the lower.
- However, a Hutu who acquired a large number of cattle or other wealth could be assimilated into the Tutsi group and impoverished Tutsi would be regarded as Hutu.
- A clan system also functioned, with the Tutsi clan known as the **Nyinginya**, being the most powerful.
- The former colonial power, **Germany**, lost possession of Rwanda during the **First World War** and the territory was then placed under **Belgian administration**.

- In the late 1950's during the great wave of decolonization, tensions increased in Rwanda.
- The **Hutu political movement**, which stood to gain from majority rule, was gaining momentum while segments of the Tutsi establishment resisted democratization and the loss of their acquired privileges.
- In **November 1959**, a violent incident sparked a **Hutu uprising** in which hundreds of **Tutsis were killed** and thousands displaced and forced to flee to neighbouring countries.
- This marked the start of the so-called '**Hutu Peasant Revolution**' or '**social revolution**' lasting from **1959 to 1961**.
  - It signified the end of Tutsi domination and the sharpening of ethnic tensions.
- By **1962**, at Rwanda's independence, **120,000 mainly Tutsis** had fled to neighbouring states to escape violence accompanying Hutu ascension to power.
- A new cycle of ethnic conflict and violence continued after independence.
- Ten such attacks occurred between **1962 and 1967**, each leading to retaliatory killings of large numbers of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda and creating new waves of refugees.

### Civil War:

- In **1988**, the **Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)** was founded in **Kampala, Uganda**.
  - It was established as a political and military movement with the stated aims of securing repatriation of Rwandans in exile and reforming the Rwandan government.
- The RPF was composed mainly of **Tutsi exiles**, many of whom had served in **President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army**, which had overthrown the previous Ugandan government in **1986**.
- On **1 October 1990**, the RPF launched a major attack on Rwanda from Uganda with a force of 7,000 fighters.
- Because of the RPF attacks, all Tutsis inside the country were labelled accomplices of the RPF and Hutu members of the opposition parties were labelled as traitors.
- In **1993**, the **Arusha peace agreements** were signed, seemingly ending the conflict and the Security Council established the **United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR)** with support for the peace process.

### The 1994 Genocide:

- Genocide is generally defined as a violent attack with the specific intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.
- On the night of **6 April, 1994** a plane carrying then- **Rwandian President Juvenal Habyarimana**, and his **counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi** - both **Hutus** - was shot down, killing everyone on board.
- On 7 April, **Radio Television Libres Des Mille Collines (RTLM)** aired a broadcast attributing the plane crash to the RPF and a contingent of UN soldiers, as well as incitements to eliminate the "**Tutsi cockroach**".
- Later that day the **Rwandan Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana** and **10 Belgian peacekeepers** assigned to protect her were brutally murdered by **Rwandan government soldiers** in an attack on her home.
- Other moderate Hutu leaders were similarly assassinated. After the massacre of its troops, **Belgium** withdrew the rest of its force.
- Hutu extremists blamed the **Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)** and launched a campaign of slaughter against **Tutsis**.
- The RPF claim the plane was shot down by **Hutus** to provide an excuse for the genocide.
- Over the next **100 days**, more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered by Hutu extremists, led by the Rwandan army and a militia known as the **Interahamwe**.
- The Hutu extremists set up a radio station, **RTLM (Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines)**, and newspapers which circulated hate propaganda, urging people to "**weed out the cockroaches**" meaning **kill the Tutsis**.
- The names of prominent people to be killed were read out on radio.
- Even priests and nuns have been convicted of killing people, including some who sought shelter in churches.
- As many as **10,000 people** were killed per day. **Seventy percent** of the Tutsi population was **wiped out**, and over **10 percent** of the **total Rwandan population**.
- Sexual violence was used as a weapon of war with up to 250,000 women and girls raped, resulting in thousands of births.
- Hutus also released **AIDS patients** from hospitals in order to form "**rape squads**" to **infect Tutsi women**. As a result, thousands of survivors and their children born from rape are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus.
- On June 22, the **Security Council** authorized **French-led forces** to mount a **humanitarian mission**.
- The mission, called **Operation Turquoise**, saved hundreds of civilians in **South West Rwanda**.
- In other areas, killings continued until **4 July 1994** when the **RPF took military control** of the entire territory of Rwanda.
- The well-organised RPF, backed by Uganda's army, gradually seized more territory, until **4 July 1994**, when its forces marched into the capital, **Kigali**.
- Some two million Hutus - both civilians and some of those involved in the genocide - then fled across the border into the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, at the time called **Zaire**.
  - Others went to neighbouring **Tanzania** and **Burundi**.

- The 1994 Rwanda Genocide is considered one of the **bloodiest massacres of the 20th century**.
- For a long time, the UN avoided using the word “genocide” under pressure from the **United States**, which was reluctant to send in troops.
- Former **U.S. President Bill Clinton** was also present, who had called the **genocide** the biggest failure of his administration.
- The conflict also became one of the factors leading to the war between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo that took place in **1996**.

### **Has justice been served?**

- The **International Criminal Court** was set up in **2002**, long after the Rwandan genocide but it could not put on trial those responsible.
- The UN Security Council set up the **International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda** in the **Tanzanian town** of **Arusha** to prosecute the ringleaders.
  - The **International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)** was established in **Tanzania** in **November 1994** by the United Nations to prosecute those behind the genocide.
- A total of **93 people** were indicted and, after lengthy trials, dozens of senior officials in the former **Rwandan regime** were convicted of genocide, all of them **Hutus**. The ICTR ended its term on **31 December 2015**.
- Rwanda also set up community courts to prosecute thousands of low-level suspects.
- Correspondents say up to 10,000 people died in prison before they could be brought to justice.
- In **2001**, the **Rwanda government** began implementing a participatory justice system, known as **Gacaca**, in order to address the enormous backlog of cases.
- Communities elected judges to hear the trials of genocide suspects accused of all crimes except planning of genocide or rape.
- These courts are intended to help the community participate in the process of justice and reconciliation for the country.

### **UN Genocide convention:**

- The Genocide Convention is an international legal instrument that, for the first time, codified the crime of genocide.
- Genocide Convention is known as the **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide**.
- It was adopted by the **UN General Assembly** on **December 9, 1948** and has been in effect since **January 12, 1951**.



- It defines genocide as crimes committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such."
- The Genocide Convention has been ratified or acceded to by **153 States** (as of **April 2022, with Zambia**) India also signed the convention in **1949**.
- The Convention defines genocide as **five acts**.
  - Killing members of a group;
  - Causing serious bodily or mental harm;
  - Inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction;
  - Imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group; and
  - Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group
- There are, therefore, two elements: **the physical acts**; and the **specific intent** "to destroy, in whole or in part" a specific group.
- Committing these acts, however widespread, is not enough to make a claim of genocide.
  - The **specific intent to destroy (dolus specialis)** is what distinguishes genocide from war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

### Iran- Israel Conflict





Source- <https://www.survivethenews.com/world-war-iii-watch-iran-launches-kamikazi-drone-attack-against-israel-the-gateway-pundit/>

**Recently:** Iran launched more than **300 drones and missiles** toward **Israel** in its first full-scale military assault against the country.

- **U.S. military forces** in the region helped Israel intercept the strikes according to US President **Joe Biden**.

### **Iran-Israel relations:**

- Initially, **Iran**, a predominantly **Shiite Muslim region**, had amicable relations with **Israel**.
- Under the **Pahlavi dynasty**, which ruled from **1925** until it was overthrown in the **1979 revolution**, ties between Iran and Israel were anything but hostile.
- Iran was, in fact, the **second Muslim-majority country** after **Turkey** to recognise Israel after it was founded in **1948**.
- Iran was one of the **11 members** of the special **United Nations committee** that was formed in **1947** to devise a solution for **Palestine** after the **British control ended**.
  - It was **one of three** to vote against the UN's partition plan for Palestine, centred on concerns that it would escalate violence in the region for generations to come.
- Two years after expanding territory **post-1948 Arab-Israeli War**, Iran, under **Mohammad Reza Pahlavi**, became second Muslim-majority nation to recognize Israel.
- Things changed after **Mohammad Mosaddegh** became Iran's PM in **1951** when he spearheaded the **nationalisation of the country's oil industry**, which was **monopolised** by **Britain**.
- Mosaddegh severed ties with Israel, which he saw as **serving Western interests** in the region.
- Mosaddegh's efforts to nationalize oil, expel British colonial power, and diminish the monarchy were Iran's primary focus. Ties with Israel were seen as "collateral damage."
- Things dramatically shifted when Mosaddegh's government was overthrown in a **coup** organised by the **intelligence services of the United Kingdom and the United States** in **1953**.
- The coup reinstated the **Shah (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi)** who became a staunch ally of the West in the region.
- Israel established a **de facto embassy in Tehran**, and eventually the **two exchanged ambassadors** in the 1970s.
- Trade ties grew, and soon Iran became a major oil provider for Israel, with the two establishing a pipeline aimed at sending Iranian oil to Israel and then Europe.
- Trade flourished, making Iran a key oil supplier for Israel. They established a pipeline to transport Iranian oil to Israel and onward to Europe.

- **Tehran** and **Tel Aviv** also had extensive military and security cooperation, but it was largely kept under wraps to avoid provoking the Arab nations in the region.

### **Post- Iranian revolution:**

- In **1979**, the shah was overthrown in a revolution, and a new Islamic Republic of Iran was born.
- **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini**, leading the revolution, promoted an Islamic worldview, advocating resistance against "arrogant" global powers and their regional allies who oppressed others, including Palestinians, for self-interest.
- This meant that Israel became known in Iran as the "**Little Satan**" to the "**Great Satan**" that is the US.
- Tehran cut off all ties with Israel. Citizens could no longer travel and flight routes were cancelled.
- The **Israeli embassy in Tehran** was transformed into the **Palestinian embassy**.
- Khomeini also declared every **last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan** as **Quds Day**, and ever since large rallies have been held on that day in support of Palestinians across Iran.
  - **Jerusalem** is known as **al-Quds in Arabic**.
- Now, Iran supports a "**resistance axis**" network of political and armed groups in several countries across the region.
  - These include **Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen**. They also support the Palestinian cause and view Israel as a major enemy.
- Over the years, Israel has backed a variety of groups who are violently opposed to the Iranian establishment.
- Tehran says these have included a number of groups it designates as "**terrorist**" organisations.
- Among them are the **Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK)**, a Europe-based organization, **Sunni organisations** in Iran's **southeastern Sistan** and **Baluchistan province**, and **Kurdish armed groups** based in Iraqi Kurdistan.

### **The recent Development:**

- The Iranian attack was in response to the **suspected** Israeli strike on **April 1** on an **Iranian consular building in Syria's Damascus** that killed 12 people, including a senior general.
- It follows a playbook from **four years ago**.
- In **January 2020**, when former **Quds Force chief Qassem Soleimani** was killed, Tehran responded days later by firing ballistic missiles at **US forces stationed at al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq**.

- At that time, Iran had attacked **two bases** in Iraq that housed **American troops** with a barrage of missiles, fulfilling Tehran's promise to retaliate for the killing of the top Iranian commander.
- "The fierce revenge by the Revolutionary Guards has begun," the **Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)** said in a statement on a **Telegram messaging app** channel in **January 2020**.
- Iraqi military officials had said that Iran had fired **22 missiles** at **two military bases in Iraq** where American troops are stationed.
- Cut to April 2024, Israeli military's spokesman, **Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari**, said Iran fired scores of drones, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles — with the vast majority intercepted outside Israel's borders.
- He said warplanes intercepted over **10 cruise missiles alone**, also outside Israeli airspace.
- The Iranian military declared that its drone and missile assault on Israel had accomplished all intended goals.

### What is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)?

- It was set up shortly after the **1979 Islamic Revolution** to protect the **Shi'ite Muslim clerical ruling system** and provide a counterweight to the regular armed forces.
- It answers to **Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei**.
- It also commands the **Basij religious militia**, a **volunteer paramilitary force loyal** to the clerical establishment that is often used to crack down on anti-government protests.
- The IRGC, branded a terrorist group by the **United States**, has sought for years to shape the **Middle East** according to Iran's interests.
- In **1982**, it founded the Shi'ite political movement **Hezbollah in Lebanon** as a vehicle to export Iran's Islamic Revolution and fight Israeli forces that had invaded Lebanon that year.
- Hezbollah is now a major military force that has played a role in regional conflicts.

### India's response:

- The Indian mission in Israel on April 14 issued a fresh "important advisory" for its nationals after attacks on the **Jewish State (Israel)**.
- It also urged Indian nationals to register with the embassy at a given link.

- South Block quickly issued a statement expressing India's "serious concern" at the escalation of hostilities, and called for "immediate de-escalation".
- India has strategic ties with both Iran and Israel — and for decades, it has been able to balance between the two sides.
- India has a very deep strategic relationship with **Israel**, especially in the context of **defence and security partnership**.
  - In the last decade or so, it has grown and has been made public — unlike in the past.
  - This has led to India lending support to Israel in the first few hours of the **October 7 terrorist attacks by Hamas**.
- Israel has also emerged as a major defence supplier, along with the US, France and Russia, and New Delhi remembers that it has stepped up to help during times of crisis, including the **Kargil war in 1999**.

### **Nigeria becomes 1<sup>st</sup> country to roll out Men5CV**



**Recently:** Nigeria recently became the **first country** to roll out a new vaccine (called **Men5CV**) recommended by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, which protects people against **five strains** of **meningococcus bacteria**.

**What is meningitis?**

- Meningitis is the **inflammation** of the tissues surrounding the **brain and spinal cord**, usually caused by infection. It can be fatal. Meningitis can be caused by several species of **bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites**.
- The highest global burden is seen with bacterial meningitis.
  - Around **one in six** people who get this type of meningitis **die**.
  - **One in five** have **severe complications**.
- The main bacteria responsible for the disease are **Neisseria meningitidis, Haemophilus influenzae** and **Streptococcus pneumoniae**.
- The main symptoms are sudden **high fever, backache, stiff neck, headaches, nausea, vomiting and intense dislike for sunlight (photophobia)**.
- Patients with a severe infection can experience confusion, delirium and loss of consciousness.
- Meningitis bacteria are **transmitted** from person to person **through droplets of respiratory or throat secretions** from carriers.
- The average incubation period is **four days** but can range between **two and 10 days**.
- Epidemics of meningitis are seen across the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The so-called "**African meningitis belt**" consists of **26 contiguous countries** from **Senegal and The Gambia** in the **west** to **Ethiopia** in the **east**.
- Outbreaks have also been reported in countries outside Africa like **Canada, Belgium, France, Brazil and Denmark**.

**Why does Nigeria have a high burden of meningitis?**

- Nigeria's **19** northern states are within the **African meningitis belt**.
- A few southern states such as Osun, Ogun and Anambra are also affected.
- The major factors that determine meningitis infection include a **hot and dry environment** and **dusty atmospheric conditions**.
- Between 1 October 2022 and 16 April 2023, Nigeria reported 1,686 suspected cases of meningitis, including 124 deaths, for a case fatality ratio of 7 per cent. The highest proportion of reported cases is among children aged 1 to 15 years.
- Factors that contribute to meningitis are all present in northern Nigeria:
  - Low or no vaccination;
  - Presence of carriers;

- Under-nutrition;
- Overcrowding;
- Scarce rainfall;
- Low Humidity;
- High Temperatures - It's often over 35°C, sometimes as high as 45°C.

### **What's specific about the meningitis strains in Nigeria?**

- There are **five strains** of meningitis in Africa: **serotypes A, C, W, X and Y.**
- Infectivity and clinical features (symptoms and signs) are the same with the strains.
- These features were established by **serotype A**, which was the **first and dominant** strain in the country.
- The severity of the infection may be higher with the new variants, such as **group C meningococcal**, as seen in some cases in **north-western Nigeria.**
- **Serotypes W, X and Y** may have similarly higher severity because the organisms are new to the country. Immunity to them is therefore not strong enough.

### **Men5CV:**

- For more than a century, epidemics of meningococcal meningitis have ravaged the African meningitis belt.
- Some of the earliest prevention attempts involved the use of **sulphur drugs** and **penicillin brd antibiotics.**
- Mass use of sulphur-brd drugs for prevention had to be abandoned because by the 1970s as **Neisseria meningitides** had become resistant to these drugs.
- The next obvious line was to consider vaccination with available **polysaccharide vaccines.**
  - These use specific pieces of the **disease-causing germ**, like its protein, sugar, or the casing around it.
  - They give a very strong immune response that targets key parts of the germ.
- There was only one such vaccine available at the time.
  - This was the **A+C vaccine (Institut Meriuex)**, which had never been used routinely or on a large scale until an epidemic in **Bauchi in 1978.**
  - The vaccine terminated that epidemic within a few weeks.
- Since then, several researchers like **John Robbins** have advocated intensified mass vaccinations with the **polysaccharide vaccines.**

- But the WHO was reluctant, with fairly good reason.
- Polysaccharide vaccines are **poorly immunogenic**, meaning not able to elicit protective immunity to the disease - particularly in young children, because they do not have immune memory.
- So, the vaccines are not cost-effective or sufficiently protective.
- The **1996 outbreak** in northern Nigeria affecting over 120,000 people and causing 12,000 deaths - and described by the WHO as the largest in recorded history - changed the narrative.
- A joint **WHO/PATH "Meningitis Vaccine Project"** facilitated by **the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** produced the highly effective **conjugate meningitis A** vaccine (known as **MenAfriVac**).
- Over 260 million people in the African meningitis belt were vaccinated with it. This led to the virtual elimination of meningococcal A serotype.
- But serotypes **C, W, X and Y then emerged**.
- Hence the critical importance of the 5-in-1 (also known as MenFive, or Men5CV).
- Proper and sustained vaccination with the 5-in-1 vaccine should put paid to epidemics of meningococcal meningitis in Africa.
- By containing the five most important serotypes causing meningitis in Nigeria, this vaccine is bound to have a far-reaching positive impact on control of the disease.
- Among all the 26 African countries within the African meningitis belt, Nigeria is by far the most populous. Thus, an epidemic of the disease affects many people.
- Before the year **2000** hardly a case of serotype C, W, X, or Y had been reported in Nigeria.
- The success of group A conjugate **MenAfriVac** introduced in **2010** in **Burkina Faso** has changed the pattern and periodicity of epidemic meningitis
- The real challenge and menace of replacement serotypes underscores the critical importance of the 5-in-1 conjugate meningitis vaccine. Its impact will be huge.



## **ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS**

### **Deregistration of Go- First's Aircrafts**



**Recently:** In a relief to aircraft leasing companies, the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** has deregistered all **54 aircraft** of **Go First**, 364 days after the **Wadia-owned airline** had filed for bankruptcy, allowing the lessors to repossess their aircraft.

- The **Delhi High Court** had on April 26 directed the DGCA to **process the deregistration applications** of aircraft leased by the airline within five working days.

### **What is the issue?**

- In **May 2023**, Cash-strapped no-frills carrier **Go Airlines (India) Ltd** (Go First), filed for **voluntary insolvency** proceedings with the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)**.
- The airline blamed engine manufacturer **Pratt & Whitney (P&W)** for its financial situation.

#### **Reason for insolvency:**

- According to the airline, it was forced to apply to the NCLT after the ever-increasing number of **failing engines** supplied by **Pratt & Whitney's International Aero Engines**.
  - This led to the grounding of **25 aircraft**, or half its fleet of Airbus **A320neo planes**, and major financial stress.
  - Pratt & Whitney's is the exclusive supplier of engines for A320neos
- According to Go first, P&W had failed to meet contractual obligations and refused to comply with an arbitration award from the **Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC)**.
- It claimed that the percentage of its grounded aircraft due to P&W's "faulty engines" had grown from 7% in December 2019 to 31% in December 2020, and to **50% in December 2022**.
- This, while incurring **100% of operational costs**, has set it back **by Rs 10,800 crore** in lost revenues and additional expenses, Go First has said.
- According to the airline, SIAC had directed P&W to dispatch at least **10 serviceable spare leased engines** by April 27, and **10 spare leased engines** per month until **December 2023**.

#### **The lessors' Case:**

- On **May 10, 2023**, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had **admitted** the airline's **voluntary insolvency resolution petition** and appointed an interim **resolution professional** to manage the carrier.
  - On **May 22**, last year, the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** upheld the order passed by NCLT whereby Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process was **initiated** against Go Airlines (India) Limited.
- With a **moratorium in force** on financial obligations and transfer of assets of Go First in the wake of the insolvency resolution proceedings, the lessors were unable to deregister and take back the aircraft leased to the carrier.
- The NCLAT **rejected** an appeal filed by the lessors challenging NCLT's direction to keep the leased aircrafts intact in the possession of Go Airlines.

- These lessors of Go First then approached the **Delhi High Court** seeking **deregistration** of their planes by aviation regulator DGCA.
- On **July 5, 2023**, a **single judge bench** of the court permitted the lessors to carry out **inspection and interim maintenance** tasks of their aircrafts, **twice a month**.
  - This was until the final disposal of their pleas to de-register their planes from the airline.
- The court had said that the lessors and its employees or agents shall be permitted by the DGCA and appropriate airport authorities to access the airport where their aircrafts were parked and to inspect them.
- Later, an appeal was moved by Go Air against the order of the single judge.
- On the appeal, the **division bench** permitted the airline to carry out maintenance of the aircrafts, subject to a **monthly inspection** by the lessors.
- The airline had then moved the **Supreme Court** appealing against the single judge order which was **rejected**.

### **Who are these lessors?**

- Some of the lessors who have approached the high court are:
  - Accipiter Investments Aircraft 2 Limited,
  - EOS Aviation 12 (Ireland) Limited,
  - Pembroke Aircraft Leasing 11 Limited,
  - SMBC Aviation Capital Limited,
  - SFV Aircraft Holdings IRE 9 DAC Ltd,
  - ACG Aircraft Leasing Ireland Ltd
  - DAE SY 22 13 Ireland Designated Activity Company.

### **Highlights of the recent orders:**

- The Delhi High Court passed a slew of directions to de-register **54 aircrafts** of various lessors on lease with the crisis-hit airline Go First.

- While disposing of a batch of pleas moved by the lessors, **Justice Tara Vitasta Ganju** set aside the communication letters issued by the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) declining to process new registration applications of the lessors.
- The court directed the DGCA to forthwith, and no later than the **next five working days**, process the deregistration applications filed by the lessors in respect of all 54 aircrafts.
- The court ordered that all **maintenance tasks** in respect of the aircrafts shall be **undertaken by the lessors** and all of their authorized representatives up to and until the time the aircrafts are de-registered and exported, in pursuance of **Rule 32A** of the **Aircraft Rules**.
- Further, Justice Ganju **restrained** the **Resolution Professional (RP)** of Go Air and the airline from accessing or entering or in any manner operating or flying any of the aircrafts.
  - The RP and Go Air have also been restrained from removing, replacing, taking out any accessories, spare parts, documents, records, materials etc from the aircrafts.
- The respondent RP shall forthwith **provide up to date information and documentation** in relation to the aircraft.
- The petitioner lessors are permitted to **export aircraft** as per the Aircraft Act, Aircraft Rules and applicable laws.

### **What is Insolvency?**

- Insolvency is such a financial state which is caused due to the inability of an individual or company to pay off outstanding debts timely to the creditors or banks because the assets are insufficient.
- This usually arises when the **cash inflows of a person are less than the cash outflows**. So, their income is not enough to cover up their liabilities.
- In the case of a company, it means that the total money inflows and the assets combined are less than its liabilities.
- Therefore, insufficient funds and liquidity can make the repayments of debts almost impossible, which makes a person insolvent.
- When a person becomes insolvent, he/she may opt to **file for bankruptcy** to the court or he/she can also deal with the debts through other options, by taking necessary steps for its resolution.

### **What is Bankruptcy?**

- Bankruptcy refers to the legal proceeding, with respect to a person who is **not able to meet the financial obligations**.
- It starts when a petition is **filed by the debtor himself or the creditor** before an appropriate authority or court by sending an application, wherein the individual declares himself as insolvent.
  - So, it is up to the court to accept or dismiss the petition.
- On the acceptance of the petition, the court decides the **appropriation of the personal assets** of the insolvent among different creditors or banks.
- Hence, when a person files a petition regarding bankruptcy, he **obliges to pay off** what is owed by him for which he seeks help from the court.
- It is the final stage of insolvency and gives a new lease to the insolvent to start afresh, i.e. it relieves the individual or a company from all the debts and other disadvantages of insolvency.
- In this process, the **assets of the debtor are measured and evaluated** and these are used for the repayment of a part of the debt, the person or entity owes to their creditor.
- It takes place when the insolvency is determined by the court and legal orders are given for its resolution.

### **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code of India:**

- The insolvency and bankruptcy code (IBC), 2016 was introduced to improve the relationship between the creditors and the debtors and to merge the then existing laws related to insolvency and bankruptcy.
- **Bankruptcy Law Reforms Committee (BLRC)** was set up in **2014** under the chairmanship of **Mr. T.K. Viswanathan**, former **Union Law Secretary**.
  - It aimed to recommend an Indian Bankruptcy Code to replace the existing laws and applicable both to non-financial corporations and individuals.
  - The draft for the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was submitted in **2015**.
- On 1st June 2016, **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** and its appellate body was set up by the government under **Companies Act, 2013**.
  - It is responsible to adjudicate disputes in the **matters of companies and limited liability partnership**, arising under the Act.

- In case of **individuals and partnership**, the adjudicating authority will be **Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT)**, which was established under Recovery of debts due to **Banks and Financial Institution Act, 1993**.
- NCLT appeals lies to **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** and after NCLAT, the party can appeal to the **Supreme court of India**.
- Similarly, for DRT, appeals lie to the **Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunal (DRAT)** and then to the supreme court of India.

#### Insolvency Professional:

- The code provides for the appointment of a insolvency professional for **administering the resolution process**, manage the assets of the debtor and provide information to assist them in decision making.
- These professionals are registered with insolvency professional agencies.
- Insolvency professionals are of two types one is **Interim Insolvency Professional** and the other is **Insolvency Professionals**.
- Interim insolvency professionals are appointed by the adjudicating authority within **7 days** from the day the application has been admitted by the adjudicating authority.
- Insolvency Professionals are appointed by a **committee of creditors (COC)** by a majority vote of **75%** in the first meeting of the COC.
- The adjudicating authority then transfers the list to the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)** for the approval of the list.
  - Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) came into existence on **1st of Oct 2016** to **regulate and counter** various Insolvency and Bankruptcy cases
  - IBBI plays the role of **governing body** for all such as insolvency resolution process, insolvency professional agencies and information utilities.
- If the board fails to respond within **10 days**, then the adjudicating authority directs the interim insolvency professionals to continue with the insolvency resolution process till the time the board confirms the list of insolvency professionals.

#### Moratorium:

- After the commencement of corporate insolvency resolution the NCLT orders a moratorium on the debtor's operations for the period of **180 days**.
- This is termed as a '**calm period**' during which no judicial proceedings for recovery, enforcement of security interest, sale or transfer of assets, or termination of essential contracts can take place against the debtor.

#### Creditors:

- There are **2 types of creditors** under the code – **Financial Creditors and Operational Creditors**.
- Under **Sec. 5(7) of IBC 2016**, financial creditors are basically creditors who give money to the promoters. Banks, home buyers, etc are considered as the promotional creditors.
- Under **Sec. 5(20) of IBC 2016**, operational creditors are those creditors who do not give money or cash to the promoters but they provide goods and services to the promoters.
- **Committee of Creditors (COC)** is given under **section 21** of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 that consists only of financial creditors.
- The role of the COC is to **approve and disapprove the resolution plan** proposed by the resolution professional in Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).
- Operational creditors are allowed to take part in the meeting of the committee of creditors but they don't have the voting rights.

#### Corporate Debtor:

- Under **sec. 5(a) of IBC 2016**, corporate debtors are the promoters who take loans or money from financial creditors or take goods or services from operational creditors as a debt.

#### The Process:

- On commission of default, the corporate debtor files an **application** before the adjudicating authority.
- After furnishing of information the adjudicating authority passes an order within **14 days** to admit or reject the application.



- If the application is admitted, then the commencement of insolvency resolution process takes place whereas in case if the application gets rejected, notice will be sent by the adjudicating authority to rectify the defects.
- After the application is accepted, a Committee of Creditors is formed which appoints a Resolution Professional.
- The RP prepares an information memorandum and proposes a **resolution plan** which has to be approved by the COC with at least **66 percent** majority.
- If the resolution plan is **not approved** then the corporate debtor is **liquidated** by an order of the Adjudication Authority under **Section 33** of the code.
  - The resolution professional act as the liquidator for the purposes of liquidation, subject to submission of a written consent to the Adjudicatory Authority.

### PayU – A Payment Aggregator



#### Recently:

PayU received in- principle approval from **Reserve Bank of India** to operate as a **payment aggregator (PA)**.

- This will allow the digital payments firm to start onboarding **new merchants** on its platform after a gap of about **two years**.

#### What is a Payment Aggregator?

- A payment aggregator is a **third-party service provider** that enables customers to make and businesses to accept payments online.
- Payment aggregators enable their clients to accept various payment methods such as **debit cards, credit cards, cardless EMIs, UPI, bank transfers, e-wallets, and e-mandates**.
- Similarly, they also enable disbursing payments to various stakeholders, such as partners, employees, suppliers, and authorities.
- To enable various payment methods on your own, your business would have to partner with various banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).
- But, in India, there are **34 nationalized banks and 9,680 NBFCs**.
- Not every business has the ability to partner with such a huge number of institutions, so payment aggregators essentially act as a middleman between individual businesses and financial institutions.

### **What happened?**

- In **2022**, the central bank had **banned** payment aggregators, including PayU, and restricted them from onboarding new merchants.
- In **January 2023**, the RBI had **returned the fintech firm's application** to operate as a payment aggregator due to its complex corporate structure and directed it to reapply within **120 days**.
- Following this, PayU had to pause on-boarding new merchants for its online payment aggregation business.
- Similar bans were imposed on **Paytm, Razorpay and Cashfree**. Of which, the latter two received their approval in December last year, while **Paytm continues to await for its approval**.
- By requiring payment firms to actively monitor merchant activities on their platforms, the RBI seeks to **mitigate potential risks** associated with digital payments, such as fraud, money laundering, and non-compliance with regulations.
- The new guidelines underscore the need for robust due diligence processes and real-time monitoring of merchant transactions.
- Payment firms will be expected to implement robust risk management frameworks, including know-your-customer (KYC) procedures, transaction monitoring, and reporting mechanisms.

**PayU:**

- PayU is a **Netherlands**-based payment service provider to online merchants.
- The company was founded in **2002**, and is headquartered in **Hoofddorp**.
- It offers services including **buy-now-pay-later**, and competes with the likes of **Tiger Global-backed Razorpay and Walmart-owned PhonePe**.
- PayU India companies aim to create a full-stack digital financial services platform to serve all (tapped and untapped) financial needs of customers through technology solutions.
- It enables businesses to collect digital payments across **150 online payment methods** such as credit cards, debit cards, net banking, EMIs, pay-later, QR, UPI, Wallets, and more.
- Earlier this month, PayU had announced a partnership with the country's largest customer engagement & loyalty solutions provider, **Loylty Rewardz**.

## **New Insurance Rules**



**Recently:** The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Insurance Products) Regulations, 2024**, came into force on **April 1**.

- Introduced as part of a wider reform agenda that the IRDAI has been actively pushing for in recent months, the new norms cover various aspects of life, general, and health insurance.
- They have generated considerable interest, particularly regarding a presumed change in the **upper age limit** to avail a **new health cover**.

### **Important features of the new Rules:**

- As per the new rules, insurers must issue policies in **dematerialised form**, and this will now be facilitated by **four insurance repositories**:
  - The CAMS Repository
  - Karvy
  - NSDL Database Management (NDML)
  - The Central Insurance Repository of India.

- The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** said, “Every insurer shall have in place a Board-approved policy for insurance policies issued in electronic form.”
- As the name suggests, **e-insurance** simply means buying insurance policies in a digital format.
- Electronic insurance policies will be held in a demat account termed an **e-Insurance Account, or eIA**.
- One can manage all the insurance policies—life, health, and general—through an e-Insurance Account.
- The IRDAI has made it mandatory for insurers to issue fresh policies digitally.

### **What areas do the new regulations cover?**

- The new regulations aim to make insurers more responsive, improve business efficiency, increase insurance accessibility, and protect policyholders' interests.
- The last objective is sought to be achieved by encouraging insurers to conform to good governance while designing and pricing their products.
- Specific to **health insurance**, the new norms are important, for instance, in reducing the “**specific waiting period**” from **four years to three years**.
- What this means is a reduced wait time, from the time the policy is purchased, to get insurance cover for specified diseases/treatments (except due to an accident).
- As per the new norms, on completion of the waiting period, diseases/treatments will be covered provided the policy has been renewed without any break.
- The time-frame for defining **pre-existing disease** has also been set to **three years** in the new regulations.
  - Pre-existing disease refers to any health condition, ailment, injury or disease diagnosed by a physician not more than **three years** prior to the commencement of the policy or for which medical advice or treatment was recommended or received from a physician not more than three years prior to the date of policy issue.
- **AYUSH treatment** coverage is another aspect emphasised in the new norms.
- Mandating a Board approved policy for the insurers, the regulator wants insurance companies to treat AYUSH on par with other treatment options.
- The previous regulation, which was in force till **March 31, 2024**, said: “all insurers may endeavour to provide coverage for **one or more** systems covered under AYUSH treatment, provided the treatment has been undergone in the hospitals or healthcare facilities subject to the guidelines as may be specified by the Authority from time to time”.

- The regulator has also advised insurers against denying renewal of a **health insurance policy** on the ground that the insured had made a claim or claims in the preceding policy years.
  - However, this advice doesn't apply to benefit-based policies where the policy terminates following payment of the benefit covered under the policy, such as in the case of a critical illness policy.

### **Changes are relevant to senior citizens:**

- The April 1 notification attempts to broaden insurance coverage from a demographic perspective, broadly in line with **IRDAI's 'Insurance for All by 2047' goal**.
- In contrast, the **Health Insurance Regulations, 2016**, on entry and exit age, stipulated that "all health insurance policies shall ordinarily provide for an entry age of at least up to **65 years**".
- In other words, under the previous regulations health insurers could not deny cover to those aged up to 65.
- This, however, does not mean that all insurers were hitherto averse to providing health cover to those aged above 65 years.
- The new regulations have also asked insurers to establish a **separate channel** to address health insurance related claims and grievances of senior citizens.
- Since it is more of a nudge from the IRDAI, many general insurers dealing in **health insurance** as well as stand-alone health insurers are likely to wait and watch.
- However, some may begin work on new products for those above **65**.
- Industry officials expect health insurers to over time reformulate their products by resetting the **maximum entry age to 99 years**.

### **Surrender charge:**

- A surrender charge, also called a surrender fee, is levied on a **life insurance policyholder upon cancellation**.
- The fee is used to cover the costs of keeping the insurance policy on the insurance provider's books.
- The charge is usually waived if the insured party informs the insurer in advance of the cancellation.
- The IRDAI has announced the final set of surrender charges in non-linked or linked life insurance products — traditional endowment policies. These charges are going to be effective from **April 1, 2024**.

- Here are the proposed slabs for the surrender value percentages:
  - **30%** of total premiums paid if surrendered during the **second year**.
  - **35%** of total premiums paid if surrendered during the **third year**.
  - **50%** of total premiums paid if surrendered between the **fourth and seventh years**.
  - **90%** of total premiums paid if surrendered during the last **two years**.

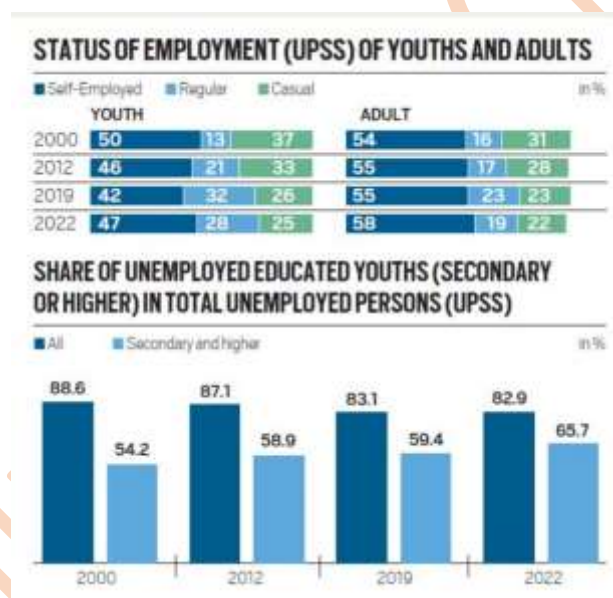
**Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI):**

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India is an autonomous and statutory body under the jurisdiction of **Ministry of Finance, Government of India**.
- It is tasked with regulating and licensing the **insurance and re-insurance industries** in India.
- It was formed in **1999** and the headquarter of **IRDAI** is in **Hyderabad**.
- The current chairperson is **Debasish Panda**.



## REPORTS & INDICES

### India Employment Report 2024



Source- India Employment Report 2024, IHD-ILO UPSS

**Recently:** The 2024 edition of the India Employment Report was jointly released by the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** and the **Institute of Human Development (IHD)**.

- The report highlights the worrying state of youth employment in India, indicating an urgent need for targeted policy interventions to save the country's demographic dividend.

**About the Report:**

- The India Employment Report 2024 is the **third** in the series of regular publications by the Institute for Human Development on labour and employment issues.
- The report examines the challenge of youth employment in the context of the emerging economic, labour market, educational, and skills scenarios in India and changes over the **past two decades**.
- It is primarily based on analysis of data from the **National Sample Surveys** and the **Periodic Labour Force Surveys**.
- The index is based on **seven** labour market outcome indicators:
  - Percentage of workers employed in regular formal work;
  - Percentage of casual labourers;
  - Percentage of self-employed workers below the poverty line;
  - Work participation rate;
  - Average monthly earnings of casual labourers;
  - Unemployment rate of secondary and above-educated youth;
  - Youth not in employment and education or training.

**Highlights of the report:**

- The 'employment condition index' has improved between **2004-05 and 2021-22**.
- Some states — **Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, and UP** — have remained at the **bottom** throughout this period.
- While some others — **Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Uttarakhand, and Gujarat** — have stayed at the **top**.

**Youth Employment:**

- There has been a rise in youth employment, but the quality of work remains a concern, especially for qualified young workers.

- Youth employment and underemployment **increased** between **2000 and 2019** but declined during the pandemic years.
- However, unemployment among youths, especially those with secondary-level or higher education, has intensified over time.
- In **2022**, the share of **unemployed youths** in the total unemployed population was **82.9%**.
- The share of **educated youths** among all unemployed people also increased to **65.7% in 2022** from 54.2% in 2000.
- The unemployment rate among youths was **six times greater** for those who had completed secondary education or higher (18.4%) and nine times higher for graduates (29.1%) than for persons who could not read or write (3.4%) in 2022.
- This was higher among **educated young women (21.4%)** than **men (17.5%)**, especially among **female graduates (34.5%)**, compared to **men (26.4%)**.
- The unemployment rate among educated youths grew to 30.8% in 2019 from 23.9% in 2000, but fell to **18.4% in 2022**.

#### Employment Quality:

- Informal employment has risen — around half the jobs in the formal sector are of an informal nature.
- Self-employment and unpaid family work has also increased, especially for women.
- Almost **82%** of the workforce is engaged in the **informal sector**, and nearly **90%** is **informally employed**.
- **Self-employment** remains the primary source of employment — **55.8%** in **2022**.
- **Casual and regular employment** accounted for **22.7%** and **21.5%** respectively.

#### Participation of Women:

- The **female labour force participation rate (LFPR)** in India remains among the **world's lowest**.
- Female LFPR declined by **14.4** percentage points (compared to 8.1 percentage points for males) between **2000 and 2019**.
- The trend reversed thereafter, with female LFPR rising by **8.3 percentage points** (compared to 1.7 percentage points for male LFPR) between **2019 and 2022**.
- There is a considerable gender gap — *women's LFPR* (**32.8%**) in 2022 was **2.3 times** lower than **men's (77.2%)**.

- India's low LFPR is largely attributed to the low female LFPR, which was much lower than the **world average of 47.3% in 2022**, but higher than the **South Asian average of 24.8%**.

### **Structural Transformation:**

- There has been a reversal of the slow transition towards non-farm employment after 2018-19.
- The **share of agriculture** in total employment fell to around **42% in 2019** from **60% in 2000**.
- This shift was largely absorbed by construction and services, the share of which in total employment increased to **32% in 2019** from **23% in 2000**.
- The **share of manufacturing** in employment has remained almost stagnant at **12-14%**.

### **International Labour Organization (ILO):**

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency whose mandate is to advance social and economic justice by setting international labour standards.
- It was established by the **Treaty of Versailles in 1919** under the **League of Nations** and is one of the first and oldest specialised agencies of the UN.
  - It became the **first specialised agency** of the United Nations (UN) in the year **1946**.
- The ILO has **187 member states**: 186 out of 193 UN member states plus the **Cook Islands**.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**
- The organization got the **Nobel Peace Prize** in **1969**, for its efforts to improve peace amongst the classes, and for promoting justice and fair work for the workers.
- The basis of the ILO is the tripartite principle. The ILO comprises:
  - International Labour Conference,
  - Governing Body,
  - International Labour Office.
- Its **Governing body** which is its **executive body** meets **three times** a year.

- **Gilbert F. Houngbo** is the current **Director General** of International Labour Organization.
  - He is the **first African** to hold the position.

### **Institute of Human Development:**

- The Institute for Human Development (IHD) was established in the year **1998** under the aegis of the **Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE)**.
- It is a **non-profit** academicians and experts, policy-makers and development practitioners.
- Its **knowledge partner is NITI Aayog** and is recognised by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India as a **"Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation"**.

### **QS World University Rankings by Subject**



**Recently:** The **2024 edition** of the QS World University Rankings by Subject was released by **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**.

**About:**

- The QS World University Rankings by Subject identifies the **world's strongest universities** in **individual subject areas**.
- The rankings are released by the **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**, a **UK based** ranking agency. The **first edition** was released in October **2004**.
- The QS world University Rankings are different from QS world university rankings by subjects.
- The QS World University Rankings by Subject employ **five key metrics** to compile the subject rankings, including reputation indicators based on surveys of academics and employers, citations per paper, H-Index, and international research.
- The rankings are across **56 academic disciplines** and **five** broad faculty areas of **Arts & Humanities, Engineering & Technology, Life Sciences, Natural Sciences** and **Social Sciences**.
- The QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024 include one new academic discipline: **Music**.

**Highlights:**

- **1,559 institutions** have been ranked across these subjects this year, with **64 universities debuting (i.e. having not been included in the 2023 edition)**.
- **Sixty-nine Indian universities** made it to the rankings with **424 entries** in the **2024 QS World University Rankings by Subject**.
  - This marks a **19.4 per cent rise** from the **previous year's 355 entries**.
- There has been a **16 per cent** expansion in the **International Research Network indicator**.
- India holds the **fifth position** regionally for the number of entries within the **top 200** and ranks **sixth for entries** within the **top 100**.
- This year's QS World University Rankings show India's notable progress, with a **20% increase** in **Citations per Paper**.
- India's research output surged by **54 per cent from 2017 to 2022** with our country set to overtake UK in research productivity.
- As many as **69 Indian universities** have made it to the latest 'QS World University Rankings' with a total of **424 entries** across **55 subjects**, a **19.4 per cent jump** from the previous **year's 355**.

- With this, India became the **second** most represented country in **Asia** after **China** whose **101 institutions** were on the list.
- Of the total Indian entries this year, an impressive **72%** were new, improved, or maintained their positions. A mere **18 per cent** experienced a decline.

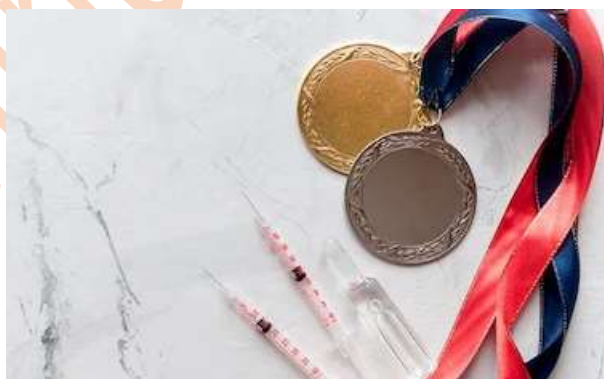
### **Which Indian universities have been featured in the rankings?**

- The **Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)** emerged as the highest ranked Indian university in the list.
  - JNU was also the country's top-ranked university in the subjects of Geography, History, Modern Languages, Politics & International Relations, Anthropology, English Language & Literature and Linguistics.
  - Under the subject of **Development Studies**, JNU was ranked **20th** in the rankings.
- **Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad** grabbed the next best rank of **22nd** in the subject of **Business & Management Studies**.
- **Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Bangalore** stood the first spot in India, under the **Accounting & Finance** subject.
- The **Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IITB)** secured **25th rank** in the subject of **Engineering-Mineral & Mining**.
- **Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM)** secured **29th** spot in **Petroleum Engineering**.
- **IIT Guwahati** has excelled particularly in **Data Science**, securing a global ranking of **51-70**, and **Petroleum Engineering**, where it ranks **51-100** globally.
- The **Jindal Global Law School** at **O.P. Jindal Global University** has been ranked the **No. 1 Law School in India** for the **5th year in a row**.
  - It is also placed at the **72nd rank in the world**, making it the **only law school in India** to be featured among the **TOP-100 in the world**.
  - In 2023, JGLS researchers showcased their commitment by publishing over **175 papers** in various **Scopus-indexed sources**, marking a notable **25%** increase from the previous year.
  - Impressively, this output surpassed the combined publications of the top four **National Law Schools (NLUs)** by **over 60%**.
  - Over half of JGLS's 2023 publications in Scopus-indexed forums stemmed from collaborations with national and international institutes



- Besides JGLS, 2 other Law Schools from India have made it to the prestigious list this year –
  - These are **National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru** (ranked **151-200**), and the **Faculty of Law, University of Delhi** (ranked **201-250**).
- The **Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences** in **Chennai** secured the **24th position** globally for dentistry studies.
- The most represented Indian universities in this edition of the rankings are the **University of Delhi (30 entries)**, **IIT Bombay (28 entries)** and **IIT Kharagpur (27 entries)**.
- **IIT Madras** this year had **22 entries**, of which **eight improved, six declined and four remained unchanged**.
- **IIT Delhi** followed this at the **fifth spot with 19 entries**, of which **11 improved, three declined and three remained unchanged**.
- The **12 Institutes of Eminence (IoE)**, which represent just a fraction of Indian universities, contribute **40 per cent of the country's total entries**, amounting to **180**.
- Furthermore, the **IoE** lead the way with **47 of the 69 top-100 Indian positions** and **14 of the 21 positions across 55 academic disciplines** and **five faculty areas** in the **14th edition** of the rankings.

### World Anti- Doping Report 2022



Source- <https://images.app.goo.gl/Gj5nFaREhRtJeESP7>

**Recently:** The 2022 edition of the **World Anti- Doping Report** was released by the **World Anti- Doping Agency (WADA)**.

- **India** has emerged as the country with the **highest percentage of doping offenders**.
- The analysis was based on failed drug tests among nations, with more than **2000 samples** being tested by their respective testing laboratories.

### **What is Doping?**

- Doping is the act of **consuming artificial and often illegal substances** to gain an advantage over others in sporting competitions.
- These substances include **anabolic steroids, human growth hormones** etc.
- Illegally produced doping products pose a dangerous health risk to both professional and amateur athletes due to their unapproved use and distribution.

### **Highlights of the report:**

- **India** has emerged as the country with the **highest percentage of doping offenders**.
  - The report revealed that **127** individuals tested **positive** for banned substances out of **4,064 samples collected from Indian athletes**.
  - This constitutes **3.26 percent** of the sample size, which includes urine, blood, and athlete biological passports.
- Samples in India were tested at the **National Anti-Doping Laboratory (NDTL)** at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi**.
- India ranked **11th in sample testing** but had higher doping violations than major sporting nations such as **Russia (85), USA (84), Italy (73), and France (72)**.
- **China** conducted the highest number of samples testing - **17,357** during the counting period - with an adverse finding percentage of **0.25 per cent**.
- WADA report also found a **6.4 per cent** increase in the total number of samples **analysed and reported** in its **Anti-Doping Administration and Management System (ADAMS)** in **2022**, compared to the previous year.

- The percentage of **Adverse Analytical Findings (AAF)** also increased to **0.77 per cent in 2022**, from **0.65 per cent in 2021**.
  - An AAF is when the analysis of a rider's sample reveals the presence of a prohibited substance or the use of a prohibited method.
- After India, **South Africa** ranked second with **80 doping failures (2.04% out of 4,169 samples tested)**, followed by **Bangkok with 1.93%** of its testing pool (**3,402 samples**) resulting in **65 cases**.
- **India** also topped the list for the highest percentage of failed **EPO-Receptor Agonists (ERA)** tests conducted per laboratory (blood), with **11 cases** or 1.8 per cent of AAFs.
  - **Erythropoietin Receptor Agonists (ERA)** tests are medical tests used to measure the levels of **erythropoietin (EPO)** receptor agonists in the body.

### **India and Doping:**

- Athletes in **boxing, wrestling, and weightlifting** are the major contributors to positive tests.
- The **International Weightlifting Federation** banned India's national weightlifting body in **2004 and 2006** after at least **three lifters** tested positive in a **single calendar year**.
- In **2019**, **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** had tested **4004 samples** with a record number of positive results (**225**), which came to **5.6 per cent**.
- With the **Paris Olympics (2024)** around the corner, NADA would do well to ramp up the number of tests to curb the doping menace.

### **World Anti- Doping Agency (WADA):**

- WADA was established in **1999 by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)** as an international independent agency to lead a collaborative worldwide movement for **doping-free sport**.
- WADA's governance and funding are based on **equal partnership between the Sport Movement and Governments of the world**.
- Its seat is in **Lausanne, Switzerland**, and its headquarters are in **Montreal, Canada**.

- The **World Anti-Doping Code** is the core document that harmonizes anti-doping policies, rules and regulations within sport organizations and among public authorities around the world.
  - It works in conjunction with **eight International Standards** which aim to foster consistency among anti-doping organizations in various areas.
- The **WADA Prohibited List** is the international standard for identifying banned substances and methods in sports.
- Effective **January 2020**, **Witold Bańka** commenced in his role as President of WADA
- A **42-member Foundation Board (Board)** led the Agency's highest policy-making body, with an equal number of representatives from the **Olympic Movement (OM)** and **Public Authorities (PAs)**.
- In **early 2022**, WADA launched a refreshed brand positioning that calls on all of us to Raise the Game to deliver on our global collaborative mission for doping-free sport.

### **National Anti- Doping Agency:**

- National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) based in **New Delhi** was set up as a registered society under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860** in **2005** with a mandate of creating dope-free sports in India.
- It functions under **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (Anurag Thakur)**.
- **Ms. Ritu Sain** currently serves as the Director General & CEO, NADA India.
- WADA **four-year investigation** into India's anti-doping programme was launched in **2019** as '**Operation Carousel**'.
- During this period, the anti-doping watchdog audited India's anti-doping programme, interviewed NADA officials, monitored dozens of athletes and reviewed the data about hundreds of others.
- The study unearthed **glaring lapses**, forcing the WADA to write multiple times to the Indian body, expressing concerns about its 'capabilities and practices'.

### **National Anti- Doping Act, 2022:**

- The **National Anti-Doping Act, 2022** came into force on **12th August 2022** after receiving the **President's assent** to provide legal backing to NADA.
- It gives effect to the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) International Convention against doping in sport, 2007**.
  - India has ratified the said Convention on the **7th November, 2007**.

- The National Anti-Doping Act, 2022, aims to provide a robust legal framework for preventing, detecting, and penalizing doping violations in sports.
- The Act enumerates prohibited substances and methods that are banned in sports, under the World Anti-Doping Code.

## **SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **China's Shenzhou- 18 Spacecraft**



**Recently:** China successfully launched the **Shenzhou-18** spacecraft aboard **Long March 2F rocket** from the **Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center**, located on the fringes of the **Gobi Desert** in northwestern China.

- The successful arrival of the crew members to China's space station was also confirmed.
- Shenzhou-18 is **China's seventh crewed mission to Tiangong** and the country's **13th human spaceflight mission overall**.

**About the Mission:**

- It is the **32<sup>nd</sup>** flight mission of China's manned space program and the **third** manned mission during the application and development stage of the country's space station.
- The mission's primary objective was to transport a **three-member crew** to the **Tiangong space station**, where they would replace the current occupants from the **Shenzhou-17 mission**.
- The three crew members are –
  - **Ye Guangfu**, 43, a **veteran astronaut** who was part of the **Shenzhou-13** mission in 2021;
  - **Li Cong**, 34, who visited space for the first time;
  - **Li Guangsu**, 36, who visited space for the first time.
- The **Shenzhou- 17 crew**, consisting of **Tang Hongbo, Tang Shengjie and Jiang Xinlin**, have been operating Tiangong since **late October 2023**.
  - The trio returned to Earth early April 30 after handing over control of the station to the incoming Shenzhou-18 astronauts.
- The Shenzhou-18 mission will last roughly **six months** before returning to the **Dongfeng landing site** in **Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region** in late October.
- The crew will carry out more than 90 experiments, install space debris protection equipment on the space station, carry out payload experiments, and popularise science education, among other things.
- During their stay in orbit, the Shenzhou-18 crew will witness the arrival of the **Tianzhou-8 cargo craft** and the **Shenzhou-19 crewed spaceship**.
- **Yang Liwei** became **China's first astronaut in space** in October **2003** and made China the third country in the world to independently send humans into orbit.

**China's Tiangong Space Station:**

Need:

- China is **excluded from the International Space Station program**, largely due to U.S. concerns over the Chinese space programs' links with the People's Liberation Army, the military branch of the ruling Communist Party.
- In **2011**, Congress prohibited NASA from cooperating substantially with its Chinese counterpart without express prior authorization.
- This law, known as the **Wolf Amendment**, makes it very difficult for China to participate in the ISS program, if the nation even wishes to do so.
- China is not an ISS partner, and no Chinese astronaut has ever visited the venerable outpost.
- As such, the nation's only option for off-Earth work was to build its own space station.

#### About:

- Tiangong space station, or "**Heavenly Palace**", is China's current permanent space station.
- China approved its space station plan in **1992** and has previously launched two temporary trial space stations, named as **Tiangong-1 and Tiangong-2**.
  - **Tiangong 1** reached Earth orbit in **September 2011** and hosted **two** crewed missions, **Shenzhou 9** in **June 2012** and **Shenzhou 10** in **June 2013**.
  - **Tiangong 2** launched in **September 2016** and welcomed the **Shenzhou 11** astronauts aboard for a **30-day mission**, the following month.
- Tiangong, orbits Earth at an altitude between **217 and 280 miles** (340 to 450 kilometers), approximately the same orbital height as the International Space Station (ISS).
- It was built by the **Chinese Manned Space Agency (CMSA)** and has **three modules** that were launched between **2021 and 2022**.
- The CMSA launched **Tianhe**, the **first station module**, on **April 28, 2021**.
  - This module contains the **living quarters** for the crew members.
  - The **54-foot-long** (16.6 meters) module was launched with a **docking hub** that allows it to receive **Shenzhou crew** and **Tianzhou cargo spacecraft**.
- The **second module Wentian** was launched on **July 24, 2022**, and the **third module Mengtian** on **Oct. 31, 2022**.



- The Chinese space station was **completed on Nov. 5, 2022**, following a maneuver to shift the recently arrived Mengtian module to its permanent docking port.
- The first crew to visit China's space station, **Shenzhou 12**, arrived on June 16, **2021**, when only the core module Tianhe was in orbit.
- The **taikonauts** — Chinese astronauts — spent **90 days** aboard Tianhe, approximately **three times longer** than any previous Chinese crewed spaceflight.
- The CMSA hopes to keep Tiangong continuously inhabited by a **minimum of three astronauts** for at least a decade.
- The Chinese space station is much smaller than the International Space Station with only three modules, compared with **16 modules on the ISS**.
- Tiangong is also considerably lighter than the ISS, which weighs **about 400 tons (450 metric tons)**; the Chinese station is about **20%** as massive.
- China plans to expand its space station to **six modules**.

#### Xuntian Telescope:

- Tiangong will be joined by a huge, **Hubble-like space telescope**, which will share the space station's orbit and be able to dock with it for repairs, maintenance and upgrades.
- Named Xuntian, which translates to "**survey the heavens**," the telescope will have a **6.6-foot (2 m) diameter mirror**, slightly smaller than that of Hubble, but will have a field of view **300 times greater**.
- Xuntian will aim to survey **40%** of the sky over **10 years** using its huge, **2.5-billion-pixel camera**.

#### International Space Station:

- The International Space Station (ISS) is the largest modular space station in low Earth orbit.
- The project involves five space agencies: **the United States' NASA, Russia's Roscosmos, Japan's JAXA, Europe's ESA, and Canada's CSA**.
- The ownership and use of the space station is established by intergovernmental treaties and agreements.

- The station serves as a microgravity and space environment research laboratory in which scientific research is conducted in astrobiology, astronomy, meteorology, physics, and other fields.

### **History:**

- The first person to write about living and traveling in space was the noted renaissance **astronomer Johannes Kepler** in the early 1600s.
- The first details of the engineering, design and construction of a space station were described by **Herman Noordung, in 1928.**
- The US government began to develop space station concepts in the 1950s.
- The Space Station was officially given approval by President Reagan and a budget approved by the US Congress in **1984.**
- NASA Administrator James Beggs immediately set out to find international partners who would cooperate on the program.
- Canadians, Japanese and many nations of the European Space Agency began to participate in the program soon after.
- The Station was designed between **1984 and 1993.** Elements of the Station were in construction throughout the US, Canada, Japan, and Europe beginning in the late 1980s.
- In **1993**, as the Station was undergoing a redesign, the **Russians were invited** to participate.
- Agreement was made to proceed in two phases.

### **Phase 1:**

- Aim- NASA Space Shuttles would carry astronauts and cosmonauts to the **Russian Mir Orbital Station**
  - The US would help to modify two Russian-built modules to house US and international experiments and to establish working processes between the participating nations.
- Phase 1, called NASA-Mir, took place between **1995 and 1998.**
- **Eleven** Space Shuttle launches went to Mir with the last ten docking to Mir and astronauts and cosmonauts transferring between the two vehicles.
- Two new Russian modules, **Spektr and Priroda** were launched, became part of Mir, and housed dozens of US payloads and seven US astronauts.

**Phase- 2:**

- Aim- Led by the US and Russia, all of the participating nations would contribute elements and crewmembers to a new International Space Station (ISS).
- In Phase 2, the elements of the new ISS were launched beginning in **1998**.
- Five partner agencies, the **Canadian Space Agency, the European Space Agency, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the State Space Corporation "Roscosmos", operate the International Space Station**, with each partner responsible for managing and controlling the hardware it provides.
- Although the primary Mission Control centers are in the US and Russia, several ancillary control centers in Canada, Japan, and Europe also have a role in managing each nation's elements and crew members.

**Other important facts:**

- The **first crew** arrived on the ISS in **2000** and since then it has always been manned by astronauts.
- The first space station crews were three-person teams, though after the tragic **Columbia shuttle disaster** the crew size temporarily dropped to two-person teams.
- The space station reached its **full six-person crew size in 2009** as new modules, laboratories and facilities were brought online.
- The astronauts generally don't live on the station for more than **six months** at a time.
- Assembly of the International Space Station (ISS) began with the launch of the Russian control module **Zarya** on November 20, **1998**.
- The ISS is usually at an altitude between about **200 km and 400 km** and weighs more than **400,000 kg**. It is **73 m long and 109 m wide**.
- It orbits the earth at about **5 miles per second** and makes **15.5 orbits per day**. It flies at an average altitude of **400km** and takes roughly **93 minutes** for it to make one revolution around the earth.
- It has a speed of **28,000kph**.
- Last year, Russia announced to withdraw from the space station after **2024**.
- According to NASA, more than **240 people from 19 nations** have visited the space station. More than 3000 educational and research investigations have been carried out in various fields.

## **Sunita Williams's 3<sup>rd</sup> Space Mission**



**Recently:** Indian-origin astronaut **Sunita Williams**, along with **Butch Wilmore**, will embark on her third space mission with **NASA's Boeing Crew Flight Test** to the **International Space Station** set for launch on **May 6**.

### **About the mission:**

- The astronauts will lift off aboard Boeing's **Starliner spacecraft** on a **United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket** from the **Space Launch Complex-41 at Cape Canaveral, Florida**.
- They will dock at the **orbiting laboratory**, where they will stay for about a **week**.
- The mission, a part of NASA's Commercial Crew Program, is the **first crewed flight** for the Starliner spacecraft.
- The mission will test the **end-to-end capabilities** of the spacecraft's system, including launch, docking and return to Earth in the western United States.
- Following a successful crewed flight test, NASA will begin the final process of certifying Starliner and systems for crewed missions to the space station.

**Who is Sunita Williams?**

- Known for her record-breaking accomplishments, Sunita Williams was born in **Euclid, Ohio**, to Mumbai Indian-American neuroanatomist **Deepak Pandya** and Slovene-American **Ursuline Bonnie (Zalokar) Pandya**.
- She received her commission as an Ensign in the **United States Navy** from the United States Naval Academy in May **1987**.
- She was selected as an **astronaut** by the US space agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in June **1998**.
- Williams has spent a total of **322 days in space** over the course of her two missions.

**Her Previous two Space Missions:**

- Sunita Williams is a veteran of two space missions — **Expeditions 14/15 and 32/33**.

**Expedition 14/15:**

- This mission lasted from **December 9, 2006 till June 22, 2007**.
- As a member of the Expedition 14 crew, Williams served as the **flight engineer**.
- She concluded her tour of duty as a member of the Expedition 15 crew returning to Earth with the **STS-117 crew** to land at **Edwards Air Force Base, California**.
- While on board, Williams established a world record for female astronauts with **four spacewalks, totalling 29 hours and 17 minutes**.
- Her record was later broken by **Astronaut Peggy Whitson** in **2008** with a total of **five spacewalks**.

**Expedition 32/33:**

- Williams was also part of a long-duration mission as **flight engineer** for **Expedition 32** and **International Space Station commander** for **Expedition 33**.

- She was launched from the **Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan**, along with **Russian Soyuz commander Yuri Malenchenko** and **Flight Engineer Akihiko Hoshide** of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency on **July 14, 2012**.
- Williams spent **four months** conducting **research and exploration** aboard the orbiting laboratory.
- She landed in Kazakhstan on **November 18, 2012**, after spending **127 days in space**.
- During their expedition, Williams and Hoshide performed **three spacewalks** to replace a component that relays power from the space station's solar arrays to its systems, and repair an **ammonia leak** on a station radiator.
- With **50 hours and 40 minutes**, Williams once again held the record for total cumulative spacewalk time by a female astronaut, which was later broken by **Whitson** who did **10 spacewalks**.

### **Awards:**

- Among her many awards and honours, Ms Williams, a retired US Navy Captain, has been awarded the:
  - Defense Superior Service Medal - Twice,
  - The Legion of Merit,
  - The Navy Commendation Medal - Twice,
  - The Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal,
  - The Humanitarian Service Medal, among others.

## **The Chipko Movement**



**Recently:** The **Chipko Movement**, a landmark environmental movement, completed its **50 years**.

- In an incident reminiscent of the movement, residents and nature enthusiasts in **Navi Mumbai** joined hands on to quietly protest against the destruction of **Belapur Hill**.
- The residents, which included many women as well, expressed their concerns about rapid encroachments, illegal temple construction, and tree cutting.

### **What is Chipko Movement:**

- The Chipko movement was a **non-violent agitation** in **1973** aimed at the **protection** and **conservation** of trees.
- It is also remembered for the **collective mobilization of women** for the cause of preserving forests.
- The uprising against the felling of trees and maintaining the ecological balance originated in **Uttar Pradesh's Chamoli district (now Uttarakhand) in 1973** and in no time spilled onto other states in **north India**.
- The name of the movement '**Chipko**' comes from the word '**embrace**', as the villagers hugged the trees and encircled them to prevent being hacked.
- However, not many people know that the original Chipko *Andolan* dates back to the **18th century** and was started by **Rajasthan's Bishnoi** community in **1730**.



- The incident has been etched in the annals of history for the sacrifice of a group of villagers.
- Led by a lady named **Amrita Devi**, they laid down their lives while protecting trees from being felled on the orders of the then **King of Jodhpur, Maharaja Abhay Singh**.
- After this incident, the king, in a royal decree, banned cutting of trees in all Bishnoi villages.

#### What triggered the modern Chipko Movement?

- The trigger for the **modern Chipko movement** was the growth in development that **Uttar Pradesh** witnessed following the **1963 China border conflict**.
- The need for infrastructural development attracted many foreign logging companies, who were eyeing the state's vast forest resources.
- However, the forests were the lifeblood of the villagers and they relied on it for both food and fuel.
- In **1970, widespread floods** inundated the area and was attributed to the mismanagement due to commercial logging.
- The villagers were further angered by the government's policy prohibiting local agriculturists and herders from cutting trees for fuel wood, fodder, and other purposes.
- The people's movement began when a **sports manufacturing company** received permission to fell trees for equipment, contrasting with locals' restrictions.
- It was then that environmentalist **Chandi Prasad Bhatt**, founder of the cooperative organisation **Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh**, led the first Chipko movement near the village of **Mandal in 1973**.
- When their appeals were denied, Bhatt led a group of villagers into the forest and embraced the trees to prevent logging.
- After many days of agitation, the government cancelled the **company's logging permit**.
- The Chipko movement can essentially be called a **women's movement**.
  - Women, being solely in charge of cultivation, livestock and children, suffered the most due to floods and landslides, caused due to rise in deforestation in the face of urbanisation.
  - **Gaura Devi** emerged as a symbol of unwavering resistance when she led a courageous stand against deforestation in the village of **Reni**.
  - Rallying a group of women, she fearlessly confronted loggers and pioneered the act of physically embracing the trees, thwarting their destruction.
- This bold act transformed Chipko into a predominantly women-led movement, sparking inspiration among women across the nation.

Sundarlal Bahuguna:

- The Chipko Movement gained traction under **Sunderlal Bahuguna**, an eco- activist.
- He spent his life persuading and educating the villagers to protest against the destruction of the **forests and Himalayan mountains**.
- It was his endeavor that saw then **Prime Minister Indira Gandhi** banning the cutting of tress.
- Bahuguna is best remembered for the slogan **"ecology is the permanent economy"**.
- The campaign to save **Himalayan forests** resulted in a ban on **commercial felling** above **30 degrees slope and above 1,000 msl (mean sea level) in 1981**.
- The movement against the **Tehri Dam** was a response to a mega-project with devastating consequences including submergence, tree-felling, displacement, and possible seismic impacts.
- Even with **Sunderlal ji's 56-day fast** and a government committee's recommendation against it, the project attempts failed.

Movements inspired by Chipko movement:Appiko movement (Karnataka):

- In **1983**, the environmental activist **Pandurang Hegde** initiated a revolt against the agricultural practice of **monoculture**, which entailed the growing of a single tree in large areas.
- Appiko, which in the local language meant **'to hug'**, was a method that Hegde owed to the Chipko movement and actively propagated in his region through local folklore.

Campaign to save trees in North 24 Parganas (West Bengal):

- As recent as **April 2017**, the **Chipko Movement** was yet again replicated by a group of young boys and girls in **West Bengal**.
- When the local administration decided to cut down close to 4000 trees on the **NH112** to turn the two-lane highway into a four-lane one, hundreds of students protested by forming mini human chains around the trees, protecting them from the axe of the government.

Save Aarey Movement:

- In **2019**, the Save Aarey Movement gained momentum in **Mumbai**, focusing on the preservation of the **Aarey National Park**.
- Led by activists such as **Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy, and various NGOs**, the movement protested against the felling of trees in the Aarey Colony to make way for the Mumbai Metro Limited's project.

Save Dehing-Patkai Movement:

- In **November 2019**, the **Save Dehing-Patkai movement** emerged in **Assam**, targeting the **Dehing-Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- Spearheaded by individuals like **Rohit Chaudhary, Adil Hussain, Randeep Hooda**, and environmentalist **Joi Jadav Payeng**, the movement vehemently opposed the National Board of Wildlife's decision to permit mining activities within the sanctuary.

Save the Sundarbans campaign:

- The Save the Sundarbans campaign unfolded in **2019-2020**, focusing on the **Sundarbans mangrove forest in West Bengal**.
- Championed by organizations like the '**All Assam Students' Union**' and '**All Assam Matak Youth Students' Union**', the campaign aimed to raise awareness about the vulnerabilities of the Sundarbans following the devastation caused by **Cyclone Amphan in May 2020**.

Chipko movement in Japan:

- In **2009**, the **Japanese** too followed the Chipko way, when the local population staged a strong protest against the building of a tunnel near **Mount Takao**.
- They too adopted the tree-hugging method to resist the agenda of the local administration.

## **Supreme Court on Climate Change Impacts**



**Recently:** The SC has ruled that people have a “**right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change**”, which should be recognised by **Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution**.

- The judgment was delivered by a **three-judge Bench** consisting of **CJI D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra**.
- This case pertained to the conservation of the critically endangered **Great Indian Bustard (GIB)**.

### **Great Indian Bustard:**

- The great Indian bustard or Indian bustard, is a bustard occurring on the **Indian subcontinent**.

- It is a large bird with a **horizontal body and long bare legs**, giving it an **ostrich like appearance**, this bird is among the heaviest of the flying birds.
- The bird was classified as '**critically endangered**' species in **2018** by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature or IUCN**.
- With less than **150 individuals remaining**, the critically endangered GIB is ensnared by **power lines** in its final stronghold within the **Kutch and Thar deserts of western India**.
- These vast, open landscapes also hold the promise of abundant solar and wind energy.
- However, the high-tension networks evacuating power are becoming denser with new projects proposed every year.

### The Case:

- A writ petition was filed by **M K Ranjitsinh** filed in **2019**, seeking protection for the **GIB** and the **Lesser Florican**.
  - Both are **scheduled species** listed under **Part III of Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- The plea sought the framing and implementation of an emergency response plan for the **protection and recovery** of the GIB.
- In an **April 2021 order**, the apex court, imposed restrictions on the setting up of **overhead transmission lines** in a territory of about **99,000 sq km** in the GIB habitat in **Rajasthan and Gujarat**.
  - The top court mandated a committee to assess laying **underground power lines** to protect the Great Indian Bustard from extinction.
- In the hearing held in March 2024, the apex court was considering an appeal for the modification of its **April 19, 2021 order**.
  - The **Ministry of Power, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** had filed the application to modify the **2021 order as they are unfeasible**.
- The three ministries cited India's commitments on transition to non-fossil fuel energy sources vis-à-vis the **Paris climate treaty**.
- India's goal to achieve **500 GW of non-fossil-based electricity generation capacity by 2030** aligned with its efforts to be **net zero by 2070**.

**The Judgement:**

- The apex court **modified** its April 2021 order, giving directions for underground **high-voltage** and **low-voltage power lines**.
- It directed **experts** to assess the feasibility of undergrounding power lines in specific areas after considering factors such as terrain, population density, and infrastructure requirements.
- The ruling acknowledged that its earlier directions, "besides not being feasible to implement, would also not result in achieving its stated purpose, i.e., the conservation of the GIB".
- The new **7-member committee** is to complete the task and submit a report to this court by **July 31, 2024**.
- The committee shall not be trammelled by any (earlier) directions.
- "We have reduced **18,000 sq km to 13,000 sq km** and we have lifted the blanket prohibition of **undergrounding of power lines**. Now we leave it to the remit of the committee," the Court ruled.
- However, the court also made several other observations on climate change, and on litigation in other jurisdictions.
- Referring to environment-related aspects of the **Directive Principles of State Policy**, the court said that these have to be read together with **Article 21**.
- The Court stressed that the Constitution recognises the importance of the natural world.

**Article 21:**

- **Right to life and personal liberty** - No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law
- The SC has historically acknowledged Article 21 as the **heart of the fundamental rights** in the **Constitution**.
- The SC has said that the right to life is not just **mere existence**, but that it includes all rights that make it a meaningful and dignified existence for an individual.
- In the landmark case of **Hussainara Khatoon Vs. the State of Bihar (1979)**, the SC declared that the **right to speedy trial** is under Article 21.
- In **Subhash Kumar Vs. State of Bihar and Ors (1991)**, the SC read the **right to a clean environment as part of Article 21**.
- A bundle of rights — including the right to education, the right to shelter, the right to clean air, the right to livelihood, and the right to medical care — have all been included under the umbrella of Article 21.

- However, these “new” rights cannot be immediately materialised or exercised by a citizen.
- Despite the plethora of environmental rights cases, clean air is still a pressing concern. Such rights are actualised only when policies are framed and legislation enacted.
- However, the absence of such legislation, the Bench said, did not mean that Indians do not have a **“right against adverse effects of climate change”**.

## **DEFENCE**

### **Crystal Maze 2**



**Recently:** The Indian Air Force (IAF) has achieved a significant milestone with the successful test firing of an air-launched ballistic missile capable of hitting targets over **250 kilometers away**.



- The missile, known as **ROCKS** or **Crystal Maze 2**, is of Israeli origin and was test-fired from a **Su-30 MKI fighter jet** in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- This milestone achievement marks a significant step forward in the IAF's efforts to enhance its offensive capabilities and maintain a credible deterrent against potential adversaries.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) has successfully conducted tests on this missile and aims to procure it in large numbers under the Make in India initiative.

### What is Crystal Maze- 2?

- It is the new version of an **air-launched medium-range ballistic missile**.
- It is an extended stand-off range **air-to-surface missile** designed to strike high-value stationary and relocatable targets, including long-range radars and air defense systems.
- It is effective in **GPS-denied environments**, similar to those faced by India during the **Kargil War**.
- The missile can **penetrate areas protected** by air defense systems, making it a potent weapon in modern warfare, where enemy air defenses can pose significant challenges.
- It also offers options for either penetration or **blast fragmentation warhead**, making it capable of destroying both above-ground and well-protected underground targets.
- It is renowned for its **accuracy and reliability** in combat scenarios, making it a preferred choice for missions requiring surgical precision.

## **Exercise DUSTLIK**



**Recently:** The Indian Army contingent embarked for the illustrious **5th edition** of the **India-Uzbekistan** joint military Exercise **DUSTLIK**, marking a significant stride in bilateral cooperation.

### **What is DUSTLIK?**

- Exercise DUSTLIK is a **yearly event** conducted alternatively in **India and Uzbekistan**.
- DUSTLIK is a cornerstone of military collaboration that **alternates its venue** between India and Uzbekistan.
- **Last edition** was conducted at **Pithoragarh (India)** in **February 2023**.
- **This year**, it was scheduled to be conducted from **15th to 28th April 2024** at **Termez, the Republic of Uzbekistan**.

### **Contingent:**

- The Indian Armed Forces contingent comprising **60 personnel** was represented by **45 personnel** from the **Indian Army**, majorly from a **Battalion of the JAT Regiment**, and **15 personnel** from the **Indian Air Force**.
- The Uzbekistan contingent comprising approximately **100 personnel**, from **Uzbekistan Army** and **Air Force**, was represented by personnel from **Southern Operational Command**, part of South-West Military District.

### **Aim:**

- To foster military cooperation and enhance combined capabilities to execute joint operations in mountainous as well as semi urban terrain.
- It focuses on high degree of physical fitness, joint planning, joint tactical drills and basics of special arms skills.

### **How was the exercise conducted?**

- Tactical drills that were practiced during the exercise included creation of a Joint Command Post, establishing an Intelligence & Surveillance Centre, securing of landing site, Small Team Insertion & Extraction, Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon and Search Operations, Room Intervention Drills and Demolition of illegal structures.
- The complexity of this edition of Exercise DUSTLIK has been enhanced with conduct of **multi domain operations** as the contingent comprises of personnel from combat support arms and services besides Infantry
- **Two Women Officers** also form part of the IA contingent, including one from the **Regiment of Artillery** and the second from the **Army Medical Corps**.

### **India- Uzbekistan Ties:**

- India was one of the first countries to acknowledge the state sovereignty of Uzbekistan after its independence in **1991**.
- The diplomatic relations between the two nations have completed **30 years** in **2022**.
- There are frequent references to **Kamboja** in Sanskrit and Pali literature, which is stated to include parts of **present-day Uzbekistan**.
- Buddhism is said to have travelled to China through Uzbekistan and Central Asia.
- **Amir Timur** was born near **Shahrisabz** and **Babur** came from **Fergana** in **Uzbekistan**.

- Prime Minister, **Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri** passed away in Tashkent on **11 January 1966** after signing the **Tashkent declaration** with Pakistan.
- Trade relations between India and Uzbekistan are governed by the **Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation** signed in **May 1993**.
- The **first-ever joint military exercise** held between India and Uzbekistan was named **Dustlik**.

### **BrahMos Missile**



**Recently:** India's **BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles** were delivered to the **Philippines**, as part of a **\$375 million** deal signed by the two countries in **2022**.

- **BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited (BAPL)** had signed a contract with the Philippines on January 28, 2022, for the supply of **Shore Based Anti-Ship Missile System**.
- It was signed by the then **Philippines Defence Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana**.

**History:**

- In the early 1980s, the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme** began under the leadership of Dr. APJ **Abdul Kalam**.
- The programme aimed to develop a variety of indigenous missiles, such as **Prithvi, Agni, Trishul, Akash, and Nag**, each with diverse capabilities and ranges.
- In the early 1990s, India's strategic leadership recognized the necessity for cruise missiles.
- Cruise missiles are characterized by their ability to maintain **nearly constant speed** throughout most of their flight and deliver large warheads with high precision over long distances.
- The need was felt primarily following the use of cruise missiles in the **1991 Gulf War**.
- **An Inter-Governmental Agreement** was signed with **Russia in Moscow in 1998 by Dr Kalam**, who headed the **DRDO**, and **N V Mikhailov, Russia's then Deputy Defence Minister**.
- This initiative led to the establishment of **BrahMos Aerospace**.
- It was formed as a joint venture between **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Russian space company NPO Mashinostroyeniya (NPOM)**.
- The Indian side holds **50.5%**, while the Russians hold **49.5%**.
- In **1999**, work on development of missiles began in labs of DRDO and NPOM after BrahMos Aerospace received funds from the two governments.
- The first successful test in **2001** was conducted from a specially designed land-based launcher at **Chandipur coast in Orissa**.
- The Indian Army has integrated multiple BrahMos regiments into its arsenal since **2007**.

**About BrahMos:**

- BrahMos is named after the rivers **Brahmaputra** and **Moskva** in **India and Russia respectively**.
- The missile is capable of being launched from **land, sea, sub-sea and air** against **surface and sea-based** targets and has been long inducted by the Indian armed forces.

- BrahMos is a **two-stage missile** with a **solid propellant booster engine**.
- Its first stage brings the missile to **supersonic speed (meaning faster than sound)** and then gets separated.
- The liquid ramjet or the second stage then takes the missile closer to **three times the speed of sound** in cruise phase.
- The missile has a very low radar signature, making it stealthy, and can achieve a variety of trajectories.
- The '**fire and forget**' type missile can achieve a **cruising altitude of 15 km** and a terminal altitude **as low as 10 m** to hit the target.
- Cruise missiles such as BrahMos, called "**standoff range weapons**", are fired from a range far enough to allow the attacker to evade defensive counter-fire.
- The BrahMos has three times the speed, **2.5 times flight range** and higher range compared to subsonic cruise missiles.
- An extended range version of the BrahMos air-launched missile was tested from a frontline **SU-30MKI aircraft in 2022**.
- In the same year, an advanced sea-to-sea variant of BrahMos was tested from the **INS Visakhapatnam**.
- The first successful test of the BRAHMOS supersonic cruise missile, capable of travelling **290km**, took place on **May 22, 2013**.
  - It was test-fired from the Navy's guided missile **frigate INS Tarkash** off the **Goa coast**.
- The new extended range version, designed after **2016**, was first tested in **2017** by the **Indian Navy**. It was fired from **stealth frigate INS Teg in the Bay of Bengal** on March 11, 2017.
- The BrahMos versions currently being tested include ranges up to **350 km**, as compared to the original's **290 km**.
- Versions with even higher ranges, up to **800 km**, and with hypersonic speed are said to be on cards.
- Efforts are also on to reduce the size and signature of existing versions and augment its capabilities further.
- The BrahMos was also involved in a recent controversy around that time.
  - **Pakistan** claimed that an unarmed Indian missile had landed in its territory on **March 9, 2022**, and the Ministry of Defence said a technical malfunction had led to accidental firing.
  - While the government, which ordered a high-level court of enquiry, did not officially identify the missile, experts felt its trajectory suggested the signature of BrahMos.

Land-based BrahMos:

- The land-based BrahMos complex has **four to six mobile autonomous launchers**, each with **three missiles** on board that can be fired almost simultaneously.
- **Batteries** of the land-based systems have been deployed along India's land borders in various theatres.
- The upgraded land attack version, with capability of cruising at **2.8 Mach**, can hit targets at a range up to **400 km** with precision.

#### Ship-based BrahMos:

- The Navy began inducting BrahMos on its frontline warships from **2005**. These have the capability to hit sea-based targets beyond the radar horizon.
- The Naval version has been successful in **sea-to-sea and sea-to-land modes**.
- The BrahMos can be launched as a single unit or in a salvo of up to **eight missiles**, separated by **2.5-second intervals**. These can target a group of frigates with modern missile defence systems.

#### Air-based BrahMos:

- In **2017**, BrahMos was successfully flight-tested for the first time from a **Sukhoi-30MKI** against a sea-based target in **the Bay of Bengal**.
- BrahMos-equipped Sukhoi-30s, which have a range of **1,500 km** at a stretch without mid-air refuelling, are considered key strategic deterrence for adversaries both along land borders and in the strategically important Indian Ocean Region.

#### Submarine-based BrahMos:

- This version can be launched from around **50 m below the water surface**
- The canister-stored missile is launched vertically from the pressure hull of the submarine and uses different settings for underwater and out-of-the-water flights.
- This version was successfully tested first in **March 2013** from a submerged platform off the coast of Visakhapatnam.

#### **BrahMos and Philippines:**



- The delivery comes amid the showdown between **Philippines and China** in the South China Sea which has been ongoing for the last few months.
- **The three batteries** of the BrahMos missile system would be deployed by the Philippines in their **coastal areas** to guard against any threat in the region.
- The Indian Air Force sent its **American origin C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft** with the missiles to the Philippines to deliver the weapon system to the Philippines' Marine Corps.

#### **Defence Research and Development Organisation:**

- The DRDO is the premier agency under the Department of Defence Research and Development in the Ministry of Defence of the Government of India.
- It is tasked with the research and development activities for the military and is headquartered in **Delhi, India**.
- Motto - "**Balasya Mulam Vigyanam**"—the source of strength is science—drives the nation in peace and war.
- DRDO was established in **1958**.
- DRDO was then a small organisation with **10 establishments or laboratories** and today, DRDO is a network of around **41 laboratories and 05 DRDO Young Scientist Laboratories (DYSLs)**
- The chairman of DRDO is **Sameer V. Kamat**.

## **IMPORTANT DAYS**

### **World Health Day 2024**



**Recently:** The 2024 edition of the World Health Day was observed on **April 7<sup>th</sup>**.

- It serves as a platform to raise awareness about worldwide health issues and advocates for a healthy mindset.

**Theme for 2024:**

- The theme for this year's World Health Day '**My health, my right**' highlights that getting access to essential health services should no longer be a privilege but one's right.

### **History:**

- Established on **October 24, 1945** the main goal of the United Nations is to promote worldwide peace, security, and better living conditions for everyone and one important factor for better living was **public health**.
- Taking this in consideration, the diplomats who created the United Nations discussed the need for an **International Health Organisation**.
- On **April 7, 1948** the constitution of the **World Health Organisation** came into being.
- And therefore, the origin of World Health Day goes back to **1948** when First Health Assembly was held by the organisation, where it was decided to commemorate **April 7** as **World Health Day**.
- The decision **came into effect in 1950** and the first World Health Day was observed on April 7, 1950.

### **World Health Organization:**

- World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations' specialized agency for Health was founded in **1948**.
- It is an inter-governmental organization and works in collaboration with its member states usually through the Ministries of Health.
- It has **194 Member States, 150 country offices, six regional offices**.
- It is Headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- Current Director- **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**.

## **World Heritage Day 2024**



Source- <https://www.thequint.com/lifestyle/world-heritage-day-theme-history-and-quotes>

**Recently:** The 2024 edition of World Heritage Day or International Day for Monuments and Sites was observed on **April 18<sup>th</sup>**.

- This day is dedicated to raising awareness about the incredible cultural and natural treasures recognised by **UNESCO's World Heritage List**.
- This special day is dedicated to honouring and safeguarding our cultural heritage.

### **Theme:**

- This year, the theme for World Heritage Day 2024 is '**Discover and Experience Diversity.**'
- This theme shines a light on the richness of our history.
- It also reminds us to explore and appreciate the unique heritage of different communities.

### **History:**

- In **1982**, The **International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)** proposed the idea of observing **World Heritage Day** on April 18 every year.
- The following year, the proposal was approved at **UNESCO's General Conference**.
- World Heritage Day was first held in **1983** by **UNESCO** on **April 18<sup>th</sup>**.
- Since then, the special day is observed every year on the same day.

### **International Council on Monuments and Sites:**

- It is a professional association that works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places around the world.
- It was founded in **1965** in **Warsaw** as a result of the **Venice Charter of 1964** and offers advice to UNESCO on World Heritage Sites.
- In **1972**, ICOMOS was named by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention as one of the three **formal advisory bodies** to the World Heritage Committee, along with:
  - International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
  - International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM).
- It is headquartered in **Paris, France**.

### **UNESCO:**

- **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) aimed at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences and culture.
- It was founded in **1945** as the successor to the **League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation**.
- The **first session** of the General Conference of UNESCO was held in **Paris** during November-December of **1946**.
- It is Headquartered in **Paris, France**.
- It has **194** (including US) **Members and 12 Associate Members** and is governed by the General Conference and the Executive Board.

- Three UNESCO member states are not UN members: **Cook Islands, Niue, and Palestine.**

## **World Earth Day 2024**



Source- <https://contentraise.com/world-earth-day-2024-quotes-images-drawing-poem-on-22-april-celebration/>

**Recently:** The 2024 edition of the World Earth Day was observed on **April 22<sup>nd</sup>**.

- World Earth Day, also known as **International Mother Earth Day**, is a globally recognised event dedicated to raising awareness and promoting the sustainability of our planet.
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): **SDG 13, Climate Action**, and **SDG 15, Life on Land**, highlight the urgent need for climate action and the preservation of terrestrial ecosystems.

### **Theme:**

- The theme for **World Earth Day 2024** is **Planet vs Plastics**.
- The theme aims to bring attention to the serious issue of plastic pollution and how it harms nature.
- For Earth Day 2024, **EARTHDAY.ORG** aims to end plastic for planetary health and demands a 60 per cent reduction in the production of all plastics by 2040.

**History:**

- In **1969** at a **UNESCO Conference in San Francisco**, peace activist **John McConnell** proposed a day to honour the Earth and the concept of peace, to first be observed on **March 21, 1970**.
- This day of nature's equipoise was later sanctioned in a proclamation written by McConnell and signed by Secretary General U Thant at the United Nations.
- A month later, United States Senator **Gaylord Nelson** proposed the idea to hold a nationwide environmental teach-in on **April 22, 1970**, dedicated to the deteriorating environment in the United States and the massive January **1969 oil spill** in **Santa Barbara, California**.
- He hired a young activist, **Denis Hayes**, to be the National Coordinator.
- Nelson and Hayes renamed the event "**Earth Day**".
- In **1990**, Denis Hayes took it international and organized events in **141 nations**.
- The **United Nations General Assembly** proclaimed **April 22** as World Earth Day through a resolution adopted in **2009**.
- On Earth Day **2016**, the landmark **Paris Agreement** was signed by the **United States, the United Kingdom, China**, and **120** other countries.



## **World Malaria Day 2024**



Source- [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/tom-frieden-md-mph/number-of-u-s-malaria-cas\\_b\\_4181924.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/tom-frieden-md-mph/number-of-u-s-malaria-cas_b_4181924.html)

**Recently:** The 2024 edition of World Malaria Day was observed on **April 25<sup>th</sup>**.

- The day raise awareness about the preventive measures against Malaria and what we can do to ensure that we don't fall victim to this disease.

### **What is Malaria?**

- Malaria is a life-threatening disease spread to humans by some types of mosquitoes.
- It is mostly found in **tropical countries** and is **preventable and curable**.
- The infection is caused by a parasite and does not spread from person to person.
- Malaria mostly spreads to people through the bites of some infected female **Anopheles mosquitoes**.
- Blood transfusion and contaminated needles may also transmit malaria.
- Left untreated, **P. falciparum** malaria can progress to severe illness and death within 24 hours.
- There are **5 Plasmodium parasite** species that cause malaria in humans:
  - 2 of these species – **P. falciparum** and **P. vivax** – pose the **greatest threat**.

- **P. falciparum** is the **deadliest** malaria parasite. They are the most prevalent on the African continent.
- **P. vivax** is the dominant malaria parasite in most countries outside of sub-Saharan Africa.
- The other malaria species which can infect humans are **P. malariae**, **P. ovale** and **P. knowlesi**.

#### Elimination:

- **Vector control** is a vital component of malaria control and elimination strategies.
  - It is highly effective in preventing infection and reducing disease transmission.
- The 2 core interventions against malaria, are **insecticide-treated nets (ITNs)** and **indoor residual spraying (IRS)**.
- Since **October 2021**, WHO has recommended broad use of the **RTS,S/AS01** aka **Mosquirix** malaria vaccine among children.
  - The vaccine has been shown to significantly reduce malaria, and deadly severe malaria, among young children.
- In **October 2023**, WHO recommended a second safe and effective malaria vaccine, **R21/Matrix-M**.
- Countries that have achieved at least **3 consecutive years of zero indigenous cases** of malaria are eligible to apply for the **WHO certification of malaria elimination**.
  - Since **January 2024**, a total of **43 countries and 1 territory** have been certified by the WHO Director-General as malaria-free.

#### Theme:

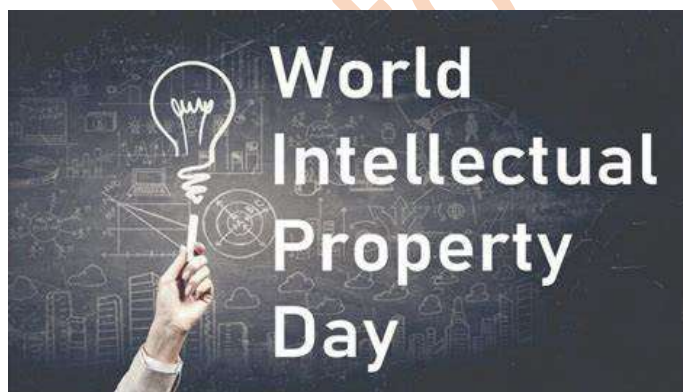
- This year the World Malaria Day 2024 theme is **"Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world"**.

#### History:

- The idea of World Malaria Day was developed from **Africa Malaria Day**.

- Africa Malaria Day is basically an event that has been observed by African governments since **2001**.
- In **2007**, at the **60th session** of the World Health Assembly, a meeting sponsored by the World Health Organisation (WHO) proposed that Africa Malaria Day be changed to World Malaria Day.
- The day was first observed on **April 25, 2008**.
- It will help to identify the existence of malaria in countries worldwide and will also help to bring awareness among people globally to fight against malaria.

### **World Intellectual Property Day 2024**



Source- <https://winspiremagazine.com/world-intellectual-property-day-2024/>

**Recently:** The 2024 edition of the World Intellectual Property Day was observed on **April 26<sup>th</sup>**.

- The is observed annually to create more awareness about intellectual property rights and why they should be safeguarded.

### **What is an Intellectual Property?**

- Intellectual property (IP) is a category of property that includes **intangible creations of the human intellect**.

- It is a form of legal protection in the form of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) given to individuals or companies for their creative and innovative works.
- **Article 27** of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** talks about these rights.
- Patent, Copyright, Trade Secret, Geographical Indication, Trademark are some of the common areas of Intellectual Property.
- Trade Marks Act, 1999, The Patents Act, 1970 (amended in 2005), The Copyright Act, 1957, the Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, are some of the Indian statutes that protect Intellectual Property in India.

**Theme:**

- This year the official theme is **"IP and the SDGs: Building Our Common Future with Innovation and Creativity"**.

**History:**

- In **1883**, the **Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property** was signed which further established protection for intellectual properties.
  - This was aimed to protect inventions, trademarks, and industrial designs.
- On **April 26<sup>th</sup> 1970**, the Convention establishing the World Intellectual Property Organisation entered into force, creating **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**, which became a UN specialised agency in **1974**.
- In **2000**, WIPO's member states designated **April 26<sup>th</sup>** as the Intellectual Property Day.

**World Intellectual Property Organization:**

- It is one of the **15** specialized agencies of the United Nations (UN).
- Pursuant to the **1967** Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization that was signed in **Stockholm, Sweden**, WIPO was created to promote and protect intellectual property (IP) across the world by cooperating with countries as well as international organization.
- It started its operations on **April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024**.
- WIPO has **190 of UN member states**. Besides, Cook Islands, Holy See and Niue are members of WIPO.

- **Palestine** has permanent observer status.
- India joined WIPO in **1975**.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva**, Switzerland.
- **Daren Tang** is the current Director General of WIPO.

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