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# GS 1 – HISTORY

After 16-year restoration, Greece unveils palace where Alexander the Great became king

#PalaceOfAigai #Alexander  
#MacedoniaKingdom #AlexanderInvasion  
#AncientHistory #History #GS1



Palace of Aigai

It was the **largest building of classical Greece**: the **palace where Alexander the Great was proclaimed king** before he launched a conquest that took him as far as modern-day Afghanistan.

The **Palace of Aigai in northern Greece** was fully reopened Friday following a 16-year renovation that cost more than 20 million euros (\$22 million) and **included financial support from the European Union**.

It was **built more than 2,300 years ago during the reign of Alexander's father, Phillip II**, who had transformed the **kingdom of Macedonia** into a dominant military power of ancient Greece. **Aigai was its royal capital**.

The **palace remains and nearby royal tombs are a United Nations World Heritage Site** at the area next to the modern village of Vergina.

**Some 65 kilometers (40 miles) southwest of the port city of Thessaloniki, in northern Greece, Aigai drew international attention in the late 1970s** during burial mound excavations in the area of rolling green hills with patches of wild poppies and daffodils.

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This Lutyens' area mosque is a testament to a new Delhi coexisting with the old

#SunehriBaghMosque #HasratMohani  
#CompleteIndependence #PurnaSwaraj  
#InquilabZindabad  
#IndianNationalMovement #ModernHistory  
#History #GS1

When Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker set out to build the new capital of British India in Delhi in the first half of the 20th century, they were clear what they did not want it to replicate: The Gothic-Victorian style buildings in Mumbai, then Bombay.

According to Robert Grant Irving, in his book *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi*, several discussions took place on where exactly the site of the new capital should be. Some suggested the old seat of the Mughals at Shahjahanabad while others thought the northern part of the city was especially scenic, considering that it overlooked the Ridge and the Yamuna.

However, Lutyens and Baker preferred the "open, virgin land" to the South of Delhi. Besides being large in expanse, the location could also give the British a chance to break away from the Mughal mould and cement their own identity into the architecture of the buildings. However, the first step they had to take was to remove the villages that had existed there for generations.

Little research exists regarding this but local, oral history suggests that the erstwhile villages in Lutyens Delhi and in the Raisina area were Muslim-dominated areas. According to the **Sunehri Bagh Mosque's** Imam Abdul Aziz, the villagers reached a deal with the British: The latter could take the land as long as they left their graveyards, tombs and religious places alone. One of the places to benefit from the move was Sunehri Bagh Masjid. It was decided that the British would let it remain on its grassy knoll while constructing a convergence of roads

around it, making it a roundabout for easy commute.



### Sunehri Bagh mosque

**Built around 150 years ago, the Sunehri Bagh mosque was not built on a royal decree. It was, and still is, a regular mosque for regular people to pray in.** According to the Imam, the structure is humble and quaint because it used to be a simple, village mosque where the villagers would convene for prayer or social events.

But besides the locals, the **Sunehri Bagh Mosque also housed freedom fighters such as Syed Fazl-ul-Hasan, known by his pen name Hasrat Mohani who was a celebrated poet credited with coining the slogan *Inquilab Zindabad - Long live the revolution.***

**“Maulana Hasrat Mohani used to reside at the mosque whenever he was in Delhi to attend sessions of the Constituent Assembly. He was a simple man who used to travel to places on a bicycle or Tonga – this is the same Hasrat Mohani who had moved the resolution for complete Independence from the British rule which was accepted by the Indian National Congress in 1921. He coined the famous slogan “Inquilab Zindabad”, which was later adopted by revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh,”** according to heritage conservationist Sohail Hashmi.

While the building is a gazette notified **Grade-III heritage site**, according to the Delhi government, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) recently sought public opinion on its proposed demolition with officials arguing that the structure causes traffic snarls. Although the status of Sunehri Bagh Masjid’s demolition is presently under a cloud, historians, heritage

enthusiasts and the local population are holding their breath.

“With the demolition of the mosque, a legacy of a nationalist, the history associated with it will also get destroyed,” said Hashmi.

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## **The story of Nashik’s Kalaram temple**

**#KalaramTemple #Panchvati #Ramayana #DalitSatyagraha #History #GS1**

After his roadshow in Nashik, Maharashtra, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday (January 12) visited the **Kalaram Mandir on the banks of the Godavari in the Panchavati area of the city.**

**The temple is also the site of a landmark agitation led by Babasaheb Ambedkar demanding temple entry rights for Dalits more than 90 years ago.**

**Panchavati has a special place in the Ramayana and, therefore, in the Hindu religion.**

A number of important events described in the epic story of Lord Ram took place here. **Ram, along with Sita and Lakshman, spent the first few years of their 14-year exile in Dandakaranya, the dense forest in central India of which Panchavati was a part.**

**The name Panchavati comes from the existence of five banyan trees in the area.** According to the epic, Lord Ram, Sita, and Lakshman set up a hut here as the presence of five banyan trees made this region auspicious.

**It is from the Panchavati region that Ravan, the demon king of Lanka, abducted Sita** after drawing her out of the secure zone created by Lakshman by deceit, and set off the chain of events that led to Ram’s journey southward to Lanka, and the Ramayana war.

But it is also the site of an important Dalit satyagraha.

**In 1930, B R Ambedkar and the Marathi teacher and social activist Pandurang Sadashiv Sane, known as Sane Guruji, led an**



#KalaJeeraRice

#KaiChutney

#KanteimundiBrinjal

#KhajuriGuda

#MagjiLaddu #ArtandCulture #GS1

**Geographical Indications of goods refer to the place of origin of a product.** Such tags are accorded as they convey an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, attributable to the fact of its origin in a specific geographical locality, region or country. **In India, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, awards GIs.**

**A GI registration is given to an area, not a trader, but once a product gets the registration, traders dealing in the product can apply to sell it with the GI logo. Authorised traders are each assigned a unique GI number.** If any unauthorised trader tries selling the product under that name, they can be prosecuted under The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.

**A marker of authentic products, the GI tags also help protect the interests of the local growers and artisans by preventing duplicity of the products and sale from unauthorised traders.** Consumers, through the tags, can know which goods are certified.

### 1. Kapdaganda shawl



Woven and embroidered by the **women of the Dongria Kondh tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) in the Niyamgiri hills in Odisha's Rayagada and Kalahandi districts,** the shawl reflects the rich tribal heritage of the Dongria Kondhs.

It is **embroidered on an off-white coarse cloth with red, yellow and green coloured**

**threads, with each colour holding significance. Green symbolises the mountains and hills, and yellow stands for peace and happiness. Red stands as the symbol of blood.**

**The motifs in the shawls are mostly lines and triangles, believed to be a reflection of the importance of mountains for the community. The shawl is worn by both men and women and the Dongrias gift it to their family members as a token of love and affection.**

### 2. Lanjia Saura Painting

The painting, one of the oldest tribal art forms, is **also known as Idital.** The artworks are famous for their beauty, aesthetics, ritualistic association and iconography.



The art form belongs to the **Lanjia Saura community, a PVTG largely residing in the Rayagada district.** These paintings are in the form of exterior murals painted on the mud walls of homes. **White paintings figure over a crimson-maroon background.**

It is believed that the Lanjia Sauras paint their walls with Idital artworks to **show gratitude to their deities and forefathers, and also for the well-being of their community.** Reflecting the love and affection of the primitive tribes for nature, they **feature subjects like tribal humans, trees, animals, birds, the Sun and the Moon.**

### 3. Koraput Kala Jeera Rice



The black-coloured rice variety, also known as the 'Prince of Rice', is famous for its aroma, taste, texture and nutritional value. Tribal farmers of the Koraput region have preserved the rice variety for around 1,000 years. As the rice grains resemble cumin seeds, it is also called Kala Jeera. Consumption of the rice variety helps in increasing haemoglobin levels and improves metabolism in the body.

The farmers and producers of Koraput Kala Jeera rice have followed the traditional knowledge and practices in cultivation. Ancient tales also speak about the physical, mental and spiritual delights resulting from the consumption of the rice variety.

#### 4. Similipal Kai chutney



**Kai Chutney**



**Red Weaver ant**

The chutney made with red weaver ants is a traditional delicacy of the tribals in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district. The ants are found in the forests of Mayurbhanj, including in the Similipal

forests – Asia's second-largest biosphere. Rich in medicinal and nutritional value, the chutney is believed to be a good source of nutrients like protein, calcium, zinc, vitamin B-12, iron, magnesium, potassium, etc.

The tribals prepare the Kai chutney by grinding the ants manually on a Sil Batta or the grinding stone. Mayurbhanj's tribals also earn their livelihood by selling the red ants and the chutney made from the ants. They believe that its consumption helps boost immunity and prevents diseases.

#### 5. Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal



Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal is known for its prickly thorns on the stems and the whole plant. The green and round fruits contain more seeds as compared to other genotypes. It is famous for its unique taste and relatively short quick cooking time. The plants are resistant to major insects and can be grown with minimal pesticide.

It is being widely cultivated in Nayagarh district of the state. The growers are getting a yield of up to 200 quintals per hectare and selling at around Rs 60 per kg. Historical records also suggest that the locals got the brinjal from the hilly areas. They collected seeds from it and started raising seedlings nearly 100 years ago.

#### 6. Odisha Khajuri Guda



## **GS 1 – GEOGRAPHY**

### **The story of India Meteorological Department's origin**

*#IndiaMeteorologicalDepartment #IMD  
#WeatherMonitoring #Weather #Geography  
#GS1*

**Two monstrous cyclones in 1864, one striking Kolkata and the other hitting the Andhra coast, killed more than one lakh people.** The loss of lives in the Kolkata cyclone, possibly the most destructive one till then, alone was estimated to be over 80,000. **Two years later, in 1866, India faced severe drought and famine, pushing scores of people into malnutrition and deaths by starvation.**

Though events like these were not uncommon in India in those times, the severity of these particular calamities, more than anything else, exposed the lack of a system of monitoring atmospheric parameters and foreseeing their changes. **It is these events that triggered the eventual setting up of the India Meteorological Department, which on January 15, is entering its 150th year of existence.**

Though meteorological observations were being made from several observatories at least from the 1850s, these were being done largely by amateurs or the disparate wings of the British colonial system, including the military and the survey office. The Asiatic Society of Bengal, which had been publishing some of these observations in its journal, was among the first to push for the setting up of a separate office. It was on January 15, 1875, that the IMD officially started functioning, employing the services of just one person, Englishman HF Blanford, who was called the Imperial Meteorological Reporter, to systematically study the climate and meteorology of India, and use this knowledge for weather forecasting and issuing cyclone warnings.

The IMD now has evolved into a massive organisation, running hundreds of permanent observatories and thousands of automatic

weather stations across the country. **While weather forecasting remains its main raison d'être, IMD now provides a variety of related specialised services that are sought by a vast range of agencies.** Whether it is conducting general elections or examinations, sporting events or mountaineering expeditions or organising a big function or a space launch, there is hardly any major activity that happens without the inputs of the IMD. These, apart from the several regular forecast and advisory services for agriculture, railways, airways and ships, power plants, fishing community, water management agencies and the like.

**IMD's first long-range monsoon forecast was made in 1886** and, quantitatively, was a good one. However, the most impactful successes of IMD have been in cyclone predictions, one of the main triggers for its establishment 150 years ago. Starting with the 2013 Phailin, the death toll from cyclones has come down to a minimal level. Earlier, cyclones these powerful would have easily killed thousands of people. The credit goes to IMD's forecasts, combined with efficient evacuation measures put in place by local administration.

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### **China's population fell for the second year in a row in 2023**

*#ChinaPopulationDecline #TotalFertilityRate  
#ReplacementRate #Demography  
#Population #Geography #GS1*

**The year 2023 saw 11.1 million deaths and 9 million births in China, marking the second year in which the country's total population has reduced.** In the same year, India overtook China as the most populous country in the world.

The fall is part of recent population trends.

**Since 2016, the Total Fertility Rate or TFR (the number of children a woman, on average, is expected to bear in her lifetime) has been falling in China.** Another important concept here is that of replacement rate. It is the

## **GS 2 – POLITY**

### **How the Northeast was ‘invented’, 52 years ago**

**#NorthEast**

**#NorthEastIndia**

**#NorthEasternCouncil #ReorganisationOfStates**

**#Polity #GS2**

Today, ‘Northeast India’, or just ‘the Northeast’, is commonly used by Indians to refer to the diverse region, with its inhabitants becoming ‘Northeasterners’, regardless of how they themselves self-identify. Yet the term took root only in the 1970s.

### **The Northeast**

Northeast India officially comprises eight states — Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura — which are a part of the North-Eastern Council, a statutory advisory body that plays a role in development planning, and region-level policy making.

Pre-Independence, five of these eight present-day states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram) were a part of colonial Assam. Manipur and Tripura were princely states, with resident British political officers answering to the governor of Assam.

Sikkim, the most unique of the eight, was juridically independent but under British paramountcy. It became an independent country in 1947, before being annexed by India in 1975. In 2001 Sikkim was made a member of the North Eastern Council, and thus officially a part of the Northeast.

### **Part of the colonial “frontier”**

Colonial Assam was a “frontier province” in British India. Like the North West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in present-day Pakistan), the political legal setup in the province was very different from the rest of the country.

Direct rule was limited to territories behind the administrative border, known as the

‘settled districts’ of Assam (most of present-day Assam and Sylhet, now in Bangladesh). These densely populated districts were — and still are — the region’s economic heartland, with thriving tea, coal, and oil industries emerging in the nineteenth century.

Beyond these districts lay the so-called ‘excluded areas’ or the ‘Hill areas’, controlled by various tribes, with minimal presence of the colonial state. These areas were (and still are, relatively speaking) sparsely populated, and provided a buffer zone between the ‘settled districts’ and the international border.

For instance, like the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) located between the ‘settled districts’ of the NWFP and the international border with Afghanistan, the North East Frontier Tracts (modern-day Arunachal Pradesh and a part Nagaland) was carved out in 1914, and located between the ‘settled districts’ of Assam, and the international border with Tibet and Burma.

### **National security concerns, and becoming part of the Indian state**

Thus, at the time of Independence, the region was unlike any other territory India inherited from the British. Northeast India, as an official place-name, is born out of the postcolonial Indian state’s attempts to turn this imperial frontier space into the national space of a “normal sovereign state.”

To do this, the Indian state made a series of ad hoc decisions to institute a new governance structure that eventually replaced the administrative setup of a colonial frontier province. Their foremost concern was the nebulous concept of national security.

After 1947, 98 per cent of the region’s borders became international (with China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Bhutan). A roughly 22 km wide land corridor in Siliguri, often referred to as the “chicken’s neck”,

became its sole physical connection with the rest of India.

By the 1960s, national security concerns were further heightened. India lost a border war with China in 1962, with the Chinese entering all the way into Assam, and the movement for Naga independence was in full swing. India and Pakistan fought a war in 1965, and the Mizo rebellion began the following year. Fears about the challenge to national security if the country's external and domestic enemies were to join hands, became jarringly immediate.

That the state of Nagaland was created a year after the China War is no accident. By making Nagaland into a state, Indian officials hoped to create Naga stakeholders in the Indian dispensation that would help quell the Angami Zapu Phizo-led rebellion. In retrospect it turned out to be the first step toward replacing the administrative structure of the frontier province with a new structure of governance.

With the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act of 1971, Manipur and Tripura, previously union territories, were given statehood. Meghalaya was carved out of two previously autonomous districts within Assam, and so was the union territory of Mizoram. The erstwhile North East Frontier Agency became the union territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Both Mizoram and Arunachal would be granted full statehood in 1987.

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## Gangster Goldy Brar declared designated terrorist under UAPA

#GoldyBrar #DesignatedTerrorist #UAPA #Polity #GS2

Gangster Goldy Brar, the mastermind behind the murder of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, was declared a designated terrorist by the Centre under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on Monday (January 1).

Amendments introduced in 2019 brought in provisions by which the Centre can declare individuals — not only organisations — as designated terrorists.

## Who is a “terrorist”?

The words “terror” or “terrorist” are not defined, but the UAPA defines a “terrorist act” as any act committed with intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, security, economic security, or sovereignty of India or with intent to strike terror or likely to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India or in any foreign country. While the original Act dealt with “unlawful” acts related to secession; anti-terror provisions were introduced in 2004.

The 2019 Bill sought to empower the central government to designate an individual a “terrorist” if they are found committing, preparing for, promoting, or involved in an act of terror.

## How are individuals declared terrorists?

The central government may designate an individual as a terrorist through a notification in the official gazette, and add his name to the Fourth Schedule to the UAPA. The government is not required to give an individual an opportunity to be heard before such a designation.

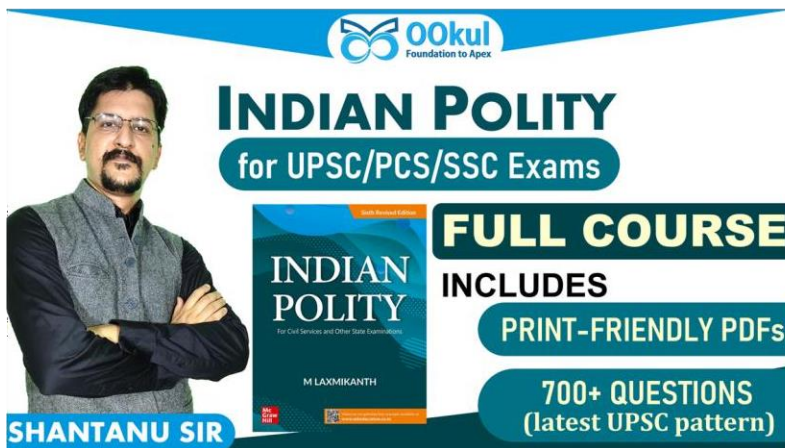
At present, in line with the legal presumption of an individual being innocent until proven guilty, an individual who is convicted in a terror case is legally referred to as a terrorist, while those suspected of being involved in terrorist activities are referred to as terror accused. The 2019 amendment did not clarify the standard of proof required to establish that an individual is involved, or is likely to be involved, in terrorist activities.

## What happens when an individual is declared a terrorist?

The designation of an individual as a global terrorist by the United Nations is associated with sanctions including travel bans, freezing of assets and an embargo against procuring arms. The 2019 amendment, however, did not provide any such detail.



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## GS 2 – GOVERNANCE

### **NREGS payments: Aadhaar-based system mandatory now**

**#NREGS #AadhaarbasedPayment #ABPS #GovernmentSchemes #Governance #GS2**

With the **Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) now mandatory for payment of wages to NREGS workers**, the Government on Monday said it may consider exemptions on a “case-by-case basis” should any gram panchayat face “technical issues”.

**Under ABPS, workers’ 12-digit Aadhaar numbers are linked with their job cards as well as their bank accounts.** The system was first made mandatory with effect from **February 1, 2023** but, through several extensions, the Centre allowed until December 31, 2023 the mixed route — of ABPS and NACH, an interbank system used for bulk payments such as subsidies and salaries.

With no extension granted to states beyond December 31, the **ABPS became mandatory from January 1, 2024.**

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### **Cabinet clears PRITHVI initiative for ease of research in earth sciences**

**#PRITHVIinitiative #EarthSciences #GovernmentInitiative #Governance #GS2**

The government Friday approved an initiative that will give it the flexibility to pursue research and use funds allocated to five different sub-schemes related to earth sciences over a five-year period.

**The funds at the disposal of the Ministry of Earth Sciences are Rs 4,797 crore which collates allocations to the sub-schemes.**

The **sub-schemes** are ‘Atmosphere and Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems and Services’, ‘Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology’, ‘Polar Science and Cryosphere Research’, ‘Seismology and Geosciences’ and ‘Research, Education, Training and Outreach’.

The new initiative, approved by the Union Cabinet at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will be called ‘**PRITHVI**’ and will **allow the ministry to award research projects to overseas institutes.**

“With the PRITHVI initiative, we are looking at **earth system sciences as one unit, instead of separate verticals such as atmosphere, cryosphere, geosphere, ocean science.** This will allow us to take up cross-disciplinary projects and even use funds allocated for the separate verticals together,” a senior official said.

“The scheme will also facilitate ease of doing research,” the official added.

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## Indore, Surat named cleanest cities, Maharashtra cleanest state

*#SwachhSarvekshanAward2023 #Cleanliness #Governance #GS2*

Indore and Surat were named the joint winners of the cleanest city award, while Maharashtra bagged the top spot among states in the Union government’s annual cleanliness rankings for urban areas.

This was the seventh year in a row that Indore was named the cleanest city in the Swachh Survekshan Awards. Surat, which has been in second place behind Indore for the past three years, won the top award for the first time.

Both cities had 100% door-to-door collection of waste, 98% segregation at source and 100% remediation of dumpsites, according to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs’ Swachh Survekshan 2023 dashboard. Both cities were tied at the top place among cities with a population over 1 lakh.

The rankings take into account door-to-door collection of waste, segregation at source, cleanliness of public areas, clean water bodies and citizens’ feedback regarding the cleanliness of their cities.

Of the eight rounds of annual awards since 2016, this was the first time that two cities shared the top prize. Navi Mumbai was named the third cleanest city.

With 89.24% door-to-door collection and 67.76% source segregation, Maharashtra was awarded the cleanest state. In second place, Madhya Pradesh has 90.59% door-to-door segregation and 54.1% source segregation.

Chandigarh won the award for the city having the best safety standards for sanitation workers – Safaimitra Surakshit Shehar. Varanasi was named the cleanest ‘Ganga town’. Sasvad in Maharashtra was named the cleanest city among those with

population below 1 lakh. Mhow Cantonment was named the cleanest cantonment in the country.

On the other hand, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Nagaland and Tripura were ranked the bottom five states.

Starting with 73 cities in 2016, the number of cities covered in the annual ranking has increased over the years. The 2023 round covered 4,416 urban local bodies, 61 cantonments and 88 Ganga towns. According to the ministry, 1.58 crore online citizen feedback and 19.82 lakh face-to-face views were received as a part of the ranking.

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## What is ‘prior approval’, and why is it needed before investigating public officials accused of corruption?

*#PriorApproval #InvestigatingPublicOfficials #PreventionOfCorruptionAct1988 #Corruption #Governance #GS2*

The Supreme Court on Tuesday delivered a split verdict in former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu’s plea to quash an FIR in the alleged skill development scam case. Justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M Trivedi disagreed on whether the AP CID was required to seek ‘previous approval’ from the state government before conducting an inquiry into the allegations against Naidu.

Justice Bose held that prior approval was necessary, which the CID did not have when it opened the inquiry. Justice Trivedi held it was necessary to seek approval only to investigate offences committed after 2018, the year this requirement was introduced.

### Prior approval requirement

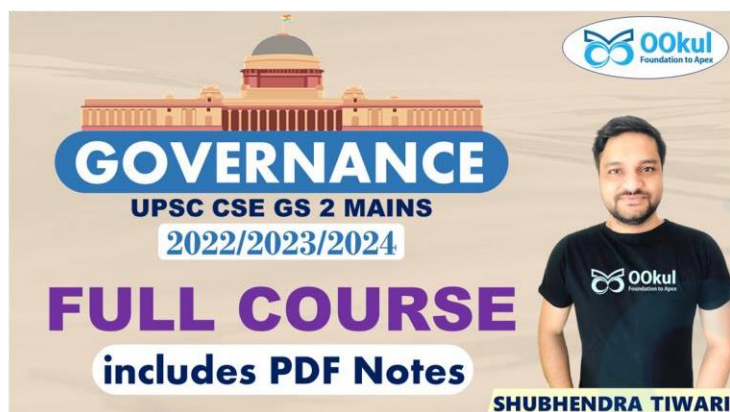
In 2003, the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946, which governs agencies like the CBI, was amended. Under Section 6A, it was required to seek approval from the central government before investigating alleged offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), 1988, if

report said the country's heavy reliance on punishment rather than institutional checks on power raises doubts over the long-term effectiveness of such anti-corruption measures.

The bottom of the index included **Myanmar (162), Afghanistan (162) and North Korea (172)**. At rank 180 was **Somalia with the lowest score of 11**.

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## GS 2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### Red Sea attacks: Why many US allies have not joined its Op Prosperity Guardian

*#OperationProsperityGuardian*

*#RedSeaAttack #MaritimeSecurity*

*#InternationalRelations #GS2*

As part of a maritime security initiative in the Red Sea named **Operation Prosperity Guardian**, the United States military said Sunday (December 31) that its forces opened fire on Yemen's Houthi rebels.

The recent attacks on ships passing via the Red Sea, a crucial trade route that connects the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, have prompted many businesses to pause the movement of cargo.

Initially, it was reported that 9 countries were joining the operation – the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain. But missing from the list are other major US partners, such as Australia, Japan, and most Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia.

Australia has said it will not be sending a ship or a plane, but tripling its contribution to the **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)**. It is a multi-naval taskforce that has 39 members – including India, Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen.

**Operation Prosperity Guardian** will be coordinated by the **Combined Task Force 153**, which was set up in April 2022 to improve maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden.

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### 15 Indians among crew freed after Navy commandos board ship hijacked in Arabian Sea

*#MVLilaNorfolk #ShipHijackInArabianSea #MaritimeSecurity #InternationalRelations #GS2*

Foiling a hijacking attempt in the north Arabian Sea, **Indian Navy's marine commandos (MARCOS)** boarded a **Liberia-flagged vessel** Friday and **rescued its crew of 21, including**



**15 Indians**, after carrying out “sanitisation” operations.

The Navy said its warship **INS Chennai** — a **Kolkata Class stealth guided-missile destroyer**, it was on an anti-piracy patrol — **intercepted the MV Lila Norfolk**, a bulk carrier, at 3.15 pm Friday.

The merchant vessel had sent a message on the **United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO)** portal, indicating that it had been boarded Thursday evening by five-six unknown armed personnel.

“Sanitisation by MARCOS has confirmed the absence of the hijackers,” the Navy said, adding that its “forceful warning” probably made the pirates abandon the hijacking attempt.

The crew members, locked inside the citadel of the vessel, were safely evacuated — a citadel refers to a designated area in a ship where the crew can seek protection in the event of a hijacking.

According to the Navy, the merchant vessel was kept under continuous surveillance using **P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, Predator MQ9B UAVs and integral helos (helicopters on a ship)** before MARCOS personnel on the warship boarded the vessel and began sanitisation operations.

The Navy said the aircraft flew over MV Lila Norfolk early Friday morning, established contact and ascertained the safety of the crew. It said **INS Chennai**, on anti-piracy patrolling duty, was diverted to assist the vessel.

The overall situation, the Navy said, was closely monitored in coordination with other agencies in the area.

“The Indian Navy remains committed to ensuring safety of merchant shipping in the region along with international partners and friendly foreign countries,” the Navy said in its statement.

This is the latest in a series of recent maritime incidents in the Arabian Sea. **In December, the Indian Navy, responding to a piracy incident, had assisted a Malta-flagged vessel, MV Ruen,**

**in the Arabian Sea, around 700 nautical miles from the Indian coast.**

**On December 23, a Liberia-flagged merchant vessel, MV Chem Pluto, carrying a crew of 22, of which 21 were Indians, came under a drone attack around 220 nautical miles southwest of Porbandar, while it was on its way to New Mangalore.**

A day after the MV Chem Pluto incident, a **Gabon-flagged commercial oil tanker, MV Sai Baba**, on its way to India with 25 Indian crew members also came under a drone attack in the southern Red Sea, along with another **Norwegian-flagged ship, MV Blaamanen.**

In the wake of these incidents, the Navy increased maritime security and surveillance in the central and north Arabian Sea by deploying frontline destroyers, frigates as well as long-range maritime patrol aircraft.

**Five warships – INS Kochi, INS Mormugao, INS Kolkata, INS Chennai and a Talwar Class frigate – have been deployed in the Arabian Sea off the Gulf of Aden.**

Along with the warships, **P8I maritime patrol aircraft, MQ-9B Predator drones and Dornier aircraft** have been carrying out enhanced surveillance of the region.

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## **Bangladesh elections and India**

**#BangladeshElections**

**#IndiaBangladeshRelations**

**#IndiaanditsNeighbours**

**#InternationalRelations #GS2**

The **countries share a 4,100-km border and deep historical, cultural, and economic ties.**

A stable, prosperous and friendly Bangladesh is in India’s best interests.

Thus, India stands firmly behind the incumbent Sheikh Hasina. Seen as one of India’s closest friends and allies, she has over the years fostered a friendly and mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries.

**What is at stake for India in Bangladesh’s elections?**

**NATIONAL SECURITY:** Before Hasina came to power in 2009, the previous Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government was quite hostile to India — and provided safe haven to numerous anti-India terrorist and militant groups. It allegedly also had links to Pakistan's ISI, and gave space to hardline Islamist radicals.

Hasina has been a very cooperative leader who has dramatically eased India's security burden on its very long eastern border. Her crackdown on anti-India elements and counter-terrorism cooperation with India has single-handedly improved India's overall security situation over the last decade or so.

Especially given the deteriorating situation in Myanmar, it becomes even more important that India and Bangladesh remain close security partners.

**DEEP ECONOMIC TIES:** One of the big changes in South Asia over the last few years is the economic rise of Bangladesh, which has replaced Pakistan as the second largest economy in the region. According to World Bank data, the GDP of Bangladesh was \$460 billion in 2022, more than Pakistan's \$375 billion.

In 2022-23, Bangladesh was the fifth largest export destination for Indian goods, after the United States, the UAE, the Netherlands, and China. It accounted for more than 2.7 per cent of all Indian exports, worth \$12.2 billion.

Under Hasina, Bangladesh is facilitating efficient connectivity to India's Northeast through overland transit and inland waterways.

Bangladesh is also crucial for economic integration within the subcontinent, especially since Pakistan refuses to support regional economic cooperation.

**REGIONAL COOPERATION:** Beyond the subcontinent, India would like Bangladesh to become a fulcrum for regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal littoral linking South and South East Asia.

Dhaka hosts the secretariat of The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) that connects the eastern subcontinent with Myanmar and Thailand. In recent years, many of India's friends such as Japan have invested heavily in Bangladesh.

### **What about allegations of democratic backsliding in Bangladesh under Prime Minister Hasina?**

The political stability in Bangladesh since Hasina came to power has been very helpful for India, and thus, she remains India's best bet. She has kept radical extremist forces at bay, and rekindled India's relationship with Bangladesh.

Yes, there have been questions raised by some regarding Bangladesh's democratic backsliding under Hasina. But the alternatives to her are a bigger threat not only to democracy but also to peace and prosperity in the region.

### **Isn't Hasina's increasing 'proximity' to China a concern for India?**

This is somewhat overstated — it is not as if she is turning to China at the expense of India. It must be remembered that China is the second largest economy in the world, and located next door to South Asia. It has investments across the globe. To expect that India's neighbours will not do business with China is unrealistic.

In fact, compared to all other neighbours with the exception of Bhutan, Bangladesh has been far more careful in navigating the tensions between India and China.

At the end of the day, New Delhi's main consideration is that Bangladesh, or for that matter any neighbour, does not do anything that hurts India's security. That is the red line which Dhaka under Hasina has respected.

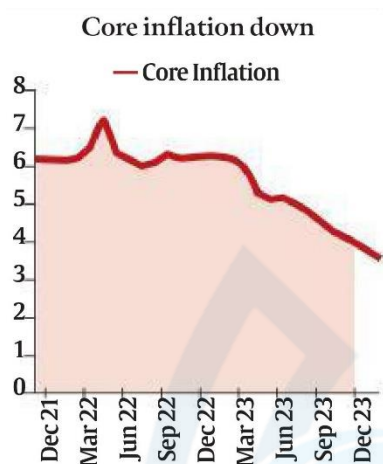
**The US has been very critical of Hasina and her government. How does this impact India's interests, given its friendship with the US?**

Lastly, as always, the inflation rate varied across the country with Odisha registering the highest inflation at 8.7% and Delhi experiencing the lowest at 2.9%.

### What is the significance?

Looking ahead, most analysts, like Dipti Deshpande of CRISIL expect the inflation rate to ease in the coming months as the Kharif harvest as well as government interventions bring down food inflation. On the whole, inflation for the full financial year is likely to be 5.5% with the March 2024 inflation rate expected to be at 5%.

Further, **regardless of what is happening to headline inflation, the core inflation rate — that is inflation rate after removing the food and fuel inflation — has been trending down.**



Source: CIEC, Yes Bank Economics Research

However, **from the perspective of monetary policy, the latest inflation data is likely to delay the cut in interest rates (read EMIs).** Before the inflation reversed its trend and started rising in November and December, there were many who had hoped that the RBI may cut as early as April this year. However, it now looks unlikely that RBI will cut interest rates before August.

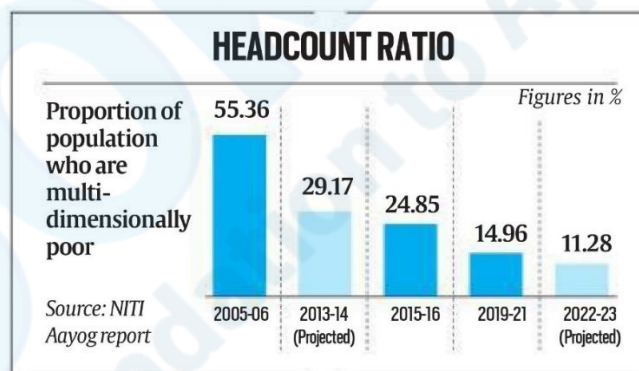
**Higher inflation is also not good news for fiscal policymakers.** Partly this has to do with the political ramifications that rising inflation rate can have so close to the elections. **But from the perspective of Budget making, too, uncertainty around inflation is hardly welcome.**

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## India's multidimensional poverty rate down to 11.28% in 2022-23 from 29.17% in 2013-14

#MultidimensionalPovertyIndex #NITIAayog  
#MultidimensionalPoverty #Poverty  
#Economy #GS3

The share of India's population living in multidimensional poverty is estimated to have fallen to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23 from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14, according to a discussion paper released by NITI Aayog on Monday. **In absolute numbers, NITI Aayog estimates a total of 24.82 crore people escaped multidimensional poverty in the last nine years.**



States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan recorded the sharpest decline in the number of people classified as poor based on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which considers twelve different indicators of poverty included under three broad dimensions, namely health, education, and standard of living.

The discussion paper also notes that the **severity of deprivation declined at a slightly lower rate between 2015-16 and 2019-21 compared to 2005-06 and 2013-14.**

Severity of deprivation measures deprivations the average multidimensionally poor person suffers from. At the same time, reduction of deprivation was faster after 2015-16 in terms of reduction in share of MPI poor out of total population compared to the decade before, owing to a lesser number of years. In 2005-06, the share of MPI poor in India's total population was 55.34 per cent. The discussion paper, which uses previously released MPI data based on



National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) conducted in 2015-15 and 2019-21, also uses NFHS-3 data from 2005-06 to understand long-term poverty trends.

Based on these three NFHS datasets, NITI Aayog estimated the share of MPI poor in the years 2013-14 and 2022-23 with technical inputs from Oxford Policy and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The discussion paper was released by NITI Aayog Member Prof. Ramesh Chand in the presence of NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam.

Prof. Chand noted that **without the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the share of MPI poor in 2022-23 would have been much lesser.** The paper also notes that it “may not fully reflect the impact of Covid on the economy” as part of NHFS-5 data collected between 2019-21 was collected before the pandemic. BVR Subrahmanyam added that **India is likely to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 1.2, which calls for reducing “at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions” much ahead of 2030.**

As per the paper, **indicators in the standard of living dimension showed highest levels of deprivation in 2005-06.** For instance, 74.4 per cent of the population was deprived of cooking fuel in 2005-06, which fell to 58.47 per cent in 2015-16, and further to 43.9 per cent between 2019-21. Similarly, 70.92 per cent of the population was deprived of adequate sanitation facilities in 2005-06, which reduced to 51.88 per cent in 2015-16, and further to 30.93 per cent between 2019-21.

The sharpest decline between two periods was recorded by the indicator measuring deprivation of access to bank accounts, which fell to 9.66 per cent in 2013-14 from 58.11 per cent in 2005-06.

According to the estimated share of MPI poor in 2013-14 and 2022-23, **Bihar recorded a 53 per cent drop from 56.3 per cent share of MPI poor in 2013-14 to 26.59 per cent in 2022-**

**23. Jharkhand also recorded a 50 per cent drop from 47.13 per cent share of MPI poor to 23.34 per cent. Uttar Pradesh, which had a lesser share of MPI poor in 2022-23 than Bihar, Jharkhand, and Meghalaya, recorded a decline to 17.4 per cent from 42.59 per cent in 2013-14.**

**India’s definition of multidimensional poverty is measured using twelve indicators including nutrition, child & adolescent mortality, maternal health, years of schooling, school attendance, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets. MPI seeks to measure poverty in a more holistic manner as opposed to solely relying on income levels to assess deprivation.**

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## Dealing with unruly passengers on flights: what the rules say

*#UnrulyPassengers*

*#CivilAviationRequirements*

*#DGCA*

*#NoFlyList*

*#FlyingBan*

*#AviationSector*

*#Economy #GS3*

IndiGo has initiated the process of putting on the no-fly list a passenger who assaulted a pilot after the flight was delayed for several hours amid heavy fog in Delhi on Sunday.

The airline declared the passenger “unruly”, and further action will be guided by the Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) on “Handling of unruly passengers” issued by the aviation watchdog Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The CAR lay down the procedure that airlines must follow with regard to unruly passenger behaviour of varying degrees at the time of the incident and subsequently.

## How are airlines supposed to respond to incidents of unruly passenger behaviour?

The airline should first inform the passengers concerned that in case their behaviour is deemed unruly as per the guidelines, they could be arrested.

**Unruly behaviour includes (but is not limited to): consuming liquor or drugs resulting in unruly behaviour; smoking; not obeying the pilot's instructions; using threatening or abusive language against crew or other passengers; physically threatening and abusive behaviour; intentionally interfering with discharge of duties by the crew; and endangering the safety of the aircraft and those on board.**

**In the incident that took place at Delhi's IGI Airport on Sunday, the aircraft was still on ground, so the passenger was handed over to airport security immediately. In cases of unruly behaviour in the air, the pilot is required to quickly assess if the cabin crew can control the unruly passenger, and accordingly inform the airline's central control on the ground.**

If the pilots and the airline's central control believe that the **unruly passenger cannot be brought under control by the cabin crew, they must land as soon as possible at the nearest available airport. "Upon landing..., airline representative shall lodge FIR (First Information Report) with the concerned security agency at aerodrome, to whom, the unruly passenger shall be handed over,"** the rules state.

### **What is the procedure to be followed after the incident is over?**

When an airline receives a complaint of unruly passenger behaviour from the pilot-in-command, it must **refer the complaint to an internal committee, which must include (i) a retired district and sessions judge as chairman, (ii) a representative of a different airline and, (iii) a representative of a passengers' association, or consumer association, or a retired officer of a consumer disputes redressal forum.**

The **internal committee is required to decide the matter within 30 days, along with the categorisation of the incident in one of three defined category levels. The committee shall also decide the duration for which the unruly passenger will be banned from flying. The**

**committee's decision shall be binding on the airline.**

### **And what are the category levels of disruptive passenger behaviour?**

The levels define behaviour ranging from verbal harassment to murderous assault.

**Level 1:** Unruly behaviour, including physical gestures, verbal harassment, and unruly inebriation.

**Level 2:** Physically abusive behaviour, including pushing, kicking, hitting, and grabbing or inappropriate touching or sexual harassment.

**Level 3:** Life-threatening behaviour, including damage to aircraft operating systems, physical violence such as choking, eye gouging, murderous assault, and attempted or actual breach of flight crew compartment.

### **What penalties can unruly behaviour by a flight passenger attract?**

**The airline can ban the unruly passenger for up to 30 days immediately after the incident.**

"Pending decision of the Internal Committee, the concerned airline may ban such unruly passenger from flying, but such period may not exceed a period of 30 days... **In case the Internal Committee fails to take a decision in 30 days, the passenger will be free to fly,"** the rules say.

**Airlines are required to maintain a database of unruly passengers and share it with the DGCA and other airlines. The DGCA maintains a No-Fly List based on the data shared by carriers.**

In addition to the airline on whose aircraft the incident occurred, **other carriers also have the option of banning such passengers from flying for varying durations based on offence levels. For Level 1 and 2 offences, the ban on flying can extend to three months and six months respectively. For a Level 3 offence, the minimum ban should be for 2 years, with no upper limit.**

**An individual who is banned from flying can appeal within 60 days to an Appellate**

## **GS 3 – ENVIRONMENT**

### **2023 was India's second hottest since 1901: IMD**

**#2023 #WarmestYear #GlobalWarming #ClimateChange #Environment #GS3**

India experienced its second warmest year in 122 years, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday. The warmest year ever recorded during this period was 2016.

The annual mean surface air temperature averaged over the country last year was 0.65 degrees Celsius (1981-2010 period) whereas the same was 0.71 degrees Celsius in 2016, IMD officials said. Globally also, 2023 is set to break all previous temperature records. 2023 was an El Nino year, which is associated with higher than normal temperatures and extremes. February, July, August, September, November and December were months when either the maximum or minimum temperatures with respect to the seasons remained above normal, the IMD said.

With respect to rainfall, December was an exceptionally wet month over the country, barring states in north and northwest India. The country received 25.5mm, which was 60 per cent above normal, last month.

During the October to December post-monsoon period, the southern peninsular India recorded 98.5mm, which was the tenth highest since 1901. The Northeast monsoon season, which officially ended in December, was largely well distributed over this region, that receives nearly 30 per cent of its annual rainfall during these three months.

“East, northeast and southern peninsular India received good rainfall mainly contributed by cyclone Michaung,” said Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director general, IMD. The IMD further said that over the past century, the country's maximum temperature had risen at a rate of 1.01 degrees Celsius whereas the minimum temperatures jumped at a rate of 0.31 degrees Celsius.

Seasonally also, the October to February months showed a significantly higher warming trend over the past 100 years. The post-monsoon period (October to December) had warmed by 1 degree Celsius whereas the winter season (January to February) had shown a jump in temperatures by 0.83 degrees Celsius, since 1901, the Met department said on Monday.

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### **How the United States' climate response has been lacking**

**#UnitedStatesClimateResponse #ClimateAction #ClimateChange #Environment #GS3**

When the **Loss and Damage Fund** was opened for capitalisation at the recently concluded COP28 climate meeting in Dubai, hosts UAE promised US\$ 100 million, as did Germany. France and Italy committed about US\$ 110 million each. United Kingdom promised about US\$ 60 million. In contrast, all that the **United States could muster was US\$ 17.3 million**. Even Ireland, Denmark and Norway put in more money into the fund.

Its small contribution to the Loss and Damage Fund was particularly jarring, but this was not the first time that the United States was found wanting in playing its expected role in the global fight against climate change. **As the country with the largest share of historical emissions, and the world's biggest economy, the United States carries a greater burden than any other nation in taking climate actions.** Both the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its 2015 Paris Agreement repeatedly mention that developed countries must take the lead in the fight against climate change.

But far from taking leadership, **United States has been one of the biggest laggards on climate action.** Not only has it not cut down on its emissions so far, it has done little to meet its financial and technological obligations. **It never ratified the Kyoto Protocol, and therefore**



never abided by the emissions reduction targets assigned therein. The Paris Agreement was negotiated largely on terms dictated by it, but it still walked out. It has rejoined the Paris Agreement now but its contributions to the climate cause have been extremely modest. The lack of enthusiasm from the United States is one of the biggest reasons why the world is not on track to meet the 2030 targets.

## Historical Responsibility

Despite China emitting much more in the last 15 years, the **United States continues to have the largest share of historical emissions, accounting for more than 20 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions since 1850.** Around the early 1990s, when the first international rules on climate change were emerging, US accounted for more than 30 per cent of historical emissions till that time.

### SHARE OF HISTORICAL EMISSIONS (1850-2021) IN %



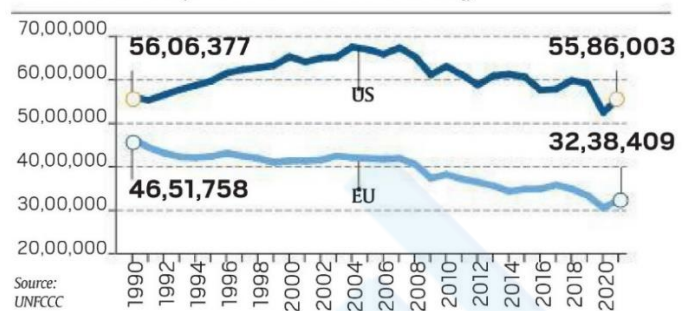
Broadly in line with the polluters' pay principle, developed and industrialised countries with the maximum share of historical emissions at that time were asked to take the lead in reducing emissions. That group of about 40 countries came to be known as Annex-I countries because they were listed in Annexure-I of UNFCCC. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the precursor to the Paris Agreement, had assigned specific emission reduction targets to each of these countries.

**But since the US never ratified the Kyoto Protocol, it was not bound by those targets. And it did nothing to reduce its emissions voluntarily.**

A recent assessment by UNFCCC shows that by 2020, when the Kyoto Protocol came to an end, the Annex-I countries, as a group, had reduced their net greenhouse gas emissions by about 25 per cent from 1990 levels. The contribution of the United States in this was next to nothing. **Its emissions came down by just 0.4 per cent during this period, that too after including the effect of Covid pandemic. In 2019, US**

**emissions were about 6 per cent higher than in 1990.**

### Annual Emissions (in thousands of tonnes of CO2 eq)



Of course, there are other Annex-I countries which have fared worse — eight of them — including Canada and Turkiye. But the United States alone emits about four times the combined emissions of all eight.

**The US still maintains that it has met its 2020 emission targets. That is because it had pegged its target — 17 per cent reduction by 2020 — to a 2005 baseline, unlike most other Annex-I countries that use a 1990 baseline.** So, the United States let its emissions grow by about 15 per cent between 1994 and 2004, and then made some reductions from that peak to claim victory. Had it not been for the Covid-induced drop in 2020, the annual emissions of the United States in 2021, the last year for which official data is available, would have been well over 1990 levels, as it indeed was in 2019.

**This year's Emissions Gap Report, an annual publication of the UN Environment Programme, showed that the US emissions were estimated to be about 1.6 per cent higher in 2022 than the previous year.**

## Modest Targets

The targets for future are not very ambitious either. **The United States has promised to reduce its emissions by 50-52 per cent by 2030 on 2005 levels.** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says global emissions have to drop by at least 43 per cent by 2030 from 2019 levels to retain any hopes of keeping the 1.5 degree Celsius alive.

**The upper limit of US emission reduction target, 52 per cent, on 2005 levels translates to less than 46 per cent from 2019 baseline.**

That is just about doing the bare minimum and nowhere close to the leadership role that it is expected to play.

And even that is not certain to be achieved. According to the same UNFCCC assessment, mentioned earlier, **current policies and measures by the United States could result in just about 20 per cent reduction from 2005 baseline by 2030.** The United States is banking heavily on the Inflation Reduction Act which it passed recently to enable the emissions reductions that would help it to achieve the 50-52 per cent target.

### **Against Equity, Justice**

**Even if it does, the bare minimum act of the United States means that the global target for 2030 is almost certain to be missed.** Meeting the global target from hereon would mean every country, even developing countries, would have to match the effort made by the United States. It is violative of the principles of equity and justice enshrined in the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

The United States, indeed, has been working actively in the negotiating rooms to do away with the differentiation between developed and developing countries that is at the heart of the international climate change framework. Even in its public utterances sometimes, the US has suggested that every country must be held equally responsible, at least for certain aspects of climate actions, and subjected to the same standards. That is the reason why, at every climate change conference, a lot of energies of the developing countries is consumed in fighting to prevent further dilution of the differentiation principle.

### **Fossil Fuel Guzzler**

While Saudi Arabia took most of the blame for attempting to prevent a mention of fossil fuel phase-out in the final outcome from Dubai meeting, the United States has largely got away with its record on fossil fuels. **It continues to be the largest producer of fossil fuels — oil, natural gas and coal taken together — and more than 80 per cent of its energy needs are**

**still met by these sources. This has remained like this for the last three decades.**

Yet, the United States has never faced the kind of pressure that India faces for its use of coal. In fact, **till 2015, the US was using as much coal as India, and it is only in recent years that it has reduced its reliance on coal a little. But the shift away from coal has been compensated largely by natural gas and oil, and only partly by renewable energy.**

Despite constant criticism, India has a far better record on fossil fuels than the United States. **Data from International Energy Agency shows that about 27 per cent of India's energy needs were being met by non-fossil sources compared to less than 20 per cent in the case of United States.**

### **No Money**

**As the world's leading economy, home to some of the largest global corporate houses, and the biggest influence on international financial institutions, the United States is uniquely positioned to mobilise financial resources for climate actions. But just like on emission reductions, it has not delivered on its climate finance obligations as well.** A day after facing criticism for its paltry contribution to the Loss and Damage fund in Dubai, the **US announced a US\$ 3 billion commitment to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for the next four years,** by far the largest sum from any single country.

GCF is the main financial instrument of the Paris Agreement geared towards raising funds to help developing countries carry out their climate actions. It had raised about US\$ 10 billion for its first four-year cycle of funding climate projects. In Dubai, it was raising money for the next four-year cycle. The US had promised US\$ 3 billion for the first round of capitalisation as well but delivered only US\$ 2 billion.

But GCF handles a very small fraction of the money that is required for climate actions, estimated to be a few trillions of dollars every year. **It was the United States that, way back in 2009, had come up with a US\$ 100 billion per year figure to be mobilised by the**

Biosecure was launched, only three individuals survived in a Kenyan conservancy. The effort to rebuild the species was inspired by an obligation to try and undo the damage caused by the greed of humans.

One rhino is poached every 16 hours on average in Africa. While the southern whites form the largest surviving rhino species, there are fewer than 7,000 black rhinos in

Africa, and only 4,000 one-horned rhinos in Asia.

Populations of the other two rhino species — the Javan and the Sumatran — are down to fewer than 100 each. But there may still be time to help them in the wild before test tubes become their future too.

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## CHECK OUT OUR ENVIRONMENT COURSE & PDF NOTES

The advertisement features a green background with the 'Ookul' logo in the top left. The main text reads 'ENVIRONMENT SHANKAR IAS ACADEMY'. Below this, it says 'FULL COURSE with PDF notes' and 'UPSC/STATE PSC/SSC'. A central image shows a book cover titled 'ENVIRONMENT' with a globe and hands, and a portrait of Shantanu Sir. The name 'SHANTANU SIR' is written at the bottom right of the advertisement.



FULL COURSE



PDF NOTES

## GS 3 – SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### ISRO's New Year launch: Special space observatory, X-ray telescope

[#XpoSat](#) [#XrayPolarimetry](#) [#ISRO](#) [#IXPE](#)  
[#NASA](#) [#ScienceandTechnology](#) [#GS3](#)

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) began the new year with the launch of its first X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XpoSat), a space-based observatory to study X-ray polarisation and its cosmic sources — celestial bodies including black holes, neutron stars and magnetars.

The PSLV-C58 rocket, with primary payload XPoSat and 10 other satellites to be deployed in low-earth orbits, lift off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota at 9.10 am on Monday.

XpoSat is only the world's second such mission. In 2021, NASA had launched Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE) to operate and perform X-ray polarisation

measurements within the soft X-ray band, whereas XPoSat will operate within the medium X-ray band.

It will carry two payloads — POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays) and XSPECT (X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing). According to ISRO, POLIX is expected to observe about 40 bright astronomical sources of different categories; XSPECT will study the electromagnetic spectrum generated by different matter.

X-ray polarisation serves as a crucial diagnostic tool for examining the radiation mechanism and geometry of celestial sources. The insights derived from X-ray polarisation measurements on celestial objects like black holes, neutron stars and active galactic nuclei, hold the potential to significantly improve the understanding of their physics.



Built entirely by two Bengaluru-based institutes — ISRO's UR Rao Satellite Centre and Raman Research Institute — XPoSat was conceptualised in 2008 and the formal agreement with the space agency was inked in 2015.

XPoSat will become the country's third space-based observatory after the recently launched solar mission Aditya-L1, and AstroSat launched in 2015.

Across the world, there have been only a handful of experiments on X-ray polarisation measurements. Some of these have been balloon-based and short-duration experiments by NASA and collaborators. Indian astronomers, using AstroSat, have undertaken timing and broadband spectroscopy of X-ray sources but no polarisation studies were performed.

XPoSat is, therefore, expected to be a gamechanger in the field, as there have been only timing, spectroscopy and imaging-based studies done in this X-ray frequency band, globally.

This is primarily due to the difficulty in developing sensitive instrumentation.

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**In 2023, Indian science went for the Moon and reached for the Sun. What's planned for 2024?**

**#ScienceAchievementsIn2023**

**#Chandrayaan3**

**#AdityaL1**

**#NationalResearchFoundation**

**#ArtemisAccord #NationalQuantumMission**

**#ResearchStations**

**#LIGO**

**#ScienceandTechnology #GS3**

While the Moon landing was quite clearly the crowning glory for Indian science in 2023, the year also marked a definite shift in gears for India's space programme. From an agency with advanced capabilities in launching and placing satellites in orbits, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) took important steps towards becoming a full-fledged planetary exploration body.

This was one of the most productive years for ISRO, which carried out seven successful missions, including the two high-profile ones — Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1, India's first mission to the Sun. The year ended the relatively lean streak for the space agency in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, which seemed to have badly disrupted its schedule, affecting even the human spaceflight mission, Gaganyaan, originally planned for 2022. With several preparatory tests still remaining, **Gaganyaan is now scheduled for 2025.**

In the meanwhile, ISRO unveiled an impressive list of milestones it aims to achieve in the next few years — **sending an astronaut to the International Space Station in a joint effort with NASA in 2024; Chandrayaan-4, a sample return mission from the Moon, in the next four years; space station Bhartiya Antariksh Station by 2028; and landing a human being on the Moon by 2040.**

This is in addition to routine launches, astronomy missions, and exploratory missions to Sun, Mars and Venus.

## **Chandrayaan-3**

Several of these plans were firmed up only after the successful moon landing of Chandrayaan-3 in August. The fact that the **United States and the then Soviet Union had made Moon landings a fairly routine event in the 1960s and 1970s** does in no way diminish the enormity of India's feat. Five decades later, **there are still only two more countries to have gone to the Moon — China and India.**

Chandrayaan-3 was sweeter because India's first attempt, Chandrayaan-2 in 2019, had met with heartbreak in the last few seconds of its descent on the Moon's surface. This time, ISRO managed a perfect landing.

Once on the Moon, **Chandrayaan-3 performed previously unannounced manoeuvres that demonstrated ISRO's capabilities, and intention, to undertake more advanced missions. The biggest surprise was the 'hop' experiment.** Towards the end of the lunar day, the entire Chandrayaan-3 lander, along with the instruments it contained, made a jump on the

Moon's surface, lifting itself about 40 cm above the ground and landing 30-40 cm away.

This demonstrated ISRO's capability to get the lander to lift off the Moon's surface — a key test for sample return missions or manned missions, when the spacecraft has to return to Earth. Not unexpectedly, ISRO, a few weeks later, said Chandrayaan-4 would indeed be a sample return mission.

## New partnerships

The growing capabilities of ISRO also resulted in more international partnerships. **During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States in June this year, India joined the US-led Artemis Accords for planetary exploration.** The Artemis Accords are a set of principles that countries agree to adhere to in their quest for peaceful and cooperative exploration of the Moon and other planets. India's decision to join the Artemis Accords brings the space programmes of the two countries closer than ever.

Another demonstration of the **new close partnership was the agreement between ISRO and NASA to send a joint mission to the International Space Station, the permanent laboratory in space about 400 km above the earth's surface, in 2024.** This would mean that India's astronauts would get into space much earlier than the Gaganyaan mission of 2025.

Later in the year, **India and the US also set up a working group for commercial space collaboration, which is expected to boost the private space industry in the country.** The two countries announced their intention to work together on planetary defence too.

## National Research Foundation

While ISRO was breaking new grounds in space exploration, the government made an important intervention to expand the scale and quality of scientific research in the country. **Delivering on a promise it made five years ago, the government approved the National Research Foundation (NRF), to fund, promote and mentor research activities.**

**Modelled on the National Science Foundation in the United States, the NRF would ensure research funding of Rs 50,000 crore over the next five years.** However, the **biggest promise of NRF is in its mandate to develop research capacities in universities and colleges.**

**The NRF would promote research not just in the natural sciences and engineering, but also in social sciences, arts and humanities, with one of the primary aims being finding solutions to the big problems facing Indian society.**

## New initiatives

The year saw India taking important decisions towards developing indigenous capabilities in frontier areas of scientific research. **In April, it launched a Rs 6,000-crore National Quantum Mission, aimed at building a 1,000-qubit quantum computer over the next eight years.** Quantum computers are not just superfast, they utilise the quantum mechanical properties of matter at a tiny scale, allowing them to perform tasks that would be impossible, or impractical, for conventional computers.

The launch of the National Quantum Mission allows India to join a global technology development race when it is still in its nascent stages. India has often been a late entrant in such matters, like in the development of supercomputers, and then has a lot of catching up to do. It also misses out on the spin-off benefits of technology development.

**Another similar decision was the approval of the LIGO-India project to build a gravitational wave observatory in Maharashtra.** The project had received an in-principle approval seven years earlier, but it was only in April that the final nod came. **LIGO-India would be the third arm of two similar observatories in the United States which made the first discovery of gravitational waves in 2015, a feat that won the Nobel Prize in Physics two years later.** Gravitational wave research is another field where there are very few players and facilities right now, and India has the opportunity to take the lead.

Biotech is the first initiative of its kind in the country.

### What is lab-grown fish?

It is merely a type of lab-grown — or cultivated/ cultured — meat. Seafood without the sea is 'grown' in the same way as other cultivated meats are grown — without the need to raise and kill an animal.

Cultivated fish meat is produced by isolating specific cells from fish and growing them in a laboratory setting using media that is free of animal components. The final product is expected to replicate the flavour, texture, and nutritional qualities of 'real' fish meat.

### What is the need to grow fish meat in the lab?

Experiments are ongoing in many countries on developing commercially viable lab grown fish meat, which is expected to address the ever growing demand for seafood, and reduce excessive pressure on wild resources. **Overfishing — the removal of fish faster than the resource can replenish itself — has resulted in dramatic reductions in populations of certain species, which has impacted entire marine ecosystems in many areas.**

In theory, **lab grown fish meat has significant potential for ensuring food security and environmental benefits. Besides taking some load off traditional fishing, lab grown fish**

**meat will be antibiotics- and environmental contamination-free, and will have no contact with microplastics or heavy metals in the polluted oceans.**

### Which countries are growing fish meat in the lab?

Large-scale commercial manufacture of lab-grown fish meat is probably still some years away, but a number of countries have made great strides in this pioneering technology. **Israel is the frontrunner, followed by Singapore, the United States and China.**

### What other kinds of meat are being produced in labs?

The Dutch pharmacologist Mark Post was the **first to present a proof of concept for cultured meat in 2013.** Several dozens of companies around the world are now reported to be working on developing lab-grown meat from cells, including chicken, pork, lamb, fish and beef.

According to the Good Food Institute, a global nonprofit think tank that also has an India chapter, **the industry has “grown to more than 150 companies on 6 continents as of late 2022, backed by \$2.6 billion in investments... (and) dozens more companies have formed to create technology solutions along the value chain”.**

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## **GS 3 – DEFENCE**

### **Country's first all-girls Sainik School inaugurated in Vrindavan**

**#AllGirlsSainikSchool #Defence #GS3**

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday inaugurated the **country's first all-girl Sainik School at Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura district** and termed it as a “golden moment in the history of women empowerment” since the institution would become a beacon of light for female students

who aspired to join the armed forces to serve the motherland.

With a strength of nearly 870 students, **Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School has been established under the initiative of opening 100 new Sainik Schools in partnership mode with NGOs/private/state government schools in all states/union territories, of which 42 have already come up,** the Defence Ministry said in a statement.



## Army reviews Gen Naravane's book: What Rules govern writing by serving and retired personnel?

[#GenNarvaneBook](#)      [#FourStarsOfDestiny](#)  
[#ArmyRules1954](#)  
[#CentralCivilServicesRule1972](#)      [#Defence](#)  
[#GS3](#)

The Army has begun a review of the memoirs of its former Chief General M M Naravane (retd) after news agency PTI published excerpts from it last month.

The excerpts revealed hitherto unknown details of the Indian leadership's response to the crisis arising out of the standoff with China in eastern Ladakh in 2020, and on the discussions on various aspects of the Agnipath scheme of recruitment in the armed forces before it was launched last year.

The book, titled *Four Stars of Destiny*, is scheduled for release this month.

### Why is the book being reviewed by the Army?

Under Section 21 of The Army Rules, 1954, serving personnel are not allowed to "publish in any form whatever or communicate directly or indirectly to the press any matter in relation to a political question or on a service subject or containing any service information".

Also, it is prohibited to "publish or cause to be published any book or letter or article or other document on such question or matter or containing such information without the prior sanction of the Central Government".

Serving officers also cannot "deliver a lecture or wireless address on a matter relating to a political question or on a service subject or containing any information or views on any service subject" without prior sanction.

The Rules explain that "'service information' and 'service subject' include information or

subject...concerning the forces, the defence or the external relation of the Union".

Officials said the rule may not apply if an Armed Forces personnel writes a book that is unrelated to his/ her work, or is of a literary or artistic nature.

### Do these Rules also apply to a retired officer such as Gen Naravane?

The Rules do not explicitly state the process that is to be followed by retired defence services officers while publishing a book.

Some officials said that the review process for books to be published by Armed Forces personnel can draw from the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972, which were amended in June 2021 by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

This is despite the fact that the Armed Forces do not come under the purview of these Rules.

The amended Rules barred retired government servants who have served in intelligence or security-related organisations from publishing any information related to the organisation after retirement without prior permission.

Retired civil servants who do not belong to this category do not require government sanction to publish a book, the officials said.

### Have other Army officers written books earlier?

Yes, several serving and retired Army officers have written books on various military-related subjects in the past.

Books written by former Army Chiefs include *Kargil: From Surprise To Victory* by Gen V P Malik (retd), and *Courage and Conviction: An Autobiography* by Gen V K Singh (retd).

Former Chief Gen K Sundarji wrote *Blind Men of Hindoostan: Indo-Pak Nuclear War* and *Of Some Consequence: A soldier Remembers*.

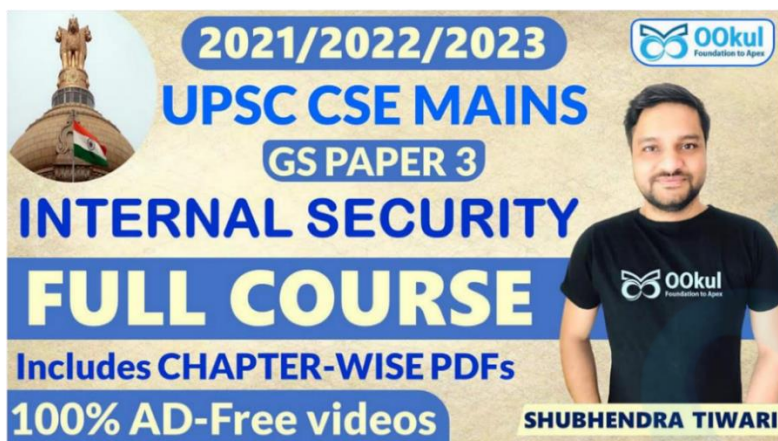
The action comes as India faces a barrage of cybersecurity-related incidents – most recently a high-profile attack on the systems of AIIMS Delhi in 2022– which pose a major challenge to New Delhi’s national security imperatives.

The framework has been drawn up by the National Critical Information Infrastructure

Protection Centre (NCIIPC) – which reports to the Prime Minister’s Office – with support from the National Cybersecurity Coordinator (NCSC).

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PDF Notes

## SPORTS

**Sumit Nagal became first Indian to beat seeded player in Grand Slams since 1989**

*#SumitNagal #AustralianOpen #GrandSlam #Tennis #Sports*

Sumit Nagal beat Kazakhstan’s Alexander Bublik (31<sup>st</sup> seed) in first round of Australian Open 2024 in Melbourne. He became the first Indian since Ramesh Krishnan in 1989 to beat a seeded player in the singles main draw of a Grand Slam.

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## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**Egypt plans expansion of new capital as first residents trickle in**  
*#NewCapital #Egypt #InternationalAffairs*

Egypt is preparing to spend billions doubling the size of a lavish new capital it is building in the desert 45 km (28 miles) east of Cairo, where the first residents are trickling in.

The city is the biggest of a series of mega-projects that **President Abdel Fateh El-Sisi says are needed for economic development and to accommodate a growing population of 105 million**, but critics say increase in Egypt’s debt burden.

The project is known as the New Administrative Capital (NAC).

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**Gabriel Attal appointed France new PM**

*#GabrielAttal #FrancePM #PersonsInNews #InternationalAffairs*

French President Emmanuel Macron appointed the 34-year-old Education Minister **Gabriel Attal as his new prime minister** on 09 January 2024. He will be France’s youngest prime minister and the first to be openly gay.

He will replace the outgoing PM Elisabeth Borne.

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## NATO to hold biggest drills since Cold War with 90,000 troops

[#NATOdrills](#) [#SteadfastDefender2024](#)  
[#Reforger](#) [#TridentJuncture](#)  
[#InternationalAffairs](#)

NATO is launching its largest exercise since the Cold War, rehearsing how U.S. troops could reinforce European allies in countries bordering Russia and on the alliance's eastern flank if a conflict were to flare up with a "near-peer" adversary.

Some 90,000 troops are due to join the **Steadfast Defender 2024** drills that will run through May.

The last exercises of a similar size were **Reforger - during the Cold War in 1988** with 125,000 participants - and **Trident Juncture in 2018** with 50,000 participants, according to NATO.

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## Thousands in Tel Aviv call for regime change as Gaza war toll hits 25,000

[#TelAviv](#) [#Israel](#) [#PlacesInNews](#)  
[#InternationalAffairs](#)

Thousands of Israelis gathered in Tel Aviv to protest against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, accusing the veteran leader of mishandling the nation's security and calling for a fresh election.

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## Drone strike kills 3 US soldiers in Jordan, White House blames Iran-backed groups

[#DroneAttack](#) [#Jordan](#) [#Israel HamasConflict](#)  
[#PlacesInNews](#) [#InternationalAffairs](#)

Three US service members were killed and dozens wounded during an unmanned aerial drone attack on U.S. forces stationed in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian border.

US President Joe Biden blamed Iran-backed groups for the attack, the first deadly strike against the U.S. forces since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October, sending shock waves throughout the region.



Jordan and neighbouring countries

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## Thousands protest Kenya femicides

[#Femicides](#) [#Kenya](#) [#PlacesInNews](#)  
[#InternationalAffairs](#)

Thousands marched in cities and towns in Kenya during the protests over the **slaying of more than a dozen women** in January.

At the largest event ever held in Kenya against gender-based violence, crowd was hostile to attempts by legislator Esther Passaris to address them.

Passaris, Nairobi's Woman Representative was accused by protestors of remaining silent during the latest wave of women slayings.