

Civil Services

CHRONICLE

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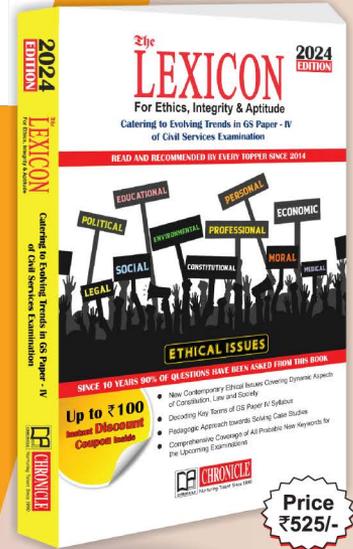
UPSC & State PSCs Prelims 2024

Geography and Indian Economy Practice Sets

Comprising carefully framed model questions on all important topics as per the changing trends of the examination

ARTICLES

- Empowering Persons with Disabilities
- Indian Women in STEM
- India-France Relations
- India-Myanmar: Scrapping Free Movement Regime
- Nano DAP: Revolutionizing Agriculture with Advanced Technology
- RBI Report on the 'Finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions'
- Rooftop Solar Power: Illuminating India's Future



Model MCQs Special

Highlights of
Interim Budget 2024-25

Highlights of
'Indian Economy - A Review'

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UPSC & State PSCs Prelims 2024

Indian Economy & Geography Practice Sets

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- In this special section we are presenting 20 Practice Sets on Indian Economy and Geography for the upcoming UPSC and State Civil Services Preliminary Examinations.
- While developing this special section, we have selected only those topics from which questions are most likely to be asked in the upcoming examinations.
- In the past few years, the trend of asking statement and fact based, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary questions in the preliminary examinations has increased.
- Keeping this in mind, we have prepared the questions on the selected topics.

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India-France Relations

Areas of Cooperation, Challenges and Way Forward

India and France attach importance to maintaining independent foreign policies and strategic autonomy. France's support during India's nuclear tests and the establishment of a strategic partnership in 1998 underline this mutual understanding. There is a need for an enhanced India-France partnership framework encompassing security, environmental sustainability, technological advancement and cultural exchange to take bilateral relations between the two countries to new heights and promote global stability and prosperity.

■ **Dr. Amarjeet Bhargava**

On 25th and 26th January, 2024, French President Emmanuel Macron visited India. He attended India's 75th Republic Day parade as the Chief Guest. France has the honour of being invited the most number of times as the Chief Guest on the occasion of Indian Republic Day. The purpose of the French President's visit to India was to strengthen strategic relations between India and France. Prime Minister Modi and French President Macron held a road show in Jaipur, Rajasthan, with both the leaders visiting Jaipur's Amer Fort, Jantar Mantar and Hawa Mahal, famous as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Significant progress has been made with the establishment of the Strategic Partnership between India and France in 1998. Bilateral cooperation has expanded in all areas through regular high-level exchanges and increased commercial exchanges in strategic areas such as defence, nuclear energy, etc. However, amid growing geopolitical uncertainties, bilateral relations are facing some challenges. In this context, it is important to identify the major areas of cooperation between India and France and analyze the existing challenges.

Key Outcomes of the Visit

Defence Cooperation: The roadmap for 'India-France Defence Industrial Partnership' between the two countries has been finalized. Additionally, both countries also signed a letter of intent for Defence Space Partnership.

- Under, 'India-France Defence Industrial Partnership', priority will be given to co-designing, co-development, co-production and creation of defence supply chain between the two countries.
- This partnership will include space technology, marine technology, robotic and artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles and platforms, and cyber security, etc.

Space: A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India's 'New Space India Limited' and Arianespace S.A.S. for satellite launch.

- Arianespace S.A.S. is a French company, founded in the year 1980 as the world's first commercial launch service provider.



Aviation Sector: MoU has been signed between Tata Advanced Systems Limited and Airbus with the aim of setting up an 'Assembly Line' for H125 helicopters.

Scientific Cooperation: Both the countries have signed a major agreement to conduct joint research in clean energy (mainly decarbonized hydrogen), applied mathematics, digital technologies and precision agriculture.

- A collaborative framework agreement in science and technology has been signed between the Department of Science and Technology (DST) of the Government of India and INRAE (Institut national de recherche pour L'Agriculture, L'Alimentation Et L'Environnement) of France to promote cooperation for funding research projects in the field of science and technology.

Other Major Announcements: The following announcements were also made by both the countries:

- It has been decided to celebrate the year 2026 as 'India-France Year for Innovation'.
- A 'Solar Academy' will be established in Senegal under the 'STAR-C' program of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- 'Young Professionals Scheme' will be operated under the Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement. Exchange of professionals will be promoted through

Empowering Persons with Disabilities

Towards a Rights based Approach and an Inclusive Society

Inclusion is a shared value inherent to every individual, and it is our responsibility as a society to ensure equal opportunities for all, including persons with disabilities. By implementing inclusive policies, we can empower persons with disabilities, ensure equitable access to education and employment, and foster a society that celebrates diversity.

■ Ranjeet Shah

The International Purple Fest 2024 was held in Goa from 8th to 13th January, 2024, with an objective to encourage the talents of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) by showcasing their capabilities through the various engaging performances such as music, dance, entertainment and many other activities. The fest was a celebration of diversity, inclusivity, and empowerment on a global scale.

Disability is the experience of any condition that makes it difficult for a person to do certain activities or have equitable access within the society. This impacts overall well-being and development, including factors like cognitive, intellectual, mental, physical, or sensory development.

According to an estimate by the World Health Organization (WHO), globally, 15 per cent of the population lives with some form of disability, while over 80 per cent of that share live in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. Over 2.2 per cent of India's population endures some form of severe mental or physical disability.

In today's progressive era, where integration and inclusion of all people is emphasized as the gateway towards sustainable development, targeted measures for health and well-being of people with disabilities is becoming more indispensable. Even the UN Convention mandates that disabilities are understood as a human rights issue.

Inclusion and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities: Key Challenges

In India, the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities (PwDs) face several key challenges, reflecting broader societal, cultural, and systemic issues. Some of these challenges include:

- ◆ **Accessibility:** Physical infrastructure, public transportation, and digital platforms often lack accessibility features, making it difficult for PwDs to navigate their environment independently.
- ◆ **Attitudinal Barriers:** Deep-rooted stigma and discrimination against PwDs persist in Indian society. Negative attitudes hinder their integration into mainstream activities such as education, employment, and social interactions.
- ◆ **Education:** Limited access to quality education and inadequate support mechanisms in mainstream schools

contribute to low literacy rates among PwDs. Special education facilities are often inadequate or unavailable, hindering their educational advancement.

- ◆ **Employment:** PwDs face significant challenges in accessing gainful employment due to discrimination, lack of reasonable accommodations, and limited skill development opportunities. Many are relegated to low-paying, informal sector jobs or are unemployed.
- ◆ **Healthcare:** Access to healthcare services for PwDs is often limited, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, there is a lack of specialized healthcare facilities and trained personnel to address the unique needs of PwDs.
- ◆ **Legal Framework:** While India has enacted legislation such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, implementation and enforcement remain inadequate. Many PwDs are unaware of their rights, and mechanisms for redressal are often inaccessible or ineffective.
- ◆ **Poverty and Social Exclusion:** PwDs are disproportionately represented among the poor and marginalized groups in India. Poverty exacerbates their challenges by limiting access to resources, opportunities, and social support networks.
- ◆ **Inadequate Data and Research:** Limited data on PwDs hampers evidence-based policymaking and program development. Comprehensive research on the needs, experiences, and outcomes of PwDs is essential for designing effective interventions.
- ◆ **Cultural Factors:** Traditional beliefs and cultural practices may perpetuate misconceptions about disability and contribute to social isolation and exclusion of PwDs within their communities.

Government Measures for Empowering Persons with Disabilities

Disability Information Line (DIL) Services

- ◆ Launched in January 2024, it is India's first cloud based IVRS toll free 'Disability Information Line' (DIL) services for persons who fall within the ambit of 21 disabilities classified under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

Indian Women in STEM

Need to Foster Diversity and Inclusion

Girls and women are systematically excluded from science and mathematics throughout their education. This restricts their access to, preparation for, and opportunities to engage in these subjects as adults. Holistic and integrated efforts are needed to get more girls and women into STEM education and careers. The society has to understand that women are an important human resource and can play an important role in economic development.

On 18th January, 2024, ‘Women Scientists and Entrepreneurs Conclave’ was organized as part of the ‘India International Science Festival’. During the conclave, a session was held on women leading in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

Women’s representation in STEM fields is almost uniformly low in all countries of the world, and India is no exception in this regard. Slow progress has been recorded on SDG-4 (to ensure equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) and SDG-5 (to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

Nevertheless, equal access and participation in STEM for women and girls is considered a major key to the ‘Sustainable Development Agenda-2030’.

Through various national and international efforts, women are rapidly growing and succeeding in STEM fields while fighting the gender gap and stereotypes; yet a lot more needs to be done in this direction.

In this context, it is necessary to analyze the current status of women in STEM fields.

Women in STEM

Global Situation

- ♦ Globally, countries with almost equal numbers of female researchers as male include Tunisia and South Africa (both 55%), Argentina (53%) and New Zealand (52%). Similarly, their numbers are also respectable in Egypt (45%) and Cuba (49%).

Scenario in India

- ♦ Women constitute about 43% of the total graduate population in STEM fields in India; yet only 14% women are serving in educational institutions and universities. This shows that women have not been prepared to ensure their participation in the technical and skill development, which is being considered the basis of the 4th Industrial Revolution.
- ♦ Even in research work, the number of women is only 27% compared to 73% of men. Similarly, only one in five professionals (22%) in cutting-edge fields like artificial intelligence is women.

- ♦ According to the Annual All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report, the number of women choosing STEM courses in India increased from 10,02,707 in the year 2017-18 to 10,56,095 in the year 2019-20.
- ♦ Similarly, according to AISHE Report 2020-21, female enrolment in higher education courses was 45% in the year 2019-20, it increased to 49% of the total enrolment in the year 2020-21. But, enrolment of women (43%) in STEM subjects was less than that of men (56%).
- ♦ Thus, not only the number of women faculty in universities and research institutes low but the percentage of women in faculty positions tends to decline with each climb up the ladder. For example, women constitute only 12% of members of the National Academies of Sciences.

Reasons for the Gender Gap in STEM

- ♦ **Patriarchal Mindset:** The misconception that boys are superior to girls in science and other fields and the patriarchal attitude of the society create a male-dominated work environment. The gender insensitivity arising from this pushes women back.
- ♦ Even in recruitment practices and awarding of fellowships and grants, men are given more preference than women.
- ♦ **Lack of Role Models:** Role models play a crucial role in choosing career options. In this context, there is a lack of female role models in STEM fields for young female students to follow. Moreover, there is little discussion of these role models even in our textbooks.
- ♦ **Lack of Women-specific Science Institutions:** There are only 11% of colleges in India that are opened exclusively for women, and most of these offer education in arts and commerce courses rather than science.
- ♦ **Economic Factors:** It is generally more expensive to obtain a science degree than an arts or commerce degree. This is a major obstacle to advancing women in STEM fields.
- ♦ **Educational and Workplace Environment:** Even today, the educational and workplace environment for women is not satisfactory. Lack of women-friendly infrastructure is also a major hindrance in this direction.

- [RBI Report on the 'Finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions'](#)
- [Nano DAP: Revolutionizing Agriculture with Advanced Technology](#)
- [Rooftop Solar Power: Illuminating India's Future](#)
- [India-Myanmar: Scrapping 'Free Movement Regime'](#)

RBI Report on the 'Finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions'

On 24th January, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released its Report titled "Finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions".

Drawing upon data on 2.58 lakh Panchayats for the years 2020-21 to 2022-23, it presents an assessment of their finances and their role in India's socio-economic development.

Major Findings

Average Revenue of Panchayats

- According to the report, the average revenue per Panchayat, encompassing taxes, non-taxes, and grants, was at 21.2 lakh in 2020-21, 23.2 lakh in 2021-22, and experienced a slight dip to 21.23 lakh in 2022-23.
- The own revenues of the Panchayats were only 1.1 per cent of their total revenue during the study period.

Decline in Average Expenditure

- The average expenditure per Panchayat decreased from Rs. 17.3 lakh in 2020-21 to Rs. 12.5 lakh in 2022-23 due to higher than-normal spending in the pandemic year 2020-21.
- Goa, Karnataka, Odisha, Sikkim, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu recorded the highest average expenditure at the Panchayat level.

Heavy Reliance on Grants

- Around 95 per cent of their revenues take the form of grants from higher levels of government, restricting their spending ability that is already hampered by delays in the constitution of State Finance Commissions.

Devolution of Power

- There are sharp inter-state variations in the devolution of powers and functions to Panchayats.
- States having higher devolution levels exhibit better outcomes in health, education, infrastructure development, water supply and sanitation.

Inconsistency in Data

- The assessment of the fiscal health of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) is hindered by inconsistent data on their finances.



Challenges in Local Tax Revenue Generation

- Panchayats face challenges in generating local tax revenue due to a limited tax base, administrative infrastructure shortages, lack of trained staff, and unclear guidelines.

Recommendations

Devolving 3Fs

- State governments should make adequate efforts to devolve 3Fs (Funds, Functions and Functionaries) to panchayats for them to effectively plan economic development and social justice schemes.

Augmenting Tax and Non-Tax Revenue Resources

- For sustainable growth, Panchayats need to intensify their efforts to augment their own tax and non-tax revenue resources and improve their governance.
- Nevertheless, the prompt establishment of State Finance Commissions (SFCs), eschewing the sizeable delays that occur currently, assumes importance.

Effective & Efficient Use of Resources

- PRIs, on their part, can use their limited resources more efficiently and effectively through measures such as transparent budgeting and fiscal discipline, active involvement of the local community to prioritise development needs, staff training, robust monitoring and evaluation processes,



Polity & Governance

- CLEA-Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference
- 'Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman' Campaign
- Vijay Raghavan Committee Report
- Electricity (Amendment) Rules, 2024

Polity & Governance

CLEA-Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference

On 3rd February, 2024, the Prime Minister (PM) inaugurated the Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA)-Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference (CASGC) 2024 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

Theme

- “Cross-Border Challenges in Justice Delivery”

Issues Discussed

The Conference deliberated on important issues pertaining to law and justice like:

- Judicial transition and the ethical dimensions of legal practice;
- Executive accountability; and
- Revisiting modern-day legal education, among others.

Key Points

Importance of Justice in Indian Thoughts

- PM mentioned an ancient Indian saying: 'न्यायमूलं स्वराज्यं स्यात्', meaning justice is at the root of independent self-governance, and without justice, even the existence of a nation is not possible.

Nations Cooperation to ensure Justice Delivery

- Referring to the cooperation and interdependence of systems like that of air and maritime traffic control, the Prime Minister advocated to expand cooperation to investigation and justice delivery.
- He underlined that cooperation can take place while respecting each other's jurisdiction as when we work together; jurisdiction becomes a tool to deliver justice without delaying it.

- Directorate General of GST Intelligence

Judiciary

- Supreme Court Legal Services Committee
- Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Supreme Court
- Apostille Convention
- 'Prior Approval' to Probe Public Officials
- 'Reading Down' the Clause

Plans & Policies

- Draft Indian Stamp Bill 2023
- Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023

Reports

- Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06

Modernizing Legal Systems

- PM pointed out the vast networks created by criminals across countries and their usage of the latest technology both in funding and operations.
- He also drew attention to the fact that economic crimes in one region are being used to fund activities in other regions, and the challenges of the rise of cryptocurrency and cyber threats.
- In this context, he underscored the need to rethink, reimagine and reform including modernizing legal systems, making the system more flexible and adaptable.

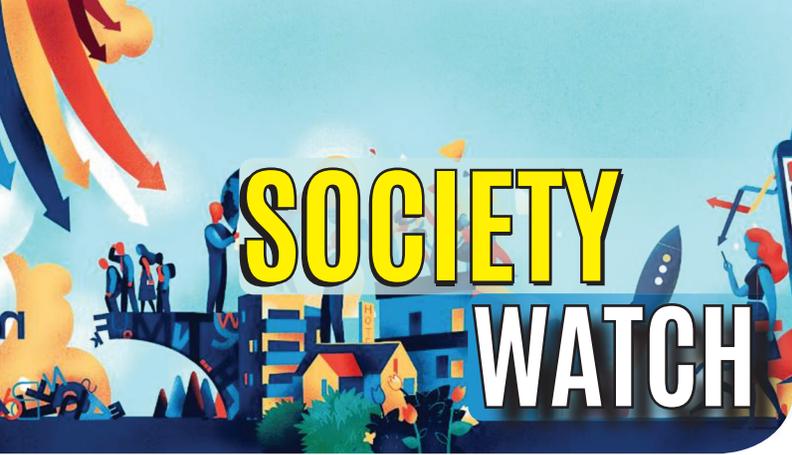
Impact of Technology on Justice Systems

- In last few years, India has used drones to map places and provide clear property cards to rural people, reducing disputes, the possibility of litigation, and load on the justice system, making it more efficient.
- Digitalisation has also helped many courts in the country, taking proceedings online, which has helped people access justice even from far-away locations.
- Indian legal system witnessed a record number of reforms
- Further, PM pointed out that India's legal system was inherited from colonial times, but the last few years have witnessed a record number of reforms.
- He mentioned the abolition of thousands of obsolete laws from colonial times, and underlined that it has boosted ease of living and ease of doing business.
- Earlier, the focus was on punishment and penal aspects. Now, the focus is on ensuring justice.

Important Facts

Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA)

- Founded in 1971, it is a Commonwealth-wide body with regional Chapters and Committees in South Asia, Southern Africa, West Africa, the Caribbean and the UK.
- It fosters and promotes high standards of legal education in the Commonwealth.



SOCIETY WATCH

Social Justice

- NHRC Advocates Implementation of Idate Commission Report
- Kutia Kondh Community Attended Republic Day Parade

Indian Society

- Deletion of Kuki-ChinsTribe from ST List

Health/Education

- Radhakrishnan Committee: Reforming Higher Education
- Central Government Approves New Leprosy Treatment Regimen
- ICMR to Revise National Essential Diagnostics List
- Scrub Typhus

Plans/Policies

- SVAMITVA Scheme receives Best Innovation Award

Reports

- World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024
- All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022

Social Justice

NHRC Advocates Implementation of Idate Commission Report

On 19th January, 2024, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) stressed on the need to implement the Idate Commission report that has recommended for setting up a permanent commission for Nomadic, Semi Nomadic, and De-Notified Tribes (NTs, SNTs, and DNTs) in India.

The Commission was constituted in 2014 and submitted its report in December, 2017.

Key Highlights from NHRC's Recent Focus

- The NHRC recognizes the challenges faced by these people due to historical stigma, primarily from the Criminal Tribes Act, 1872, and Habitual Offenders Act, 1952.
- Habitual Offenders Act, 1952: The act can either be repealed or a representative from the De-notified Tribe community shall be included with the nodal officers.
- The Habitual Offenders Act defines a habitual offender as someone who has been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment more than twice in five years.
- There is a necessity to change the colonial mindset that labels De-Notified Tribes as having “criminal tendencies.”
- The documentation process for these communities must be boosted to ensure they receive welfare scheme benefits.
- Issues like the lack of citizenship documents among De-Notified communities must be discussed.
- **Suggestions by NHRC:** NHRC suggests measures to overcome the difficulties faced by these communities, including ensuring their representation in parliament, government institutions, and higher education.
- Special attention to the women and children of these tribes must be highlighted citing their unique challenges and needs.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF IDATE COMMISSION

Permanent Commission

- It proposes the creation of a permanent commission dedicated to addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic, and De-Notified Tribes.

Separate Department/Directorate

- For each state to ensure effective administration and coordination for the development of these people.

Census and Proactive Data Collection

- It emphasized conducting a detailed census for accurate data on their population for policy formulation.

Strong Safeguards

- It asked for constitutional protections like extension of the Protection of Atrocities Act to these communities.

Representation

- It proposed that due representation in Political Bodies would ensure partnership in the decision-making process.

Sub-Quota

- A sub-quota or a separate category within existing quotas could address the non-representation issues in education, employment, and other spheres.

Removal of Anomalies

- In order to address categorization anomalies and rationalize classifications based on ethnographic studies and due procedures.

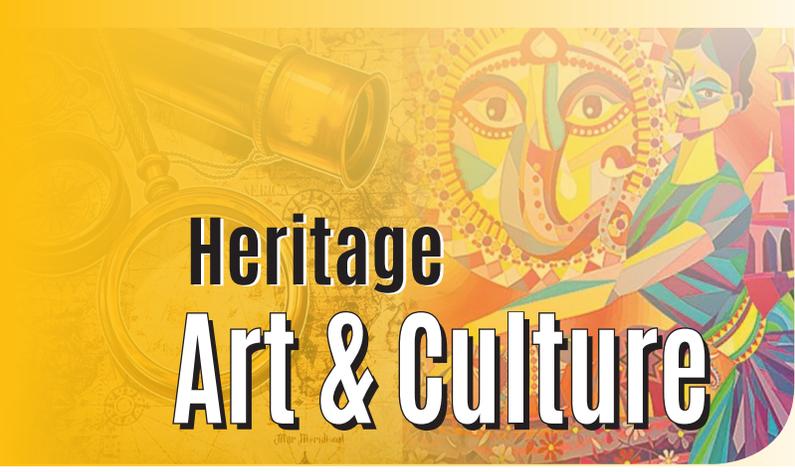
Important Facts

Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs (SEED)

The Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs (SEED) was launched in 2022.

Objectives of the Scheme

- To provide coaching of good quality for DNT candidates to enable them to appear in competitive exams,



Heritage Art & Culture

Art & Culture

- PM's Visit to Hindu Temples

Art & Culture

PM's Visit to Hindu Temples

On 22nd January, 2023, Prime Minister performed the consecration of Shri Ramlala at the Ayodhya Dham temple in Uttar Pradesh. Before consecration, PM visited different Hindu temple across the country associated with Lord Ram.

Kalaram Temple

- The temple is situated on the banks of the river Godavari in the Panchavati area of Nashik, Maharashtra.
- The Kalaram temple derives its name from a black statue of the Lord — Kala Ram translates literally to “Black Ram”.
- It was built in 1792 with the efforts of Sardar Rangarao Odhekar.
- The sanctum sanctorum has statues of Ram, Sita, and Lakshman, and a black idol of Hanuman at the main entrance.
- The main temple has 14 steps, which represent the 14 years of Ram's exile. It has 84 pillars, which represents the cycle of 84 lakh species that one has to complete in order to be born as a human.
- This temple is the site of a landmark agitation led by Babasaheb Ambedkar demanding temple entry rights for Dalits more than 90 years ago.

Veerabhadra Temple

- The Veerabhadra Temple, also known as the Lepakshi Temple, is located in the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh.
- The temple was built in 1530 AD by Virupanna Nayaka and Viranna, both brothers who were Governors under the Vijayanagar Empire during the reign of King Achutaraya, at Penukonda who were native to Karnataka.
- The temple is dedicated to the Virabhadra, a fierce incarnation of Lord Shiva.
- The temple is of the Vijayanagara architectural style.
- One of the major highlights of the temple is the Hanging Pillar, which seems like the 70 other pillars in the vicinity.

- Nagara Style of Temple Architecture
- Chandubi Festival of Assam
- Thanjavur Doll
- Kateel Yakshagana Mela
- Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival
- Batadrava Than

History

- Kadamba Inscription Discovered in Goa
- Saqqara

Miscellaneous

- A gigantic statue of Nandi, also known as Basavanna, is located about 200 mts away from the temple. The seated bull faces the Nagalingeshwara sculpture inside the temple.
- The temple complex also contains many epigraphical inscriptions, providing historical insights into the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the Vijayanagara Empire.

Guruvayur Temple

- It is a Hindu temple dedicated to Guruvayurappan, a form of Vishnu, but popularly known as Krishna, located in the town of Guruvayur in Kerala.
- It is often referred to as Bhuloka Vaikuntha (Vaikuntha in the earthly realm).
- The temple is classified one among the 108 Abhimana Kshethram of Vaishnavate tradition.
- The central icon is a four-armed standing Vishnu carrying the conch – ‘Panchajanya’, the discus ‘Sudarshana’, the mace ‘Kaumodaki’, and a lotus with a tulasi garland.
- In 1931-32, Sathyagraha was launched under Kelappan (Kerala Gandhi) to secure the entry of untouchables into the temple.
- It led to the Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936.

Thriprayar Shree Ramaswami Temple

- It is Hindu temple situated in Thriprayar in Thrissur district of Kerala state in India. It is also known as the Dakshin Ayodhya.
- The deity is Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, with four arms bearing a conch, a discus, a bow, and a garland.
- The temple is situated on the bank of Karuvannur River, which is called as Theevra river- ‘Dakshin Sarayu’ while flowing through Thriprayar, and presently forms a part of Canoli Canal, which connects Kozhikode and Koodungallur.
- The temple deity is the presiding deity of Arattupuzha Pooram.
- In the memory of Sethubandhan (also called Rama Setu), Thriprayar temple (Trichur District) observes “Sethubandhan” in every year. This is celebrated as a festival on “Thiruvonam” day in the Malayalam Month “Kanni” (October – November) in every year.

ECONOMY WATCH

Agriculture

- Blue Economy: Unlocking Sea of Opportunities
- Extension of Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund

Agriculture

Blue Economy: Unlocking Sea of Opportunities

The Interim Budget presented by Finance Minister on 1st February, 2024, stressed on environment-friendly development through the promotion of 'blue economy'.

For promoting climate resilient activities for blue economy 2.0, the government will launch a scheme for restoration and adaptation measures, and coastal aquaculture and mariculture with integrated and multi-sectoral approach.

India's Potential of Blue Economy

- India has been leading the blue economy discourse at the highest level with its geographic and geostrategic position, putting greater focus on the Indian Ocean region.
- With 7517 kilometers long coastal line, India has a unique maritime position. India's blue economy comprises of the entire resources system in the ocean, economic infrastructure in marine, maritime and onshore coastal zones within country's legal jurisdiction.
- The country has 13 major ports and 187 non-major ports, handling about 1400 million tons of cargo every year, as 95 per cent of India's trade by volume transits by sea.
- The Indian Ocean's Blue Economy has become a global economic corridor. It is the world's third-largest body of water, covering 68.5 million square kms and rich in oil and mineral resources, and countries around the ocean's periphery are home to about one-third of humanity.
- India has significant diplomatic interests in the Indo-Pacific, as well as international commitments in the region under the UNCLOS, such as Search and Rescue, seabed mining, and counter-piracy.

- RBI Imposes Restriction on Payment Bank

Banking & Finance

- Amendments to Input Service Distributors
- Tax Buoyancy
- Dynamic Asset Allocation
- SEBI Extends FPI Disclosure Norms Deadline
- RBI Revises Norms for Politically-Exposed Persons
- RBI's Guidelines on State 'Guarantees' on Borrowing
- Momentum Investing

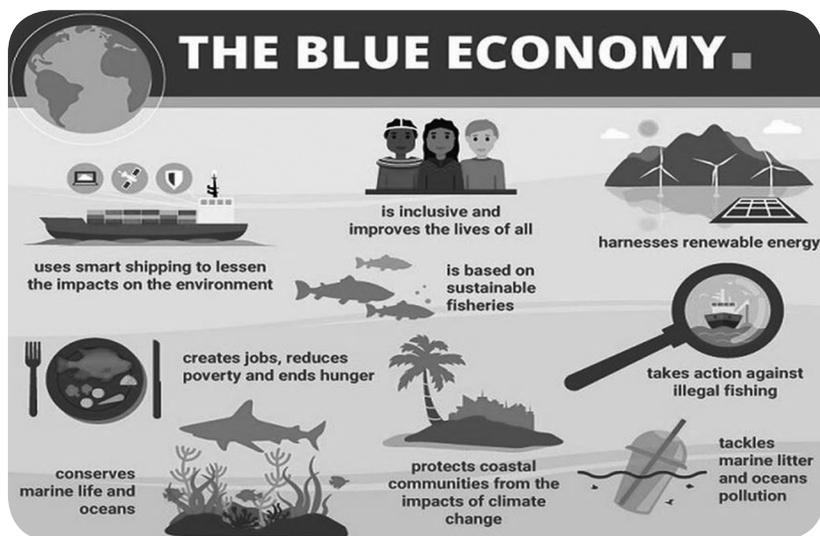
Plans & Polices

- Launch of Voluntary Carbon Market Framework in the Agriculture Sector

- Lastly, the reach and exposure of the blue economy is further being increased due to the rapid developments of the country's inland waterways that cover 14,500 km of India, and the first containerized freight has already passed through the India-Bangladesh Protocol.

Government Initiatives to Promote Blue Economy

- **Sagarmala Project:** Vision of the Sagarmala Programme is to reduce logistics cost for export-import and domestic trade with minimal infrastructure investment.
- **Coastal Economic Zones:** The government identifies CEZs in the National Perspective Plan for Sagarmala Programme. CEZs aim to promote exports by providing infrastructure and facilities to entrepreneurs to set up businesses and industries near Ports.
- **Matsya Sampada Yojana:** It is a flagship scheme for focused and sustainable development of the fisheries sector in the country. It will bring about the Blue Revolution by harnessing fisheries' potential in a sustainable, responsible, inclusive and equitable manner.
- **India-Norway Task Force on Blue Economy for Sustainable Development:** It was inaugurated jointly by both the countries in 2020 to develop and follow up joint initiatives between the two countries.





SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Space Science

- ISRO's POEM-3 Achieves Payload Objectives
- China Launches Einstein Probe to Explore Celestial Fireworks

Space Science

ISRO's POEM-3 Achieves Payload Objectives

On 27th January, 2024, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced that its space platform, POEM-3, has accomplished all designated payload objectives.

Key Points

- **Platform and Payloads:** POEM-3, the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3, utilizes the spent PS4 stage from the PSLV-C58 rocket's XPoSat mission launched on January 1, 2024.
- **Operational Success:** By the 25th day in orbit, POEM-3 completed 400 orbits, showcasing itself as a unique and cost-effective platform.
- **Payload Operations:** All nine payloads, including ARKA200, RUDRA, LEAP-TD, WeSAT, BeliefSat0, RSEM, DEX, a 100W Fuel Cell Power System, and Si-C based High Power Li-Ion Battery, successfully completed their designated operations.
- **Platform Features:** Described as a three-axis-attitude controlled platform with power generation, telecommand, and telemetry capabilities, POEM-3 supports various payloads.
- **Upcoming Experiments and Debris Mitigation:** The platform is expected to continue orbiting for approximately 73 more days before re-entering Earth's atmosphere.

Significance

- **Regular Data Collection:** Payload data is regularly collected for various experiments, contributing to studies such as solar irradiance, UV index, amateur radio satellite, radiation shielding, and interplanetary dust particle experiments for every orbit.

- NASA Restores Contact with Mars Helicopter Ingenuity
- India Officially Joins SKA Project
- ISRO Successfully Tests Fuel Cell Power System in Orbital Platform

Defence Technology

- Indian Navy Unveils Drishti 10 Starliner UAV
- DRDO Successfully Tests Next-Gen Akash SAM

New Technology & Innovations

- New Alloy Revolutionizing Magnetic Refrigeration
- Heat-Tolerant COVID-19 Vaccine
- Tricholime: IISR's Breakthrough in Crop Care

- **Technological Demonstrations:** Experiments involving advanced technologies like Xenon-Based Electric Propulsion (ARKA200) and HAN-based Green Propellant Thruster (RUDRA) were accomplished.
- **Debris-Free Mission:** ISRO highlighted the mission's success in leaving zero debris in space, showcasing responsible space practices and mitigating orbital debris.

China Launches Einstein Probe to Explore Celestial Fireworks

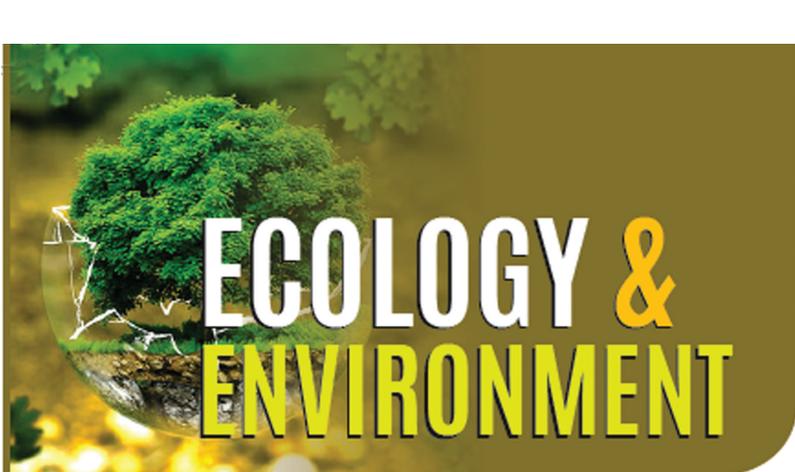
On 9th January, 2024, China sent the Einstein Probe, a lotus-shaped satellite, into space to observe mysterious transient phenomena, inspired by fireworks in the universe.

Key Points

- **Homage to Einstein:** Named after Albert Einstein, the satellite aligns with his predictions of black holes and gravitational waves in the theory of general relativity.
- **X-ray Detection Technology:** Equipped with new X-ray detection technology inspired by a lobster's eye, the satellite aims to unveil the energetic side of the universe.
- **Observatory Features:** The satellite features 12 "petals" housing wide-field X-ray telescopes (WXT) and two "stamens" with follow-up X-ray telescopes (FXT). Together, they form a space observatory.
- **Scientific Objectives:** The observatory will capture the first light from supernova explosions, identify X-ray signals during gravitational wave events, and discover faint celestial objects like dormant black holes.

Importance of the Satellite

- **Celestial Activities:** Despite the serene visible sky, the universe hosts fierce activities such as star explosions, black hole devouring, and collisions between neutron stars and black holes. The satellite will observe these events.
- **X-ray Emissions:** Extraordinary explosions emit X-rays, revealing the hot and energetic universe. The satellite enables observations beyond Earth's atmosphere.



ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Sustainable Development

- Government's Rs 8,500 Crore Boost for Coal Gasification Projects
- India Aims for 5 MMTPA Green Hydrogen Production by 2030

Climate Change

- Antarctic Marine Protected Areas Face Severe

Sustainable Development

Government's Rs 8,500 Crore Boost for Coal Gasification Projects

On 24th January, 2024, in a significant move towards energy independence and the promotion of indigenous technologies, the Union Cabinet approved a financial incentive scheme amounting to Rs 8,500 crore for coal gasification projects. The scheme aligns with Prime Minister's vision to gasify 100 million tonnes of coal by 2030.

Key Points

- **Public Sector Utilities (PSUs):** Rs 4,050 crore allocated for up to three projects, with a lump sum grant of Rs 1,350 crore or 15% of capex, whichever is lower.
- **Government and Private Sector Projects:** Rs 3,850 crore earmarked, offering a lump sum grant of Rs 1,000 crore or 15% of capex, whichever is lower, for each project.
- **Demonstration Projects (Indigenous Technology):** Rs 600 crore provisioned for indigenous technology projects, with a lump sum grant of Rs 100 crore or 15% of capex, whichever is lower.
- **Tariff-Based Bidding Process:** At least one project will be bid out through a tariff-based bidding process, with criteria designed in consultation with NITI Aayog, enhancing transparency and efficiency.

Analysis

- **Strategic Move for Energy Independence:** The approval of the incentive scheme reflects the government's strategic move to reduce dependency on imports for crucial products like methanol, ammonia, ammonium nitrate, and olefins, contributing to India's energy independence.

Acidification Threat

- Logging and Climate Change Threaten Montane Birds

Biodiversity

- Report on India's Snow Leopard Population Status
- Odisha Plans World's First Melanistic Tiger Safari
- 'Paramyrothecium indicum': New Phytopathogenic Fungus

Government Policies/Initiatives

- Union Cabinet Approves "PRITHvi Vlgyan" Scheme for Earth System Research

Disaster Management

- WEF Report: Extreme Weather Tops Global Concerns

- **Boost to Coal Sector:** The scheme aims to boost the coal sector's role in the production of syngas-derived by-products, offering a sustainable alternative to imported raw materials.
- **Economic Impact:** The initiative is poised to have a positive economic impact by reducing import costs, enhancing domestic production, and creating a conducive environment for coal gasification projects.

India Aims for 5 MMTPA Green Hydrogen Production by 2030

A recent report, jointly presented by the World Economic Forum and Bain & Company, outlines a strategic roadmap, titled "Green Hydrogen: Enabling Measures Roadmap for Adoption in India."

This comprehensive plan aims to drive the adoption of green hydrogen, with the ambition to produce 5 MMTPA by the end of the decade.

Key Points

- **Energy Demand Surge:** India, ranking third in global energy consumption, anticipates a 35% surge in energy demand by 2030. With a \$185 billion energy import bill in 2022, the nation shifts focus towards achieving net-zero goals.
- **Strategic Roadmap:** The report outlines strategies to boost green hydrogen adoption. Shifting half of India's hydrogen needs to green hydrogen could cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50 million metric tons, reducing energy import dependence.
- **Export Potential:** The report emphasizes India's potential to attract international trade in green hydrogen derivatives with affordable renewable energy.



WORLD WATCH

International Relations

- India and UAE Finalize Four Agreements
- Denmark Unveils Green Fuels Alliance India at GIM 2024
- India and Saudi Arabia Sign Bilateral Agreement for Haj 2024

- 7th Meeting of India-Nepal Joint Commission

World Issues

- ICJ Orders Israel to Take Preventive Measures against Genocidal Acts
- Sweden's NATO Membership Clears Hurdle
- Canada Reduces International Student Admissions by 35%
- Iran and Pakistan Face Strained Relations

International Treaties

- India Launches Global Alliance for Gender Equality at Davos
- India Appointed First Vice-Chair of UN FAO Fisheries Committee

International Relations

India and UAE Finalize Four Agreements

On 10th January, 2024, India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) solidified their cooperation within the I2U2 grouping by concluding four agreements, covering sectors such as food processing and renewable energy.

Key Points

- **Four Memorandums of Understanding:** Both countries finalized four MoUs, including cooperation in renewable energy investment, food processing development, investment cooperation for innovative healthcare projects, and the development of green and sustainable ports by DP World and the Gujarat government.
- **Alignment with I2U2 Plans:** The MoUs in renewable energy and food processing align with the I2U2 grouping's plans to develop projects in these sectors in Gujarat.
- **Rapidly Transforming India-UAE Partnership:** This marked the fourth meeting between Indian Prime Minister and UAE President in less than seven months. They expressed their commitment to a shared and prosperous future, acknowledging the rapidly transforming India-UAE partnership.
- **Focus on Strengthening Ties with West Asia:** The Indian government aims to enhance ties with key regions in West Asia, considering it an extended neighbourhood that provides a significant portion of energy supplies and is home to a substantial Indian expatriate population.

I2U2: Significance for India

- **Dehyphenation of Foreign Policy:** Deepening engagement with Israel without jeopardizing ties with the UAE and other Arab states.

- **Global Leadership:** Emerging as a global leader in climate cooperation, clean energy, and waste management.
- **Market Benefits:** Capturing market opportunities for Indian goods in the partner countries.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Maintaining strategic autonomy while being part of SCO, Quad, and I2U2 simultaneously.
- **Investments:** Announcement of USD 2 billion investment by the UAE in India for developing Food Parks.
- **Diaspora Impact:** Positive impact on remittances and enhanced cooperation with the Indian diaspora.
- **Flexibility in the Region:** Providing flexibility for India to engage freely with Israel and Gulf partners.
- **Shift in Diplomacy:** Strengthening India's regional foreign policy strategy towards West Asia.

Important Facts

I2U2

- The I2U2 Group, also known as the West Asian Quad, is a strategic partnership involving India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States.
- Formed after the Abraham Accords, it aims to enhance cooperation in various sectors.
- Its focus areas include the following:
- Enhancing collaboration in areas like food security, maritime cooperation, and biotechnology.
- Promoting deeper economic and trade relations, leveraging technological expertise.

Denmark Unveils Green Fuels Alliance India at GIM 2024

On 9th January, 2024, Denmark announced the Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI) initiative at the Global Investors Meet 2024 (GIM), aiming to enhance collaboration with India in sustainable energy solutions and advance the shared global goal of carbon neutrality.

UPSC & State PSCs Prelims 2024

Indian Economy

Practice Sets

Set-I

1. Which of the following constitute the largest source of revenue for Government of India?

- (a) Income Tax
- (b) Corporation Tax
- (c) Borrowings and other liabilities
- (d) Goods and Services Tax

2. Consider the following statements:

- 1. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) is published by the Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- 2. It measures changes over time in the level of retail prices of selected goods and services on which consumers of a defined group spend their incomes.
- 3. It is further categorized into - WPI-IW, WPI-UNME, WPI-AL and WPI-RL.

How many of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

3. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Primary agricultural markets mainly comprise seasonal markets, commonly known as haats, shandies, painths, and fairs.
- 2. Secondary agricultural markets attract potential buyers and traders who assemble and consolidate truckloads of produce for sale in urban wholesale markets.
- 3. Unlike primary and secondary markets, terminal markets often involve merchants as sellers rather than farmers.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

4. Consider the following statements:

Statement I: Capital flow from Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) are often seen as a double-edged sword.

Statement II: FII investments reduce the cost of capital in emerging economies undergoing liberalization but they can exacerbate volatility in the host country's stock markets.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I
- (b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I
- (c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is incorrect
- (d) Statement I is incorrect but Statement II is correct

5. Which of the following taxes was introduced to ensure that companies with significant profits pay a minimum fixed percentage of book profit as tax, even if they benefit from various tax incentives and exemptions?

- (a) Minimum Alternate Tax
- (b) Capital Gains Tax
- (c) Securities Transaction Tax
- (d) Gift Tax

6. Which of the following institutions brings out the 'Financial Inclusion Index'?

- (a) Reserve Bank of India
- (b) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
- (c) Economic Intelligence Unit
- (d) Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance

7. Consider the following statements:

- 1. GDP identifies health of an economy, i.e., whether it is growing or experiencing recession.
- 2. GVA gives real picture on State of Economic Activity, i.e., amount of goods and services produced as GDP growth can happen because of better tax compliance as well.
- 3. The quarterly and annual estimates of GVA are given by National Statistical Office (NSO) under five broad sectors.

How many of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

UPSC & State PSCs Prelims 2024

Geography

Practice Sets

Set-I

1. Consider the following statements:

1. The problem of floods in rivers arises due to monsoon rains and melting of glaciers.
2. Deforestation in watersheds increases the severity of floods by increasing surface runoff.
3. Floods in low lying areas are effectively controlled by construction of embankments along the river banks.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

2. Consider the following pairs:

River	Source
1. Ob River	- Altai Mountains, Russia
2. Darling River	- Northern New South Wales, Australia
3. Mississippi River	- Valdai Plateau, Russia
4. Danube River	- Black Forest, Germany

How many of the above pair(s) is/are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) Only three (d) All of the above

3. In which of the following countries is the region 'Catalonia', which was in news recently, located?

- (a) France (b) Portugal
(c) Britain (d) Spain

4. Consider the following statements regarding the Thar Desert:

1. Apart from India, it is widespread in some parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan.
2. It receives more than 200 mm of rainfall annually, which makes it semi-arid.
3. Luni River and Mahanadi are the main sources of water for this region.
4. Its landscape is comprised of undulating sand dunes and bushy vegetation.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are not correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) Only 4 (d) All of the above

5. Consider the following statements regarding Westerlies:

1. These winds blow from subtropical high pressure belt to sub-polar low pressure belt.
2. Westerly winds blow from south-west to north-east in the Northern Hemisphere and from north-west to south-east in the Southern Hemisphere.
3. Westerly winds are stronger in the Southern Hemisphere because there are no large landmasses to obstruct them.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 2 and 3
(c) Only 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

6. Consider the following statements regarding the Western Ghats:

1. These are older than the Himalayas and were formed about 150 million years ago.
2. It is mainly made of Charnockite which is a type of igneous rock.
3. This region receives the highest rainfall in India during the south-west monsoon.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

7. Which of the following statement(s) is/are essentially true about coal reserves in India?

1. Jharia coal field located in Jharkhand is one of the most ancient and rich coal fields.
2. Chhattisgarh has the largest coal reserves in India, followed by Odisha in terms of coal reserves.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

8. Consider the following statements:

1. The place beneath the earth's surface where earthquake originates is called as epicenter.
2. The place above the earth's surface where seismic waves reach first is called hypocentre.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

HIGHLIGHTS OF

Interim Budget 2024-25

With the 'mantra' of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, and Sabka Vishwas' and the whole of nation approach of "Sabka Prayas", the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nir-mala Sitharaman presented the Interim Union Budget 2024-25 in Parliament on 1st February, 2024. The key highlights of the Budget are as follows:

Focus Areas

Budget at a Glance (Important Macro-indicators)

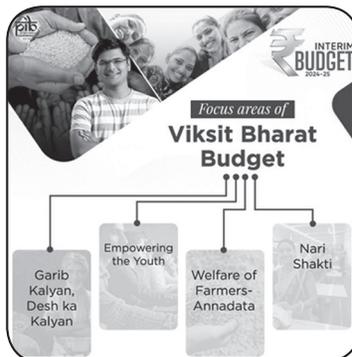
Indian Economy maintaining robust Macroeconomic Fundamentals

- India's Real GDP projected to grow at **7.3 per cent** in FY 2023-24
- Fiscal deficit to reduce **below 4.5 per cent** by 2025-26
- Capital Expenditure outlay for the next year **increased by 11.1 per cent** to Rs. 11,11,111 crore
- Allocation of **Rs. 1.3 lakh crore** in BE 2023-24 towards fifty-year interest free loans to the states to boost capital expenditures



Social Justice

- Prime Minister to focus on upliftment of four major castes, that is, 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth) and 'Annadata' (Farmer).



'Garib Kalyan, Desh ka Kalyan'

- Government assisted 25 crore people out of multi-dimensional poverty in last 10 years.
- DBT of Rs. 34 lakh crore using PM-Jan Dhan accounts

- led to savings of Rs. 2.7 lakh crore for the Government.
- PM-SVANidhi provided credit assistance to 78 lakh street vendors. 2.3 lakh have received credit for the third time.
- PM-JANMAN Yojana to aid the development of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG).
- PM-Vishwakarma Yojana provides end-to-end support to artisans and crafts people engaged in 18 trades.

Garib Kalyan, Desh ka Kalyan

- DBT of **₹34 lakh crore** using PM-Jan Dhan accounts; **₹2.7 lakh crore** saved due to avoidance of leakages
- Credit assistance to **78 lakh street vendors under PM-SVANidhi**, out of which **2.3 lakh** received credit for the **third time**

Welfare of 'Annadata'

- PM-KISAN SAMMAN Yojana provided financial assistance to 11.8 crore farmers.
- Under PM Fasal Bima Yojana, crop insurance is given to 4 crore farmers
- Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) integrated 1361 mandis, providing services to 1.8 crore farmers with trading volume of Rs. 3 lakh crore.

Welfare of Farmers-Annadatas

- Direct financial assistance to **11.8 crore farmers under PM-KISAN**
- Crop Insurance to **4 crore farmers under PM Fasal Bima Yojana**
- Integration **1,361 mandis under e-NAM**, supporting trading volume of **₹3 lakh crore**
- Increased procurement of **Wheat and Rice in the year 2023-24**

Highlights of 'Indian Economy - A Review'

The Economic Survey 2023-24 was not released as 2024 is an election year. Instead, 'Indian Economy - A Review' document was released which traces the journey of Indian economy in past 10 years. The economic survey 2023-24 document may be released post general election. Below is the summary of 'Indian Economy - A Review'.

Indian Economy: Past, Present and Future

Over the last decade, India has demonstrated robust and resilient growth despite challenges like the Covid pandemic and geopolitical conflicts.

Here is an overview of India's growth experience since independence, the state of the economy in 2014, and the key drivers of growth from 2014 to 2030.

The Indian Growth Story (1950 to 2014)

Post-Independence Challenges (1950-1960)

- India's share of world income reduced from 22.6% in 1950 to 3.8% in 1952.
- Rapid industrialization in the 1950s with a decadal growth rate of 3.9%.

Challenges and Slowdown (1960s and 1970s)

- 1960s faced challenges from wars, drought, and economic controls.
- 1970s marked by devaluation, political instability, and global volatilities, resulting in a growth rate of 2.9%.

Reforms and Recovery (1980s)

- Reforms in the 1980s led to improvements, with GDP growth reaching 5.7%.
- External shocks like the breakup of the Soviet Bloc and the Iraq-Kuwait war impacted trade in 1990-1991.

Balance-of-Payments Crisis and Reforms (1991)

- The Balance-of-Payments crisis in 1991 led to significant reforms.
- Reforms included dismantling complex rules, permissions, and licenses, and promoting a market economy.

Post-Reform Growth (2000s)

- Sustained momentum in the early 2000s with a decadal growth rate of 6.3%.

- Global financial crisis in 2008 exposed vulnerabilities, leading to bad debts in banks.

Challenges and Reforms (2009-2014)

- **High Inflation and Twin Deficits (2009-2014):** Period from 2009-2014 marked by high fiscal deficits, loose monetary policy, and annual double-digit inflation rates. Twin deficits - fiscal and current account deficits - led to a depreciation of the Indian rupee.
- **Economic Stall and Rejuvenation (2013):** Economic growth stalled in 2013, with the Indian rupee crashing against the US dollar.

Lessons from the Growth Experience till 2014

Transition to an Open Economy (1950-1980)

- Shift from import substitution to liberalization, export incentives, and technology integration.
- Import liberalization, export incentives, and fiscal policies played a role in growth.

Transition in Investment Patterns (1970s-1980s)

- Shift from public sector dominance to the co-existence of public and private investment.
- Private sector became a major engine of growth from the 1990s onwards.

Technology as a Growth Driver (1980s Onward)

- Identification of technology as a key growth driver post-liberalization. Slow but steady use of technology to transform the Indian economy.

Economic State in 2014

- Prime Minister Modi assumed office in 2014 with challenges such as lower than 5% GDP growth in 2012-13 and 2013-14.

STATE WATCH

Uttar Pradesh

Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School

- The first-ever all-girls Sainik School, Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School, with a capacity of nearly 870 students, was recently inaugurated in Vrindavan. It is part of a broader initiative to establish 100 new Sainik Schools across India in partnership with NGOs, private entities, and state governments.
- This initiative aligns with the objective of increasing educational opportunities for girls aspiring to join the armed forces.
- Affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the school will provide education and training under the guidance of ex-servicemen. The institution plans to offer 120 seats, emphasizing a curriculum that integrates the principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) to offer comprehensive and quality education.
- The establishment of 100 new Sainik Schools aims to provide quality education aligned with NEP and enhance career prospects for students.

Goa

Goa Cess Act, 2000

- Recently, the Bombay High Court upheld the constitutional validity of Goa Rural Improvement and Welfare Cess Act, 2000 (Goa Cess Act), dismissing the petitions filed by several mining and coal transport companies.
- Goa Cess Act was enacted in 2000 but it came into effect from 2006 to augment revenue for improvement of infrastructure and health and to promote welfare of the people of the people residing in rural areas, being affected by the use of plastics, dumping of garbage and spillage of materials.
- The Act imposes cess on carriers transporting scheduled materials including coal, coke, sand, debris, garbage, packaged water, mineral ore etc. in Goa.
- This Act was enacted to generate additional revenue for the improvement of infrastructure and health, aiming to promote the welfare of people in rural areas affected by materials such as plastics, garbage dumping, and spillage.
- This Act is related to entries 6 and 66 of the State List, covering public health and sanitation, and providing a pecuniary charge to meet public needs.
- It does not impose any tax discriminating between the goods imported and goods manufactured in Goa. It also does not impose any restriction on the freedom of trade, commerce or intercourse within Goa.

Andhra Pradesh

Caste Census

- The Government in Andhra Pradesh has initiated a comprehensive caste census, marking the state's commitment to understanding and addressing the complex caste dynamics within its population.
- Launched with the aid of a specially designed phone app, this ambitious census aims to enumerate all castes in the state.
- Andhra Pradesh now stands as the second state in the country, following Bihar, to undertake such a comprehensive caste enumeration.
- The cornerstone of this census initiative is a dedicated phone app developed by the government, enabling a more efficient and streamlined data collection process.
- The app offers more than 700 caste options for the public to choose from, with a notable inclusion being the 'No caste' option.
- The utilization of technology not only expedites the data collection process but also ensures greater accuracy in recording and categorizing the diverse range of castes in the state.

Sports in News

Khelo India Youth Games

The sixth edition of the Khelo India Youth Games-2023 was held in four cities (Chennai, Trichy, Madurai, and Coimbatore) of Tamil Nadu from 19-31 January 2024.

- This was the first time the Khelo India Youth Games were held in South India.
- **Mascot:** Veera Mangai
- Rani Velu Nachiyar, fondly called Veera Mangai, was an Indian queen who waged a war against British colonial rule.

Performances

- Maharashtra won the overall championship for the fourth time in six editions of the Khelo India Games. Maharashtra won a total of 158 medals – 57 gold, 48 silver, and 53 bronze.
- Host Tamil Nadu finished second with a total of 97 medals – 38 gold, 20 silver, and 39 bronze.
- Haryana stood third with 103 medals - 35 gold, 22 silver, and 46 bronze.

Key Facts

- All 36 States and Union Territories of India had representation at KIYG 2024.
- Hosts Tamil Nadu had the largest contingent with 559 athletes.
- Squash made its debut in 6th KIYG while Silambam, a form of indigenous martial arts, featured as a demonstration sport.
- Swimmer Vritti Agarwal of Telangana, who represented India at the Asian Games last year, was among the top performers at KIYG 2024. The 17-year-old swimmer won five individual gold medals.

Khelo India Winter Games

The Khelo India Winter Games 2024 is the fourth edition of the annual event in the Khelo India calendar.

- The first part of the Khelo India Winter Games was held in Union Territory of Ladakh for the first time from February 2-6.
- The second part is scheduled in Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir from February 21-25.
- **Mascot:** ‘Sheen-e She’ (Shan) – a snow leopard

Asian Winter Games

The 9th Asian Winter Games will be held from 28 February to 9 March 2025 in Harbin in China.

- **Mascot:** “Binbin” and “Nini”, two Siberian tiger cubs

FIH Hockey5s Men’s World Cup

The 2024 Hockey5s World Cup was the first edition of the FIH Men’s Hockey5s World Cup, the quadrennial world championship for men’s national hockey5s teams organized by the FIH.

- It was held from 28 to 31 January 2024, in Muscat, Oman.
- The Netherlands won the tournament after a win over Malaysia. Host Oman secured the third place.
- India finished at the fifth spot.

Women’s FIH Hockey5s World Cup

The 2024 Hockey5s World Cup was the first edition of the FIH Women’s Hockey5s World Cup, the quadrennial world championship for women’s national hockey5s teams organized by the FIH.

- It was held from 24 to 27 January 2024, in Muscat, Oman.
- The Netherlands won the final against India to claim the first gold. Poland came at 3rd place.

Australian Open: Rohan Bopanna’s First Men’s Doubles Grand Slam

At the Australian Open 2024, Bopanna created history and at the age of 43 years and nine months, became the oldest man to win a Grand Slam in the Open Era of tennis after clinching the men’s doubles crown with Matthew Ebden (Australia).

- He recently, for the first time, climbed to World Number One position in the latest ATP Doubles Rankings.
- He is also the fourth Indian tennis player after Leander Paes, Mahesh Bhupathi and Sania Mirza to reach the top of the tennis rankings. All four are also the only Indian Grand Slam winners.
- Earlier, Bopanna won a Grand Slam in 2017 (French Open, Mixed Doubles event with Gabriela Dabrowski (Canada).

FIFA Football Awards

- London hosted The Best FIFA Football Awards on 15 January 2024 for the year 2023.
- Major Awards & Awardees
- **Best Men’s Player:** Lionel Messi
- **Best Men’s Coach:** Pep Guardiola
- **Best Women’s Coach:** Sarina Wiegman
- **Best Women’s Goalkeeper:** Mary Earps
- **Best Men’s Goalkeeper:** Ederson
- **Fair Play Award:** Brazil senior men’s team
- **Puskas Award:** Guilherme Madrugá