

**CURRENT EVENTS
AND
ANALYSIS
(February & March 2022)**

Editor

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CURRENT EVENTS AND ANALYSIS

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ECONOMY

REGULATION OF MFIS:

RBI Releases Revised Regulatory Framework for Institutions Involved in Micro Finance Lending

- In March 2022, the Reserve Bank of India released the revised regulatory framework for institutions involved in micro-finance lending.

Background:

What is Micro Finance?

- Micro finance (also called micro credit) refers to **small amounts of credit** provided to the poor in rural and urban areas like marginal farmers, landless labourers, petty traders, artisans, etc **without any collateral** (property or asset as a security against loan default).
- Credit is given for taking up **income generating activities** as well as other activities such as **housing repairs, education, medical and other emergencies**. However, on an overall basis Banks have to extend 50 % of their microcredit to income generating activities.

Need for Micro Finance ?

- Access to micro finance is crucial for the poor as they have very low savings to improve their living standards and meet their emergencies.
- However, despite the vast expansion of the formal credit system in the country, institutionalised access to credit is limited as they cannot provide collateral. This forces them to depend on money lenders who charge high interest rates.
- Micro-finance institutions emerged as an institutional mechanism to meet the micro finance needs of the poor. In 1974 SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), a cooperative bank, was set up in Gujarat and in 1982 NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) began encouraging micro finance by linking Self-Help Groups with Banks and providing refinance facility.

What are the problems in Micro Finance?

- In the late 1990's many NBFCs (Non Banking Financial Institutions) emerged to meet the credit requirements of the poor. The entry of the NBFCs led to numerous problems in the micro finance sector.

1. High Interest Rates:

NBFC's were charging very high interest rates ranging from 24 % to 36 % per annum.

2. Reckless Lending:

NBFC were lending recklessly without properly taking into account the source of income of borrowers, and their ability to pay. Focus was solely on profit.

3. Coercive Recovery Practices:

NBFCs were also resorting to strong arm tactics such as seizing their properties, indulging in physical assaults for recovery of loans by forcing them to repay on weekly or fortnightly basis.

The above practices of NBFCs led to suicides of some of the borrowers in States like Andhra Pradesh in 2010. Since then, the RBI has been releasing regulatory guidelines for micro finance lending institutions. It also set up Malegam Committee for suggesting reforms in the micro finance sector.

In 2011, RBI capped the interest rate on micro finance at 26 % per annum.

It also began to limit the amount that could be given as loan to the poor. It fixed the loan amount for an individual borrower at Rs 35,000 from a Micro Finance Institution. Since then, RBI has been periodically reviewing and revising regulations of micro finance institutions.

Revised Regulatory Framework:

- At present, Commercial Banks, Cooperative Banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) are involved in the business of micro-finance.
- There were different guidelines for institutions involved in the business of micro-finance. Hence, the RBI released the revised framework for bringing uniformity to all the institutions calling them Regulated Entities (REs).

1. Definition of Micro finance Loan:

Earlier, RBI made a distinction between rural and urban borrowers (those with income of less than Rs. 1.25 lakh in rural areas and Rs.2 lakh in urban areas).

Later, RBI has set a common household income limit of Rs. 3 lakhs for accessing micro finance. Household means an individual family unit, i.e., husband, wife and their unmarried children.

2. Interest Rates:

Micro finance industry has matured now and has access to low cost funds and refinance facilities. Some of the micro finance institutions are charging interest rates below 20 %. Hence, the RBI removed the cap on interest rates.

However, all the regulated entities would have to put in place Board-approved policies on interest rates. These would be supervised by RBI.

3. Cap on Lending:

While extending micro finance loan, the monthly income sources of the borrower should be evaluated and loan repayment obligation should not exceed 50 % of monthly household income.

4. Flexibility in Repayment:

Borrowers should be given flexibility in repayment i.e. whether to make weekly, fortnightly or monthly repayments. There should be Board-approved (approved by the Board of Directors of the Lending Institution) policies in this regard.

5. Loan Recovery:

Loan recovery should be made at only designated places mutually approved by borrower and the lender. This is to check strong-arm tactics in loan recovery by lending institutions. If the borrower fails to appear at the designated place, recovery agent can be sent by the lenders. Recovery agents should not engage in any harsh methods of recovery like using threatening or abusive language, harassing friends, relatives, co-workers of the borrower, use of violence, etc.

Resource Mobilisation:

National Land Monetisation Corporation

- In March 2022, the Union Government approved the setting up of National Land Monetisation Corporation (NLMC) to undertake monetisation of surplus land and building assets of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and other Government agencies. This proposal was first floated in Union Budget for 2021-22.

Background:

Rationale for setting up of NLMC:

- The Government has made substantial investments in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in diverse sectors spread across the country.
- Central PSUs have significant unutilised and underutilised lands.
- Internationally, public assets are recognised as significant economic resources for Governments and put to optimum use to raise revenues for the Government.
- But in India, this option is inadequately explored. Hence, NLMC aims at unlocking the value of the investments made in these public assets.

Advantages of NLMC:

- It creates **new source of revenue** for the Government by unlocking the value of the hitherto unutilised and underutilised public assets.
- Money generated from asset monetisation can be **used for creation of new infrastructure** in the country.
- (The Union Government has launched a series of infrastructure projects under the National Infrastructure Pipeline. It envisages investments of around Rs. 111 lakh crore in infrastructure projects during 2020-25)

Functions of NLMC:

- NLMC will own, hold, manage and monetise surplus land and building assets of CPSEs under closure and the surplus non-core land assets of Government owned CPSEs under strategic disinvestment.
- It will be set up as a wholly owned Government of India company with an initial authorised share capital of Rs 5000 crore.
- All land assets which are worth above Rs.100 crore will have to be transferred to the NLMC by central PSUs. Those below Rs. 100 crore will be handled by respective administrative ministries.
- NLMC will hire professionals from the private sector through a merit-based selection process as monetisation of real estate requires expertise in valuation of property, market research, legal diligence, etc.
- It will act as a directory of best practices in land monetisation.
- NLMC will be under the administrative control of Department of investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), Ministry of Finance.

INFRASTRUCTURE:**Ports:****Sagarmala Completes 7 Years**

Sagarmala, the flagship scheme of the Union Government, aimed at reducing the logistic cost of EXIM (Export-Import) trade as well as domestic trade completed 7 years.

Details:

Sagarmala Programme, launched in March 2015, has the following components.

Components of Sagarmala:

S.No	Component	Focus
1.	Port Modernization & New Port Development	Port operational efficiency improvement, capacity expansion of existing ports and new port development to increase the Indian ports capacity to 3300 MTPA (Million Tonnes per Annum). At present capacity is 2500 MTPA. (More than 90% of India's external trade is carried out through ports)
2.	Port Connectivity Enhancement	Enhanced connectivity between the ports and the domestic production/consumption centers located in the hinterland
3	Port Led Industrialization	Setting up of Coastal Economic Zones for reducing logistic cost and time for the movement of EXIM (Export Import) cargo.
4	Coastal Community Development	Development of coastal communities through Marine sector related activities like fisheries, maritime tourism and skill development.
5	Coastal Shipping & Inland Water Transport (IWT)	In India, domestic freight movement happens primarily through road, followed by railways and a meagre share is through waterways. Coastal shipping can also be a great enabler to develop economy and reduce logistics costs. Currently, in India, the coastal shipping primarily handles POL, coal, and iron ore, which account approximately 80 percent of the total coastal movement. Similarly, despite having an extensive network of in land waterways in the form of rivers, canals, back waters and creeks freight transportation by waterways is highly under-utilized. Waterways currently contribute around 6% to India's internal transportation modal mix.

	<p>Sagarmala Initiatives: Coastal shipping traffic of about 250 MTPA can be achieved from current and planned capacities across coal, cement, iron and steel, food grains, fertilizers, POL by 2025. Additionally about 150 MMTPA of cargo is expected to be moved via inland waterways by 2025.</p> <p>To promote inland water transport (IWT) in the country, 111 (including 5 existing and 106 new) National Waterways (NWs) have been declared under the National Waterways Act, 2016.</p>
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Status of Sagarmala:

As a part of Sagarmala Programme, more than 800 projects at an estimated cost of around Rs. 5.48 lakh crore have been identified for implementation.

Sagarmala projects includes projects from various categories such as modernisation of existing ports and terminals, new ports, terminals, RoRo (Roll on Roll off) & tourism jetties, enhancement of port connectivity, inland waterways, lighthouse tourism, industrialisation around port, skill development, technology centres, etc.

S.No	Project Pillar	No. of. projects	Total Project Cost (in crores)
1.	Port Modernization & New Port Development	237	250606
2.	Port Connectivity Enhancement	213	138514
3.	Port Led Industrialization	33	119845
4.	Coastal Community Development	77	10135.7
5.	Coastal Shipping & IWT	242	29382
	Total	802	5,48,484

So far, 194 projects worth Rs. 99,000 crore have been completed.

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS (BOP):

Exports:

Merchandise Exports Cross US \$ 400 Billion in 2021-22, Over All Exports including Services Cross US \$ 650 Billion

- For the first time, Indian exports crossed US \$ 400 billion, services exports reached US \$ 250 billion and overall exports of Goods and Services crossed US \$ 650 billion in 2021-22.

Details:

Merchandise Exports:

- India's exports in 2021-22 stood at around US \$ 420 billion (419.65 billion).

- On an average, India exported more than US \$ 1 billion merchandise goods everyday in 2021-22 (April-March).

Service Exports:

- Similarly, India's service exports registered all-time high growth and reached **US \$ 250 billion for the first time in 2021-22.**

Overall Exports (Goods and Services):

- India's overall exports (Merchandise Goods and Services) touched an all-time high of US \$ 669.65 Billion in April-March 2021-22.
- There was 34.50 per cent growth in overall exports in 2021-22 over 2020-21.

Overall Trade Date at a Glance:

Item	2021-22 (April-March) (US \$ Billion)	2020-21 (April-March) (US \$ Billion)	2019-20 (April-March) (US \$ Billion)
Merchandise Trade			
Exports	419.65	291.81	313.36
Imports	611.89	394.44	474.71
Trade Balance (-)	192.24	(-) 102.63	(-) 161.35
Services Trade			
Exports	250.0	206.09	213.19
Imports	144.79	117.52	128.27
Net of Services	105.21	88.57	84.92
Overall Trade (Merchandise and Services)			
Exports	669.65	497.90	526.55
Imports	756.68	511.96	602.98
Overall Trade Balance (Goods & Services)	(-) 87.03	(-) 14.06	(-) 76.43

What Factors Contributed to the Growth of Exports:

1. **Global demand** which was weak in 2020-21 due to the impact of COVID revived in 2021-22.
2. The Government also worked out a **detailed strategy** for achieving the target of US \$ 400 billion exports by disaggregating the target in terms of regions and countries as well as product/commodity groups and set up an elaborate monitoring system.
3. Export targets were **tightly monitored** at country, region level by Union Government by ensuring effective coordination between all stake holders i.e. district units, State and Central Governments, line Ministries, Export Promotion Councils (EPCs), and Indian Missions overseas (Foreign embassies).

As a result, **engineering goods exports** have gone up by nearly 50% vis-à-vis last year (2020-21). Engineering goods exports crossed US \$ 100 billion in 2021-22 and stood at US \$ 112 billion.

Export of Cotton Yarn/Fabrics/Made-ups, Handloom Products, Gems and Jewellery have also registered a growth rate between 50%-60%.

Similarly, for the first time **agricultural exports** crossed US \$ 50 billion (50.2 billion) in 2021-22. Agricultural exports were US \$ 41.8 billion in 2020-21.

4. The Union Government launched **Districts as Export Hub (DEH) initiative** to make districts active stakeholders in driving export growth.

Recent Initiatives launched to boost Exports:

1. PLI Programme:

To achieve economies of scale and global competitiveness, Union Government launched Production Linked Incentive Program for 14 sectors like electronics, pharmaceuticals, telecom equipment, mobile manufacturing, specialty steel, solar photovoltaics, etc

2. FTAs:

India also signed Free Trade Agreements with UAE, and Australia which would lead to lowering of tariffs and enhance exports. FTA's are also under finalization with countries like UK, US and European Union.

Significance of Exports for India:

- Exports can make a significant contribution to developing countries like India. They contribute to
 - a) economic growth
 - b) increased employment opportunities, and
 - c) are a source of foreign exchange which are needed for imports.
- After 1950's many countries like China, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, etc. focussed on exports which led to significant economic transformation of these countries. Export-led strategy contributed to rise in per capita incomes and living standards of people in these countries.

India's Share in Global Merchandise Exports:

- Despite the significant benefits of exports for the economy, its potential remains underexploited in India.
- The share of India in world exports of merchandise goods is mere 1.6 %. In contrast, China is the world's leading exporter with a share of 14.7 %.

Share in Service Exports:

- India's share in world services exports stands at 4.1 %. USA is the leading exporter with a share of 13.9 %.

Export Preparedness Index 2021 Ranks Gujarat as Top Performer

- Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2021, which ranks all States and Union Territories (UTs) on the basis of their export readiness and performance, was released in March 2022. The report was prepared by NITI Aayog, Government's think-tank, in collaboration with the Institute of Competitiveness.

Details:

- Exports are considered to be one of the major drivers of economic growth and development. Countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore and other Southeast Asian economies were able to achieve continuous economic growth by expanding their export capacity.
- In India, many studies have focused explicitly on exports at the national level. Not much has been written regarding the export performance at the subnational level. But, with the existing regional disparity in India, it becomes essential to understand the export landscape at the state level and the factors influencing the export performance.
- Over the years, it has been noticed that the coastal states, namely Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, are the significant exporters in the country. In the year 2020- 2021, the combined share of the three states constituted around 60 per cent of the total countries exports.
- Relative to the coastal and landlocked areas, states in the hilly terrains are still struggling to make a mark at the global export network. Such contrast depicts how the diverse locations impact the state's export dimensions.

Objective of Export Preparedness Index:

- The objective of the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) is to instill competition among all States and Union Territories (competitive federalism) wherein each state can identify their export opportunities and challenges and subsequently put in place specific strategies to focus on and benefit from exports.

Criteria for the Index:

The Export Preparedness Index is based on four main pillars:

1. Policy ecosystem;
2. Business ecosystem;
3. Export ecosystem; and
4. Export performance.

Key Findings of the Report:

- Gujarat is the top performer followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu which were ranked second, third and fourth respectively.

Coastal States have advantages:

- Coastal States with higher industrial activity and access to sea ports account for a majority of India's exports.
- Coastal states, namely Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, are the significant exporters in the country. The combined share of the three states constituted around 60 per cent of the total countries exports.
- Relative to the coastal and landlocked areas, states in the hilly terrains are still struggling to make a mark at the global export network. Such contrast depicts how the diverse locations impact the state's export dimensions.

Gujarat:

- Gujarat has been leading the export contribution in India, with its total share accounting for 20.83 per cent as of 2020- 2021.

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- Robust trade support systems and emphasis on a constructive business environment are critical factors for Gujarat's export performance. Gujarat is now the largest producer of processed diamonds, and its total share in India's export of diamond stands at 80 per cent.
 - The state is now also known as the country's chemicals, and petrochemicals hub and its total petroleum products exports as of 2020 is US\$ 17,972.08 million.
 - In 2020-21, the state achieved the total FDI inflows at the US \$21.89 billion.

Maharashtra:

- Similarly, Maharashtra, the second largest exporter in the country with a 20.06 per cent share, has facilitated export growth by focusing on initiatives such as Ease of Doing business and providing subsidies to SME's units. It has also laid focus on sectors such as IT, textile, and automobile components to drive exports.
- Both top-performing states (Gujarat and Maharashtra) have productively managed and expanded their port infrastructure on the coastal line. With 48 ports, Maharashtra has the highest number of ports in the country, followed by Gujarat with 42 ports. Thus, the conscious efforts made by the state governments to establish an export oriented ecosystem have made a substantial positive impact on its export share.

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INTERNATIONAL POLITY

Russia-Ukraine War:

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

- On February 24, 2022, Russia launched full scale invasion of Ukraine its western neighbouring country which was part of erstwhile USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).

Details:

Why Did Russia Launch Invasion of Ukraine?

- Russia announced that it has launched a **special military operation** to **demilitarise Ukraine** as it is involved in **genocide** (large-scale deliberate killing of a particular ethnic group) in Luhansk and Donetsk (together called as Donbas region).
- Donbas is located in the south-eastern part of Ukraine bordering Russia has **significant ethnic Russians**. Russian-backed rebels in Donbas region have some areas under their control in Luhansk and Donetsk and are fighting for independence of Donbas region from Ukraine.
- However, Russia did not substantiate its claim of genocide with sufficient evidence. Hence, the international community calls Russia's military operation as invasion and stated that unprovoked military action by Russia is a threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Actual Reasons for Russian Invasion:

There are two possible reasons for Russian invasion of Ukraine.

1. Annexation of Luhansk and Donetsk:

Before the start of the invasion Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree recognizing Luhansk and Donetsk as independent republics.

More than 40 percent of the people in these two areas are ethnic Russians and they form the largest minority in the Donbas region.

One of the possible reasons for invasion is to annex Luhansk and Donetsk in Donbas region. Both are industrial centres with abundant coal resources and home to many metallurgical industries. After the Second World War, many Russians have settled in these industrial centres.

After the breakup of the USSR, many State-owned industries were sold. Elite Russians who were politically connected took control of these industries. Such industrialists are called Oligarchs in Russia and Ukraine.

(The traditional definition of oligarchy is a form of Government ruled by a few powerful persons or families. However, in recent times the term oligarch is used for industrialists who rose due to their political connections).

2. Forcing Ukraine to Abandon its Bid to Join NATO:

Another reason for invasion is to force Ukraine to abandon its bid to get membership of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation).

Since its emergence as an independent country after the breakup of USSR in 1991, Ukraine has been making efforts for closer integration with the western world (Europe and US) and is actively seeking membership of NATO, a political and military alliance formed in 1949 by western European countries along with US and Canada for securing peace in Europe and checking the expansion of soviet communism in Europe.

Russia is against Ukraine joining NATO as it sees NATO's expansion into its backyard as an existential threat.

What are Russia's broad interests in Ukraine?

Two major reasons are

Russia wants Ukraine to be a **buffer State** between NATO countries and Russia.

Russia also wants Ukraine to be under **its sphere of influence** to due to historical, cultural and economic reasons.

1. Buffer State:

Ukraine and Russia share a vast border. By not allowing Ukraine to join NATO, Russia wants to keep it as buffer State between NATO countries and Russia.

NATO expansion into eastern Europe and its increasing military presence has been a security concern to Russia as many NATO countries are in its geographical proximity and some NATO countries like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania share borders with Russia.

Russia is vast country geographically and is spread over two continents Europe and Asia. However, from geopolitical perspective, European part of Russia which is in geographical proximity with the eastern Europe holds significance for Russia.

About 77% of Russia's total population lives west of the Ural Mountains (Ural mountains divide Russia into European Russia and Asiatic Russia). Almost all of Russia's largest cities (Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Volgograd, Yekaterinburg, etc.) are in the western part of the country closer to eastern Europe. These cities are important social, political, economic, industrial and cultural centers. Hence, expansion of NATO into eastern Europe heightens the security threat to Europe. NATO has deployed air defence missile systems in NATO countries like Poland and Romania. Though NATO stated that the objective of deployment is collective defence, Russia perceives it as a security threat.

2. Sphere of influence

Russia wants Ukraine to be under its sphere of influence due to **deep historical, cultural, economic, and political bonds** with Ukraine.

Russia and Ukraine have strong familial bonds that go back centuries. Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, is sometimes referred to as "the mother of Russian cities," on par in terms of cultural influence with Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Modern Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians draw their lineage from 'Kiev-an Rus' a medieval state formed in the eighth and ninth centuries and included modern-day Belarus, Ukraine, and part of Russia.

3. Russian diaspora:

Ethnic Russians account for **17 % of Ukraine population** who are living mostly in the south and eastern Ukraine. Hence, protecting the interests of ethnic Russians in Ukraine is a priority for Russia.

4. Regaining Superpower image:

Many Russian politicians including President Putin view allowing the breakaway of Ukraine after the collapse of USSR as a mistake of history and a threat to Russia's standing as a great power. Losing a permanent hold on Ukraine, and letting it fall into the Western orbit, would be seen by many as a major blow to Russia's international prestige.

Putin wants to build a Russia-led sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and regain the past glory of Russia.

5. Western-style democracy threat to autocratic regime in Russia:

If Ukraine continues to develop into a modern, Western-style democracy that would also inevitably undermine autocratic regime in Russia.

Why Ukraine wants closer relationship with the western countries?

- After gaining independence from USSR in 1991, Ukraine has expressed interest in forging closer relationship with the western countries announced its intention to join NATO and European Union due to following reasons.
- It wanted to protect its independent identity which was subsumed under the Soviet rule from 1922 to 1991. Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe after Russia and has a population of around 44 million (4.4 crores). Many in Ukraine believe that they can enjoy more political freedom and also economic advancement by forging closer political and economic cooperation with the West.

Divided Opinion on forging closer relationship with the West:

- However, the Ukrainian population is divided on forging closer relationship with the West.
- While those in the western part of Ukraine mainly Ukrainians are advocating closer political and economic integration with the West by joining NATO and European Union, those in the eastern part of the Ukraine bordering Russia want closer relationship with Russia.
- As a result, the stand of Ukraine kept changing depending on Presidents in power in Ukraine.
- In 2013, the then President Victor Yanukovich, who hails from eastern Ukraine, scrapped plans to formalise a closer economic relationship with the EU and instead opted for closer economic cooperation with Russia partly yielding to pressure from Russia. His decision led to countrywide protests known as Euromaidan (maidan means square or open space in Persian) mainly by Ukrainians demanding closer relations with the EU. Due to widespread protests, Victor Yanukovich fled the country and parliament voted to oust him and hold new elections. Petro Poroshenko was elected as new president.

1. Annexation of Crimea:

Russian President Putin who was infuriated by the ouster of pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich blamed the West for instigation of Euromaidan protests and as retaliation launched invasion on Crimea and later annexed into Russian territory.

President Putin defended the annexation stating that it was necessary to protect ethnic Russians and military assets in Crimea. In fact, **Crimea was not part of Ukraine** till 1954. It was part of

Russia and was gifted by Russia to Ukraine in 1954 due to territorial closeness and to strengthen brotherly ties between Russia and Ukraine on the occasion of 300th anniversary of unification of Ukraine with Russia. Through the 'Treaty of Pereiaslav' in 1654 Ukraine became part of Russian Tsar (Empire). At that time USSR never anticipated break up.

However, after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, President Boris Yeltsin (the then Russian premier) unexpectedly did not attempt to regain Crimea for Russia during negotiations with Ukraine. Thus Crimea became part of the newly independent Ukraine.

Significance of Crimea for Russia:

Russia has a critical naval base at Sevastopol in Crimea. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia signed agreement with Ukraine for leasing the military port of Sevastopol. In 2010, the lease was extended up to 2042 through the agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

Sevastopol serves as the home of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. It gives the Russian Navy direct access to the Mediterranean Sea.

Crimea also has a 2 million population, of which about 60 percent are ethnic Russians. This is **the only region in Ukraine where Russians are in the majority** and has the highest number of Russian speakers.

2. Support to Separatists in the Donbas Region:

Apart from annexing Crimea, Russia also began supporting pro-Russian separatists in the eastern Ukraine in Donbas Region (Luhansk and Donetsk). The separatists who were provided military and financial assistance by Russia declared independence from Ukraine in 2014 and control part of the territories in Luhansk and Donetsk.

Annexation of Crimea and support to separatists in the Donbas region further strained the relationship between Russia and Ukraine. In 2019, Ukraine amended its Constitution committing the country to seek membership and join NATO and European Union.

In addition, Ukraine was given 'enhanced opportunity partner' status by NATO, a special status given to non-NATO member allies. Both NATO and Ukraine began joint military exercises. All these measures further infuriated Russia leading to the launch of invasion on Ukraine.

How did the international community respond to Russia's Invasion?

International community condemned Russian invasion stating that Russia's military offensive violates territorial integrity of a sovereign nation i.e. Ukraine.

In response to Russia's invasion, US, UK and European Union imposed economic sanctions to cripple Russia economically and extended military assistance and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

1. Sanctions on Banks:

US imposed sanctions on two biggest Russian banks namely Sberbank and Alfa Bank which account for half of the banking system in Russia.

US Banks and citizens have been banned from having any transactions and processing payments with these banks.

Sberbank holds nearly one-third of the overall Russian banking sector's assets and is systemically critical to the Russian economy. Alfa Bank is Russia's largest privately-owned financial institution and Russia's fourth largest financial institution overall.

On a daily basis, Russian financial institutions conduct about \$46 billion worth of foreign exchange transactions globally, 80 percent of which are in U.S. dollars. The vast majority of those transactions will now be disrupted as sanctions have been imposed on these two biggest banks.

2. Freeze on Foreign Exchange Reserves:

US, EU and Japan also announced freeze on foreign exchange reserves parked in foreign banks. Russia has around US \$ 630 billion forex reserves. These forex reserves are in the form of gold as well as in foreign currencies like dollars, Euros, Japanese Yen and Chinese Yuan. These are used to purchase Government securities in these countries as well as parked in Banks there to earn interest income. Russia cannot access these reserves parked in foreign countries due to the freeze. As a result of the freeze, the Russia currency Rouble depreciated by around 30 %. To arrest the depreciation, Russia forces energy importers to pay in Roubles as it increases the demand for Roubles and helps in partly arresting depreciation.

3. Ban on Investments:

US prohibited new investments in Russia by US citizens.

4. Sanction on Elite People:

US also imposed sanction on more than 1000 elite people of Russia and Russian oligarchs including former President, Foreign Minister, more than 300 elected representatives. Their assets in US will be frozen and they would be cut off from the US financial system. Bank will not be allowed any transactions by these individuals.

5. Exclusion of SWIFT:

US and EU excluded Russia from SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication), an international network for banks to facilitate smooth money transactions globally.

SWIFT provides a trusted messaging platform for banks to send their counterparts very fast and accurate instructions on fund transfers. As a result of exclusion from SWIFT, Russian would have to build an alternative system which would be cumbersome.

(The Belgium-headquartered SWIFT connects more than 11,000 banking and securities organisations in over 200 countries and territories. SWIFT is regulated by G-10 central banks of Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland, and Sweden, alongside the European Central Bank. Its lead overseer is the National Bank of Belgium.)

6. Military Assistance:

US extended a security assistance of more the US \$ 1 billion to Ukraine.

7. Humanitarian Measures:

US also stated that it will admit 1 Lakh Ukrainian refugees into the country.

8. Reducing Energy dependence on Russia:

Revenue through energy exports finances over 40 % of Russian annual budget.

The US announced ban on all Russian oil and gas imports. UK announced that it will phase out Russian oil imports by the end of 2022.

European Union is significantly dependent on Russia for oil and natural gas imports. The EU gets 25% of its oil and 40% of its natural gas requirements from Russia.

As immediate replacement is not possible, EU announced that it will switch to alternative supplies and make Europe independent from Russian energy "well before 2030".

What are the consequences of Invasion for Russia?

1. Economic:

Contraction in GDP:

Russian economy is expected to contract by at least 15 % in 2022 due to impact of the war.

Inflation:

Inflation is more than 15 % and is expected to increase further.

2. Political:

Russia has been politically isolated by US, UK, and EU.

3. Military:

Russia expected the military operation to end quickly. It focussed on damaging the military infrastructure and force the Ukrainian troops to surrender. However, Russian military faced stiff resistance from Ukrainian military forces. Almost 50 days into the war, Russia has not been able to achieve its stated objectives.

It lost heavily in terms of military personnel as well as military armour. In desperation, it began civilian areas like railway stations, auditoriums, high-rise apartments leading to death of civilians and widespread international condemnation. The Russian army has also been accused of war crimes for killing unarmed civilians.

Cost of Invasion for Ukraine:

1. Refugees:

Russian invasion also led to refugee crisis. As normal life was disrupted and there is a threat to security many Ukrainians began fleeing the country.

Ukraine imposed martial law under which men aged 18 to 60 were banned from leaving the country in order to defend the country. As a result, many women along with children and old people began leaving the country for neighbouring countries as refugees.

Around 4.6 million Ukrainians (46 lakhs) have become refugees in neighbouring countries like Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary. Poland is hosting the maximum refugees (25 lakhs). EU is providing monetary assistance to countries hosting refugees.

European Union has also granted Ukrainian refugees a blanket right to stay and work throughout its 27 member nations for up to three years.

They will also receive social welfare benefits like access to housing, medical treatment and schools.

Some of the refugees from eastern Ukraine have also fled to Russia and Belarus.

2. Damage to critical infrastructure:

Ukraine suffered massive damage due to Russian invasion. Russian military damaged its critical military infrastructure and key civilian infrastructure like airports.

Though in the initial phase Russia targeted military infrastructure, Russia changes its course and began damaging civilian infrastructure as the war prolonged. This led to extensive devastation of many cities like Mariupol, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Sumy, etc.

Ukraine offers to be neutral State:

To end Russian aggression, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky has offered to abandon aspiration to join NATO and accept Ukraine becoming neutral State if it receives adequate security guarantees from western nations.

To what extent NATO is responsible for Russia-Ukraine Conflict?

There is also criticism that NATO led by US is responsible for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

1. Expansion into Eastern Europe:

NATO's continued expansion into eastern Europe from 1990 after the collapse of the USSR and inclusion of 3 former soviet republics Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania humiliated Russia. (These 3 countries share borders with Russia).

Russian leaders, including Putin, alleged that the United States and NATO repeatedly violated pledges they made in the early 1990s to not expand the alliance into the former Soviet bloc.

2. Open Door Policy:

Moreover, with the breakup of USSR, there was no longer threat of communist expansionism in the Europe, there was no longer need to expand NATO. But NATO followed 'open door' policy and expanded to Russia's borders.

3. In-principle Opening of Membership to Ukraine and Georgia:

Beginning in 1999, NATO has added 14 new members in stages. At the NATO summit in 2008, at the request of U.S. President George Bush, an in-principle opening for Ukraine and Georgia was announced ignoring Russia's concerns.

In the weeks leading up to its invasion, Russia made several major security demands for the United States and NATO, including that they cease expanding the alliance, seek Russian consent for certain NATO deployments, and remove U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe. Alliance leaders responded that they were open to new diplomacy but were unwilling to discuss shutting NATO's doors to new members.

4. A new Security Framework for Europe:

There is opinion that instead of expanding the NATO after the fall of USSR, US should have facilitated a new security framework for Europe led by European countries.

Response of NATO on Ukraine Membership Aspiration:

1. Sovereign nations should have freedom to choose their alliances based on their interests.
2. Ukraine cannot be coerced politically or militarily to act according to the wishes of Russia.

Additional Information:

Background about NATO:

- The common understanding is that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded in response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union. This is only partially true.
- In fact, the Alliance's creation was part of a broader effort to serve three purposes:
 1. deterring Soviet expansionism,
 2. forbidding the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence on the continent, and
 3. encouraging European political integration.

Details:

Soviet Expansionism:

- Communists aided by the Soviet Union were becoming a threat to elected governments across Europe.
- In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, with covert backing from the Soviet Union, overthrew the democratically elected government in that country.
- Russian Leader Joseph Stalin wanted Eastern Europe under Russia's control to act both as a defense buffer to protect the Soviet Union (it fought against Germany in World War II) and to expand socialism.

Checking Revival of nationalist militarism in Europe:

- World War II saw much of Europe devastated.
- Approximately 36.5 million Europeans had died in the conflict, 19 million of them civilians.
- It left many people homeless. Refugee camps and rationing of essential goods became way of life.
- The war also led to millions of orphans.
- US launched Marshal Plan (European Recovery Programme) for economic recovery of western European countries devastated by the war.
- European states still needed confidence in their security before they would begin economic recovery. Military cooperation would have to develop in parallel with economic and political progress as it assures security.
- Hence, western European democracies came together to implement various projects for greater military cooperation and collective defence, including the creation of the Western Union in 1948,
- However, they felt that only a truly **transatlantic security agreement** could deter Soviet aggression while simultaneously preventing the revival of European militarism and laying the groundwork for political integration.
- Accordingly, after much discussion and debate, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed on 4 April, 1949 which assures collective security.

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- Under Article 5 of NATO treaty, an attack on NATO member country will be considered as an attack on all NATO member countries thus assuring collective defence. (So far, Article 5 has been invoked once - in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001.)
 - With the benefit of aid under Marshal Plan and a security umbrella under NATO, political stability was gradually restored to Western Europe and the post-war economic progress began.

NATO Membership Expansion:

- The membership of NATO also began to expand gradually.
- It has 12 member countries when it was formed in 1949:
- US, Canada, UK, France, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Luxemburg, Iceland.

Cold war Expansion:

- 1952: Greece, and Turkey; 1955: West Germany; 1982: Spain

Post Cold war expansion:

- Germany (1990), Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017) and North Macedonia (2020).
- Thus at present, there are 30 member countries in NATO.

Relevance of NATO:

- There is no longer threat of soviet communism. But NATO is still being considered relevant to deter the revival of militant nationalism in Europe and to provide the foundation of collective security. It would encourage democratisation and political integration in Europe.



NATO



UKRAINE

India's Stand on Russia-Ukraine War:

Evaluation of India's Foreign Policy in Russia-Ukraine War

India's stand on Russia-Ukraine conflict is being widely debated.

Details:

What is India's Stand in Russia-Ukraine Conflict?

1. India did not condemn Russian military invasion of Ukraine.
2. It **abstained from voting on resolutions condemning Russian aggression** and calling for withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and United Nations Security Council-UNSC (where India is a non-permanent member at present).
3. India also **did not join the sanctions regime** imposed on Russia by US and European countries. Three Asian nations - Japan, South Korea and Singapore - have backed and joined the sanctions regime.
4. On the other hand, India decided **to increase oil imports from Russia** as Russia offered supply at discounted price by Russia.

What is the criticism on India's Policy?

- By launching a military invasion on sovereign country, Russia has become as **a threat to rules-based liberal international order built after the Second World War through United Nations**. The UN Charter signed by all the member countries when United Nations was set up calls for respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member States.
- There is also widespread **violation of human rights** in Ukraine by Russian military by bombing schools, theatres, leading to killing of innocent civilians. Russia military also seized key towns and blocked essential supplies to increase the pressure on Ukrainian armed forces and force them to surrender.
- Hence, **being world's largest democracy**, India cannot remain silent on Russian military aggression and join the international community in condemning the Russian aggression and be part of sanction regime.

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- By not being part of sanctions regime and increasing the imports of Russian oil, India is contributing to the funding of Russian invasion of Ukraine.

What are the reasons for India's Foreign Policy Stand?

1. Historical Relationship:

India has long-standing and historical deep strategic partnership with Russia since its independence. Russia stood by India in international fora in numerous occasions.

Bangladesh War:

During the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war, US, UK and China supported Pakistan. US has sent its Navy's Seventh Fleet headed by USS Enterprise, at that time the largest aircraft carrier in the world, to Bay of Bengal. Likewise UK also sent its naval fleet. In response, India sought help from USSR which sent nuclear armed ships and submarines.

(India sought help from Russia under the India-USSR Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1971. Under the treaty, there is provision for mutual cooperation in case of any external aggression on either of them from the third country).

Kashmir Issue:

As a member UN Security Council, Soviet Union also stood firmly with India on Kashmir issue. It used veto power against UN resolution calling for interventions in Kashmir in 1957, 1962 and 1971.

In 1955, the Nikita Khrushchev, the then Leader of USSR, visited Kashmir during his visit to India and declared Kashmir as integral part of India.

Even during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war, US had initiated a resolution in the UN Security Council demanding a ceasefire and withdrawal of armed forces by India and Pakistan. USSR once again had vetoed the resolution, allowing India to keep fighting for the cause, which eventually led to the liberation of Bangladesh.

2. Defence Needs:

Russia is India's largest arms supplier meeting supplying 50 of India's defence imports.

(Russia was supplying up to 70 % defence needs till 2017. It came down to 50 % recently as India began increasing defence purchases from other countries like US, France)

India is heavily dependent on Russia for its defence needs like Battle tanks (T-72 and T-90), Fighter Aircrafts (Su-30 MKI), (MIG-29), Submarines, Aircraft Carrier (INS Vikramaditya, which is Soviet-made), Anti-Tank Guided Missiles, Helicopters (Mi-17), Assault Rifles (AK-47), etc.

Overall, at present Russian-origin weapons and platforms across Indian armed forces is as high as 85 per cent. India needs assured supply of spares and maintenance of the weapons and platforms.

Recently (2018), India also signed US \$ 5 billion deal with Russia to buy 5 units of S-400 Surface-to-Air Missile defence system.

Both the countries also involved in joint production of BrahMos supersonic missile. (It can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or land platforms and flies at a speed of 2.8 Mach or almost three times the speed of sound.

Recently (2021), India and Russia have also signed an agreement to jointly manufacture AK-203 rifles (advanced version of AK-47 Rifle) in India. (A joint venture plant has been set up in this regard in Korwa, Uttar Pradesh to manufacture over 6 lakh AK-203 Assault Rifles)

3. China Factor:

Condemning Russian actions will strain the bilateral relationship and such an action would also push Russia to forge closer relationship with China.

4. Strategic Autonomy:

India does not want to be a client state of any major power and maintain strategic autonomy in foreign policy.

Historically India's foreign policy was guided by strategic autonomy. Even during the Cold War period (between US and Russia), India did not join any block. In fact, India took lead (along with Egypt, Yugoslavia and Indonesia) in launching Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), a grouping more than 100 developing countries, with the objective of not aligning with any major power block.

5. Chance to play the role of Peacemaker:

By not taking sides in the conflict, India gets a chance to play a peacemaker. Once it takes a stand on either side, the scope for negotiations reduces.

6. Permanent interests:

Foreign policy is guided by permanent national interests of the country rather than merely on moral principles.

For instance, Europe is still importing oil and natural gas from Russia. Similarly, China, the world's second largest economy did not abide by the sanctions regime imposed by US and Europe.

7. Rivalry of Great Powers:

India also sees the situation of Russia-Ukraine as conflict between US and Russia which have been historical rivals (mainly ideological - Capitalism Vs Communism) since the end of Second World War.

The fall of USSR partly reduced rivalry but continuous eastward expansion of US-led NATO (a political and military alliance to secure Europe from spread of Communism from USSR) after the fall of USSR humiliated and angered Russia. US opened up NATO membership opportunity to Georgia and Ukraine (which were part of erstwhile USSR) in 2008 leading to present conflict.

On the other hand, the US wants to use the current Russia-Ukraine war to significantly weaken Russia and consolidate its super power status whose position is also threat due to rising China. Hence, India does not want to take a side in the confrontation between US and Russia. Taking a stand also would make China, India's neighbour, stronger as it would lead to forging of closer China-Russia partnership. Thus by taking a side against Russia, India risks damaging its relations with deep and historical relations with Russia and facilitating closer Russia-China partnership. Hence remaining neutral is the best available option for India.

8. Geopolitical Objectives:

India also needs Russia not only for defence and energy purchases but also for geopolitical reasons. India is as much a continental power as it is a maritime power. While close ties with the U.S., Japan and Australia are important for India's maritime security and interests, ties with Russia, Iran and the Central Asian countries are important for its continental security and economic interests, especially after the U.S.'s ignominious withdrawal from Afghanistan.

US Stand on India:

- US expressed displeasure at India's stand on Russia-Ukraine war.
- But US also understands India's concerns as US was never an historical ally of India. US-India bilateral relations deepened only in the last three decades. The collapse of UUSR in 1991 and launch of economic reforms (Liberalisation, Globalisation and Privatisation) around the same time lead to deepening of India-US relations.

Sri Lankan Economic Crisis:

Sri Lankan Economic Crisis

Sri Lanka is undergoing a severe economic crisis due to shortage of foreign exchange reserves to finance imports.

Extent of economic crisis:

- Due to shortage of foreign exchange reserves, Sri Lankan Government is struggling to finance import of essential commodities like **food, medicine and fuel**.

Fuel Shortages:

- There is also shortage of fuel (diesel and petrol) and cooking gas in the country as their imports were affected by non-payment of dues.

Power cuts:

- The country is dependent on import of coal and fuel oil to run its thermal power plants. The supply of these raw materials was affected due to non-payment of dues for imports. As a result, the country is experiencing power cuts of more than 10 hours per day.
- Due to shortage of paper, school examinations for students were postponed and major newspapers suspended print editions due to shortage of newsprint.

70 % Reduction in Forex Reserves in 2 Years:

- Foreign currency reserves of Sri Lanka reduced by about 70% in the last two years.
- They stood at around \$2.3 billion by February 2022 (from the level of US \$ 7.6 billion at the end of 2019).
- Out of this \$2.3 billion, there are certain amounts that the Central Bank cannot use immediately, such as the gold stock, position of Sri Lanka with the International Monetary Fund and also 1.6-billion yuan facility that had been granted by the People's Bank of China to Sri Lanka.
- So, the usable foreign reserves as at the end of February was about \$400 million, which was not sufficient even to meet imports for one week for the country.

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- On the other hand, Sri Lanka has to make external debt payments of about \$7 billion in the year 2022 while continuing to import essential commodities from its dwindling forex reserves.
 - The total external debt of Sri Lanka is US \$ 51 billion. Out of the this, US \$ 12.5 has been raised through international sovereign bonds (Government securities issued in foreign currency mainly dollars).

What are the reasons for the present crisis?

- The impact of COVID-19 pandemic and some unwise policy decisions of the Government are the reasons for the present economic crisis in Sri Lanka

COVID-19 Impact:

Sectors which generate foreign exchange for the country were severely affected due to the impact of the COVID-19. These are

- Tourism
- Garments Exports
- Tea exports
- Rubber exports
- Remittances

Tourism almost came to a halt as COVID-19 led to travel restrictions. Tourism accounts for 12% of Sri Lanka GDP.

Demand for exports like garments, tea and rubber also reduced due to the impact of COVID-19.

Remittances from workers settled abroad also declined due to COVID-19 as it resulted in job losses. Sri Lanka gets around \$650 million by remittances per month, but that had fallen to \$200 million by February 2022.

Other Reasons for Economic Crisis:

1. Unviable Infrastructure projects:

After the end of civil war with LTTE in 2009, Sri Lanka embarked on a series of infrastructure projects (ports, airports, etc) for economic transformation of the country most of them financed by China. However, these projects were economically unviable and most them are struggling to recover operating costs. But, Sri Lanka has to spend foreign exchange reserves (dollars) for repayment of these loans.

2. Central Bank Decisions:

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka also liberally extended credit to the Sri Lankan Government which fuelled inflationary pressure in the economy. The rising demand for goods was met through imports which also contributed to decline of foreign exchange reserves.

(Normally, the Central Bank keeps money supply growth equal to the real economic growth (growth adjusted to inflation) in the economy, plus another 5-6 percent to facilitate the transactions. So, if the real economic growth is say 5 percent, the Central Bank would allow the money supply

to grow by 11 percent. But, in case Sri Lanka, what happened was the real economic growth has been actually close to zero during 2020 and 2021. Because in 2020, it was negative 3.6 percent. In 2021, it is positive 3.7 percent. But the money supply has increased by 40 percent, which led to tremendous inflationary pressure. Inflation stood at 16.8 per cent in February 2022 and 18.7 in March 2022).

3. Tax Reductions:

The present Government headed by Gotabaya Rajapaksa came to power in 2019. During the election campaign, he promised lowering of taxes. After coming to power, he reduced value added tax (VAT) rates from 15% to 8% and raised annual income threshold for waiver of personal income tax from 500,000 LKR (Sri Lankan rupee) to LKR 3,000,000.

Close to 4% of the GDP was lost in taxes foregone.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 made the bad situation worse. Exports of tea, rubber, spices and garments suffered and Tourism arrivals and revenues fell further. The pandemic also necessitated a rise in government expenditures. All this led to fiscal deficit exceeding 10% in 2020 and 2021.

The ratio of public debt to GDP rose from 94% in 2019 to 119% in 2021. As a result, Sri Lanka's ability to raise external debt (which would have brought dollars into the country) got affected

4. Ban on Import of Fertilisers:

Sri Lanka annually spent about \$260 million (or about 0.3% of its GDP) on fertiliser subsidies. Most of the fertilisers are imported. To prevent the drain of foreign exchange reserves, the Gotabaya government in May 2021, banned import of all fertilisers and declared that Sri Lanka would become a 100% organic farming nation

This policy was withdrawn in November 2021 after protests by farmers and warning of yield losses by agricultural scientists. However, the ban on import of fertilisers for 7 months did affect the yields of crops like rice, rubber and tea. As a result, Sri Lanka began importing rice from India to meeting the domestic demand.

5. 2019 Terrorist Blasts:

In April 2019, Sri Lanka was rocked by deadly blasts by terrorists which killed more than 250 people. Terrorists linked to Islamic State carried out coordinated blasts in 8 places in cities of Colombo, Batticaloa, and Negombo mainly on Churches and high-end hotels on Easter Sunday on April 21, 2019.

The blasts took a heavy toll on tourism industry of Sri Lanka as it became to be seen as unsafe destination for international tourists. Consequently, the number of international tourists fell sharply leading to a decline in foreign exchange reserves.

How is Sri Lanka Tying to Address the Economic Crisis?

- It is seeking assistance from friendly countries like India, China and Bangladesh by way loans, currency swaps, and credit lines for import of essentials like rice, fuel, medicines (procuring these commodities on credit i.e. on the promise of future payments) and deferment of past loan repayments including International sovereign bonds.

India's Assistance:

- Beginning January 2022, India has extended assistance totalling US \$ 2.4 billion which includes \$ 400 million RBI currency swap, a \$500 million loan deferment, and credit lines for importing **food, fuel, and medicines.**
- China is considering Sri Lanka's recent request for further \$2.5 billion assistance, in addition to the \$2.8 billion it has extended since the outbreak of the pandemic.

IMF's Role:

- Sri Lanka was hesitant to seek assistance from International Monetary Fund (IMF) as it extends assistance only with conditionalities and approaching friendly countries like India, China and Bangladesh. However, continuation of the economic crisis forced Sri Lanka to change its stance and seek assistance from International Monetary Fund (IMF). It is negotiating with IMF for securing \$ 3 billion financial assistance.
- IMF assists countries facing Balance of Payments (BoP) crisis based on conditionalities like devaluation of currency (to make exports competitive and reduce imports), reducing fiscal deficit, tax reforms, rationalising Government expenditure, measures to encourage foreign investment to improve competitiveness of the economy, etc.

What Measures can help Sri Lanka in the Long term?

- Lack of diversification for export base and continued reliance on traditional sectors like tea, garments, tourism, and rubber are the structural problems in Sri Lankan economy.
- Manufacturing base has not expanded
- Service sector has not diversified apart from tourism.
- Diversifying the manufacturing base and service sector to tap opportunities in sectors like Information Technology, Business Process outsourcing (BPO) can increase the forex earning opportunities for Sri Lanka
- Sri Lanka should also adopt judicious approach in allowing foreign investments in order to ensure that they ensure a win-win situation for both (investor and the Sri Lankan economy). Otherwise, these projects end up sucking more foreign exchange from the Sri Lankan economy.

RC REDDY IAS STUDY CIRCLE

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Indo-UAE:

India UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

- India and United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in February 2022. It came into force on May 1, 2022. This is the first trade related agreement for India in almost a decade. The last agreement was in 2011 with Japan when India and Japan signed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- India UAE CEPA is also the first agreement for India in the West-Asian region and North-Africa region. (Also called Middle East and North Africa-MENA- region)
- India UAE CEPA aimed at deeper economic cooperation between both the countries. It covers wide areas like trade in goods, trade in services, investments, movement of skilled personnel, Government procurement, telecommunication services (allowing Indian telecom companies to offer telecom services through licence in UAE and vice versa), etc.

Details:

Significance of UAE for India:

1. Trade:

UAE is third largest trading partner (after USA and China) and second largest export destination after USA. Bilateral trade stood at US \$ 65 billion in 2021-22. (Bilateral trade has come a long way from just US \$ 180 million per annum in 1970's).

In 2021-22, India's exports to the UAE were around US \$ 25 billion while imports were around US \$ 40 billion.

2. Oil trade:

UAE is one of the key energy suppliers of India.

It is India's third biggest oil supplier after Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Around 10 % of India's oil imports are supplied by UAE.

3. Investment:

The UAE is also the eight largest investor in India with an estimated investment of US\$ 18 billion.

4. Infrastructure:

UAE has also committed US\$ 75 billion towards infrastructure development in India.

5. Immigrants:

UAE is home to around 3.5 million (35 lakhs) Indian expatriate community. They constitute around 30% of UAE population. (UAE total population is 93 lakhs of which three-fourths are immigrants from foreign countries including India. India receives more than US \$ 20 billion in remittances from immigrants in UAE. UAE accounts for one-third of the remittances received by India annually. This is due to most of the immigrants to UAE (65 %) are blue-collar workers like construction workers, agricultural labour, domestic helps, etc. who migrate with the intension of saving by sending remittances back home.

Benefits of CEPA with UAE for India:

Some of the major benefits for India from CEPA with UAE are as follows.

1. Duty free Exports:

90 % of merchandise goods exported from India to UAE will be given duty free access i.e. UAE will not charge any import duty. This tariff free access will increase to 99 % exported goods from India over a period of 10 years.

(India agreed to give duty-free access to 80 % of goods from UAE. This duty-free access will increase to 90 % of goods imports from UAE in 10 years)

2. Benefit to Labour intensive industries:

Labour intensive industries in India like Gems and Jewellery, Textiles, leather, footwear would benefit from duty free access. At present exports from these industries attract 5 % duty while the same from countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam have duty-free access.

3. Pharmaceuticals:

India's pharmaceutical industry will also benefit from CEPA. UAE agreed to facilitate market access and regulatory approval within 90 days to Indian pharmaceutical products that have been approved in developed jurisdictions such as the US, the UK, the EU, Canada and Australia.

4. Access to other countries and regions:

CEPA is India's first bilateral trade agreement in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This agreement will ease similar agreements with the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries - Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain.

It will provide better access to markets across the wider MENA region by leveraging the UAE's transport and logistics infrastructure.

5. US \$ 100 billion trade:

CEPA is expected to boost bilateral trade to US \$ 100 billion in 5 years from US \$ 65 billion at present.

Indo-Australia:

India Australia Virtual Summit

India Australia virtual summit was held in March 2022.

Details:

Major Facets of India-Australia Partnership:

1. Trade:

Bilateral Trade:

India is the 8th largest trade partner of Australia.

Trade in goods and services stood at \$ 27.5 billion in 2020-21

Merchandise imports from Australia stood at US \$ 15.1 billion while exports stood at US \$ 6.9 billion. India has a trade deficit with Australia.

Major Imports from Australia: Coal, copper, gold, LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas), wool, fruits and nuts, lentils, etc.

Major Exports to Australia: Refined petroleum, medicines, Pearls, Gems and Jewelry, textiles, etc

2. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

India and Australia have been negotiating to conclude Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) which would be a comprehensive agreement to deepen economic cooperation between the two countries covering trade in goods, services, investment, intellectual property rights, Government procurement, etc.

Since there are many issues to be resolved for concluding the CEPA deal, both the countries signed an interim deal called **Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)** in April 2022.

The agreement covers trade in goods, services, movement of natural persons, etc. Both the countries agreed to eliminate tariffs on most of the traded goods between them which will make the goods cheaper and increase their consumption.

The agreement aims to enhance bilateral trade to \$ 45 billion in the next 5 years from around \$ 27 billion at present.

Benefit for India from the Agreement:

Australia agreed to eliminate duties on all imports from India.

Labour-intensive sectors of export interest to India such as Gems and Jewellery, Textiles, leather, footwear, furniture, food, and agricultural products, engineering products, medical devices, and Automobiles would benefit from tariff elimination.

India pharmaceutical sector is expected to be a major beneficiary as market for pharmaceuticals in Australia which is worth US \$ 12 billion while Indian export of pharmaceutical products is meagre \$ 345 million.

Similarly, footwear and leather products present huge market opportunity of \$ 2 billion. But India captures only 3 to 5 % of market and China dominates the market due to Free Trade Agreement with Australia. With elimination of tariffs, Indian leather and footwear industry can compete with China.

In services, Australia has committed to further open up IT, ITES, Business services, Health, Education, and Audio visual for Indian professionals.

Australia also agreed to provide post study work visa of 2-4 years for Indian students.

Benefits to Australia:

India will eliminate tariffs on more than 85 % of the Australian exports. This tariff free access will increase to 91 % of Australian exports in 10 years.

India has agreed to eliminate tariffs (import duty) on import of sheep meat, wool, LNG, coal, alumina, metallic ores, including manganese, copper and nickel; and critical minerals including titanium and zirconium.

Present tariffs up to 30 per cent on avocados, onions, broad, kidney beans and adzuki beans, cherries, shelled pistachios, macadamias, cashews in-shell, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, currants will be eliminated over seven years.

Tariffs on almonds, lentils, oranges, mandarins, pears, apricots and strawberries will be reduced, improving opportunities for Australia's horticulture industry to supply India's growing food demand.

Tariffs on wine bottles with minimum import price of US\$15 will be reduced from 150 per cent to 75 per cent on entry into force and subsequently to 25 per cent over 10 years (based on Indian wholesale price index for wine).

3. Supply Chain Resilience Initiative:

World is heavily dependent on China for supply chains. But, the COVID-19 which originated in China led to global supply disruptions.

India and Australia along with Japan launched 'Supply Chain Resilience Initiative' in April 2021 to make them resilient from future disruptions.

What is a supply chain?

Due to increasing sophistication in manufacturing, manufacturing industry has witnessed a shift in the way certain products are manufactured. A single company no longer manufactures the end product. Conceptualisation, designing, manufacturing, assembling are being taken up as specialised activities. These processes lead to supply chain. For instance, Apple iPhone is designed and developed in US but manufactured and assembled in low labour cost countries like China, Taiwan, Viet Nam, Philippines, etc.

4. Civil nuclear cooperation:

India and Australia have also signed a Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement in 2014 under which Australia agreed to allow uranium exports to India for civilian uses (in nuclear power reactors)

5. Indian Diaspora:

India is one of the top sources of skilled immigrants for Australia.

The Indian community in Australia is significant with a population of more than 7 lakhs. After England, Indians constitute the second largest migrant group in Australia.

6. Education:

More than 1 lakh Indian students studying in various universities in Australia

Indo-Japan:

India Japan Relations

Prime Minister of Japan Mr. Fumio Kishida visited India in March 2022 for the 14th India-Japan Annual Summit.

Details:

Major Facets of India Japan Relationship:

1. Trade:

Bilateral trade between India and Japan stood at US \$ 15.3 billion in 202-21.

Exports to Japan: US \$ 4.4 billion

Imports from Japan: US \$ 10.9 billion

India has a trade deficit with Japan.

Exports: India's primary exports to Japan have been petroleum products, chemicals, fish & fish preparations, metalliferous ores & scrap, clothing & accessories, iron & steel products, textile yarn, fabrics and machinery etc.

Imports: India's primary imports from Japan are machinery, electrical machinery, iron and steel products, plastic materials, non-ferrous metals, parts of motor vehicles, organic chemicals, manufactures of metals, etc.

2. Investment:

Japan is the 5th largest investor in India.

Cumulative investments by Japan in India stand at US \$ 36 billion.

Japanese FDI into India has mainly been in automobile, electrical equipment, telecommunications, chemical, financial (insurance) and pharmaceutical sectors.

There are more than 1400 Japanese companies operating in India.

3. Official Development Assistance (ODA):

Japan has been extending bilateral loans and grant assistance to India since 1958 and is the largest bilateral donor for India.

Japanese ODA supports India's efforts for accelerated economic development, particularly in priority areas like power, transportation, environment and social sector.

4. Railways:

Japan is providing concessional loans for construction of metros (Delhi and Chennai), dedicated freight corridors, Mumbai-Ahmadabad High Speed Railway Project (Bullet train).

5. Other Infrastructure projects:

Japan is providing concessional loans for other physical and social infrastructure projects like roads network in north eastern India, **highway projects** in mountainous regions, **power supply projects** in Andaman and Nicobar islands, development of **healthcare infrastructure, drinking water supply, sewerage systems, and pollution abatement projects** in various states in the country.

6. Skill Development:

Moreover, 15 million people (1.5 crore) enter the labour market annually in India.

Hence, it is imperative to strengthen the manufacturing capacity and focus on human resource development. To meet the skill demand in manufacturing sector and contribute to the 'Skill India' and 'Make in India' initiatives, India has signed MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Japan in 2016 under which Japan agreed to 30,000 persons in 10 years. For this purpose, Japan India Institute of Manufacturing (JIM) have been set up in various states across the country.

Five Japanese Companies established JIMs in 2017 viz., Suzuki (Gujarat), Daikin (Rajasthan), Yamaha (Tamil Nadu), Toyota and Hitachi (Karnataka). In 2018, Ahresty established its JIM in Bawal (Haryana), Toyota Tsusho in Mandal (Gujarat), Terumo Corporation in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala).

7. Cooperation in Disaster Risk Reduction:

As both India and Japan are disaster prone countries, they have been cooperating in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) by sharing best practice in preparedness, earthquake early detection and warning systems, etc.

8. Indo-Pacific:

India and Japan are working together to promote peace, stability and prosperity, through economic growth and development in the Indo-Pacific, including Africa, by enhancing connectivity through quality infrastructure and capacity building in countries in the Indo-Pacific.

Some of the projects taken up jointly by India and Japan are development of LNG-related infrastructure in Sri Lanka, housing, education and electrification projects in Rakhine province in Myanmar, construction of Road and Railway projects in Bangladesh, etc.

9. QUAD:

India and Japan along with US and Australia are also part of QUAD, an informal group, which aims at deepening cooperation in critical technologies (5G technology, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, etc), cyber security, addressing climate change issue, building quality infrastructure in the Indo-pacific region, and dealing with COVID through vaccine partnership.

10. Indian Community in Japan:

Approximately 40,000 Indians are living in Japan currently who are working in various professions like IT professionals and engineers working for Indian and Japanese firms as well as professionals in management, finance, education, and S&T research.

Outcome of the Present Visit:

1. Investments:

Japan committed to facilitate flow of Rs. 3.2 lakh crore investments (public and private) into India in the next 5 years.

2. Clean Energy Partnership:

India-Japan Clean Energy Partnership (CEP) was launched for cooperation towards achieving sustainable economic growth, addressing climate change and ensuring energy security, in areas such as electric vehicles (EV), storage systems including batteries, electric vehicle charging infrastructure (EVCI), solar energy, green hydrogen, wind energy, energy efficiency, CCUS (Carbon dioxide Capturing, Utilisation and Storage), etc.

3. Wastewater Management:

A Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) was signed for cooperation in decentralised domestic wastewater management.

4. India-Japan Initiative for Sustainable Development of the North Eastern Region of India:

India-Japan Initiative for Sustainable Development of the North Eastern Region of India", was also launched which includes "Initiative for Strengthening the Bamboo Value Chain in the North East" and cooperation in health care, forest resources management, connectivity and tourism in different states of the North Eastern Region.

5. Russia Ukraine Conflict:

Both the Prime Ministers expressed serious concern about the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. They emphasised that the contemporary global order has been built on the UN Charter, international law and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.

They reiterated their call for an immediate cessation of violence and noted that there was no other choice but the path of dialogue and diplomacy for resolution of the conflict.

India's Arctic Policy:

India Unveils Arctic Policy

India unveiled Arctic policy in March 2022. Though India is an Observer State in the Arctic Council, till now it did not have a clearly articulated Arctic Policy.

Details:

What is Arctic?

The Arctic is the northernmost region on Earth. It includes Arctic Ocean and northern areas of 8 States: Canada, United States (Alaska), Russia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Denmark (Greenland).

Arctic is home to almost 4 million inhabitants. Approximately one-tenth of these inhabitants are indigenous people.

Arctic Council:

Arctic Council was formed in 1996 for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.

It consists of 8 Arctic States along with 6 associations representing indigenous communities: Inuit, Sami, Aleut, Athabaskan, Gwich'in and Russian indigenous peoples.

Observer States: In addition, there are 13 non-arctic States which have been given Observer Status: United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, China, India, South Korea, Singapore, Spain, and Switzerland.

Why is Arctic Region Significant?

1. Opening of Sea Route:

Arctic region is warming three times faster than the rest of the world leading to melting of ice caps and reduction of snow cover in the Arctic region.

Ice free conditions in the Arctic are resulting in progressive opening of shipping route between northern Europe and East Asia. This route (called Northern Sea Route) could potentially reshape global trade as it reduces distance, saves time and also reduces shipping costs.

At present, shipping between major Japanese and South Korean ports such as Tokyo and Busan and northern Europe ports such as Rotterdam (Netherlands) and Hamburg (Germany) must pass through a series of heavily trafficked chokepoints, including the Suez Canal and the Strait of Malacca.

Initial estimates suggest the current 40-day, 22,000-kilometer voyage from northern Europe to East Asia (routed through the Suez Canal and Strait of Malacca) could be reduced into a 30-day, 15,000-kilometer trip via the Northern Sea Route.

2. Mineral Resources:

The region also contains large reserves of mineral deposits: Copper, phosphorous, niobium, platinum, and rare earth minerals,

3. Hydrocarbon Resources:

Arctic region constitutes largest unexplored area for hydrocarbons (oil and natural gas)

A US Geological Survey (USGS) appraisal of the Arctic estimated that the Arctic region may contain 30 per cent of the world's undiscovered natural gas and 13 per cent of the world's undiscovered oil.

With the increasing ice-melt, these resources are becoming more accessible and feasible for extraction.

Major Features of India's Arctic Policy:

1. Scientific Research:

India will further strengthen its existing research base at Himadri in Ny-Alesund, Svalbard to maintain yearlong presence. At present research is conducted for 180 days in a year in disciplines such as atmospheric science, ocean science, glaciology, geology, geophysics.

Additional research stations would be established in the Arctic.

A dedicated institutional funding would be set up to support Arctic research.

2. Space Technology:

India would engage with Arctic nations to use the ISRO's RESOURCESAT, constellation of earth imaging satellites, data for mapping the Arctic region and using the data for sustainable land and water management.

3. Climate Change:

Climate change is an existential global challenge. Hence, studying climate change in Arctic would be critical dimension of India's scientific research.

4. Economic Objectives:

India would explore investment opportunities with Arctic States for responsible exploitation of natural resources and minerals in the Arctic.

History of India's Engagement with the Arctic:

- India's Arctic engagement began a century ago with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in 1920.
- However, its more regular engagement with the region began in 2007, with the launching of its first scientific expedition in the Arctic.
- In 2008, India set up a research station Himadri at the international Arctic research base in Ny-Alesund, Svalbard.
- In 2014, IndArc, India's first multi-sensor moored observatory was deployed in Kongsfjorden.
- In 2016, India's northernmost atmospheric observatory was established at Gruebadet.



SUMMITS

5th BIMSTEC Summit

5th BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Summit was held under the Chairmanship of Sri Lanka in March 2022.

Details:

Background about BIMSTEC:

- BIMSTEC is a regional organisation of 7 states: 5 South Asian States and 2 South East Asian States.
- 5 South Asian States: India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan.
- 2 South East Asian States: Myanmar and Thailand.

Origin of BIMSTEC:

- Initially, four countries namely Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand formed BISTEC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation) in June 1997 for promotion of economic cooperation between countries bordering the Bay of Bengal.
- Later in December 1997, Myanmar joined the group and it was renamed as BIMSTEC (Bangladesh-Myanmar-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation)
- In 2004, Nepal and Bhutan joined the Group and the group was renamed as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Evaluation of BIMSTEC:

- Despite being in existence for 25 years, BIMSTEC has not made any noticeable progress mainly due to lack of political will.
- In 2004, Member States agreed to sign Free Trade Agreement. But till now there has been no progress on this front.
- However, BIMSTEC did achieve success in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and security, including counterterrorism, cyber security, and coastal security cooperation as there is deepened cooperation in these matters.
- But, BIMSTEC needs comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (goods, services and investment) to be a real game changer.

Reasons for Revival of Interest in BIMSTEC:

- There is a revival of interest in the BIMSTEC initiative mainly due to interest shown by India.
- As another regional Group SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) has not been able to make adequate progress since 2014 due to strained bilateral partnership between India and Pakistan, India has been trying to revive BIMSTEC as an alternative. India sees BIMSTEC as a more practical instrument for regional cooperation over a faltering SAARC.

- Hence, at the initiative of India, 4th BIMSTEC Summit was held in 2018 in Nepal during which member countries decided undertake institutional reform by drafting a Charter for the Group.

Major Outcome of 5th BIMSTEC Summit:

- At the recent summit held in Sri Lanka, BIMSTEC countries for the first time agreed on a Charter.
- The Charter lays down the aims and objectives of the group and also gives legal sanctity to the grouping as an intergovernmental organisation. All the decisions in the Group will be taken by consensus.
- 'BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters' and 'Master Plan for Transport Connectivity' were also adopted during the BIMSTEC summit in Sri Lanka.
- The sectors for cooperation identified among BIMSTEC member States were also rationalized to limit cooperation to 7 sectors (One sector each for BIMSTEC member).
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) among BIMSTEC countries during the recent summit in Sri Lanka.

BIMSTEC Charter:

Under the charter, the major aims and objectives of the BIMSTEC are to

1. accelerate the economic growth and social progress in the Bay of Bengal region through joint endeavours and implementation of specific cooperation projects.
2. establish multidimensional connectivity to enable economic integration of Member States
3. promote trade and investment in the region.
4. eradicate poverty from the Bay of Bengal region.
5. maintain peace and stability in the Bay of Bengal region through close collaboration in combating international terrorism, transnational organised crimes as well as natural disasters, climate change and communicable diseases.

Revised Areas for Cooperation:

There were 14 areas identified for cooperation among BIMSTEC member countries. At the BIMSTEC Summit held in Sri Lanka, member countries agreed to rationalise and limit the areas of cooperation to 7 (One area for each member as given below).

Country	Sector
Bangladesh	Trade, Investment and Development
Bhutan	Environment & Climate Change
India	Security (Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Disaster Management, Energy)
Myanmar	Agriculture and Food Security
Nepal	People-to-People Contact (Culture, Tourism, Forums of think tanks, media etc.)
Sri Lanka	Science, Technology & Innovation
Thailand	Connectivity

BIMSTEC MAP



RC REDDY IAS STUDY CIRCLE

NATIONAL POLITY

Hijab Controversy:

Karnataka High Court Upholds Ban on Hijab in Educational Institutions

In March 2022, a three-Judge Bench of the High Court of Karnataka, headed by the Chief Justice, Ritu Raj Awasthi, upheld the ban imposed by Karnataka Government on wearing of Hijab in educational institutions in the State.

Details:

Some pre-university colleges in Karnataka refused entry to Muslim girl students wearing hijabs (head-scarves).

The denial of entry to a few Muslim girls, who insisted for entering the classroom with hijab, had subsequently led to a series of protests and demonstration in several parts of Karnataka. This protests also resulted in students belonging to the Hindu faith demanding that college authorities permit them to attend classes wearing saffron shawls.

Some Muslim Girl Students challenged refusal of entry into educational institutions to Muslim girl students wearing hijabs in the Karnataka High Court.

Why Uniforms are prescribed for Students?

1. To promote equality and integrity.
2. To ensure public order.
3. Educational institutions are also **secular spaces**. Allowing religious attire leads to **polarization** on religious lines in secular spaces.

What is the Stand of Students?

Wearing a Hijab is a fundamental right and protected under Article 19 (a), Article 21 (Right to Privacy) and Article 25 (Religious Freedom).

1. Article 19 (1) a:

Under Article 19 (1) (a), Dress (Hijab) is covered under freedom of expression.

2. Article 21:

Similarly, it also protected under Article 21 (Right to Privacy). Hence, Government should provide 'reasonable accommodation' for wearing Hijab which matches with the colour of the uniform. Otherwise such restriction would not pass 'test of proportionality' (interference in privacy must be proportionate to the need for such interference)

3. Article 25:

The Muslim girl students also contended that wearing of Hijab is an essential religious practice and protected under the right to freedom of religion in Article 25 of the Constitution.

4. Article 21A:

The girl students also contended that denial of entry into colleges for wearing a Hijab amounts to violation of the students' right to education under Article 21A

What is the Verdict of Karnataka High Court?

1. Not an Essential Religious Practice:

The High Court ruled that Hijab is not part of essential religious practices in Islamic faith.

The concept of essential religious practices emerged out of various Supreme Court Judgments since the 1950's. Whenever, a religious practice is exclusionary or discriminatory, the test of essential religious practice is applied by the Supreme Court.

To determine whether a particular practice is essential to religion or not, the Supreme Court relies on the relevant religious scriptures.

It also evaluates whether the absence or removal of a religious practice has the effect of destroying the religion itself in determining essential religious practice.

2. Reasonable Restriction:

The High court ruled that prescription of school uniform does not violate either the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1) (a) or the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution, and the restriction against wearing of Hijab in educational institutions is only a reasonable restriction constitutionally permissible, which the students cannot object to.

Fundamental Rights are not absolute and subject to reasonable restrictions on the grounds of morality, public order, etc.

CrPC Bill:

Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill 2022

Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill 2022 was passed by the Parliament in March 2022. The Bill replaced the Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920 which has been repealed.

Details:

Why was the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill 2022 Passed?

- Evidence plays a crucial role in prevention, control of crimes and also increasing the rate of crime conviction.
- Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920 allowed collection of fingerprints, footprints and photographs from convicted (if they were punished with a rigorous imprisonment of more than year) and non-convicted persons.

The following are non-convicted persons

- Those arrested for crimes which attract punishment of more than a year.
- Those who are ordered by the executive magistrate to give security bond for good behaviour.
- However, the Government opines that present measurements (fingerprints, footprints and photographs) collected as evidence are inadequate. Since 1920 many new techniques have been developed which need to be incorporated.

What are the major Features of the Bill?

1. Expansion of nature of evidence:

1920 Act provides for collection of fingerprints, footprints and photographs. The 2022 Bill provides for collection of following new measurements.

biometrics (palm prints, iris and retina scan in addition to foot prints, finger prints), physical and biological samples (which could include blood, semen, saliva, etc.), and behavioural attributes (signature, handwriting, voice samples, etc.).

Exception:

Biological samples can be collected only when a person is arrested for an offence: (i) against a woman or a child, or (ii) that offence carries a minimum punishment of seven years imprisonment

2. Expansion of category of persons whose evidence may be collected:

The category of persons whose measurements (evidence) can be collected has also been expanded.

Under the 1920 Act, measurements of only the following can be collected

Those who have been convicted with a rigorous imprisonment of more than year.

Those who are arrested for an offence which carries a rigorous imprisonment of more than year.

Those who are ordered by the executive magistrate to give security bond for good behaviour.

Under the 2022 Bill,

Under the 2020, there is **no bar on collection of measurements**. Measurements of any person convicted or arrested for any crime can be collected.

Besides, the measurements of those arrested under Preventive Detention can also be collected.

Under those who are ordered by the executive magistrate to give security bond for good behaviour, the 1920 Act covered following sections under Code of Criminal Procedure 108 (Persons disseminating seditious matters), 109 (Persons suspected to commit cognizable crimes), 110 (Habitual offenders).

The 2022 Bill in addition to the above added those covered under section 107 (Those whose actions contribute to breach of peace or public tranquility) of Code of Criminal Procedure.

3. Storage of Data:

The data (measurements) collected would be stored in a central database by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the central agency to maintain the records. It will share the data with law enforcement agencies of States if needed.

4. 75 Years Storage:

The data collected by the Police can be retained by them up to 75 years in case of convicted persons.

In case of those arrested and acquitted, their records will be destroyed if they are convicted any crime earlier unless the Court rules in favour of retaining the records (on request and evidence submitted by Police by giving reasons in writing).

Criticism over the Bill:

1. Concerns of Right to Privacy:

There is criticism that the Bill does not balance the privacy concerns of people with legitimate State interests.

In 2017, the Supreme Court recognised right to privacy as a fundamental right and laid out principles that should govern any law that restricts privacy of individuals. These include a public purpose, an existence of law with such purpose, and ensuring that such law is the least intrusive way to achieve the purpose. That is, the infringement of privacy must be necessary for and proportionate to that purpose.

2. Need for Data Protection Law:

The Bill facilitates collection of sensitive personal and biological data of individuals by the police and creation of a database that could retain the information for up to 75 years. A data protection law is needed as it empowering police and governments to conduct such intrusive investigations. India is yet to enact Data Protection Law.

3. Chilling Effect of Law:

There is also criticism that Bill is intended to create a chilling effect (deterring free speech and association) and aimed at mass movements and protests (like protests against Citizenship Amendment Act).

An Executive Magistrate may seek security bond from likely protestors on the grounds of contributing to breach of peace and public tranquility. When such bond is sought, police can collect personal and biological data of protestors.

RC REDDY IAS STUDY CIRCLE

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ENVIRONMENT:

Minamata Convention:

4th Meeting of Conference of Parties (CoP) to Minamata Convention on Mercury

The 4th meeting of 'Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury' was held in Bali, Indonesia in March 2022.

Details:

- Mercury is a naturally occurring element that is found in air, water and soil.
- Exposure to mercury causes serious health problems. It affects the nervous, digestive and immune systems, lungs, kidneys, skin and eyes.
- Mercury exists in various forms:
 - a) **Elemental** form (also called metallic). This is liquid at room temperature. It is used in some thermometers, dental amalgams, fluorescent light bulbs, some electrical switches, mining, and some industrial processes. It is released into the air as mercury vapour when coal and other **fossil fuels** are burned as this is naturally present in them.
 - b) **Inorganic Mercury compounds. These** are formed when mercury combines with other elements, such as sulphur or oxygen, to form compounds or salts. Inorganic mercury compounds can occur naturally in the environment. Inorganic mercury compounds are used in some industrial processes and in the making of other chemicals.
 - c) **Organic Mercury Compounds** (e.g., methyl- mercury). These are formed when mercury combines with carbon. Microscopic organisms in water and soil can convert elemental and inorganic mercury into an organic mercury compound, methyl-mercury, which accumulates in the food chain.

Sources of mercury:

Mercury occurs naturally in the earth's crust.

It is released into the environment from

- **volcanic activity,**
- **weathering of rocks, and**
- **human activity.**

Human activity is the main cause of mercury releases, particularly

- a) coal-fired power stations,
- b) residential coal burning for heating and cooking,
- c) industrial processes (used in batteries, switches, lights, cosmetics, pesticides, measuring devices, etc.)
- d) waste incinerators and
- e) mining for mercury, gold and other metals.

How are People Exposed to Mercury:

- People may be exposed to mercury in any of its forms under different circumstances.
- However, **exposure mainly occurs** through consumption of fish and shellfish contaminated with methyl mercury and through worker inhalation of elemental mercury vapours during industrial processes.

Who are at Most Risk?

- Generally, two groups are more sensitive to the effects of mercury.
- Foetuses are most susceptible to developmental effects due to mercury. Methyl-mercury exposure in the womb results from a mother's consumption of fish and shellfish. It can adversely affect a baby's growing brain and nervous system. The primary health effect of methyl-mercury is impaired neurological development. Cognitive thinking, memory, attention, language, and fine motor and visual spatial skills may be affected in children who were exposed to methyl-mercury as foetuses.
- The second group is people who are regularly exposed (chronic exposure) to high levels of mercury (such as populations that rely on subsistence fishing or people who are occupationally exposed).

About the Minamata Convention:

- Minamata Convention on Mercury is the most recent multilateral convention on Environment.
- It was signed in 2013 and came into force in 2017.
- The objective of this Convention is to protect the human health and the environment from **anthropogenic emissions and releases** of mercury and mercury compounds.
- 137 countries including India are parties to the Minamata Convention.

Main Aims of the Minamata Convention:

The Minamata Convention requires the member States to take the following measures.

1. Control mercury air emissions from coal-fired power plants, coal-fired industrial boilers, certain non-ferrous metals production operations, waste incineration and cement production.
2. Phase-out or take measures to reduce mercury use in certain products such as batteries, switches, lights, cosmetics, pesticides and measuring devices, and create initiatives to reduce the use of mercury in dental amalgam (for dental fillings).
3. Phase out or reduce the use of mercury in manufacturing processes such as chlor-alkali production, vinyl chloride monomer production, and acetaldehyde production,
4. Reduce and where feasible eliminate the use and release of mercury from artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM).
5. Ban on new mercury mines, and phase-out of existing ones.

Meeting of Conference of Parties (COP) to Convention are held periodically to assess the progress in achieving the aims off the Convention. Under the Convention, developed countries should assist the developing countries in the implementation of Convention through transfer of environmentally sound alternative technologies.

Why is Mercury used in Gold Mining?

(Mercury is used in gold mining by informal artisanal and small-scale gold miners. Mercury is mixed with gold containing metal. Gold dissolves in mercury while other impurities do not forming mercury-gold amalgam. This amalgam is then heated to a temperature that will vaporise the mercury, leaving behind the gold. This process releases mercury vapour into the environment. Mercury vapour negatively impacts the nervous, digestive, and immune systems, and the lungs and kidneys,

How did the Minamata Convention Get Its Name?

- The Minamata Convention is named after Minamata, a seaside town in Japan. In the 1950s, a neurological epidemic affected at least 50 000 people in the seaside town of Minamata, Japan with severe cases suffering brain damage, paralysis, incoherent speech and delirium. There was also problem of **mental retardation in newborns**.
- A local chemical factory producing acetic acid discharged waste liquid into Minamata Bay. The discharge included high concentrations of methyl mercury. Methyl mercury accumulated in the phytoplankton of the Bay water and became part of the food chain. The bay rich in fish and shellfish consumed phytoplankton and local residents consumed these fish.

Climate Change:

IPCC Report on Climate Change

- The IPCC Working Group II Report 'Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability' was released in February 2022.

Details:

What are IPCC Reports?

- Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change.
- It was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Its main activity is to prepare Assessment Reports, special reports, and methodology reports assessing the state of knowledge of climate change.
- The IPCC's Reports, which are produced periodically, are **the most comprehensive and widely accepted scientific evaluations of the state of the Earth's climate**. They form the basis for government policies to tackle climate change, and provide the scientific foundation for the international climate change negotiations.
- Six Assessment Reports have been published so far: 1990, 1995, 2001, 2007, 2014, 2021/22
- The sixth report (AR6) was released in three parts - **the first** in August 2021, **the second** in February 2022, and the third in April 2022.

Major Highlights of the Report:

- The following are the highlights of the second part of the Sixth Report.
- Climate change has caused substantial damages in terrestrial, freshwater and coastal and marine ecosystems including in India where mega cities, coastal areas and Himalayan river system are at grave risk.

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- Many ecosystems are in danger and are at a point of no return.
 - High temperatures and extreme weather events such as droughts, extreme rainfall events, heat waves and floods are damaging crops. If temperatures continue to rise, it will result in decreased crop production thereby threatening global food security.
 - Damage to critical infrastructure like Roads, Railways, Ports, etc. would be huge due floods and cyclones.

Impact on Asian Countries:

- Transboundary river basins like Amu Darya, Indus, and Ganges could face severe water scarcity challenges.
- Due to global warming, Asian countries could experience increase in drought conditions by the end of this century.
- Asian countries are also experiencing hotter summer climate leading to higher energy demand.

Impacts on India:

1. Health:

Heat and humidity would be beyond the limits of human survivability if emission reductions are not undertaken.

2. Impact on Cities:

Cities in India will be experiencing more **heat stress, urban floods.**

India is one of the most vulnerable countries globally in terms of population that will be affected by sea level rise. Coastal cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Goa, Cochin, Puri will be affected. Around 35 million people could face annual flooding by the middle of the century (2050)

3. Economic Costs:

The **economic costs** of sea-level rise and river flooding for India would also be among the highest in the world. Direct damage is estimated at \$ 24 billion to \$ 36 billion.

Due to rising climate change and rising population, about 40 % of people in India will live in **water scarcity** by 2050 compared to 33 % now.

4. Flooding:

Both **Ganges and Brahmaputra river basins** will see increased flooding as a result climate change if global warming crosses 1.50 above the pre-industrial level (1850-1900).

5. Impact on Food Security:

Rice production in India could fall by 10 to 30 % and maize production by 25 to 70% due to water scarcity leading to price hikes and threatening food security.

6. Recommendation:

Adequate funding, technology transfer, political commitment and partnership are essential for effective climate change adaptation and emission reductions.

Any delay in concerted global action will come at huge cost for future generations.

Noise Pollution:

Moradabad 2nd Most Noise Polluted City Globally: UNEP Report

- Moradabad is the 2nd most noise polluted city according to the 'Frontiers 2022' report released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in March 2022.
- Since 2016, UNEP has been Frontiers Reports which highlight the emerging environmental issues. Noise pollution is one the subject studied in the 2022 Frontiers Report.

Details:

- Sounds with **frequency higher than 70 dB (decibels)** are considered a **harmful to human health**.
- **Regular exposure to over 85 dB for 8-hours a day or longer** can cause permanent hearing damage.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) had recommended a 55 db standard for residential areas in the 1999 guidelines, while for traffic and business sectors, the limit is 70 db.
- Noise pollution comes from sources such as roads, railways, airports, and industry.

Noisiest Cities in the World:

City	Noise in Decibels (dB)
Dhaka (Bangladesh)	119
Moradabad (UP, India)	114
Islamabad	105
Rajshahi (Bangladesh)	103
Ho Chi Minh City	103

There are 13 noise polluted cities in South Asia out of which 5 are in India which are Moradabad(114 dB), Kolkata (89 dB), Asansol (89 dB), Jaipur (84 dB), Delhi (83 dB).

Quietest Cities in the World:

City	Noise in Decibels
Irbid (Jordan)	60
Lyon (France)	69
Madrid (Spain)	69
Stockholm (Sweden)	70
Belgrade (Serbia)	70

How are countries dealing with noise pollution?

The measures taken by some of the countries to tackle the noise pollution are as follows.

1. Quite Places:

Public places (like parks) are being increased. These act as places of quietness. These places also provide relief to city inhabitants from noisy surroundings.

2. Increasing Green Cover:

Vegetation absorbs sound energy and reduces the propagation of sound.

3. Converting Roads into Single-lane Roads:

Noise due to traffic is a major problem in cities with high level of vertical building. Such roads are being converted into single way roads by decreasing the length through setting up of pedestrian ways and cycle ways. Converting two-lane roads into single-lane roads also decreases the number of vehicles on the road thereby contributing to reduced noise pollution.

4. Encouraging Bicycles:

Use of bicycles for commutation is being encouraged through setting up cycle lanes.

5. Electric vehicles:

Use of electric vehicles is also being encouraged as they produce less noise.

Plastic Pollution:

UNEP Passes Resolution for a Legally Binding Agreement to End Plastic Pollution

- In March 2022, the Meeting of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Member States held in Nairobi, Kenya, passed a resolution to forge an international legally binding agreement by 2024 to end plastic pollution. The agreement will address the full lifecycle of plastic, including its production, design and disposal.

Details:

Extent of Plastic Pollution:

- High and rapidly increasing levels of plastic pollution has become a serious environmental problem at a global scale.
- Plastic production soared from 2 million tonnes in 1950 to 348 million tonnes in 2017, becoming a global industry valued at US\$522.6 billion. Production is expected to double in capacity by 2040.
- Exposure to plastics can harm human health, potentially affecting fertility, hormonal, metabolic and neurological activity. Open burning of plastics contributes to air pollution.
- By 2050 greenhouse gas emissions associated with plastic production, use and disposal would account for 15 per cent of allowed emissions, under the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C (34.7°F).
- More than 800 marine and coastal species are affected by this pollution through ingestion, entanglement, and other dangers.
- Some 11 million tonnes of plastic waste flow annually into oceans. This may triple by 2040.

Need for Legally Binding Agreement:

- A shift to a circular economy can reduce the volume of plastics entering oceans by over 80 per cent by 2040; reduce virgin plastic production by 55 per cent; reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent; and create 700,000 additional jobs.

-
- Hence, the UNEP adopted the historic resolution, titled "End Plastic Pollution: Towards an internationally legally binding instrument by 2024"

Focus Areas of the Agreement:

- The international agreement would focus on promoting
- sustainable design of products and materials so that they can be reused, remanufactured or recycled and therefore retained in the economy for as long as possible, as well as minimizing the generation of waste, which can significantly contribute to sustainable production and consumption of plastics,
- national and international cooperative measures to reduce plastic pollution in the marine environment, including existing plastic pollution;
- research and development of sustainable, affordable, innovative and cost-efficient approaches

DEFENCE:

Defence Acquisition Council Gives Approval for GSAT-7B Satellite

- In March 2022, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister gave approval for acquisition of GSAT-7B satellite for the Indian Army.

Details:

- GSAT 7 satellites are advanced satellites developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to meet the communication needs of the defence services.
- The GSAT 7 satellite (also known as Rukmini) was launched in August 2013 is serving the secure communications needs of the Indian navy.
- GSAT 7 A (also known as Angry Bird) launched in 2018 is serving secure communications needs of the Indian Air Force. The satellite connects various IAF platforms like aircraft, choppers, drones, airborne early warning and control system and radars,
- There is no exclusive satellite for meeting the secure communication needs of Indian Army.
- Currently, the Army is using 30 per cent of the communication capabilities of the GSAT 7A satellite, which has been designed for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- The GSAT 7B will fulfil the secure communication needs of the Indian Army and also provide round-the-clock surveillance of India's borders.

RC REDDY IAS STUDY CIRCLE

MISCELLANEOUS (PERSONS, AWARDS, SPORTS)

NATIONAL PERSONS

Lata Mangeshkar (92), affectionately called a "Nightingale of India", passed away on February 6, 2022. She sang thousands of songs in several Indian languages in a record-breaking career which began at the age of 13 in the 1942 Marathi film Kiti Hasaal. She was awarded the nation's highest honour, Bharat Ratna, in 2001. She was also given France's highest civilian award, Officier de la Legion d'Honneur, in 2009.

Rahul Bajaj (83), one of India's leading industrialists and chairman emeritus of Bajaj Auto Ltd., passed away in Pune on February 12, 2022.

A grandson of the industrialist, freedom fighter and group founder Jamnalal Bajaj, Rahul Bajaj helmed the Bajaj group of companies, which have a presence across industries including automobiles, general and life insurance, and consumer finance, for almost four decades till 2005.

He successfully steered the diversified entity during India's transition from a closed economy to a liberalised one.

M. Jagadesh Kumar, JNU Vice Chancellor was appointed as chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) February 4, 2022 for a period of five years.

Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, a political science professor at Savitribai Phule Pune University, was appointed as the first woman Vice-Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on February 7, 2022 for a period of five years.

Dr. Pandit has previously been a member of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, the UGC Committee on Higher Education and Indicators and a number of think tanks. She is currently president of the Indian Political Science Association and has been a resource person for the Academic Staff Colleges and the Military Intelligence Training School in Pune, providing insight into the Asia Pacific region and India's security perceptions.

Born in the erstwhile USSR, where her mother taught Tamil and Telugu at the Leningrad Oriental Faculty Department, Dr. Pandit hails from Chennai and is a gold medallist graduate of the University of Madras. She is multilingual, speaking Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, Sanskrit and English.

Bappi Lahiri (69), the composer-singer who popularised disco music in the 1980's and 1990's, passed away on February 16, 2022. He is known for his songs in several films of the late 70s-80s. These included Chalte Chalte, Disco Dancer, and Sharaabi.

Sandhya Mukhopadhyay (90), legendary Bengali singer, passed away in Kolkata on February 15, 2022. She was trained under Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and was later associated with legends like Begum Akhtar.

Sandhya Mukherjee's first record was in 1945 and her first album of Durga Puja songs was released in 1948. Soon, offers for playback singing in Bengali films started coming in. Her first playback song was for the film Samapika released in 1948. In 1971, she bagged the national award for best female playback singer for songs in the films Jai Jayanti (1970) and Nishi Padma (1970).

She was awarded Banga Bibhushan, the highest honour in West Bengal, by the State government in 2011.

Dr. S. Somanath, eminent rocket scientist, was appointed Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Space Secretary on January 12, 2022.

Dr. Somanath has played a major role in the development of the PSLV and the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk-III (GSLV Mk-III). He joined the GSLV Mk-III project in 2003, and served as Project Director from 2010 to 2014.

Pandit Birju Maharaj (83), Kathak legend, passed away on January 17, 2022. He is a recipient of the country's second-highest civilian award, Padma Vibhushan,

M.K. Prasad (89), noted ecologist, passed away on January 17, 2022. Professor M.K. Prasad, who had served as Pro-Vice Chancellor of Calicut University, was in the forefront of environment protection activities in Kerala.

He had played a crucial role in creating public awareness across the State for protecting the verdant forests of the Silent Valley during the early 1970s. He had played a leadership role in the Save Silent Valley campaign, considered the first popular campaign for protecting a forest ecosystem in the State.

It was the green campaign led by Mr. Prasad and others highlighting the ecological significance of the evergreen forest of the area that eventually led to the scrapping of the hydel power project proposed by the Kerala State Electricity Board in the area. Later, the Silent Valley was notified as a national park.

Narayan Debnath (97), legendary cartoonist, noted illustrator and litterateur, passed away in Kolkata on January 18, 2022.

Mr. Debnath was the creator of some of immortal cartoon characters for Bengali readers such as Bantul the Great, Handa Bhonda and Nonte Fonte that have inspired not only children but generations of Bengalis.

His comic strips have attained a cult following for nearly six decades. He was honoured with the Sahitya Akademi award in 2013 and the Padma Shri in 2021.

Sunith Francis Rodrigues (88), former Chief of Army Staff General of India, passed away in Goa on March 5, 2022.

Mallu Swarajyam (91), Communist leader from Telangana who had participated in Telangana Peoples Armed Struggle against feudal lords,, passed away due to multiple organ failure on March 19, 2022. Though born into a feudal family, she fought against the feudal lords of the time and their private armies who exploited the commoners.

INTERNATIONAL PERSONS

Thich Nhat Hanh (95), Vietnamese monk-turned-peace-activist and a hugely influential Buddhist credited with bringing mindfulness to the West, passed away on January 22, 2022.

The Zen Buddhism (a branch of Mahayana Buddhism) master, whose reach within Buddhism is seen as second only to the Dalai Lama, spent nearly four decades in exile after being banished from his homeland for calling for an end to the Vietnam-American War.

Before his return to Vietnam in 2018, he set up retreats around the world and wrote over 100 books including on mindfulness and meditation.

Madeleine Albright (84), who fled the Nazis as a child in her native Czechoslovakia during Second World War but rose to become the first woman Secretary of State of United States, passed away on March 23, 2022.

She served as US Secretary of State from 1997 to 2001 in the last four years of Clinton administration.

Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to reign for seven decades. Britain's longest-serving monarch acceded to the throne aged 25 on February 6, 1952, following the death of her father King George VI.

SPORTS PERSONS

Shane Warne (52), one of cricket's greatest spinners, passed away in Thailand on March 5, 2022. He took 708 Test wickets and 293 in One Day Internationals (ODIs) for Australia. The leg-spinner was part of World Cup and Ashes winning squads and after his retirement in 2007, donned various roles linked to cricket, such as a coach or commentator.

He was named among Wisden's five cricketers of the 20th century, in a list headlined by Sir Donald Bradman.

Rod Marsh (74), former Australian cricket great widely regarded as one of the finest wicketkeepers to ever play the game, died after suffering a heart attack on March 5, 2022.

He played 96 Tests matches for Australia and was later a long-time national selector of Australian Cricket.

Marsh made his debut in 1970 before retiring in 1984 with what was then a world-record 355 Test dismissals, many off the bowling of legendary paceman Dennis Lillee.

He was the first Australian wicketkeeper to score a Test century. After his playing career, Marsh remained closely linked to the game as head of the Australian Cricket Academy, helping nurture dozens of Test players including Ricky Ponting and Justin Langer, before becoming chairman of selectors.

Tiger Woods, The greatest of his generation in Golf, took his place among the best of all time when he was inducted into the **World Golf Hall of Fame** in March 10, 2022.

Cricketing legend **G.R. Viswanath's** autobiography '**Wrist Assured**', co-authored by senior journalist R. Kaushik, was released in March 2022.

Praveen Kumar Sobti (74), Indian Athlete who represented the country in hammer and discus throw and won four medals at the Asian Games including two gold medals in 1966 and 1970, passed away on February 8, 2022.

Virat Kohli resigned as the Test Cricket captain in January 2022 after India lost the Test series 2-1 to South Africa. He has been serving as Test Cricket Team Captain since 2014. His greatest achievement as captain was in leading India to its first ever Test series triumph in Australia.

Rashid Rustomji Byramji (88), legendary racehorse trainer, passed away on January 29, 2022.

Kamal Kant Nayak, a para-athlete from Odisha, has covered a distance of 213 km in a wheelchair in 24 hours in January 1 2022. If his marathon wheelchair drive is approved by the Guinness World Records, Kamal Kant Nayak will break the present record of 182.4 km (113.34 miles) achieved by Mario Trindade of Portugal in 2007.

Mr. Nayak had been a veteran of many para marathons on his wheelchair. He first participated in the Ability Marathon in the Kalinga Stadium conducted by the State government and holds the national record of having completed a wheelchair ultra-marathon of 139.57 km in 15 hours.

NATIONAL AWARDS

Padma Awards 2022:

Padma Awards - one of the highest civilian Awards of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

The Awards are given in various disciplines/ fields of activities, viz.- art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.

'Padma Vibhushan' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; 'Padma Bhushan' for distinguished service of high order and 'Padma Shri' for distinguished service in any field.

The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.

For the year 2022, President has approved conferment of 128 Padma Awards including 2 duo case (in a duo case, the Award is counted as one) as per list below.

The list comprises 4 Padma Vibhushan, 17 Padma Bhushan and 107 Padma Shri Awards.

34 of the awardees are women and the list also includes 10 persons from the category of Foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI and 13 Posthumous awardees.

Padma Vibhushan

S.No	Name	Field	State/Country
1.	Ms. Prabha Atre	Art	Maharashtra
2.	Shri Radheyshyam Khemka (Posthumous)	Literature and Education	Uttar Pradesh
3.	General Bipin Rawat (Posthumous)	Civil Service	Uttarakhand
4.	Shri Kalyan Singh (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Uttar Pradesh
Padma Bhushan (17)			
5.	Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad	Public Affairs	Jammu and Kashmir
6.	Shri Victor Banerjee	Art	West Bengal
7.	Ms. Gurmeet Bawa (Posthumous)	Art	Punjab
8.	Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee	Public Affairs	West Bengal
9.	Shri Natarajan Chandrasekaran	Trade and Industry	Maharashtra
10.	Shri Krishna Ella and Smt. Suchitra Ella* (Duo)	Trade and Industry	Telangana
11.	Ms. Madhur Jaffery	Others-Culinary	United States of America
12.	Shri Devendra Jhajharia	Sports	Rajasthan

13.	Shri Rashid Khan	Art	Uttar Pradesh
14.	Shri Rajiv Mehrishi	Civil Service	Rajasthan
15.	Shri Satya Narayana Nadella	Trade and Industry	United States of America
16.	Shri Sundararajan Pichai	Trade and Industry	United States of America
17.	Shri Cyrus Poonawalla	Trade and Industry	Maharashtra
18.	Shri Sanjaya Rajaram (Posthumous)	Science and Engineering	Mexico
19.	Ms. Pratibha Ray	Literature and Education	Odisha
20.	Swami Sachidanand	Literature and Education	Gujarat
21.	Shri Vashishth Tripathi	Literature and Education	Uttar Pradesh
Padma Shri (107)			
22.	Shri Prahlad Rai Agarwala	Trade and Industry	West Bengal
23.	Prof. Najma Akhtar	Literature and Education	Delhi
24.	Shri Sumit Antil	Sports	Haryana
25.	Shri T Senka Ao	Literature and Education	Nagaland
26.	Ms. Kamalini Asthana and Ms. Nalini Asthana* (Duo)	Art	Uttar Pradesh
27.	Shri Subbanna Ayyappan	Science and Engineering	Karnataka
28.	Shri J K Bajaj	Literature and Education	Delhi
29.	Shri Sirpi Balasubramaniam	Literature and Education	Tamil Nadu
30.	Srimad Baba Balia	Social Work	Odisha
31.	Ms. Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay	Science and Engineering	West Bengal
32.	Ms. Madhuri Barthwal	Art	Uttarakhand
33.	Shri Akhone Asgar Ali Basharat	Literature and Education	Ladakh
34.	Dr. Himmatrao Bawaskar	Medicine	Maharashtra
35.	Shri Harmohinder Singh Bedi	Literature and Education	Punjab
36.	Shri Pramod Bhagat	Sports	Odisha
37.	Shri S Balleash Bhajantri	Art	Tamil Nadu
38.	Shri Khandu Wangchuk Bhutia	Art	Sikkim

39.	Shri Maria Christopher Byrski	Literature and Education	Poland
40.	Acharya Chandanaji	Social Work	Bihar
41.	Ms. Sulochana Chavan	Art	Maharashtra
42.	Shri Neeraj Chopra	Sports	Haryana
43.	Ms. Shakuntala Choudhary	Social Work	Assam
44.	Shri Sankaranarayana Menon Chundayil	Sports	Kerala
45.	Shri S Damodaran	Social Work	Tamil Nadu
46.	Shri Faisal Ali Dar	Sports	Jammu and Kashmir
47.	Shri Jagjit Singh Dardi	Trade and Industry	Chandigarh
48.	Dr. Prokar Dasgupta	Medicine	United Kingdom
49.	Shri Aditya Prasad Dash	Science and Engineering	Odisha
50.	Dr. Lata Desai	Medicine	Gujarat
51.	Shri Malji bhai Desai	Public Affairs	Gujarat
52.	Ms. Basanti Devi	Social Work	Uttarakhand
53.	Ms. Lourembam Bino Devi	Art	Manipur
54.	Ms. Muktamani Devi	Trade and Industry	Manipur
55.	Ms. Shyamamani Devi	Art	Odisha
56.	Shri Khalil Dhantejvi (Posthumous)	Literature and Education	Gujarat
57.	Shri Savaji Bhai Dholakia	Social Work	Gujarat
58.	Shri Arjun Singh Dhurve	Art	Madhya Pradesh
59.	Dr. Vijaykumar Vinayak Dongre	Medicine	Maharashtra
60.	Shri Chandraprakash Dwivedi	Art	Rajasthan
61.	Shri Dhaneswar Engti	Literature and Education	Assam
62.	Shri Om Prakash Gandhi	Social Work	Haryana
63.	Shri Narasimha Rao Garikapati	Literature and Education	Andhra Pradesh
64.	Shri Girdhari Ram Ghonju (Posthumous)	Literature and Education	Jharkhand
65.	Shri Shaibal Gupta (Posthumous)	Literature and Education	Bihar
66.	Shri Narasingha Prasad Guru	Literature and Education	Odisha

67.	Shri Gosaveedu Shaik Hassan (Posthumous)	Art	Andhra Pradesh
68.	Shri Ryuko Hira	Trade and Industry	Japan
69.	Ms. Sosamma Iype	Others - Animal Husbandry	Kerala
70.	Shri Avadh Kishore Jadia	Literature and Education	Madhya Pradesh
71.	Ms. Sowcar Janaki	Art	Tamil Nadu
72.	Ms. Tara Jauhar	Literature and Education	Delhi
73.	Ms. Vandana Kataria	Sports	Uttarakhand
74.	Shri H R Keshavamurthy	Art	Karnataka
75.	Shri Rutger Kortenhurst	Literature and Education	Ireland
76.	Shri P Narayana Kurup	Literature and Education	Kerala
77.	Ms. Avani Lekhara	Sports	Rajasthan
78.	Shri Moti Lal Madan	Science and Engineering	Haryana
79.	Shri Shivnath Mishra	Art	Uttar Pradesh
80.	Dr. Narendra Prasad Misra (Posthumous)	Medicine	Madhya Pradesh
81.	Shri Darshanam Mogilaiah	Art	Telangana
82.	Shri Guruprasad Mohapatra (Posthumous)	Civil Service	Delhi
83.	Shri Thavil Kongampattu A V Murugaiyan	Art	Puducherry
84.	Ms. R Muthukannammal	Art	Tamil Nadu
85.	Shri Abdul Khader Nadakattin	Others - Grassroots Innovation	Karnataka
86.	Shri Amai Mahalinga Naik	Others - Agriculture	Karnataka
87.	Shri Tsering Namgyal	Art	Ladakh
88.	Shri A K C Natarajan	Art	Tamil Nadu
89.	Shri V L Nghaka	Literature and Education	Mizoram
90.	Shri Sonu Nigam	Art	Maharashtra
91.	Shri Ram Sahay Panday	Art	Madhya Pradesh
92.	Shri Chirapat Prapandavidya	Literature and Education	Thailand
93.	Ms. K V Rabiya	Social Work	Kerala
94.	Shri Anil Kumar Rajvanshi	Science and Engineering	Maharashtra

95.	Shri Sheesh Ram	Art	Uttar Pradesh
96.	Shri Ramachandraiah	Art	Telangana
97.	Dr. Sunkara Venkata Adinarayana Rao	Medicine	Andhra Pradesh
98.	Ms. Gamit Ramilaben Raysingbhai	Social Work	Gujarat
99.	Ms. Padmaja Reddy	Art	Telangana
100.	Guru Tulku Rinpoche	Others - Spiritualism	Arunachal Pradesh
101.	Shri Brahmanand Sankhwalkar	Sports	Goa
102.	Shri Vidyanand Sarek	Literature and Education	Himachal Pradesh
103.	Shri Kali Pada Saren	Literature and Education	West Bengal
104.	Dr. Veeraswamy Seshiah	Medicine	Tamil Nadu
105.	Ms. Prabhaben Shah	Social Work	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu
106.	Shri Dilip Shahani	Literature and Education	Delhi
107.	Shri Ram Dayal Sharma	Art	Rajasthan
108.	Shri Vishwamurti Shastri	Literature and Education	Jammu and Kashmir
109.	Ms. Tatiana Lvovna Shaumyan	Literature and Education	Russia
110.	Shri Siddhalingaiah (Posthumous)	Literature and Education	Karnataka
111.	Shri Kaajee Singh	Art	West Bengal
112.	Shri Konsam Ibomcha Singh	Art	Manipur
113.	Shri Prem Singh	Social Work	Punjab
114.	Shri Seth Pal Singh	Others - Agriculture	Uttar Pradesh
115.	Ms. Vidya Vindu Singh	Literature and Education	Uttar Pradesh
116.	Baba Iqbal Singh Ji	Social Work	Punjab
117.	Dr. Bhimsen Singhal	Medicine	Maharashtra
118.	Shri Sivananda	Others - Yoga	Uttar Pradesh
119.	Shri Ajay Kumar Sonkar	Science and Engineering	Uttar Pradesh
120.	Ms. Ajita Srivastava	Art	Uttar Pradesh
121.	Sadguru Brahmeshanand Acharya Swami	Others - Spiritualism	Goa
122.	Dr. Balaji Tambe (Posthumous)	Medicine	Maharashtra

123.	Shri Raghuvendra Tanwar	Literature and Education	Haryana
124.	Dr. Kamlakar Tripathi	Medicine	Uttar Pradesh
125.	Ms. Lalita Vakil	Art	Himachal Pradesh
126.	Ms. Durga Bai Vyam	Art	Madhya Pradesh
127.	Shri Jyantkumar Maganlal Vyas	Science and Engineering	Gujarat
128.	Ms. Badaplin War	Literature and Education	Meghalaya

INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

Abel prize 2022:

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters has awarded the Abel prize for the year 2022 to

American Mathematician **Dennis Parnell Sullivan**, won the Abel Prize 2022 announced in March 2022 for key breakthroughs in developing a new way of understanding rational homotopy theory, a subfield of algebraic topology.

Topology is a field of mathematics which was born in the 19th century and deals with properties of surfaces that do not change when they are deformed.

About the Abel prize:

The Abel Prize in an international award given annually to recognise pioneering scientific achievements in mathematics.

The award is named after Niels Henrik Abel, Norway's greatest mathematician who left lasting marks on the mathematical world. The Abel Prize was established by the Norwegian Parliament (The Storting) in 2002, on the occasion the 200-year anniversary of his birth.

The winner of the Abel Prize gets 7.5 million Norwegian Kroner (around Rs. 6 crores).

RC REDDY IAS STUDY CIRCLE

SPORTS

BADMINTON:

All England Championships (Birmingham, 2022 March)

Men's Singles:

Viktor Axelsen - Winner

Lakshya Sen (India) - Runner

Men's Doubles:

Muhammad Shohibul Fikri & Bagas Maulana - Winner

Mohammad Ahsan & Hendra Setiawan - Runner

Women's Singles:

Akane Yamaguchi (Japan) - Winners

An Seyoung (South Korea) - Runners

Women's Doubles:

Nami Matsuyama & Chiharu Shida - Winner

Zhang Shu Xian & Zheng Yu - Runner

Mixed doubles:

Yuta Watanabe & Arisa Higashino - Winners

Wang Yi Lyu & Huang Dong Ping - Runners

Swiss Open Super 300 Badminton Tournament (Basel, Switzerland, 2022 March)

Women's Singles:

P.V.Sindhu (India) - Winner

Busanan Ongbamrunphan (Thailand) - Runner

Men's Singles:

Jonatan Christie (Indonesia) - Winner

H.S. Prannoy (India) - Runner

Men's Doubles:

Fajar Alfian & Muhammad Rian Ardianto - Winners

Goh Sze Fei & Nur Izzuddin - Runners

Women's Doubles:

Gabriela Stoeva & Stefani Stoeva - Winners

Linda Efler & Isabel Lohau - Runners

Mixed Doubles:

Mark Lamsfub & Isabel Lohau - Winner

Goh Soon Huat & Shevon Jemie Lai - Runner

India Open (New Delhi, January 2022)

Men's Singles:

Lakshya Sen (India) - winner

Loh Kean Yew (Singapore) - runner

Men's Doubles:

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty (India) - winner

Mohammad Ahsan & Hendra Setiawan (Indonesia) - runner

Women Singles:

Busanan Ongbamrungham (Thailand) - winner

Supanida Katethong (Thailand) - runner

Women's Doubles:

Benyapa Aimsaard & Nuntakarn Aimsaard (Thailand) - Winners

Anastasiia Akchurina & Olga Morozova (Russia) - Runners

Mixed doubles:

Hee Yong Kai Terry & Tan Wei Han (Singapore) - Winner

Chen Tang Jie & Peck Yen Wei (Malaysia) - Runner

Syed Modi India International Badminton Tournament (Lucknow, January 2022)

Women's Singles:

P. V. Sindhu - Winner

Malvika Bansod - Runner

Women's Doubles:

Anna Ching Yik Cheong & Teoh Mei Xing (Malaysia) - Winners

Treesa Jolly & P. Gayatri - Runners

Men Singles: Not awarded

Men's Doubles:

Man Wei Chong & Kai Wun Tee (Malaysia) - Winner

Krishna Prasad & Vishnuvardhan Goud - Runner

Mixed Doubles:

Ishan Bhatnagar & Tanisha Crasto - Winner

Nagendra Babu & G. Srivedya - Runner

Odisha Open Badminton Tournament (Cuttack, January 2022)

Men's Singles:

Kiran George - Winner

Priyanshu Rajawat - Runner

Men's Doubles:

Nur Mohammad Azriyn Ayub Azriyn & Lim Khim Wah (Malaysia) - Winners

P.S. Ravikrishna & S. Udayakumar - Runners

Women's Singles:

Unnati Hooda - Winner

Smit Toshniwal - Runner

Women's Doubles:

Treesa Jolly & P. Gayatri - Winners

Sanyogita Ghorpade & Shruti Mishra - Runners

Mixed doubles:

Sachin Dias & Thilini Hendahewa (Sri Lanka) - Winners

M.R. Arjun & Treesa - Runners

BILLIARDS:**19th Asian 100 UP billiards championship (Doha, Qatar, 2022 March)**

Pankaj Advani (India) - Winner

Dhruv Sitwaa (India) - Runner

This is Advani's 24th international title and 8th Asian crown.

CRICKET:**India-South Africa Freedom Test series (Cape Town, South Africa, January 2022)**

South Africa - Winner

India - Runner

Under-19 World Cup (North Sound , Antigua, 2022 February)

India - Winner

England - Runner

India won a record-extending fifth Under-19 World Cup.

FOOTBALL:**Indian Super League (Goa, 2022 March)**

Hyderabad - Winner

Kerala Blasters - Runner

African Cup of Nations Championship (Cameroon, February 2022)

Senegal - Winner

Egypt - Runner

KABADDI:**Pro Kabaddi League (Bengaluru, 2022 February)**

Dabang Delhi - Winner

Patna Pirates - Runner

TENNIS:

Australian Open (Melbourne, January 2022)

Women's Singles:

Ashleigh Barty (Australia) - Winner

Danielle Collins (USA) - Runner

Men's Singles:

Rafael Nadal (Spain) - Winner

Daniil Medvedev (Russia) - Runner

Men's Doubles:

Kokkinakis & Kyrgios (Australia) - Winners

Ebden & Purcell (Australia) - Runners

Women's Doubles:

Barbora Krejčíková & Katerina Siniaková (Czech Republic) - Winners

Anna Danilina (Kazakhstan) & Beatriz Haddad Maia (Brazil) - Runners

Mixed Doubles:

Kristina Mladenovic (France) & Ivan Dodig (Croatia) - Winner

Jaimee Fourlis & Jason Kubler (Australia)

Bengaluru Open (Bengaluru, 2022 February)

Singles:

Aleksandar Vukic (Australia) - Winner

Dimitar Kuzmanov (Bulgaria) - Runner

Doubles:

Arjun Kadhe(India) & Alexander Erler (Australia)- Winners

Saketh Myneni & Ramkumar Ramanathan (India) - Runners

Tata Open Maharashtra (Pune, 2022 February)

Singles:

Joao Sousa (Portugal) - Winner

Emil Ruusuvuori (Finland) - Runner

Doubles:

Rohan Bopanna & Ramkumar Ramanathan (India) - Winners

Luke Saville & John-Patrick Smith (Australia) - Runners

VOLLEYBALL:

Prime Volleyball League championship (Hyderabad, 2022 February)

Kolkata Thunderbolts - Winner

Ahmedabad Defenders - Runner