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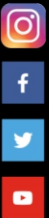
LawEx

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**HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE REPORT
ON ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION**



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About Magazine

“LawEx” is a carefully curated set of Current Events designed specifically for CLAT aspirants. To take you one step closer to realizing your dream, “LawEx” provides a fortnightly overview of the most significant current events related to politics, economics, science and technology, & sports with a wide range of infographics to ensure a smoother learning experience and enhanced retention of information.

Editor's Note

The High-Level Committee (HLC) on “One Nation, One Election,” headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, submitted its report on the feasibility of conducting simultaneous polls to President Droupadi Murmu on March 14. India on March 10 signed a trade agreement with the four-nation European Free Trade Association (EFTA), an intergovernmental grouping of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. India will go to the polls from April 19 to June 1, in a marathon seven-phase exercise to elect the 543 members of the 18th Lok Sabha. A day after the Centre notified a Fact Checking Unit (FCU) under the Press Information Bureau (PIB) to identify fake news about the government, the Supreme Court stayed the operation of the notification until the Bombay High Court takes a final decision on petitions challenging the 2023 amendments to the Information Technology Rules. Keep reading for more updated information.

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VAISHNAV BHATT

Our Top Achiever

AIR - 113th

CLAT 2024

Q. Give us a brief intro about yourself, Vaishnav.

Ans. Hello, I'm Vaishnav and I secured AIR 113 in CLAT 2024. I completed my 10th standard in Delhi and have moved to Bangalore this year.

Q. When did you think about doing law?

Ans. I've had some very unpleasant experiences in life when I was staying in Delhi where my family and I had to suffer emotionally and financially and a major part of it was due to insufficient knowledge of the law and our rights. In this process I had to interact with some lawyers, and visit the court as well. These experiences made me want to pursue law as a profession as I found it interesting and also felt that having this knowledge would keep me safe and I would be able to help others as well who face similar situations due to insufficient knowledge.

Q. When did you seriously start preparing for CLAT?

Ans. I started my preparation in March 2023.

Q. What is the role of LawEx in your preparation?

Ans. LawEx helped me a lot with my preparation for CLAT. Their current affairs magazine and Maths YouTube videos are excellent and have been of great help. I also found their GK topic tests to be very useful.

Q. Do you think LawEx Lectures with sufficient reading and mock practice enough for CLAT?

Ans. I feel LawEx should increase the number of mock tests that they offer. Apart from this I think that they provide sufficient study material.

Q. What did you do for your subject-wise strategy?

Ans. My weak point was GK, so I gave it a bit more attention compared to the other subjects. For this I read The Hindu newspaper everyday for 1.5 hrs and focused on the editorial as that improved my vocabulary and helped improve my English as well. I allocated 4-5 hours for GK everyday. I gave 2 hours for legal reasoning. During this time I had not yet started giving mock tests. I watched LawEx's maths YouTube videos to improve my maths for around 30 minutes. A bulk of my preparation was focused on these 3 subjects. Apart from this I attempted around 60 mock tests, 20 of which were from LawEx and the rest I had to source from other test series.

Q. What was your highest and lowest score in mock tests?

Ans. My lowest score was 72 and my highest score was 96.25. On average my score was around 90 marks out of 120.

Q. How did you keep your confidence up when scoring low in mocks?

Ans. My performance in mocks was more or less pretty consistent throughout my preparation. So I did not face this issue.

Q. How to maintain mock scores?

Ans. In my opinion, analysing the mocks after attempting them is very important as it makes you understand what kind of mistakes you have made and helps you to improve upon them in the next mock. This will also make you understand your own weak points and which subject needs improvement. This will help you maintain and improve your score.

Q. How much GK is sufficient and how to revise it?

Ans. No amount of GK can be considered sufficient in my opinion. So I would suggest to find 2-3 sources which are of good quality like The Hindu newspaper and LawEx magazine which covers most of the topics which you need to know and for static GK you can purchase any book like A P Bharadwaj's Static GK book. I revised for GK by doing the topic tests multiple times.

Q. How many Mocks are sufficient for CLAT Preparation?

Ans. According to me at least 50 mock tests are required so that your speed along with accuracy improves and it doesn't make you feel anxious anymore as a calm mind will help you concentrate better and score more. Clat is a reading based exam and it can be quite draining especially in the last 30-35 minutes so practicing mocks is important here.

Q. What is your advice to CLAT Aspirants?

Ans. I would advise CLAT aspirants to give themselves at least one year for preparation and attempt 1-2 mock tests every week so that it doesn't drain you out. I made this mistake too by attempting around 60 mocks in 2 months. It is not feasible. CLAT is highly competitive and requires consistency and patience. As my English was at a decent level to begin with, I was somehow able to manage the stress. Also don't forget to take short breaks and have good sleep. Some books which I purchased for CLAT are A P Bharadwaj's Legal reasoning and A P Bharadwaj's static GK. Also practice 15-20 mocks on OMR printouts as well and try finishing your mocks in 115 minutes as this is the time you'll get in your actual examination. Best wishes to all of you.

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QUICK BOOSTERS



HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE REPORT ON ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

WHY IN NEWS?

- The High-Level Committee (HLC) on "One Nation, One Election," headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, submitted its report on the feasibility of conducting simultaneous polls to President Droupadi Murmu on March 14.

Key Recommendations

- The report recommended that elections to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies should be held at the same time.
- Subsequently, elections to local bodies (municipalities and panchayats) too should be "synchronised" so that they are held within 100 days of the simultaneous state and national elections.
- To give effect to its recommendation, the committee has suggested 15 amendments to the Constitution of India — in the form of both new provisions and changes to existing provisions — to be carried out through two Constitution Amendment Bills.

The First Bill

- The First Bill will deal with the transition to a simultaneous election system, and the procedure for fresh elections to Lok Sabha or a state Assembly before the expiration of their stipulated five-year term.
 - According to the Kovind committee, this Bill can be passed by Parliament without the requirement for consultation with state governments or ratification by state Assemblies.
- The first Bill would begin by inserting a new article— 82A —into the Constitution.
 - Article 82A will establish the process by which the country will move to a system of simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.
- The proposed Bill also recommends amending Article 327, which gives Parliament the power to make laws relating to elections to Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and state legislatures, including the preparation of electoral rolls and delimitation of constituencies.
 - The Kovind committee has recommended that the power of Parliament under Article 327 should be expanded to include "conduct of simultaneous elections" as well.
- Lok Sabha and state Assemblies are constituted for a period of five years after each election.
- The committee has recommended that this five-year period be referred to as "the full term" by amending Article 83 ("Duration of Houses of Parliament") and Article 172 ("Duration of the State Legislatures").
 - If the Lok Sabha or a state Assembly is dissolved before the expiry of the full term, the remaining period will be referred to as the "unexpired term".
- The committee recommended Articles 83(4) and 172(4) state that the Lok Sabha or state Assembly that replaces the previous one will serve only for the remaining "unexpired term" before being dissolved again once simultaneous elections are conducted as scheduled.
- The report has also recommended the amendment of certain laws relating to legislative Assemblies in Union Territories such as The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, The Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.
 - These laws would have to be amended to ensure that Assembly elections in UTs also take place simultaneously with Lok Sabha and state Assembly elections.

The Second Bill

- The second Bill will deal with municipal and panchayat elections, as well as the creation of a Single Electoral Roll by the Election Commission of India (ECI), with details of every voter and the seat for which they are eligible to vote.
- The Kovind committee has acknowledged that this Bill deals with subjects on which states have the primary power to enact laws — and it would, therefore, require the approval or ratification of more than half of India's states before it can be enacted.





Under Article 368(2), any constitutional amendment that deals with subjects in the State List (where states have the power to enact laws) would have to be ratified by at least half of the state legislatures in the country before it can be passed.

- The committee has suggested the inclusion of a new Article 324A in the Constitution.
 - This new article would empower Parliament to make laws to ensure that municipality and panchayat elections are held simultaneously with the General Elections (to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies).
- The Kovind committee has also recommended that new sub-clauses should be added to Article 325 of the Constitution.
 - This article says: “There shall be one general electoral roll for every territorial constituency for election to either House of Parliament or to the House or either House of the Legislature of a State...”
- The new Article 325(2) proposed by the committee will create a “Single Electoral Roll for every territorial constituency for election in the House of the People, Legislature of a State or to a Municipality or a Panchayat”.
 - This electoral roll shall be made by the Election Commission in consultation with the State Election Commissions.

Idea of simultaneous Elections

- The idea of simultaneous polls aims to synchronise the timing of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections across all States to reduce the frequency of polls throughout the country.
- During the first four general election cycles of 1952, 1957, 1962 and 1967, the elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies were held simultaneously.
- This practice was first dissolved in 1959 after the Union government invoked Article 356 (failure of constitutional machinery) of the Constitution to dismiss the then-Kerala government.
- Subsequently, due to the premature dissolution of the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies on various occasions owing to defections and counter-defections between parties, the elections to the Lok Sabha and various state Assemblies came to be conducted at different times.
- At present, only four states hold simultaneous elections with the Lok Sabha — Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim.

Reviving an old debate

Centre has said a committee has been formed to explore the possibility of simultaneous polls for LS and state assemblies

PANEL FORMED

While the panel is likely going to be headed by former **PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND**, its composition and the terms of its functioning will be announced soon

WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE IDEA

<p>NITI AAYOG A 2016 paper, co-authored by Bibek Debroy and Kishore Desai, noted....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate elections lead to massive recurring expenditures as well as prolonged deployment of forces • It suggested holding elections in two cycles with an interregnum of 30 months • It pegged cost of simultaneous polls at ₹4,500 crore, while the cost of 2014 Lok Sabha polls alone was ₹3,870 crore 	<p>STANDING COMMITTEE In 2015, the House panel on personnel, public grievances, law and justice said...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections could be held in two phases • Polls to some assemblies can be held in Lok Sabha midterm and remaining assemblies could be held at the end of Lok Sabha term 	<p>LAW COMMISSION In 1999, the Law Commission in its 170th report on Reform of Electoral Laws said...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding simultaneous polls would be ideal, but a workable formula is required to be in the Constitution • The holding of a separate election to assemblies should be an exception and not the rule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another law panel report, in 2018, said simultaneous polls don't alter balance of power between Union and the states
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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2023-24

WHY IN NEWS?

- The 2023-24 Human Development Report (HDR), titled 'Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarised World' has been released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Key Highlights

- The 2023-24 Human Development Report identified Switzerland, Norway and Iceland as leading the national human development indices, while the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and Somalia lagged the furthest behind.
- The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (more commonly known as North Korea) and Monaco were not ranked in the list of countries and economies.
- According to the 2023-24 Human Development Report, the HDI stands at a new high following a steep decline during 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Rich countries experienced unprecedented development, yet half of the world's poorest nations continue to languish below their pre-COVID crisis levels.
- The UNDP report also identified an emerging "democracy paradox", with most of those surveyed expressing support for democracy but also endorsing leaders who may undermine democratic principles.
 - This paradox, coupled with a sense of powerlessness and a lack of control over government decisions, has fuelled political polarization and inward-looking policy approaches.
- Global inequalities have been compounded by substantial economic concentration – almost 40% of global trade in goods is concentrated in three or fewer countries.
 - In 2021, the market capitalisation of each of the three largest tech companies in the world surpassed the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of more than 90% of countries that year, the report said.

India's Performance

- After a drop in its Human Development Index (HDI) value in 2021 and following a flat trend over the past few years, India's HDI value has increased to 0.644 in 2022, placing the country 134 out of 193 countries.
 - This categorises India under 'medium human development.'
- In 2022, India saw improvements across all HDI indicators – life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.
- Life expectancy rose from 67.2 to 67.7 years, expected years of schooling reached 12.6, mean years of schooling increased to 6.57, and GNI per capita saw an increase from \$6,542 to \$6,951.
- India's strides in reducing gender inequality, highlighted a Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 0.437, surpassing the global average.
 - On the GII 2022 list, which evaluates countries based on reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation, India ranks 108 out of 166 nations in 2022.

- India's southern neighbour Sri Lanka has been ranked much ahead at 78, while China is ranked 75, both categorised under the High Human Development category.
- India also ranks below Bhutan that stands at 125 and Bangladesh, which is in the 129th position.
- India, Bhutan and Bangladesh are all in the Medium Human Development category.
- Nepal (146) and Pakistan (164) have been ranked lower than India.

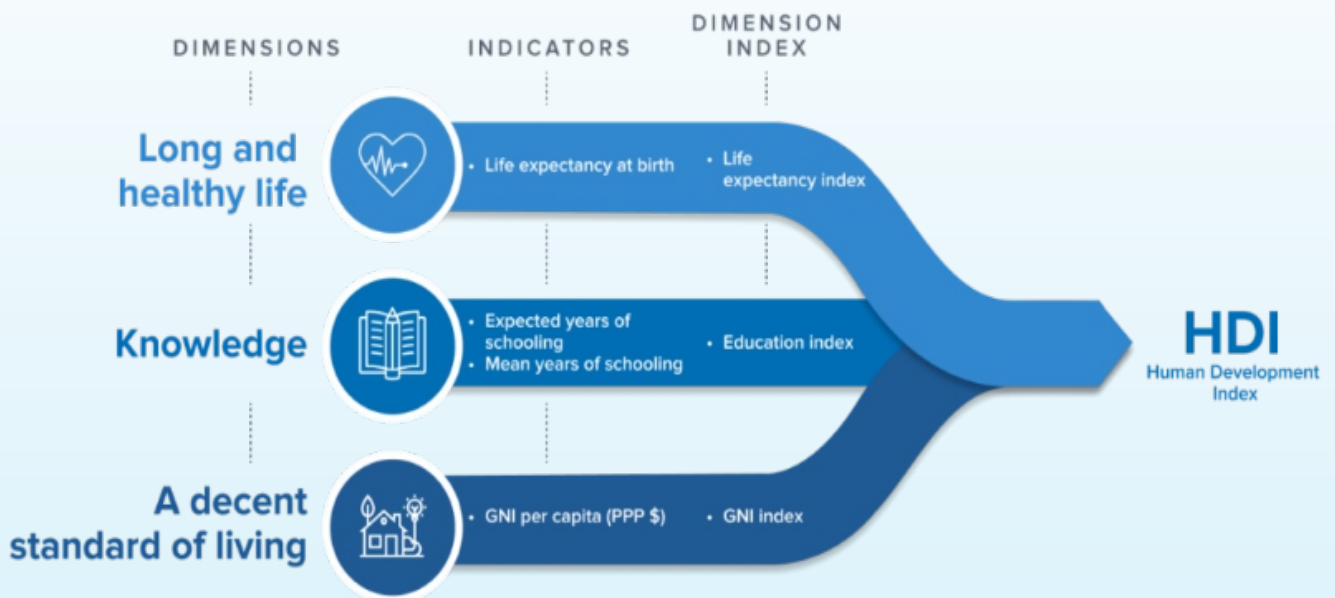
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About the Human Development Index (HDI)

- HDI is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development- a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living.
- It also measures average achievement in human development taking into account three indicators - life expectancy at birth (SDG 3), expected years of schooling (SDG 4.3) & mean years of schooling (SDG 4.4) and Gross National Income (SDG 8.5).





INDIA-EFTA TRADE AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (TEPA)

WHY IN NEWS?

- India on March 10 signed a trade agreement with the four-nation European Free Trade Association (EFTA), an intergovernmental grouping of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
 - As its name suggests, the thrust of the FTA is deeper economic engagement with the EFTA countries.
 - It heralds the westward tilt of India's FTAs, being the first with any European country and the Western world.

Key Features

- **Investment:** TEPA sets out a target of a \$100 billion investment into India from EFTA countries, and consequent one million jobs over a 15-year period.
 - The agreement reveals that for the promised investments and jobs to materialise, two conditions need to be met: India growing at a fast rate of 9.5%, and the return on EFTA investments in India exceeding 16% annually over the 15-year timeline.
 - If not, both sides may lower their level of ambitions. If India is not satisfied, it can pull back its tariff concessions in a proportionate manner after 18 years.
- **Trade in goods:** The chief gain here is for EFTA's market, which can have more access to India due to tariff concessions. India is mandated to eliminate tariffs on most products within seven to 10 years.
 - With regard to India's exports to EFTA, there will be no material impact since most products face very low or zero tariffs for nations which have the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status in EFTA countries.
- **Trade in services:** On services, both India and the EFTA members have committed to liberalisation across a wide range of sectors.
 - In a departure from previous FTAs of India, benefits of the trade in services chapter would extend to any juridical person (i.e., corporate entity) by merely being incorporated in an EFTA member, while having its actual operations in any other WTO member, including those with which India does not have FTAs.
- **Sustainable development:** The TEPA's chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD), comprising commitments on the environment and labour aspects, represents a first for India in any FTA.
 - The TSD chapter refers to a range of multilateral environmental agreements and labour conventions, whose implementation is based on a balance of rights and obligations.
 - For example, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement recognise differential obligations for developed and developing countries.
- **Intellectual property rights:** The EFTA countries are home to several pharmaceutical and high technology MNCs, whose ask has been commitments on protection of intellectual property rights that exceed the WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.
- **Data exclusivity:** India earlier rejected the four nations' demand for the pact to include provisions on "data exclusivity" that would make it difficult for its drug companies to produce generic variants of the off-patent drugs.



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What is the EFTA?

- EFTA is an intergovernmental organization of four member countries that are not part of the European Union (EU): Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.
- EFTA was established in 1960 by seven countries: Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.
 - Iceland and Liechtenstein joined EFTA in 1970 and 1991, respectively.
 - Denmark, the UK, Portugal, Austria and Sweden then left EFTA to join the EU between 1973 and 1995.
- With a population of 13 million and a combined GDP of more than \$1 trillion, the EFTA nations are the world's ninth-largest merchandise trader and its fifth-largest in commercial services.
- The four countries in EFTA have developed one of the world's largest networks of free trade agreements. These cover more than 60 countries and territories, including the EU.
 - Thirty of EFTA's free trade agreements are with 41 countries and territories outside the EU, including Egypt, Jordan, Canada, Chile, India, Singapore and Ukraine.
- India is the EFTA's fifth-largest trading partner after the European Union, the United States, Britain and China, with total two-way trade touching \$25 billion in 2023.
- Its exports to the EFTA touched \$2.8 billion and imports were about \$22 billion during that period.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Free trade is an agreement to reduce barriers to trade, like tariffs and quotas.
 - Tariffs are taxes on imports or exports.
 - Quotas are physical limits on the volume of goods that can be imported into a country.
- India hopes the pact will improve trade ties with Switzerland, the biggest partner in the EFTA.
 - India is its fourth-largest trading partner in Asia and the largest in South Asia.
- India runs a trade deficit with most of its top trade partners, except for the US.
- TEPA is the 4th major deal signed by India to promote trade and economic cooperation in the last 3 years. The others are with Australia, Mauritius and the UAE.
- In 2019, India also walked out of the RCEP- 15 nation Asian and Australian FTA . While India has refused to reconsider, neighbours like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have applied to join RCEP.

India's trade with EFTA

(in million dollars)

EFTA countries	Exports	Imports	Trade balance
Iceland	13	5	8
Liechtenstein	0	8	-8
Norway	484	782	-298
Switzerland	1,382	19,657	-18,275
TOTAL	1,879	20,452	-18,574

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PANDAVULA GUTTA - GEO-HERITAGE SITE IN TELANGANA

WHY IN NEWS?

- Pandavula Gutta, a geological marvel older than the Himalayan hills, has been officially recognised as the sole Geo-heritage site in Telangana by the central government.

Key Features

- Pandavula Gutta, a geological marvel in the Deccan plateau older than the Himalayas, is situated in the Jayashankar Bhupalpally district of Telangana.
- An ancient hill range known for rock paintings by early man, Pandavula Gutta is so named because it is believed that the Pandavas, the protagonists in the Mahabharata, lived here for a while during their vanavaas (exile).
- It is observed that these caves date back to the Mesolithic era (middle stone age) and are about 4,000-2,500 million years old.
- The caves are adorned with figures of humans, animals and other symbols on walls and ceilings of caves, rock shelters and isolated boulders.
- The rock art paintings depict wildlife like bison, antelope, tiger and leopard, besides other forms like the swastika symbol, circles and squares, and weapons such as bows, arrows, swords and lances.
- The paintings also feature geometrical designs and impressions in green, red, yellow and white pigment colours.

- In a similar event, the Rajasthan government also designated Ramgarh Crater in the Baran district as a national geo-heritage site.
- The 3-km diameter Ramgarh Crater was formed 165 million years ago due to a meteor impact.
- It is declared as the Ramgarh Conservation Reserve under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the presence of the Pushkar Talab complex within the crater, is recognised as wetlands under Wetland (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2017.
 - Pushkar Talab complex located inside the crater is a source of both saline and alkaline water.
- The crater forms a circular depression surrounded by hills and forests, and the crater's lake adds to the landscape's beauty and diversity, supporting a variety of flora and fauna, including rare and endangered species, states the notification, a copy of which is with TOI.
- Ramgarh Crater exhibits an important interchange of human values within a cultural area, reflected in developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning, or landscape design.
 - Bhand Deva Temple, influenced by the Chandela dynasty and their temples at Khajuraho, is an example of such interchange.

What is the Geological Survey of India (GSI)?

- The GSI, established in 1851, is an attached office to the Ministry of Mines.
- With its headquarters in Kolkata, GSI has six Regional offices at Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Shillong and Kolkata and offices in almost all States of the country.
- GSI was established to investigate and assess coal and other mineral resources of the country through regional-level exploration.
- There are 34 Geological Heritage Sites in India spreading across 13 states including the Volcanogenic bedded Barytes of Mangampeta in the Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh, the Akal Fossil Wood Park in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan and others.
- The latest inclusions in the list are - Siwalik Fossil Park, Himachal Pradesh and Stromatolite bearing Dolomite / Limestone of Buxa Formation of Buxa Formation, Sikkim.

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INDIA PROPOSED THE G4 MODEL FOR UNSC REFORM

WHY IN NEWS?

- India presented a detailed model on behalf of the G4 nations for Security Council reform that includes new permanent members elected democratically by the General Assembly and displays flexibility on the veto issue.
- G4 nations are - Brazil, Germany, Japan and India

Key Highlights

- Catering to the new realities, the G4 model proposes that the Security Council's membership increase from the current 15 to 25-26, by adding six permanent and four or five non-permanent members.
 - Among the six new permanent members, two each are proposed to be from African states and Asia Pacific states, one from Latin American and Caribbean states; and one from Western European and Other states.
- The G4 model offered flexibility on the veto, an issue that has been a contentious topic among member states as they try to move the needle forward on the reform process that has moved at a snail's pace over the years.
- New permanent members would refrain from exercising the veto until a decision on the matter is taken during a review process, demonstrating a willingness to engage in constructive negotiations.
- The proposal emphasizes that the G4 model "does not specify" which member states will occupy the new permanent seats. This decision will be made by the General Assembly in a democratic and inclusive election.
- The G4 model also suggested that "we should not allow the veto issue to have a "veto" over the process of Council reform itself. Our proposal is also a gesture of displaying flexibility on the issue for a constructive negotiation."

What is the United Nations Security Council?

- The Security Council is one of the six main organs of the United Nations established under the UN Charter in 1945.
 - Its primary responsibility is maintaining international peace and security.
 - The other 5 organs of the United Nations are—the General Assembly (UNGA), the Trusteeship Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat.
- The Council has 15 members, it includes 5 permanent members (P5) and 10 non-permanent members.
 - The permanent members are the United States, the Russian Federation, France, China, and the United Kingdom.
 - 10 non-permanent members, five of which are elected each year by the General Assembly for a two-year term.
 - Each Member has one vote. Under the Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The G4 was created in 2004 and has been promoting Security Council reform.
- According to Oppenheim's International Law: United Nations, "Permanent membership in the Security Council was granted to five states based on their importance in the aftermath of World War II."
- India's participation in the Security Council has been as a non-permanent member during the periods of 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12, and 2021-22.
- In 2022, India declared its candidature as a non-permanent member of the UNSC for the 2028-29 term.
- United Nations Day is celebrated every year on October 24.





INDIA JOINS RACE TO MINE NEW SEA PATCH

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, India applied to the International Seabed Authority (ISBA), Jamaica, for rights to explore two vast tracts in the Indian Ocean seabed - the Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount) and Carlsberg Ridge in the Central Indian Ocean - that aren't part of its jurisdiction.

Along with the application for AN Seamount, India has also applied for permission to explore another region, spanning 3,00,000 square km, called the Carlsberg Ridge in the Central Indian Ocean to investigate for polymetallic sulphides, which are large smoking mounds near hydrothermal vents that are reportedly rich in copper, zinc, gold and silver.

Key Points

- The application to explore one of these regions, a cobalt-rich crust long known as the Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount), is a gambit by India.
- Rights to the region have already been claimed by Sri Lanka under a separate set of laws, but India's application is partly motivated by reports of vessels by China undertaking reconnaissance in the same region.
- For any actual extraction to happen, interested explorers — in this case, countries — must apply first for an exploration licence to the ISBA, an autonomous international organisation established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- These rights are specific to areas that are part of the open ocean, meaning the ocean — whose air, surface and sea-bed — where no countries can claim sovereignty.
- Around 60% of the world's seas are open ocean and though believed to be rich in a variety of mineral wealth, the costs and challenges of extraction are prohibitive.
- Currently, no country has commercially extracted resources from open oceans.

- The AN Seamount is a structural feature (400 km long and 150 km wide) in the Central Indian Basin, located about 3,000 km away from India's coast.
- From an oceanic depth of about 4,800 km, it rises to about 1,200 metres and — as surveys from about two decades establish — rich in deposits of cobalt, nickel, manganese and copper.

Exclusive Rights

- Countries have exclusive rights up to 200 nautical miles, and its underlying sea-bed from their borders.
- Some ocean-bound states may have a natural stretch of land, connecting their border and the edge of the deep ocean that extends beyond this 200, as part of their so-called continental shelf.
 - To claim so, however, a country must give a detailed scientific rationale, complete with underwater maps and surveys to show this unbroken land connected to a scientific commission appointed by the ISBA.
- If such a claim is approved, then such a country will have the primacy to explore and potentially exploit the living and non-living resources in the region.
- If a region isn't formally classified as being part of a country's continental shelf, then it is considered 'high sea' and open to any country to approach the ISBA and ask permission for exploration.
- With respect to the current application of the Indian government, the Commission noted that the area of the application (by India) lies entirely within an area submitted to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf by another state (Sri Lanka).

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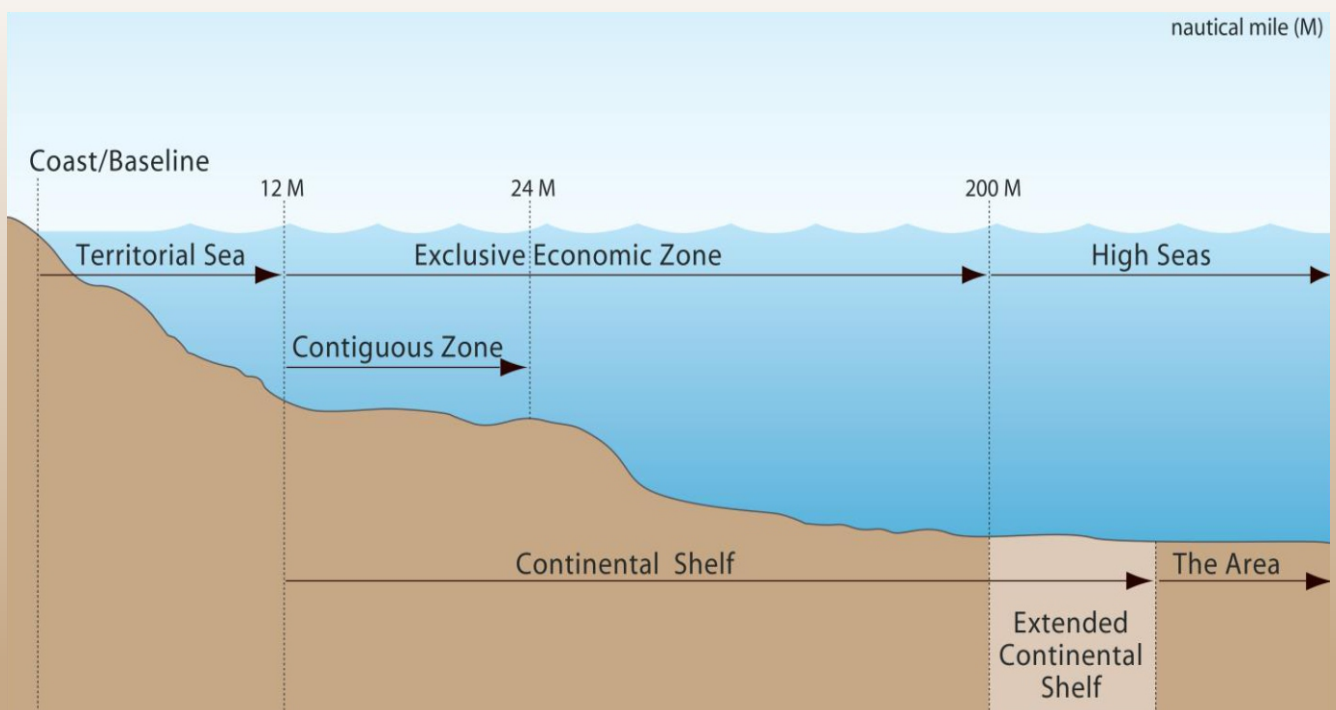


What is Deep Sea Mining?

- Deep-sea mining involves removing mineral deposits and metals from the ocean's seabed.
- There are three types of such mining: taking deposit-rich polymetallic nodules off the ocean floor, mining massive seafloor sulphide deposits and stripping cobalt crusts from rock.
- These nodules, deposits and crusts contain materials, such as nickel, rare earths, cobalt and more, that are needed for batteries and other materials used in tapping renewable energy and also for everyday technology like cellphones and computers.
- Countries manage their own maritime territory and exclusive economic zones, while the high seas and the international ocean floor are governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS).
 - UNCLOS, also known as the Law of the Sea, divides marine areas into five main zones namely- Internal Waters, Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the High Seas.

DID YOU KNOW?

- On June 19, 2023, the UN adopted the Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) or the High Seas Treaty.
- It became the third agreement to be approved under UNCLOS, after the 1994 and 1995 treaties, which established the International Seabed Authority and the Fish Stocks Agreement.
- In 1982, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), was adopted, which delineated rules to govern the oceans and the use of its resources.
- India has been studying the seabed and carrying out test mining for about two decades through institutes like National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT).



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SIPRI REPORT 2023

WHY IN NEWS?

- The latest data on international arms transfers has been released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) for the period from 2019 to 2023.

Key Global Trends

- The volume of international transfers of major arms in 2019–23 was 3.3 per cent lower than in 2014–18 and 3.3 per cent higher than in 2009–13.
- The five largest exporters were the United States, France, Russia, China and Germany.
- Arms exports by the USA went up by 17 per cent between 2014–18 and 2019–23, while those by Russia went down by 53 per cent.
- France's exports rose by 47 per cent and it moved just ahead of Russia to become the world's second-largest arms exporter.
- The five largest arms importers in 2019–23 were India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ukraine and Pakistan.
- Ukraine became the fourth biggest arms importer globally after it received transfers of major arms from over 30 states in 2022-23.
- States in Asia and Oceania accounted for 37 per cent of all arms imports in 2019–23, followed by states in the Middle East (30 per cent), Europe (21 per cent), the Americas (5.7 per cent) and Africa (4.3 per cent).
- Arms imports by states in Europe were 94 per cent higher in 2019–23 than in 2014–18. A total of 55 per cent of European arms imports came from the USA in 2019–23, compared with 35 per cent in 2014–18.
 - The largest importer in Europe was Ukraine, which received 23 per cent of the region's total arms imports in 2019–23.

India's Position

- India was the world's top arms importer for the period 2019-23 with imports having gone up by 4.7% compared to the period 2014-18.
 - Between 2019 and 2023, the country accounted for a significant 9.8% of the total global arms imports, reflecting a strategic vulnerability in its defence procurement.
- Russia has historically been India's primary weapons supplier, accounting for 36% of its arms imports.
 - However, this trend is shifting, with India increasingly diversifying its sources to include Western countries and domestic manufacturers.
 - Notably, SIPRI highlights that the period between 2019-23 marked the first five-year span since 1960-64 where Russian deliveries comprised less than half of India's arms imports.
- France and the United States are emerging as key suppliers to India, collectively accounting for 46% of its arms imports.
- India's position as the top arms importer is followed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ukraine, Pakistan, Japan, Egypt, Australia, South Korea, and China.

India's Defence Sector

- In the interim budget presented in February for financial year 2024-25, the total allocation for the Defence Ministry was at ₹6.2 lakh crore of which the capital allocation, for new procurements, was ₹1.72 lakh crore, 5.78% higher than the Budget Estimates of last year.
- India's defence exports reached an all-time high level of ₹21,083 crore in the financial year 2023-24 with a 32.5% growth in FY24 compared to the previous financial year.
- The government aims to nearly triple India's total annual defence production to Rs 3 lakh crore by 2028-29.
- The target for defence exports is more than double at Rs 50,000 crore as against Rs 21,083 crore at present.
- The target for 2024-25 is Rs 1,75,000 crore worth of total annual defence production, which would include exports worth ₹35,000 crore.
- India is building a gargantuan defence-industrial complex, which includes large corporates such as L&T, Godrej and Adani to PSUs, startups and research bodies, and manufactures from ballistic missiles such as BrahMos and fighter jets to artillery shells and night-vision devices.

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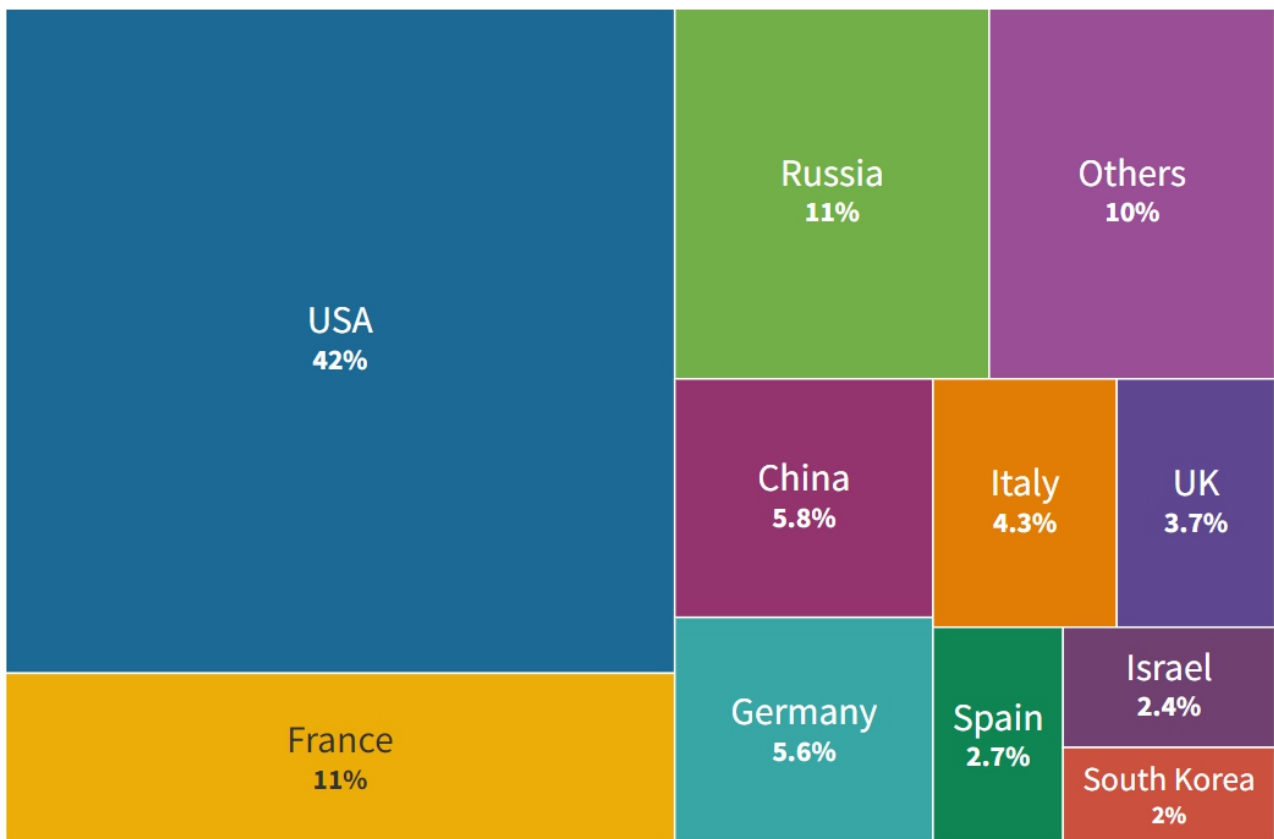




- The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 prescribed 50 per cent indigenous content (IC) in procurement contracts.
- To encourage foreign original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to set up maintenance and manufacturing facilities in India, a new procurement category — Buy (Global-Manufacture in India) — has been introduced. This will enable ab initio indigenisation of spare parts.
- The Union Ministry of Defence (MoD) has released several “Positive Indigenisation Lists” that mention items that must be procured only from domestic sources.
- Two defence industrial corridors have been established in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
- Recently, Adani Defence & Aerospace launched two facilities, South Asia's largest ammunition & missiles complex, dedicated to the production of ammunition and missiles in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.
- The INS Vikrant aircraft carrier, dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister in September 2022, is the largest warship built in India's maritime history.
- The Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau has launched Project 17A frigates. The INS Vindhyagiri, launched in August 2023, is the latest example of this.
- The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) initiative, launched in 2018, aims to involve industry, including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia.
- The iDEX Prime framework under iDEX was launched in 2022 to support start-ups with grants-in-aid up to Rs 10 crore to enable the development of high-end solutions.
- In 2019, the SIPRI placed India among the top 25 arms exporters (at 23rd position) for the first time. India has set a defence exports target of Rs 35,000 crore by 2025.

Share in global arms exports (%)

2019-23 2014-18



Source: SIPRI

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LOK SABHA ELECTION 2024

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Election Commission announced the schedule for the Lok Sabha polls on March 16.

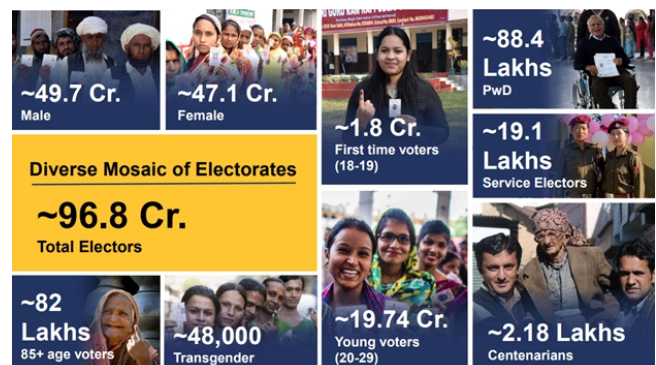
About General Election 2024

- India will go to the polls from April 19 to June 1, in a marathon seven-phase exercise to elect the 543 members of the 18th Lok Sabha.
 - The tenure of the 17th Lok Sabha is scheduled to end on June 16, 2024.
 - The dates of polling for the Lok Sabha are April 19, April 26, May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25, and June 1.
 - In Bihar, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh, voting will take place in all seven phases.
 - The counting of votes will take place on June 4.
- Assembly elections will be held simultaneously in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- With the election dates having been announced, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) comes into immediate effect and will be in force till the declaration of results.

- The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a set of guidelines published by the Election Commission of India (EC) for political parties and candidates to set standards of conduct during the election campaign and polling.
- It also explains how parties can lodge complaints to the EC observers in case of dispute and instructs how the Ministers of the parties in power must conduct themselves when the MCC is in force.
- In 2019, a new addition regarding election manifestos was added, instructing parties to not issue promises which were 'repugnant to the ideals of the Constitution'.
- The MCC is applicable to all elections to the Lok Sabha, and State Assemblies.
 - It is also applicable for State Legislative Council elections from Local Bodies, and Graduates' and Teachers' Constituencies.
 - It is enforced throughout India in case of General elections, and the State up for polls in case of Legislative Assembly elections.

Key Facts

- This parliamentary election (2024) will be the second-longest polling exercise in India's electoral history.
- The longest so far was the country's first general election, which was held over a five-month period between September 1951 and February 1952.
- India has a total of 96.8 crore registered voters, of which 49.72 crore are men and 47.1 crore are women.
 - There are 1.82 crore first-time electors, of which 85 lakh are women.
- The gender ratio among electors has improved significantly to 948 women for every 1,000 men, noting that there are more women than men voters in 12 States.
- This is the first time in a general election that people above the age of 85 years, as well as those with more than 40% disability, will be able to vote from their own homes.
 - There are 85 lakh registered voters who are aged above 85 years while the number of voters with disabilities is 88.4 lakh.
 - The electoral rolls also contain 21.18 lakh centenarians.
- The EC will require roughly 55 lakh Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines for conducting the upcoming election.
 - In 2019, the EC had requisitioned 23.3 lakh ballot units (where votes are cast), 16.35 control units (where tallies are stored), and 17.4 lakh VVPAT machines



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MeitY TWEAKS IT RULES

WHY IN NEWS?

- The government has amended Section 23 of the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009 to allow for the Home Secretary or other bureaucrats in the Centre to issue directions to destroy digital records of interception or decrypt information of a person under surveillance after six months.
- Until now, the power to delete was with the security agency which had requested the surveillance either from the home ministry or a competent court.

The Rule 23 of this law states that every record, including electronic records pertaining to directions for interception or monitoring or decryption of information and of intercepted or monitored or decrypted information shall be destroyed by the security agency in every six months except in a case where such information is required, or likely to be required for functional requirements.

Key Highlights

- The government has amended the IT Rules to substitute the word “security agency” with the words “competent authority and the security agency”, granting the Centre broader powers to issue directives for the destruction of digital evidence.
- The home secretary, both at the state and the central level is the competent authority who can now ask for such surveillance orders and its records to be deleted.
 - The first amendment to the rules gives more clarification as the Home Ministry, both at the central and the state level, is the nodal agency to execute orders to intercept, monitor and decrypt information.
- The IT ministry has also amended the rules to declare computer resources related to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and their associated dependencies as critical information infrastructure.
 - The other amendment is to classify computer resources related to NIA as critical information infrastructure.
 - This ensures that if a person tries to attack or steal information from these resources, they can face stricter than usual action.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In 2018, the Ministry of Home Affairs authorised 10 agencies, including the Enforcement Directorate and the Intelligence Bureau, to snoop into communications in a statutory order.
- In November 2023, Apple Inc. sent a notification to individuals, including opposition leaders and journalists, about “State-Sponsored Attackers who are remotely trying to compromise” their iPhones.
- This is the second time that Opposition politicians and civil society actors in India have been warned that they have been targets of spying attempts.
- In 2021, the Paris-based Forbidden Stories collective reported that the Pegasus spyware, which was sold only to government agencies by an Israeli firm NSO Group, was allegedly used on a range of journalists, civil society groups and politicians in India.
- In K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017), the Supreme Court declared that the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed in Article 21 also implicitly includes a right to privacy.
 - The right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution.
 - The Puttaswamy judgement holds that the right to privacy is protected as a fundamental constitutional right under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India.

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100 YEARS OF VAIKOM SATYAGRAHA

WHY IN NEWS?

- Vaikom, a temple town in the princely state of Travancore, saw the start of a non-violent agitation on March 30, 1924 — the first among temple entry movements that would soon sweep across the country.

What was Vaikom Satyagraha?

- Precisely a century ago, Kerala's Vaikom town which was then in the princely state of Travancore became the epicentre of a historic non-violent movement against untouchability and caste discrimination.
- Back then, the people of the oppressed classes especially the Ezhavas, were prohibited from walking on the four roads surrounding the Vaikom Mahadeva temple.
- The princely state of Travancore had a feudal, militaristic, and ruthless system of custom-ridden government.
- T.K. Madhavan, who himself was an Ezhava, K.P. Kesava Menon who was the then secretary of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee and Congress leader and educationist K. Kelappan (also known as Kerala Gandhi) are considered the pioneers of the Vaikom Satyagraha movement.
 - In 1923, Madhavan presented the issue as a resolution at the Kakinada meeting of the All India Congress Committee.
 - Subsequently, it was taken up by the Congress Untouchability Committee formed by the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee in January 1924.
- On March 30, 1924, the Satyagrahis walked in procession towards the forbidden public roads.
 - They were stopped 50 yards away from the place where a board (first put up in 1905) cautioning the oppressed communities against walking on the roads, was placed.
 - Dressed in khadi and wearing khadi caps, three young men namely Govinda Panikkar, a Nair, Bahuleyan, an Ezhava and Kunjappu, a Pulaya, marched ahead, defying the prohibitory orders.
 - The police who asked about their castes, stopped them when they answered. In protest, the three men sat on the road and were arrested.
 - Then on, every day, three volunteers from three different communities were sent to walk on the prohibited roads. Within a week, the leaders of the movement were all arrested.
- Vaikom Satyagraha which lasted for 604 days (20 months) from March 30, 1924 to November 23, 1925 marked the dawn of temple entry movements across India.
- The Satyagraha attracted national attention and many prominent leaders came to participate in the protest, including Periyar, who came to Vaikom at the request of barrister George Joseph, who had already been jailed for leading the movement.
- The movement gained more power when Mahatma Gandhi reached Vaikom on March 1925 and held discussions with leaders of various caste groups.
- On November 23, 1925, three roads (leading to the Western, Southern and Northern entrances) excluding the one leading to the Eastern entrance of Vaikom temple were thrown open to all castes, after the prohibitory orders were withdrawn.
 - The fourth road reserved only for Brahmins remained out of bounds for Muslims and Christians too.
- A week later, the Vaikom Satyagraha was officially withdrawn on November 30, 1925, after consultations between Gandhi and W.H. Pitt, the then-police commissioner of Travancore.
 - A compromise was reached following the release of all prisoners and grant of access to three of the four roads.
- In November 1936, almost a decade after the conclusion of the Satyagraha, the historic Temple Entry Proclamation was signed by the Maharaja of Travancore which removed the age-old ban on the entry of marginalised castes into the temples of Travancore.
- The Kerala government, in July 2014, announced the establishment of the Vaikom Satyagraha Memorial Museum and Mahatma Gandhi statue at Vaikom.

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KATCHATHEEVU AND WADGE BANK

WHY IN NEWS?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 31 came down heavily on the Congress over the ceding of Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka in 1974 by the then Indira Gandhi government.

What is Katchatheevu Island?

- Katchatheevu island is a 285-acre uninhabited speck in the Palk Strait northeast of Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu, 33 km from the Indian coast, but within the maritime boundaries of Sri Lanka.
- The tiny, barren island which, according to some official reports, was created following a 14th-century volcanic eruption, is 1.6 km in length and just 300 metres wide at its widest point.
- The island was under the control of the kingdom of the Ramanad Raja, a zamindari from 1795 to 1803 in Ramanathapuram in the Madras Presidency during British rule.
- The 120-year-old St Anthony's Church on the island attracts devotees from India and Sri Lanka for an annual festival.

Agreement in 1974

- India and Sri Lanka had been claiming Katchatheevu since at least 1921 after a survey placed the island within Sri Lanka's boundaries.
- In 1974, when Indira was Prime Minister, the two governments signed — on June 26 in Colombo and June 28 in New Delhi.
 - The island was ceded to Sri Lanka, but Indian fishermen were given “access to Katchatheevu for rest, for drying of nets and for the annual St Anthony's festival”.
 - The agreement did not specify fishing rights, and Sri Lanka interpreted it as the right of Indians to access the island “for rest, drying nets and for visit to the Catholic shrine without visa”.
- About 4,000 devotees from Rameswaram visit the 110-year-old St Anthony's Church on the island every year on average.

Agreement in 1976

- After the Emergency was imposed in 1975 and the Tamil Nadu government was dismissed in 1976, a series of letters were exchanged between the foreign secretaries of India and Sri Lanka.
 - Both Parliament and the state Assembly were non-functional and, without consulting either, another agreement was drafted.
- The negotiations and the orders essentially settled the maritime boundary between India and Sri Lanka by giving sovereign rights over a maritime patch called 'Wadge Bank' near Kanyakumari to India.
 - The Wadge Bank lies to the south of Kanyakumari and has been identified by the Fishery Survey of India as a 4,000-sq-mile area.
- It is one of the world's richest fishing grounds, and in a much more strategic part of the sea than the island of Katchatheevu.
- This area near Kanyakumari has been significant for fishermen from Tamil Nadu and Kerala for more than four decades.
- As per the agreement, the Wadge Ban lies within the exclusive economic zone of India, and India shall have sovereign rights over the area and its resources.
- While the 1974 agreement was to settle the maritime boundary in Palk Bay, the 1976 pact was to determine the boundary in the Gulf of Mannar and the Bay of Bengal.



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THE KERALA-CENTRE DISPUTE OVER STATES' BORROWING POWERS

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Supreme Court recently declined any interim relief to Kerala in its suit seeking that the Union government relax its borrowing restrictions to enable the State to borrow additional funds during the current fiscal year.
- It also refused to stay the operation of two letters issued by the Union Finance Ministry last year and certain amendments made to the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003, in 2018 that imposed borrowing cap restrictions on States.
- A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K.V. Viswanathan also referred to a Constitution Bench the larger questions of law raised in the suit, such as whether Kerala had an “enforceable right” under Article 293 of the Constitution to raise its borrowing limits from the Union government and other sources.

Background

- The Kerala government approached the Supreme Court in December 2023 arguing that the imposition and reduction of Kerala's Net Borrowing Ceiling is unconstitutional as “Public Debt of the State” is a subject included in the state list and the central government cannot limit the states' borrowing capacity.
- The state government also claimed that Rs 26,000 crore is required immediately in order to avert a financial crisis.

Why is Kerala dealing with a Financial Crunch?

- The 15th Finance Commission set the Net Borrowing Ceiling for states at 3% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for the 2023-24 financial year.
 - The NBC imposes a limitation on borrowings of a State from all sources including open market borrowings.
 - The Union government decided to deduct liabilities arising from the public account of the States to arrive at such a cap.
 - Additionally, borrowings by State-owned enterprises, where the principal and/or interest are serviced out of the Budget or through assignment of taxes, cess or any other State revenue, are also deducted from the NBC.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman clarified in December that this would come up to Rs 32,442 crore for Kerala in the 2023-24 financial year.
 - Kerala, meanwhile, claims that the Centre cut its borrowing limit in May and August of last year, whittling the states' borrowing limit down to Rs. 15,390 crore.
- The 15th Finance Commission, on its part, designated Kerala as a “highly debt stressed” state that often resorts to borrowing from the central government in order to pay for day-to-day expenses such as salaries and pensions.
 - The commission also noted that Kerala spent the second-highest percentage of its total revenue expenditure on salaries, which are continuing to grow.
- Kerala claims that the Centre is withholding its due share in taxes.
 - The Kerala government, relying on an RBI report on state finances, has claimed that for every Rs 100 in tax collected, the Centre, on average, provides Rs 35 to the states.
 - However, the Kerala government claims that it has only been receiving Rs 21 for every Rs 100 in taxes sent to the Centre.
- Further, the COVID-19 pandemic and the cessation of Goods and Services Tax (2017) compensation negatively impacted revenue collection in Kerala.
 - When GST was introduced in 2017, it was done with the assurance that the Centre would compensate states for the shortfall in revenue collection for the next five years and with the understanding that annual tax growth rates would increase by the end of this period.
 - However, the pandemic put an end to any notions of growth and the GST compensation period ended in June 2022.
- Kerala has also opposed the inclusion of the debt of State-owned enterprises as its own debt.
 - Due to the inclusion of the debt of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) in the NBC, the State has claimed that it is unable to pay salaries and meet expenses for welfare schemes.





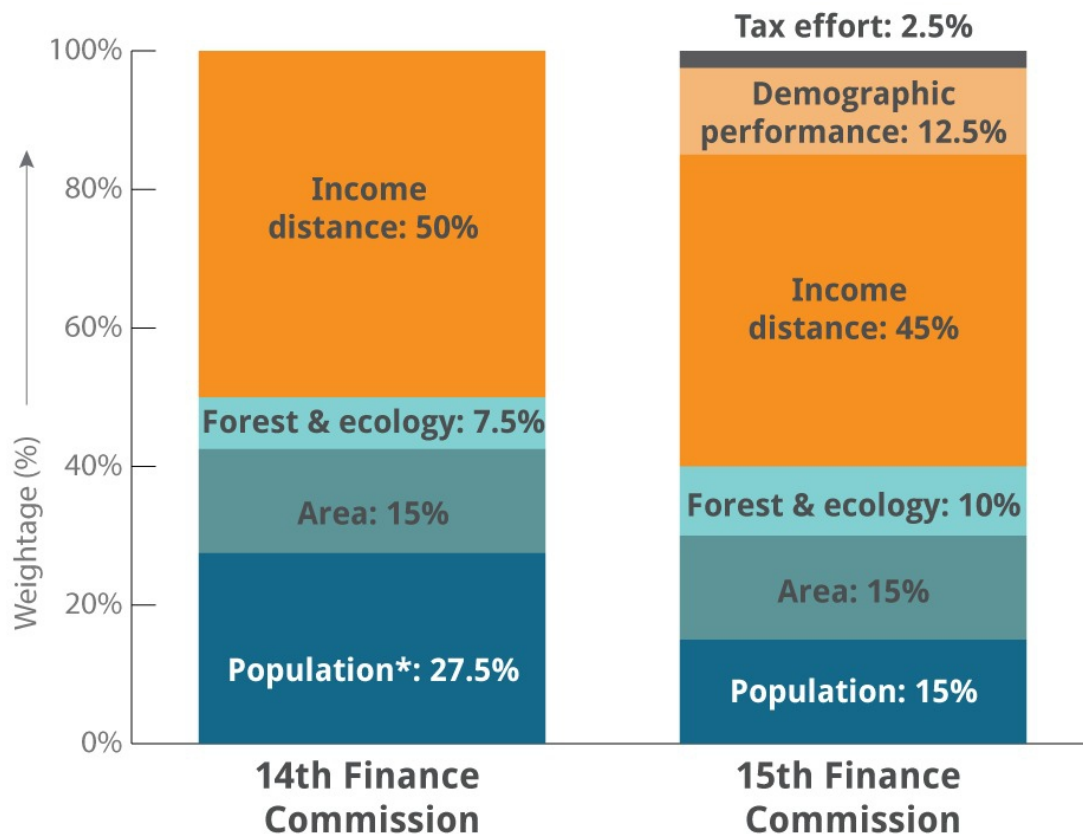
Fiscal Autonomy

- Article 293 of the Constitution permits States to borrow only from within the territory of India on a guarantee from the consolidated fund of the State and within such limits as outlined by the legislatures of each State.
- The subject "Public Debt of the State" finds mention in Entry 43 of the State List of the Constitution and thus the Parliament cannot legislate or administer upon such matters.
- If a State wishes to borrow from the Centre, then such a transaction will be regulated by the FRBM Act, 2023.
- Pertinently, under Article 293(3), the State has to obtain the consent of the Centre to raise "any loan," if "any part of the previous loan" extended by the Centre is outstanding.
 - The NBC has been imposed by invoking the powers of the Centre under this provision.

The Centre's Stand

- The Centre asserted that the the setting of borrowing limits was done based on the recommendations of the Finance Commissions, and applied to all States equally.
- It further added that the Finance Commissions make their recommendations keeping in mind the spirit of the FRBM Acts passed by the Centre and all of the States.
 - One of the stated objectives of the Acts is to achieve a fiscal deficit target not exceeding 3% of the GDSP of a State.
- Each State has its own version of the FRBM Act along the lines of the central legislation and is used to regulate its fiscal deficit.

Revenue-sharing formulas in the 14th and 15th Finance Commissions



*17.5% weightage according to 1971 population and 10% by 2011 population
Source: Finance Commission reports

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WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2024

WHY IN NEWS?

- The World Happiness Report (WHR) 2024 was released on March 20 to mark the UN's International Day of Happiness by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).

Key Global Observation

- Finland emerged as the happiest country in the world, with an average score of 7.7, topping the report, the seventh successive year that the country has occupied the top spot on the list.
- Other top 10 countries are Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Australia.
- Out of the 143 countries, Afghanistan and Lebanon held the bottom two spots, with scores of 1.7 and 2.7 respectively.
- The United States and Germany, after more than a decade, have fallen below the top 20 happiest nations, securing the 23rd and 24th positions respectively.
- Conversely, Costa Rica and Kuwait have entered the top 20, claiming the 12th and 13th spots.
- The report underscores a change wherein the happiest countries no longer include any of the world's most populous nations.
- Only the Netherlands and Australia, both with populations exceeding 15 million, are present in the top 10, while Canada and the UK, with populations over 30 million, are found in the top 20.
- For the first time, the report gives separate rankings by age group, in many cases varying widely from the overall rankings.
- While ranking happiness in young people (aged 30 and below), Lithuania, Israel, Serbia, Iceland and Denmark ranked in the top five slots, with Finland being relegated to the seventh rank. India ranked at 127th spot in this.
- However, when it came to ranking happiness in old people (aged 60 and above), Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland — all Nordic nations — ranked the highest, with India occupying the 121st spot.

India's Position

- India ranked 126th while China ranked 60th, Nepal at 93, Pakistan at 108, Myanmar at 118, Sri Lanka at 128 and Bangladesh at 129th spots.
- The top 10 happiest countries in Asia are – Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, China and Mongolia.
- Factors such as marital status, social engagement, and physical health also influence life satisfaction among older Indians.
- The report said that older age is associated with higher life satisfaction in India, “refuting some claims that the positive association between age and life satisfaction only exists in high-income nations”.
- On average, older men in India are more satisfied with life than older women but when taking all other measures into account, older women report higher life satisfaction than their male counterparts.
- In India, older adults with secondary or higher education and those of dominant social castes report higher life satisfaction than counterparts without formal education and those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- India's older population ranks second globally, with 140 million individuals aged 60 and above, trailing only China.
- The growth rate of this demographic surpasses three times the country's overall population growth rate.
- While this demographic shift signifies social and economic advancement, comprehending the factors that impact the quality of life in old age remains essential.

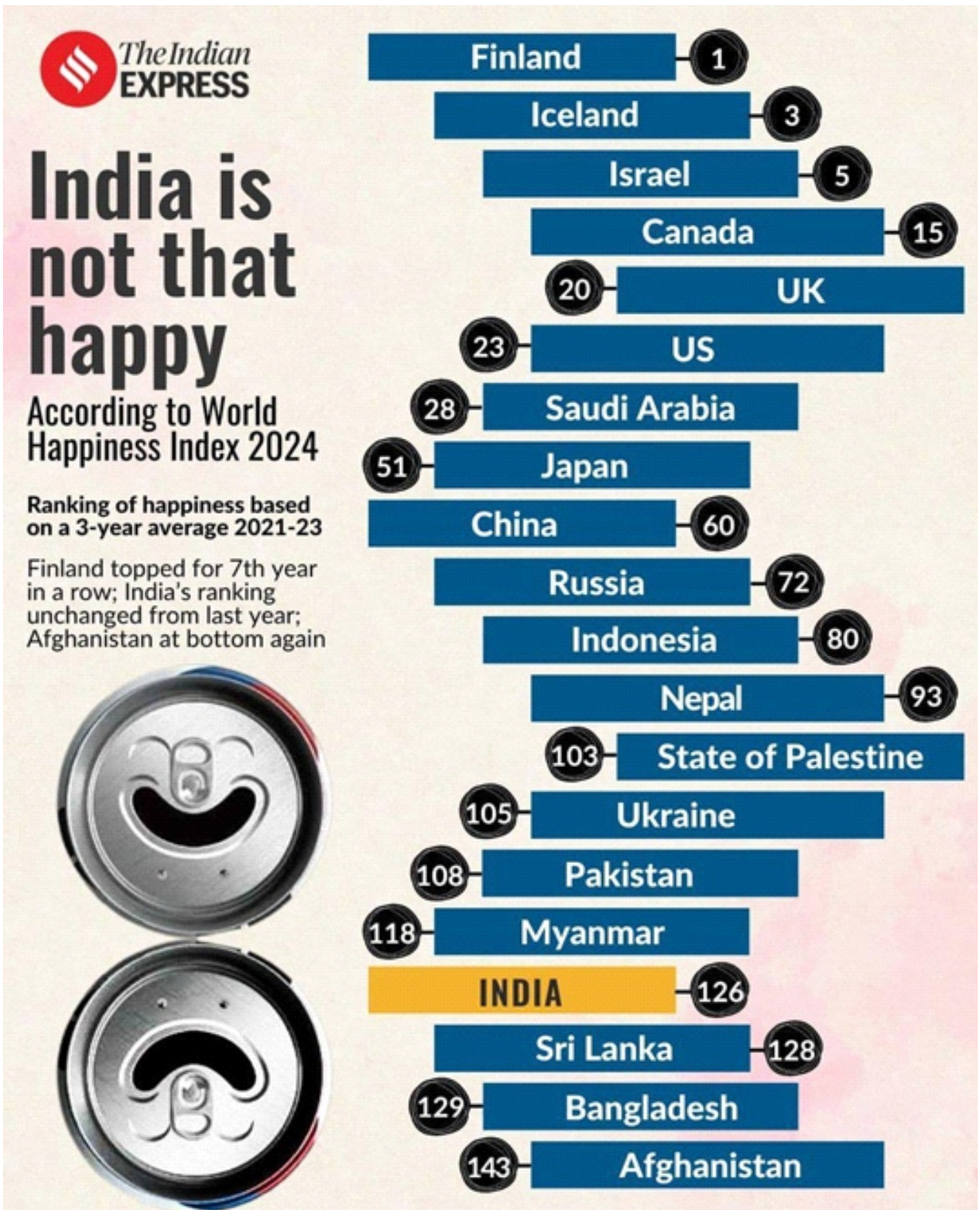
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About WHR

- The World Happiness Report is published annually by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- It takes into account six variables — GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, having someone to count on, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and freedom from corruption.



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CENTRE'S FACT CHECK UNIT UNDER PIB

WHY IN NEWS?

- A day after the Centre notified a Fact Checking Unit (FCU) under the Press Information Bureau (PIB) to identify fake news about the government, the Supreme Court stayed the operation of the notification until the Bombay High Court takes a final decision on petitions challenging the 2023 amendments to the Information Technology Rules.

What is the Fact Checking Unit?

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology designated the FCU as a statutory body under the PIB as per the amendment made to Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 in 2023.
- The FCU was established with the stated objective of acting as a deterrent to creators and disseminators of fake news and misinformation on social media platforms.
- The FCU actively monitors, detects, and counters disinformation campaigns, ensuring that false information about the Government is promptly exposed and corrected.
- Under the new Rules, if the FCU comes across or is informed about any post that is “fake”, “false” or contains “misleading” facts pertaining to the business of the government, it would flag it to the social media intermediaries.
- The online intermediaries would then have to take down such content if they wanted to retain their “safe harbour” (legal immunity against third-party content).
 - According to the safe harbour principle protections in Section 79 of the IT Act, an online platform such as Facebook or Twitter cannot be held accountable for the content posted on them by users.
- Additionally, these platforms must make reasonable attempts to avoid hosting content related to the Central Government that has been flagged as false or misleading by a fact-checking unit.

Concerns

- Without a right to appeal or the allowance for judicial oversight, the government cannot sit on judgment on whether any information is “fake” or “false” as the power to do so can be misused to prevent questioning or scrutiny by media organisations.
- By threatening to remove a platform's immunity for content that is flagged by a government unit, it is clear that the Union government intends to create a “chilling effect” on the right to speech and expression on online platforms.
- In India, freedom of the press is guaranteed through Article 19 of the Constitution, with media rights and public right to free speech derived from this Article.

Apex Court Orders Stay

MeitY on Wednesday notified setting up the FCU to act as a “deterrent” against creation & dissemination of false information regarding the govt

Telcos were effectively required to take down any misinformation, while social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube and X, needed to demonstrate compliance



Apex court said implementation of notification would be stayed until a third judge of Bombay HC took a final call on validity of the provisions of the relevant rule of IT Rules, 2021 (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code)



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THE STORY OF USHA MEHTA AND CONGRESS RADIO

WHY IN NEWS?

- Amazon Prime released Ae Watan Mere Watan on March 21.
- The historical biography tells the story of Usha Mehta and Congress Radio — an underground radio station in 1942, during the Quit India Movement.

Who was Usha Mehta?

- Usha Mehta was born on March 25, 1920, in Saras, Gujarat to Gheliben Mehta, a homemaker and Hariprasad Mehta, a district-level judge.
- Her father's involvement in the Indian National Congress made her to be a part of the movement.
- She earned a Ph.D. in Gandhian Thought from the University of Bombay and for 30 years, she served as a professor of political science at Wilson College.
- She was the President of the Gandhi Peace Foundation and in 1998, India honoured her Padma Vibhushan.
- She died on August 11, 2000, at the age of 80.

About the Quit India Movement

- After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Mahatma Gandhi framed a resolution calling for British withdrawal and a non-violent non-cooperation movement against any Japanese invasion.
 - The Cripps Mission came to India in 1942 with constitutional proposals to seek Indian support for the Second World War. It was headed by Stafford Cripps.
- In July 1942, the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and resolved that it would authorise Gandhi to take charge of the non-violent mass movement. The resolution is generally referred to as the 'Quit India' resolution.
 - Proposed by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Sardar Patel, it was to be approved by the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay in August.
- The Quit India Resolution was ratified at the Congress meeting at Gowalia Tank, Bombay, on 8th August 1942.
- On 8th August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi gave a clarion call to end British rule and launched the Quit India Movement at the session of the All-India Congress Committee in Mumbai.
- Mahatma Gandhi gave the call "Do or Die" in his speech delivered at the Gowalia Tank Maidan (now known as August Kranti Maidan) during the Quit India Movement.

About Congree Radio

- The Quit India Movement led to the creation of the underground Congress Radio.
- The British came down heavily on the Quit India Movement, jailing nearly 60,000 Indians, including Gandhi and Nehru and most of the Congress leadership, within twenty-four hours.
- Against the backdrop of famine, World War and imprisonment of the Congress leaders, if the Quit India Movement was going to survive, it would require new leadership. Young leadership.
- The Congress also realized, having examined its past campaigns, that communication with the public was central to its success.
 - Thus, the idea of an underground radio station was conceived, and Usha Mehta became its voice.
- Though it was known by many names – the Freedom Radio, the Ghost Radio, the Congress Radio – it was, very simply, the secret anti-imperialist voice of the Indian National Congress and almost no one, apart from those involved, knew anything certain about its inner workings.



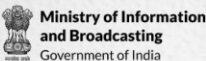


In India, radio broadcasting began in 1923 with the Radio Club of Bombay, followed by the Calcutta Radio Club, which was set up in the same year. Both went bankrupt after a few years. But it was not until 1936 that the Indian State Broadcasting Services (established in 1930), became the All India Radio (AIR) or Akashvani.


- The Congress Radio, which began operations in August 1942, was set up to counter the British-controlled AIR, often tagged as 'anti-India Radio'.


DID YOU KNOW?

- World Radio Day is observed on February 13 every year to spread awareness of the importance of radio as a medium to inform, educate and entertain.
- The theme of World Radio Day 2024 is 'Radio: A Century Informing, Entertaining and Educating'.
- The first-ever radio transmission was made on May 13, 1897, by Guglielmo Marconi.
- India has around 479 radio stations making All India Radio one of the biggest broadcasters in the world. It covers around 99.19% of the Indian population.
- Prasar Bharati, India's largest public broadcasting agency, is a statutory autonomous body set up by the Prasar Bharati Act, 1997.
- In May 2023, Public broadcaster Prasar Bharti decided to drop references to its radio service as 'All India Radio' and substitute it with 'Akashvani', as mentioned in the law.
- All India Radio was referred to as 'Akashvani' by renowned poet Rabindranath Tagore in a poem he had written for the inauguration of the Calcutta shortwave service in 1939.
- On 14 March 2024, the public broadcaster Prasar Bharati launched a news-wire-like service PB-SHABD (Prasar Bharati-Shared Audio Visuals for Broadcast and Dissemination) to offer free service for one year to all news organisations registered with the ministry, which will be free of copyright or credit obligations.
- National Broadcasting Day in India is marked on July 23 as symbolic of the Radio Club of Bombay (established by some businessmen) making the first-ever broadcast in the country in June 1923.



Ministry of Information
and Broadcasting
Government of India





75
Azadi Ka
Amrit Mahotsav

#AmritMahotsav

Dr. Usha Mehta

25th March, 1920 - 11th August, 2000

Remembering the **Gandhian freedom fighter & Padma Vibhushan awardee** on her death anniversary.

She, along with her associates, began the **Secret Congress Radio** in **1942** which broadcasted **nationalist songs & speeches** from **eminent leaders**.

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QUICK FACTS

**CONTEMPORARY EVENTS OF
SIGNIFICANCE FROM INDIA
AND THE WORLD**



1. Union Minister for Steel recently inaugurated **India's first Green Hydrogen plant** in the stainless steel sector located at Jindal Stainless Ltd, **Hisar**. Conventional steel production relies heavily on coal, a major source of greenhouse gases. This dependence is problematic for India's environmental goals. Green hydrogen offers a cleaner alternative.
2. Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas launched '**ETHANOL 100**', a revolutionary automotive fuel that consists of 100% ethanol, at select 183 retail outlets across five states – Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, New Delhi, and Tamil Nadu. It is a biofuel produced from renewable sources such as corn, sugarcane, or other plant materials.
3. Election Commission has announced Para Archer and Arjuna Awardee, **Sheetal Devi** as its **National PwD Icon**. Sheetal Devi is a winner of 2 gold and 1 silver medal in the Asian Para Games 2022. Her name was announced at an Exhibition Cricket Match between the Indian Deaf Cricket Association Team and District Cricket Association team, held in Delhi.
4. A Tri-Services Live Fire and Manoeuvre Exercise named "**Bharat Shakti**" was conducted in **Pokhran, Rajasthan**, demonstrating India's indigenous defence capabilities. It included successful test firing of the long-range AGNI missile with advanced MIRV technology. Key equipment and weapons systems featured in the exercise include T-90 (IM) Tanks, Dhanush and Sarang Gun Systems, Akash Weapons Systems, Logistics Drones, Robotic Mules, Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH), Naval Anti-Ship Missiles, Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, Light Utility Helicopters, and Advanced Light Helicopters.
5. **India** was declared as the **third-most polluted country in 2023**, after Bangladesh and Pakistan, according to a report released by Swiss air quality monitoring body, IQAir. In 2022, India was ranked as the eighth most polluted country with an average PM2.5 concentration of 53.3 micrograms per cubic metre. Meanwhile, in the report's list of the top 50 most polluted cities in the world, 42 cities were in India. **Begusarai was the most polluted metropolitan area of 2023, followed by Guwahati and then Delhi.**
6. '**Agray**' and '**Akshay**', the **5th and 6th ships of 08 x ASW Shallow Water Craft (SWC) Project** were launched by the Indian Navy. These ships are being built by M/S Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata for the Indian Navy. These ships signify a transition from the ageing Abhay Class Corvettes to the more advanced Arnala Class, designed for anti-submarine and mine-laying operations in coastal waters.
7. **India's first integrated Oil Palm Processing Unit** by 3F Oil Palm, one of India's largest Oil Palm development companies, started its commercial operations recently and the factory situated at Roing in lower **Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh**, carries forward Mission Palm Oil, representing a pivotal step in India's journey towards self-reliance in edible oils, catalyzed by the National Mission on Edible Oils - Oil Palm (NMEO-OP).
8. The **International Astronomical Union (IAU)** working group for Planetary System Nomenclature has approved the name '**Statio Shiv Shakti**' for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander. The approval was given on March 19, 2024. The IAU is the internationally recognised authority for assigning names to planetary surface features. Prime Minister previously designated the location of Chandrayaan-2's lander crash in September 2019 as "Tiranga Point."
9. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully conducted the **Pushpak Reusable Landing Vehicle (RLV) LEX 02** landing experiment at the Aeronautical Test Range in Chitradurga in Karnataka. The Pushpak RLV is designed as an all-rocket, fully reusable single-stage-to-orbit (SSTO) vehicle.
10. Star paddler **G. Sathiyam** has become the **first-ever Indian to win a men's singles trophy at a WTT Feeder Series** event in Beirut, Lebanon.
11. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) have announced the launch of the **BhashaNet** portal at the Universal Acceptance Day. The theme of the event, "**BhashaNet: Impetus Towards Universal Acceptance**," highlighted MeitY/NIXI's unwavering commitment towards ensuring that, regardless of linguistic or textual barriers, everyone can fully participate in the digital world.
12. **India** on March 21 launched '**Operation Indravati**' to evacuate its citizens from the turmoil-stricken Haiti to the neighbouring Dominican Republic. Haiti, situated in the Caribbean, has plunged into chaos with armed gangs seizing control of the streets, resulting in the virtual disappearance of the government.

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QUICK FACTS

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



1. In the inaugural ranking of global public health institutions, the **Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)** has clinched the second position among 26 institutions worldwide, surpassing Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, which now holds the third spot on the list. The rankings are part of a report titled 'A New Model for Ranking Schools of Public Health: The Public Health Academic Ranking,' published in the International Journal of Public Health. The PHFI, launched in 2006, is a public-private initiative involving Indian and international academia, governments, agencies, and civil society groups.
2. The Tenth edition of Joint Military Exercise "**LAMITIYE-2024**" between the **Indian Army and Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF)** recently concluded in Seychelles. 'LAMITIYE' meaning 'Friendship' in the Creole language is a biennial training event and has been conducted in Seychelles since 2001.
3. The **Gender Inequality Index 2022** was released on 13 March 2024 by UNDP in their Human Development Report 2023-2024. On the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022, India stands at rank **108 out of 193 countries** with a score of 0.437. India stood at rank 122 out of 191 countries with a score of 0.490 in the Gender Inequality Index 2021. Over the last 10 years, India's rank in GII has become consistently better, indicating progressive improvement in achieving gender equality in the country. In 2014, this rank was 127, which now has become 108.
4. **NATO's DIANA** (Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic) program is expanding its reach with the addition of new sites, including Finland. Recently, the DIANA initiative board approved a proposal to establish an accelerator and two test centres in Finland, with a mission to foster technology, innovation, and business development for both civil and defence purposes.
5. **India and Brazil** explored ways to expand cooperation in areas of energy, critical minerals, technology and counter-terrorism at their **first '2+2' defence and foreign ministerial dialogue**. The talks focused on expanding cooperation in various areas, including energy, critical minerals, technology, and counter-terrorism. India conducts '2+2' dialogues with key strategic partners: the US, Australia, Japan, and Russia. The US holds the oldest and most significant '2+2' talks partnership with India.
6. **India and the United States** have conducted a bilateral tri-service humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) exercise on Kakinada Beach, as part of '**Tiger Triumph-24**'. The Tiger Triumph 2024 Exercise concluded in Visakhapatnam on March 31. Other exercises between India and the US are Yudh Abhyas, Vajra Prahar and Cope India.
7. The International Labour Organization (**ILO**) recently released a report titled '**Profits and poverty: The economics of forced labour**', which has found that Forced Labour generates illegal profits worth USD 36 billion per year.
8. The new annual State of the Climate report, published on March 19, by the **World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)** found that **2023 was the hottest year on record**. Numerous records for indicators of the climate system, including greenhouse gas levels (GHGs), surface temperatures, ocean heat, sea level rise, Antarctic sea ice cover, glacier retreat, etc., were broken, the report added.
9. **World Sparrow Day** is observed every year on **March 20**. In 2024, the theme for World Sparrow Day is "**Sparrows: Give them a tweet-chance!**", "**I Love Sparrows**" and "**We Love Sparrows**". The first World Sparrow Day was celebrated on March 20, 2010.
10. The world produced a whopping 62 billion kg of electronic waste (e-waste) in 2022. That number is projected to rise to 82 billion kg in 2030, according to a new report titled "**Global E-waste Monitor 2024**" brought out by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and Fondation Carmignac, a corporate foundation on March 20, 2024.
11. **International Day of Forests** is observed every year on **21 March**. This year, the International Day of Forests 2024 is outlined under the theme "Forests and innovation: new solutions for a better world", the essential role of technology and innovation in the safeguarding of forest ecosystems. The United Nations General Assembly announced March 21 to be the International Day of Forests in 2012. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Forum on Forests are the coordinators of the International Day of Forests.





12. **Google DeepMind** revealed its latest AI gaming agent called **SIMA or Scalable Instructable Multiworld Agent**, which can follow natural language instructions to perform tasks across video game environments. AI research lab Google Deepmind describes SIMA as an AI Agent, which is different from AI models such as OpenAI's ChatGPT or Google Gemini.
13. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has launched a global network, called **CoViNet**, of laboratories to identify and monitor potentially novel coronaviruses that could emerge shortly. Besides SARS-CoV-2, the new WHO Coronavirus Network will assess other coronaviruses, including MERS-CoV, with enhanced laboratory capacity.
14. The Border Roads Organisation (**BRO**) has connected the strategic **Nimmu-Padam-Darcha via road in Ladakh**. The 298-km road will connect Manali to Leh through Darcha and Nimmu on the Kargil–Leh highway. The road is now the third axis apart from Manali-Leh and Srinagar-Leh which connects Ladakh to the hinterland.
15. The **second edition of the India-Mozambique-Tanzania Trilateral Exercise (IMT TRILAT 24)** concluded at Nacala, Mozambique, on March 28, 2024. INS Tir and Sujata participated in IMT TRILAT 24 through a series of joint exercises, training sessions and collaborative activities, providing invaluable opportunities for all three Navies to exchange knowledge, enhance capabilities and bolster maritime security in the region.
16. **Thailand's** lower house of parliament on March 27 passed a marriage equality bill at the final reading, in a landmark step that moves the country closer to becoming the third territory in Asia to legalise same-sex unions and the first in Southeast Asia to guarantee marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples. Thailand will become the third place in Asia to recognize same-sex marriage, after Taiwan and Nepal, and rank among some 40 countries around the world to guarantee equal marital rights.
17. The **United Nations General Assembly** unanimously adopted the **first global resolution on artificial intelligence** that encourages countries to safeguard human rights, protect personal data, and monitor AI for risks. The nonbinding resolution, proposed by the United States and co-sponsored by China and over 120 other nations, also advocates the strengthening of privacy policies.
18. **World Tuberculosis (TB) Day** is celebrated every year on **March 24, 2024**, to raise awareness around the disease, increase efforts to eradicate the disease, and mobilise support for those affected by TB. World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, 24 March 2024, continues with the theme “Yes! We can end TB”.
19. **World Water Day** is celebrated every year on **March 22**. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro saw the first formal proposal of World Water Day under Agenda 21. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in December 1992 by which March 22 was declared World Water Day. The theme for this year is 'Water for prosperity and peace'.
20. The **third Summit for Democracy**, an initiative launched by U.S. President Joe Biden in 2021, was held on March 18, 2024, in **Seoul, South Korea**. The theme of the Summit was “**Democracy for Future Generations**”.
21. In a significant move to boost its tourism industry, the **government of Nepal** has officially declared **Pokhara**, a picturesque city in the Gandaki province, as the tourism capital of the Himalayan nation. Pokhara, known for its natural beauty and adventure tourism, has long been recognized as a tourism hub in Nepal.

IMPORTANT INFO!

POKHARA OFFICIALLY DECLARED AS 'TOURISM CAPITAL' OF NEPAL.





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QUICK FACTS

**ARTS & CULTURE AND HISTORICAL
EVENTS OF CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE**



1. **Masaan Holi**, a two-day event on different ghats of Varanasi, draws devotees from around the world to witness the celebration by applying ashes from the funeral pyre and gulal (pink powder) upon each other. It is also believed to be a celebration of death, where the devotees in huge numbers take part in a procession making their way to the ghat through dancing, singing, chanting 'Har-Har Mahadev' as the ashes of the pyres and gulal thicken the air.
2. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently received **Bhutan's highest civilian award**, the '**Order of the Druk Gyalpo**', during his two-day State visit to the neighbouring nation. He is the first foreign Head of the Government to receive the honour. The Order of the Druk Gyalpo stands as Bhutan's most esteemed civilian accolade, reserved for individuals who have demonstrated exceptional contributions to society, embodying values of service, integrity, and leadership.
3. In **Jaipur, Rajasthan**, the age-old tradition of celebrating Holi continues. This celebration involves the practice of "**Gulaal Gota**," a unique tradition dating back around 400 years. Lac, the primary raw material for Gulaal Gota, is sourced from Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Gulaal Gotas are made by Muslim lac makers, known as Manihaars, in Jaipur, who learned lac-making from Hindu lac makers in Bagru, a town near Jaipur.

PM Modi's leadership defining India's global image

Bhutan confers its highest
civilian award

Order of the Druk Gyalpo on PM Modi

Bhutan highlighted the 'unconditional friendship'
that India had extended over the years, particularly
during the Covid-19 pandemic



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TEST ZONE



PASSAGE - 1

The high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind has recommended simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies as the first step and hold municipal and panchayat polls within 100 days of the general election in the next phase.

The committee on March 14 submitted its report, running into more than 18,000 pages, to President Droupadi Murmu. However, the report that has been put in the public domain is a 321-page one.

The 22nd Law Commission, that is examining the simultaneous polls issue, is also expected to submit its report to the Law Ministry anytime now and recommend simultaneous polls from the 2029 general election cycle.

The Kovind panel report too will not have any bearing on the coming Lok Sabha polls. To synchronise the elections, the Ram Nath Kovind Committee has suggested that the President, through a

notification issued on the first sitting of the Lok Sabha post general elections set an 'Appointed Date'. This date would mark the beginning of the new electoral cycle.

State Assemblies, that are formed after the Appointed Date and before the completion of the Lok Sabha's term, would conclude before the subsequent general elections. After this, election to the Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies would be held simultaneously.

The panel recommended that fresh elections could be held to constitute a new Lok Sabha in the event of a hung House or a no-confidence motion, or any such event but the tenure of the House will be "only for the unexpired [remaining] term of the immediately preceding full term of the House".

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "Ram Nath Kovind panel for simultaneous Lok Sabha, Assembly polls", By Sandeep Phukan, The Hindu]

Q.1 Which Article gives Parliament the power to make laws relating to elections to LS, RS, and state legislatures, including the preparation of electoral rolls and delimitation of constituencies?

A Article 327

B Article 312

C Article 356

D Article 320

Q.2 The Kovind-led committee recommended the amendment in _____ ("Duration of Houses of Parliament") and _____ ("Duration of the State Legislatures").

A Article 90 & Article 180

B Article 89 & Article 179

C Article 83 & Article 172

D Article 80 & Article 170

Q.3 At present, only four states hold simultaneous elections with the Lok Sabha. These states are Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, _____ and _____.

A Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur

B Jharkhand and Sikkim

C Haryana and Jharkhand

D Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim

Q.4 The term of the 22nd law panel was extended up to August 31, 2024, in February 2023. The 22nd law panel is headed by –

A Justice Ranjan Gogoi

B Justice Dipak Mishra

C Justice Rituraj Awasthi

D Justice S. Abdul Nazeer

Q.5 India will go to the polls from April 19 to June 1, in a marathon seven-phase exercise to elect the 543 members. The tenure of the 17th Lok Sabha is scheduled to end on –

A June 23, 2024

B May 23, 2024

C June 16, 2024

D May 16, 2024

Q.1 (A) Q.2 (C) Q.3 (D) Q.4 (C) Q.5 (C)

Answers

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PASSAGE - 2

India has bettered its ranking on a global UN measure of well-being and quality of life of citizens, making progress for the first time since slipping in 2020 and 2021, according to the just-released 2023/24 Human Development Report titled, "Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World".

The world's fifth-largest economy has been placed [1] out of 193 countries, the report said, as India's human development index (HDI) value saw an increase from 0.633 to 0.644 in 2022, placing the country in the medium human development category, just as in previous years.

The HDI is a composite index computed based on three parameters – life expectancy, mean years of schooling and average incomes – in contrast to gross domestic product (GDP), which is a gauge only of incomes or output in an economy.

In 2022, India saw improvements across all HDI indicators – life expectancy, education and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. Life expectancy rose from 67.2 to 67.7 years, expected years of schooling reached 12.6, mean years of schooling increased to 6.57 and GNI per capita saw an increase from \$6,542 to \$6,951, the report said.

The UN report also said India demonstrated progress in reducing gender inequality, with a value of 0.437 that is better than the global and South Asian averages. India's HDI value was 0.633 in 2021, down from 0.642 in 2020.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "India improves ranking in HDI score; placed 134 out of 193 countries", by Zia Haq, Hindustan Times]

Q.1 Which rank has been replaced with [1] in the passage above?

- A** 125
- B** 134

- C** 115
- D** 153

Q.2 Which of the following countries topped the Human Development Index 2023-24?

- A** Denmark
- B** Norway

- C** Iceland
- D** Switzerland

Q.3 The bottom three countries in the Human Development Index 2023-24 are _____, South Sudan and Central African Republic.

- A** Somalia
- B** Afghanistan

- C** North Korea
- D** Haiti

Q.4 The Human Development Report 202-24 revealed that India's average life expectancy reached _____ in 2022, up from 62.7 years the previous year.

- A** 65.5 years
- B** 67.7 years

- C** 72.2 years
- D** 73.2 Years

Q.5 India, the world's fifth-largest economy, is expected to become the third-largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$5 trillion in the next three years and touch \$7 trillion by 2030. Currently, the third largest economy is –

- A** Germany
- B** Japan

- C** The United Kingdom
- D** France

Q.1 (B) Q.2 (D) Q.3 (A) Q.4 (B) Q.5 (A) Answers

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PASSAGE - 3

India has presented a detailed model on behalf of the G4 nations for Security Council reform that includes new permanent members elected democratically by the General Assembly and displays flexibility on the veto issue.

Participating in the Inter-governmental Negotiations on Security Council reform (IGN) on March 7, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said the UN's 80th anniversary next year serves as a milestone to achieve concrete progress on the long-pending subject.

Ms. Kamboj presented the 'G4 model' on behalf of [1], Germany, Japan and India for debate, dialogue and finally negotiations. The proposals elicited strong support from wider UN members.

Catering to these new realities, the G4 model proposes that the Security Council's membership increase from the current 15 to 25-

26, by adding six permanent and four or five non-permanent members.

Among the six new permanent members, two each are proposed to be from African states and Asia Pacific states, one from Latin American and Caribbean states; and one from Western European and Other states.

Ms. Kamboj highlighted that it is important to note that the G4 model "does not specify" which member states will occupy the new permanent seats. "This decision will be made by the General Assembly in a democratic and inclusive election."

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "India presents detailed model on behalf of G4 nations for UNSC reform that displays flexibility on veto", The Hindu]

Q.1 The name of which nation has been replaced with '[1]' in the passage above?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| A Brazil | C Australia |
| B South Africa | D Italy |

Q.2 India completed its eighth term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2022 and declared its candidature for the ninth term in –

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| A 2030-31 | C 2028-29 |
| B 2029-30 | D 2027-28 |

Q.3 United Nations Day is celebrated every year on –

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| A 24 August | C 24 September |
| B 24 December | D 24 October |

Q.4 The UNSC has 15 members, including 5 permanent members and 10 non-permanent members. 10 non-permanent members, five of which are elected each year by the General Assembly for a –

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| A Two-year term | C Four-year term |
| B Three-year term | D Five-year term |

Q.5 The G20 Troika during the Brazilian G20 Presidency in 2024 will comprise India, Brazil, and _____.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| A Indonesia | C Italy |
| B South Africa | D Mexico |

Q.1 (A) Q.2 (C) Q.3 (D) Q.4 (A) Q.5 (B)

Answers

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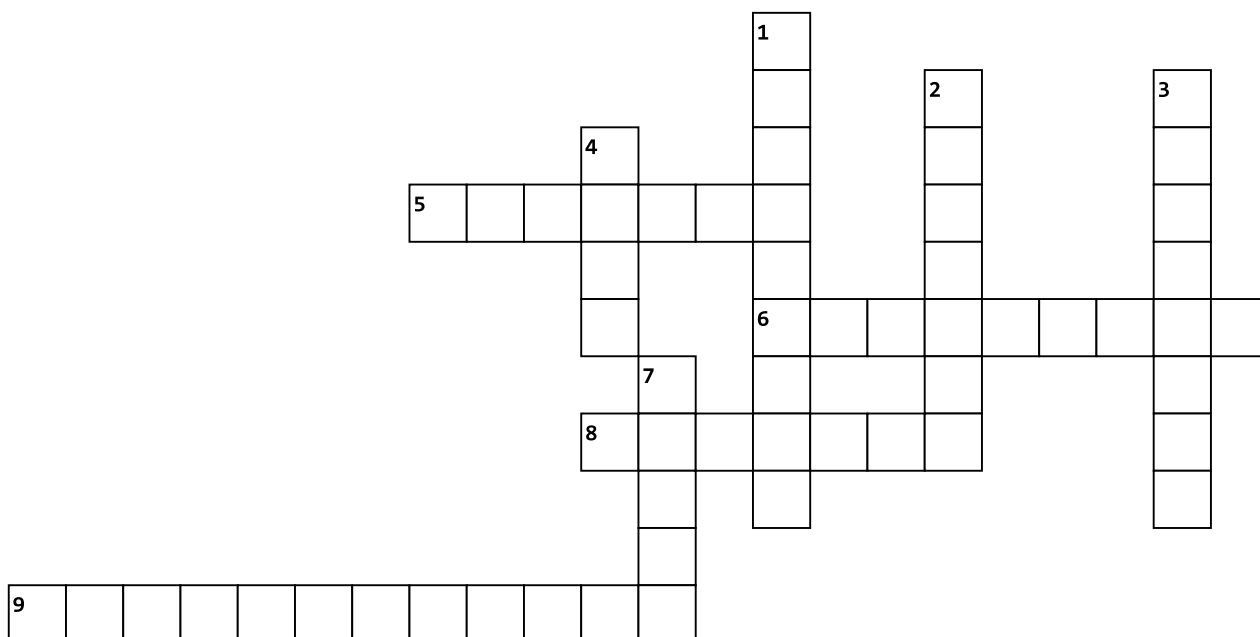
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The Question Bank



CROSSWORD CORNER



CROSSWORD - 1



Across

5. WHO Coronavirus Network
6. India's operation to evacuate its citizens from Haiti
8. World Sparrow Day
9. Tri-service exercise between India and the US

Down

1. First-ever Indian to win a men's singles trophy at a WTT Feeder Series
2. International Day of Forests
3. Joint Military Exercise between India and Seychelles
4. Google DeepMind's latest AI gaming agent
7. India's rank in the Gender Inequality Index 2022

Answers

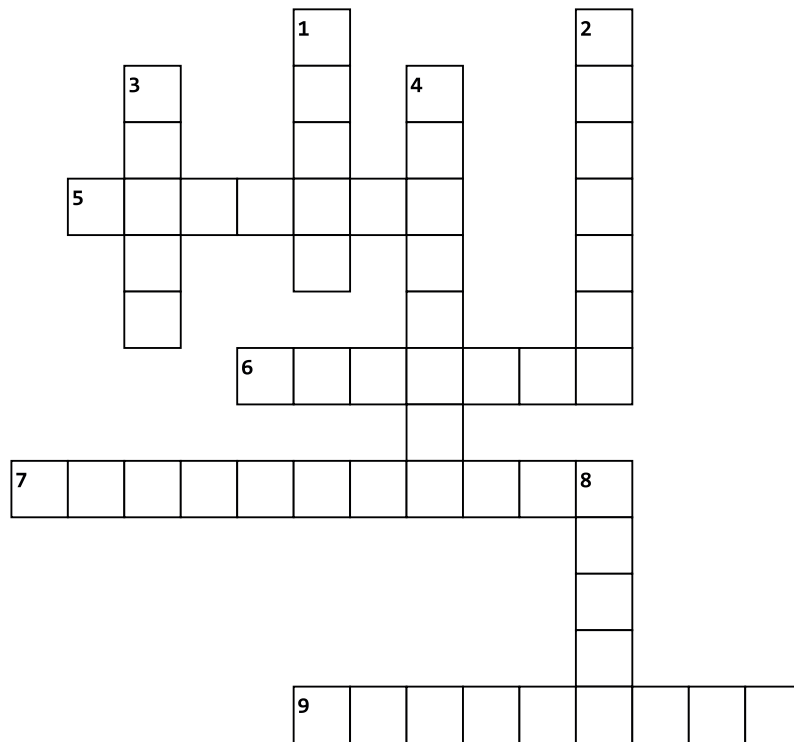
Indravati	6	Gsathiyar	1
108th	7	21March	2
20March	8	LAMITYE	3
TigerTriumph	9	SIMA	4
		CovINet	5

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CROSSWORD - 2



Across

5. Tourism capital of Nepal
6. World Tuberculosis (TB) Day
7. National PwD Icon of ECI
9. Most polluted metropolitan area of 2023

Down

1. India's first Green Hydrogen plant in the stainless steel sector
2. World Water Day
3. The third Summit for Democracy was held in
4. First country in southeast Asia and the third country in Asia to legalise same-sex unions
8. Third-most polluted country in 2023

Answers

- | | | | |
|---|----------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Hisar | 6 | 24 March |
| 2 | 22 March | 7 | Sheetal Devi |
| 3 | Seoul | 8 | India |
| 4 | Thailand | 9 | Begusarai |
| 5 | Pokhara | | |



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