FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST

> Indian Overseas Migrants

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As UPSC aspirants, it is essential to stay updated on current affairs to excel in the examination. This **Fortune Weekly Digest (ForWarD)** brings you the latest news and developments from around the world, carefully curated and analyzed to help you prepare for the Civil Services (Main) Examination.

We understand that time is precious, and we have made sure to present the information in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

The magazine is divided into different sections. Mains relevant topics have been covered in detail with a UPSC previous year question perspective. The jot downs are examples and interesting facts to enrich your answer writing. Cherrypicks has some key words from the week, helpful again in answer writing and essay. We have also included essay topics and sample questions to help you guage your preparation.

We have designed this magazine to best supplement the daily current affairs notes we have launched by the name of **FIND (Fortune IAS News Daily)** and **FINDER (Fortune IAS News Daily Explainer)** and the **Fortune Prelims Precise** monthly compilation. This magazine will be explained in detail and your queries addressed in a live class we conduct.

At a time when there is no dearth of current affairs materials, our hope is help you get a one-stop solution for all your current affairs needs.

This magazine is a work in progress and your feedback will be appreciated.

We hope that this magazine will serve as a valuable resource for your exam preparation and contribute to your success in the UPSC examination.

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NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

Syllabus: GS II - Educartion; Government Policies

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *The quality of higher education in India requires major improvements to make it internationally competitive. Do you think that the entry of foreign educational institutions would help improve the quality of higher and technical education in the country? Discuss. (2015)*

Q) *National Education Policy 2020 is in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (2030). It intends to restructure and reorient education system in India. Critically examine the statement. (2020)*

Q) *'Earn while you learn' scheme needs to be strengthened to make vocational education and skill training meaningful." Comment. (2021)*

SHORT TAKES

➤ **AICTE:** The **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** was established in **1945** (initially as an advisory body, statutory status granted in 1987) as the It functions under the **Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education (MoE)** and is national-level regulating body for technical education in India.

➤ **GER**: GER stands for **Gross Enrollment Ratio.** It is a statistical measure used in the education sector to indicate the number of students enrolled in a particular level of education expressed as a percentage of the **eligible age group population.**

WHY IN NEWS?

Recent article in Indian Express highlights that **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**'s focus on standardised credits and peripheral courses dilutes core subject knowledge, burdening students with excessive exams and administrative tasks, potentially compromising depth of learning. Despite recent adjustments, widespread stakeholder discontent suggests a need for deeper reconsideration of NEP's objectives and implementation

INTRODUCTION

- In 2020, the Government of India unveiled the National Education Policy (NEP), a comprehensive reform initiative aligned to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and designed to revitalise the country's educational landscape.

- Prior to the NEP, concerns mounted regarding **rote-learning focused pedagogy** and a perceived lack of emphasis on **critical thinking skills**. The NEP seeks to address these issues by promoting a **holistic development approach** encompassing intellectual, social, emotional, and physical well-being for students.

DETAILS

➡ **Vision:** Massive transformation in education through— "an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to **transforming India**, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society,

➡ **Guiding pillars:** The NEP 2020 is founded on the five guiding pillars of **Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability.**

➡ **Holistic Development:** NEP emphasises holistic development of students, encompassing **intellectual, social, emotional, and physical well-being.** This moves away from a system focused solely on academic achievement.

➡ **Universal Access:** NEP 2020 aims for **100% Gross Enrollment Ratio** in school education by 2030. Initiatives include providing sufficient infrastructure, alternative education centres, and tracking student participation and learning levels.

  » The policy aims to achieve **100% youth and adult literacy.**

➡ **Promoting equity:** The NEP's implementation signifies a concentrated effort towards achieving the goals of equal access to **quality education** for all, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

  » **Example**: **Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University's** Centre for Equal Opportunities and Inclusive Education has launched **Atri**, a specialised learning centre dedicated to supporting disadvantaged groups such as **transgenders and sex workers.**

  » **Central University of Tripura** has introduced postgraduate courses teaching **scheduled tribes' languages** to preserve cultural heritage and offer higher education opportunities.

➡ **Emphasis on Digital Infrastructure:** The NEP recognizes the importance of technology in education and emphasises

the use of online and blended learning methods as well as AI. This can expand access to quality education, particularly for students in remote areas.

» **Example**: **Anuvadini**, supported by AICTE, offers AI text and voice translation in **22 regional Indian and foreign languages**, empowering non-English native speakers and promoting **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat principles.**

➡ **Vocational Education:** By 2025, **NEP 2020 aims for 50%** of learners to engage in vocational education, starting from middle and secondary school levels and extending into higher education, integrating vocational training across all secondary schools over the next decade.

» This initiative includes **collaborations with ITIs, polytechnics, and local industries**, ensuring exposure to multiple vocations with practical internships during **Grades 6-12** and through online courses.

➡ **Ministry of Education:** In order to bring the focus back on education and learning, it was suggested to re-designate **MHRD as the Ministry of Education (MoE).** This was done by a gazette notification on 14 August 2020.
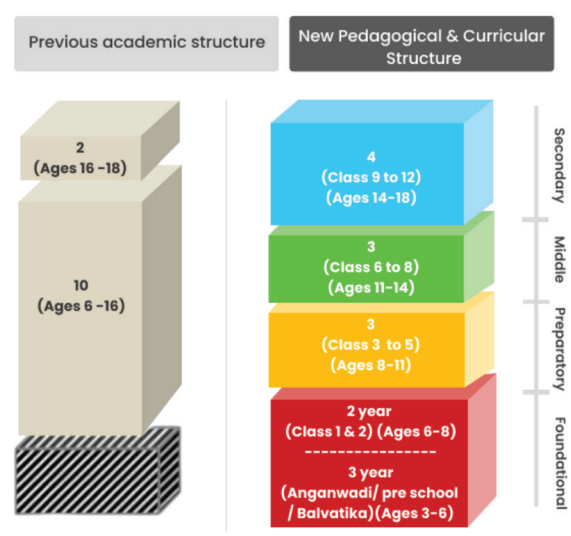
TIMELINE

➤ **January 2015:** The **Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)** initiates a comprehensive consultative process to get over 2 lakh suggestions from panchayats and districts.

➤ **May 2016:** A committee led by **Late Shri T.S.R. Subramanian**, former Cabinet Secretary, submits its report on evolving the new education policy.

» Based on the committee report, the Ministry prepares "**Some Inputs for the Draft National Education Policy, 2016"**.

➤ **June 2017:** A new committee for drafting the NEP is formed under the chairmanship of **Dr. K. Kasturirangan**, former ISRO Chairman and scientist.

➤ **May 31, 2019:** The Dr. Kasturirangan Committee submits the Draft National Education Policy 2019.

» The Draft NEP 2019 is uploaded on the MHRD(now MoE) website and MyGov Innovate portal for public feedback and suggestions.

➤ **July 29, 2020:** NEP 2020 was launched

FEATURES

SCHOOL EDUCATION

- **Early Childhood Education:** A National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education **(NCPFECCE)** for children up to age 8 will be developed by NCERT. The Ministries of HRD, Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare, and Tribal Affairs will jointly plan and implement this early childhood education.

- **5+3+3+4 School System:** The policy introduces a flexible **5+3+3+4 school curricular structure.** This includes foundational learning from **ages 3-8 (preschool + 3 years of primary school)**, followed by **3 years of upper primary, 3 years of secondary, and 4 years of higher secondary education** with increased flexibility for subject choices and vocational integration.

- **Study Materials**: High-quality textbooks will be developed by NCERT and SCERTs, with states preparing curricula and region-specific materials. Priorities include providing textbooks in all regional languages and reducing the weight of school bags and textbooks by adjusting curriculum load.

- **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy:** A National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be established by 2025 to enhance **early language and maths skills from Grades 1 to 3.**

- **Multilingualism and Language Learning:** NEP 2020 emphasises multilingualism to help children learn about India's diverse languages.

    o The **medium of instruction** will be the mother tongue/local language/regional language until at least Grade 5, preferably till Grade 8 and beyond.

    o Students in Grades 6-8 will participate in projects on '**The Languages of India**' under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative.

o Sanskrit and other **classical languages** (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian, Prakrit) will be available as options.

o **Foreign languages** (Korean, Japanese, Thai, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian) will be offered at the secondary level.

o **Indian Sign Language (ISL)** will be standardised, with curriculum materials developed for hearing-impaired students.

- **Reformed Assessment:** Assessment will shift from summative to regular and formative, focusing on competency, learning, and higher-order skills like critical thinking.

o **Grades 10 and 12 board exams** will continue but will be reformed to reduce reliance on coaching classes.

o Students can take board exams twice a year, once for the main exam and once for improvement.

o School examinations in Grades 3, 5, and 8 will be conducted by the appropriate authority.

o **PARAKH :**A new National Assessment Centre, **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)**, will be set up as a standard-setting body for setting norms, standards, and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation for all recognized school boards of India.

- **Teacher Recruitment:** Teachers will undergo transparent recruitment and merit-based promotions, with multi-source performance appraisals.

o A **National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)** will define roles and competencies across expertise levels, adopted by states for career management, including tenure, development, salaries, promotions, and reviews every ten years starting from 2030.

- **Infrastructure development:** The NEP emphasises not just theoretical knowledge but also practical skills and real-world experiences. This necessitates well-equipped classrooms, labs, workshops, and libraries to facilitate various learning activities.

o **Example**: Under **PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India)** for school upgrades, 6,448 schools were selected, and **Rs 630.11 crore was allocated to 6,207 PM SHRI schools across 27 States/UTs, including KVS/NVS.**

HIGHER EDUCATION

- **Increase GER:** The aim will be to increase the **Gross Enrolment Ratio** in higher education including vocational education from **26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035**

- **Four Year UG Programs:** The **4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's program** is preferred as it offers comprehensive education across various disciplines alongside specialisation in chosen majors and minors based on student preferences.

- **Flexibility with Structure:** NEP allows for flexibility within a structured framework. Students can choose a major and minor for focused study, along with electives from various disciplines.The NEP incorporates:

  Generic electives: These courses broaden students' knowledge beyond their core subjects.

  Ability and skill enhancement courses: These equip students with practical skills for employability or entrepreneurship

- **Exit and Re-entry:** The NEP acknowledges that students may need to pause their studies for various reasons. It allows them to exit and re-enter programs, making education more accessible and promoting lifelong learning. This is a shift from the traditional view of students who leave a program as **"dropouts."**

- **Creation of Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)**: **Digitally stores the academic credits** earned from various recognized **Higher Educational Institutions (HEI)** so that the degrees from an HEI can be awarded taking into account credits earned.

- **Outcome-Based Learning (OBL): NEP emphasises OBL**, where courses have defined learning goals, and assessments are designed to measure if students achieved them. This ensures a clear focus on what students should learn from each course.

- **Creation of the National Research Foundation:** Primary role will be to nurture a vibrant research ecosystem through funding, mentoring, and support of **multidisciplinary research** in Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Engineering, Technology, and Educational Technology in universities.

- **Seeding a Research Culture:** The NEP encourages universities to establish research centres, innovation hubs, and mentorship programs to nurture a research culture among students and faculty from early stages.

  - **Example**: 7,568 Institutions' Innovation Councils and approximately **104 Idea Development, Evaluation, and Application Labs (IDEA)** have been established to foster research and innovation.

- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** Students gaining real-world experience relevant to their studies can earn academic credit through RPL. Their knowledge and skills gained outside the classroom are recognized and valued, reducing the time needed to complete a degree.

DIFFERENCE FROM EARLIER

National Education Policy

Feature	NEP 1968	NEP 1986	NEP 2020
Government	Indira Gandhi	Rajiv Gandhi (amended by P.V. Narasimha Rao)	Narendra Modi
Key Focus	• Radical restructuring of education system • Equality of opportunity • National integration	• Universalization of elementary education • Vocationalisation of education • Emphasis on science and technology	• Access, equity, quality, affordability, accountability • Holistic and integrated learning • Focus on critical thinking and problem-solving
Major Initiatives	• 10+2+3 education system • Emphasis on mother tongue education • Work experience programs	• Operation Blackboard • Navodaya Vidyalayas • Emphasis on computer education	• New 5+3+3+4 school structure • Integration of vocational training • Multiple entry/exit points • Holistic learning with focus on core subjects, arts, and life skills
Criticisms	• Slow implementation • Limited success in achieving equality • Issues with vocationalization	• Limited impact on quality and vocationalization • Overemphasis on rote learning	• Concerns about practicality of certain aspects (e.g., one-size-fits-all practicals) • Frequent amendments creating confusion

ISSUES

- **Lacks Holistic Learning:** Critics argue true education involves more than **credit accumulation.** It requires deep absorption, critical thinking, and a stable learning environment.

- **Fast-Paced vs. Sthir (Steady):** The NEP's structure might not foster the **"sthira" (steady)** environment needed for meaningful academic work, as emphasised in traditional gurukul systems.

- **Americanization of Education:** Some see the NEP as adopting an **"American view" of education** solely as a means for job market survival, potentially neglecting broader intellectual development.

- **Reduced Content:** This can result in fewer units or chapters being covered, potentially hindering a holistic understanding of complex subjects.

  » **Example:** The NEP's impact on literature courses is exemplified by the reduced focus on **Whitman's "Passage to India."**

    • **Previously:** Students studied the entire poem (255 lines across 13 sections).

    • **Under NEP: Only 68 lines across 4 sections** are prescribed, potentially sacrificing crucial context.

- **Credit System and Content Dilution:** The NEP's credit-based system and emphasis on a broad curriculum can lead to a diluted focus on core subjects. This creates a **larger number of subjects (7-8 exams/semester) for students to manage.**

  » **Example**: The St Xavier's University, Kolkata, Economics Honours syllabus for semester one includes **Introductory Microeconomics as the only core subject** and Basic Statistics, Understanding Human Behaviour, Introduction to Media Studies, Communicative English, Personality Development, Inter-religious Studies for Global Citizenship and Environmental Education as minors. Semester two follows a similar pattern, with only one core economics subject.

- **Assessment Burden:** On top of frequent exams, students face internal assessments (assignments, class tests) and continuous assessments. Marks for attendance and participation in these assessments add to the workload.

- **Financial Burden on States:** The NEP proposes significant reforms, potentially requiring increased expenditure on infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development.

  » **Example**: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma emphasised the financial challenges posed by implementing the NEP noting the lack of direct funding from the Centre.

- **Impracticality of Practicals in Non-Core Courses:** The NEP mandated practical exams for even non-arts subjects, involving external experts and full-day sessions. This becomes impractical for value-added courses like **"The Art of Being Happy."**

- **Competitive Disadvantage:** The policy's encouragement of private and foreign universities, with greater fee flexibility and innovative course offerings, could marginalise public universities, exacerbating social inequalities in access to quality education.

- **Syllabus issue:** The UGC has proposed a model structure for the curriculum, **granting universities the autonomy to design their final syllabus**. Much of the criticism targets the design and content of these syllabi, which is a university-specific issue rather than a failure of the NEP itself.

- **Remote learning challenges:** Educators and students in remote regions face significant challenges due to inadequate training and resources, impacting the quality of education and limiting opportunities for higher education and employment.

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

- ☀ **Uttarakhand:** Became the **first state to implement NEP at the pre-primary level** in all government schools by inaugurating 'Bal Vatikas at anganwadi kendras across the state to strengthen the pre-primary education system.

- ☀ **Goa:** More than **8000 opted for advanced curriculum** in coding and robotics offered in government and aided schools in Standards VI, VII, and VIII.. The **Coding and Robotics Education in Schools (CARES)** is implemented by the Project Management Unit's (PMU) Scheme in Goa according to NEP guidelines

- ☀ **Germany:** The **German vocational training system (duales System)** integrates classroom learning with workplace apprenticeships, preparing students foar specific careers.

- ☀ **Finland**: In Finland, standardised tests are rare, except for the voluntary **National Matriculation Exam for upper-secondary students.**

- ☀ Instead, children are individually graded by their teachers using a system set by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry tracks progress by sampling groups across various schools nationwide.

WAY FORWARD

✷ **Emphasising Quality:** To ensure resilience in the face of job disruptions, **focusing on quality is crucial.** Developing integrated curricula across disciplines fosters comprehensive knowledge, while introducing new courses can expand educational horizons and prepare students for dynamic challenges.

✷ **Financial Support:** Advocating for adequate financial support from state and central governments to **bridge funding gaps** and ensure equitable infrastructure development across all types of educational institutions.

✷ **Governance Reforms:** Revising governance structures to promote academic autonomy, **streamline decision-making** processes, and reduce bureaucratic hurdles will foster a conducive environment for implementing NEP reforms.

✷ **Reevaluate the Necessity of Practical Exams:** Conduct a thorough assessment to determine if practical exams are essential for value-based courses. If not, consider alternative assessment methods that align better with the course objectives.

   » **Example:** The University of Delhi addressed this by removing impractical practicals and opting for a **40-mark continuous assessment**, though details on its implementation remain unclear.

✷ **Focus on Knowledge Creation:** True reform requires defining the core purpose of higher education, which should be to equip students to become knowledge producers, not just passive consumers of information.

✷ **Continuous Updation:** Effective implementation and continuous updation based **on stakeholder feedback** are key to the success of any educational reform.

   » **Example**: **Delhi University has successfully implemented the NEP** by adopting a higher credit framework, allowing students to earn additional credits for academic enrichment.

✷ **Enhancing Teaching Capabilities:** This approach ensures that educators are well-equipped to deliver effective instruction, cater to diverse learning needs, and foster a conducive learning environment that supports student growth and development.

   » **Example:**The **National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)** held a five-day virtual orientation program in June 2024, **for 1 lakh teachers from 29 states, UTs, KVS, and NVS across the country to assist teachers in implementing the NEP 2020.**

   » **4-year Integrated Teacher Education Program** has been introduced. Recognition has been granted to 42 institutions including IITs, NITs, RIEs, IGNOU and Government Colleges for the Academic Session 2023-24.

✷ **Dedicated Budget for rural areas:** It ensures rural schools aren't left behind, empowers educators, and provides students with the tools and resources they need to thrive under the NEP.

   » **Develop infrastructure:** Expand internet access and provide reliable power backups, and equip schools with digital devices.

   » **Train and support teachers:** Create programs for rural teachers to integrate technology into lessons and offer ongoing support networks.

   » **Create localised content:** Invest in high-quality educational content in local languages, relevant to the rural context, and accessible even with limited internet.

CONCLUSION

The **National Education Policy (NEP)** emphasises on holistic development, critical thinking, and lifelong learning offers a promising path forward for students of all backgrounds. Ensuring access to quality education across all regions, addressing teacher training needs, and fostering a culture of innovation will be crucial in realising its full potential. Ultimately, the success of the NEP will be measured by the positive impact it has on the lives and futures of India's students.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform the educational landscape of India. Critically evaluate the NEP's potential impact and the challenges associated with its implementation. **(10 marks)(150 words)**

INDIAN OVERSEAS MIGRANTS

Syllabus: GS I - Population relates issues

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *Discuss the changes in the trends of labour migration within and outside India in the last four decades.* **(2015)**

Q) *Indian Diaspora has an important role to play in South-East Asian countries' economy and society. Appraise the role of Indian Diaspora in South- East Asia in this context.* **(2017)**

SHORT TAKES

➢ **World Migration Report 2024 -** It is International Organisation for Migration's flagship report.Its findings:

o Between 2000 and 2022, international remittances surged **by 650%, soaring from USD 128 billion to USD 831 billion.**

o In 2022, India led in receiving remittances with USD 111 billion, **followed closely by Mexico**.

o India hosts the largest number of international migrants globally, totaling nearly 18 million, and maintains substantial diasporas in nations such as the UAE, the US, and Saudi Arabia.

➢ **ECR(Emigration Check required category) -** ECR is a stamp that appears on passports for individuals who are considered low-skilled laborers.

WHY IN NEWS

At least 49 people, including 42 Indians, died and many others were injured in a fire accident in a building in southern Kuwait that housed foreign workers. It initiated discussions on rights and working conditions of Indian workers abroad.

INTRODUCTION

According to the **International Organisation for Migration,** a migrant is defined as a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.

DIFFERENT MIGRANTS OF INDIA

• **Skilled Professionals:** These migrants often move to countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, and various European countries for better career opportunities, higher wages, and better quality of life. They typically possess in-demand skills such as IT, healthcare, engineering, finance,etc.

Eg- **Sundar Pichai - CEO of Alphabet INC.**

• **Students:** Many Indian students migrate abroad for higher education, especially to countries like the **USA, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, etc.** They pursue undergraduate, postgraduate, or doctoral degrees in various fields.

In **2022 a record 2,26,450 Indian students went to study in Canada.**

• **Unskilled or Semi-Skilled Workers:** These migrants often move to Middle Eastern **countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, etc.,** and some Southeast Asian countries for employment in construction, hospitality, domestic work, etc.

• **Diaspora**: People of Indian origin who have settled abroad for generations form a significant

| Major Population of Overseas Indians ||
Country	Population
USA	5409062
UAE	3568848
Canada	2875954
Saudi Arabia	2463509
UK	1864318
Kuwait	995528
Oman	686635

part of the Indian diaspora. They may have migrated several decades ago and often retain strong cultural and economic ties with India.

Eg- **Rishi Sunak, the current British PM.**

- **Business Entrepreneurs**: Some Indians migrate for entrepreneurial opportunities, establishing businesses or investing in foreign countries to explore new markets or due to more favourable business environments.

Eg- **M. A. Yusuff Ali (Lulu Group International)**

- **Retirees and Family Reunification:** Some Indians migrate to countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, etc., for retirement purposes, attracted by better healthcare facilities and peaceful lifestyle. They also migrate to join their family members who are already settled abroad.

ISSUES

Discrimination and Racism:

» Migrants often encounter discrimination or racism based on their ethnicity, nationality, or appearance, which can affect their social integration and sense of belonging.Eg- **Issue of discrimination and racism against Indian students in Australian Universities.**

Employment Issues

» Obtaining the necessary work permits and visas can be a bureaucratic and time-consuming process. Some countries have quotas or restrictions on hiring foreign workers, which may limit job opportunities for Indian migrants. Eg - **Nitaqat law(Saudi Arabia)** aims to **replace a significant portion of foreign workers in Saudi Arabia with locals.**

» The **United Arab Emirates have sponsorship systems (kafala)** for foreign workers, which regulate their employment and residency status. Employers must sponsor foreign workers and adhere to quotas for hiring foreigners in different sectors.

Exploitation of migrant workers

» Some migrants are vulnerable to exploitation and **abuse in low-wage or informal sectors** with lack of any security.

» Reports have surfaced of **crowded housing and inadequate safety measures** provided by employers or labour camps where several

workers are housed together in cramped spaces with limited amenities. Eg - **Recent fire accident in Kuwait** exposed this inadequacy in safety.

Cultural Adjustment:

» Adapting to a **new cultural environment, including language barriers**, social norms, and everyday practices, can be challenging for Indian migrants.

» Eg- In the **US, beef is a common protein source** and is readily available in supermarkets, restaurants, and fast-food chains.In Hinduism, cows are revered as sacred animals, and consuming beef is strictly avoided by many Hindus due to religious beliefs.

Social Security issues

» Accessing healthcare services can be challenging due to language barriers, lack of insurance coverage, or unfamiliarity with the healthcare system in the host country.Eg- **Issue of healthcare access faced by Indian migrants during COVID 19 pandemic.**

» Being far from family and friends can lead to feelings of loneliness and social isolation among **Indian migrants, impacting their mental health and well-being.**

» Language proficiency requirements, high cost of education, issues associated with recognition of the Indian education system often affects education of migrants and their family members.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT

☀ **Ministry of External Affairs:** Ministry has a **dedicated Overseas Indian affairs division** to prioritise addressing the challenges specific to the Indian diaspora abroad.The Ministry is running a scheme known as "**Tracing the Roots"** to facilitate PIOs in tracing their roots in India.

☀ **Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY)** : formerly known as Swarna Pravas Yojana, is a skill development scheme of the **Ministry of External Affairs** aimed at enhancing the skill set of potential migrant workers in select sectors and job roles, in line with international standards, to facilitate overseas employment opportunities.

- ☼ **Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY):** It is a mandatory insurance scheme aimed at safeguarding the interests of Indian migrant workers falling under **Emigration Check Required (ECR)** category going for overseas employment to ECR countries.

- ☼ **e-Migrate system**: It is an online platform developed by the Government of India to streamline the process of emigration for Indian workers going abroad for employment.It ensures the welfare and check on exploitation met to emigrants.

- ☼ **Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC):** It grants 100 scholarships annually to students of **Indian origin living abroad (PIO and NRI)** to pursue undergraduate courses.

- ☼ **Loka Kerala Sabha:** The **"Loka Kerala Sabha" (LKS)** is a unique initiative by the Kerala government in India aimed at engaging with the expatriate Kerala community globally. It serves as a platform for discussing issues related to Kerala's development and welfare of expatriates.

- ☼ **NRI Sabha :**Established **by Punjab Govt**. in various districts of the state, these sabhas serve as platforms for NRIs to raise their issues and concerns. They also facilitate communication between NRIs and the state government.

- ☼ **Gulf Workers Welfare Board**: Telangana established the **Gulf Workers Welfare Board** to address the issues faced by migrant workers in Gulf countries. The board provides financial assistance, legal aid, and rehabilitation support to migrants and their families in distress.

- ☼ **Dream Kerala Project** - An initiative **by Kerala Govt**. to rehabilitate expatriates who returned amid the Covid-19 pandemic. It helps to tap the potential and experience of those returning from abroad and other states after losing their jobs due to the pandemic.

SOLUTIONS

◉ **Skill Development and Employment Support:**
- » Facilitate skill development initiatives and vocational training programs to enhance employability and integration opportunities for migrants in host country economies.**Eg-** Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) by Japan

◉ **Insurance:**
- » Developing a compulsory insurance scheme to cover the risks faced by overseas workers. **Eg-Overseas Work Injury Insurance for Chinese Workers** provided by China for its migrants.

◉ **Enhanced Diplomatic Engagement:**
- » Strengthen bilateral dialogues and agreements between India and host countries to advocate for the rights and welfare of migrants. This includes agreements on labour rights, social security, and mutual recognition of qualifications.

◉ **Collaboration with International Organizations:**
- » India must collaborate with international organisations, such as the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and United Nations agencies, to promote migrant rights and advocate for global standards on labour migration.
- » Also foster partnerships with **non-governmental organisations (NGOs)** and civil society organisations working on migrant rights and welfare to leverage resources and expertise in addressing issues faced by migrants.

◉ **Social Integration:**
- » Establish community centres or migrant support networks that offer social services, counselling, and recreational activities to promote social cohesion and provide a sense of belonging.Eg - **NORKA(Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) Department)** an initiative of Kerala Govt organises cultural events, seminars, and forums to promote the social integration of NRKs and strengthen their ties with Kerala.

CONCLUSION

To resolve the migrant crisis we need comprehensive approaches that involve governments, international organisations, employers, civil society, and migrant communities. Efforts should focus on promoting migrants' rights, improving access to essential services, enhancing social integration, and creating safer and more supportive working environments for migrants worldwide.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Discuss the issues faced by India's external migrants.Elaborate on the measures that can be taken to address this issue. **(15 marks) (250 words)**

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

Syllabus: GS II - India and its neighbourhood- relations

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *'China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia', In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbor.***(2017)**

Q) *Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India-Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchanges could help generate goodwill between the two countries? Discuss with suitable examples.***(2015)**

SHORT TAKES

➤ **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG):** Comprises 48 member countries working collectively to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons through stringent control over the export of nuclear-related materials, equipment, and technology. India is not a member.

➤ **Free Movement Regime (FMR)**: An agreement between two or more countries that allows for relaxed border controls and easier movement of people across their shared borders.

WHY IN NEWS

A recent article highlights Narendra Modi's third swearing-in as India's Prime Minister reaffirms the "**neighbourhood first**" policy, indicated by the attendance of South Asian and Indian Ocean leaders. This event highlights India's regional stability and strong ties despite challenges with Pakistan. Additionally, India faces significant tasks in managing relations with China and seizing opportunities with the West amidst concerns about democratic backsliding.

INTRODUCTION

South Asia is a vibrant region brimming with potential, yet burdened by historical baggage and contemporary challenges. At the heart of this complex landscape lies India, a rising economic and strategic power with a multitude of relationships with its neighbours. Examining India's current relations with key regional partners—**China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar**—highlights both promising opportunities for cooperation and persistent challenges that impede closer ties.

INDIA - CHINA

OPPORTUNITIES

☼ **Trade**: Despite border tensions, China remains India's largest trading partner. In the fiscal year 2024, India's bilateral trade with China totalled $118.4 billion, with imports rising by **3.24% to $101.7 billion and exports increasing by 8.7% to $16.67 billion.** Continued economic cooperation offers potential for mutual benefit.

☼ **Global Issues:** Collaboration on global challenges like climate change, pandemics, and economic recovery presents opportunities for both countries.

☼ **People-to-People Exchange:** Increased cultural exchange and educational programs can foster better understanding and reduce animosity.

☼ **Regional Cooperation:** Both nations could work together for regional stability and development in South Asia.

CHALLENGES

● **Military Clash:** The unresolved border dispute in Ladakh remains a major flashpoint with potential for escalation. Both countries have a history of violent clashes along the LAC, military clashes in **2013 (Depsang), 2014 (Chumar), 2017 (Doklam), 2020 (Galwan), and 2022 (Tawang)** as strategic escalations,resulting in casualties on both sides.

● **Objection to NSG Membership:** China argues that India's application should be considered alongside Pakistan's, as both are non-signatories to the Treaty on the **Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).**

● **Border Disputes**: China issues stapled visas on a separate piece of paper to citizens of Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh to avoid legitimising India's sovereignty over these regions.

- **Restricted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** Since 2020, India has tightened FDI norms for countries sharing land borders, primarily targeting Chinese investments. The Indian government has received around **450 FDI** applications from Chinese entities in the past four years, rejecting nearly 180 and approving only around 70.

  » Chinese companies, especially in the auto sector, face hurdles in expanding their presence in India. For instance, **BYD's plans** to invest and potentially set up a joint venture with an Indian company were reportedly rejected.

- **Heightened Tensions: Chinese President Xi Jinping** decided not to attend the G20 Summit hosted by India in September 2023 and sent **Premier Li Qiang instead**. This lack of engagement at the highest level further complicates efforts to resolve bilateral issues.

- **Security Concerns:** China's growing military presence in the region and its support for Pakistan create security concerns for India.

- **Trade Imbalance:** The significant trade imbalance heavily favours China, posing economic challenges for India.Trade deficit in favour of China had crossed a mammoth **$100 billion driven by a 21% rise in Imports from China into India.**

- **Election results:** Chinese media's reaction to BJP's reduced Lok Sabha majority implies caution in bilateral relations. Beijing views Modi's reduced majority as reinforcing China's power advantage.Chinese President Xi Jinping has not yet extended his congratulations to **PM Modi on his re-election.**

INDIA - PAKISTAN

OPPORTUNITIES

- ☼ **Economic benefits:** Pakistan's business community sees a golden opportunity in normalising relations with India. The sentiment, expressed by prominent **figures like businessman Arif Habib**, highlights the potential economic benefits of improved ties between the two.

- ☼ **Trade:** While limited due to political tensions, some bilateral trade does exist. There have been proposals to increase trade ties and open new border crossings for trade facilitation.

- ☼ **Ceasefire Agreement:** On February 25, 2021, India and Pakistan announced a ceasefire along the **Line of Control (LOC)** that divides the Indian- and Pakistani-administered parts of Kashmir. It has proven to be the most enduring attempted LOC ceasefire in more than a decade.

- ☼ **Prisoners' Exchange:** Occasionally, both countries agree to exchange prisoners held on **inadvertent border crossings or humanitarian grounds.**

- ☼ **People-to-People Contact:** Limited cultural exchange programs and sporting events can foster some level of understanding between citizens. There are **also back-channel talks and peace initiatives** involving civil society and religious leaders from both sides.

CHALLENGES

- **Kashmir:** The Indian government's decision to reclassify Jammu and Kashmir as a union territory and revoke its special status under **Article 370 in 2019** emerged as the biggest bone of contention. Both claim the entire territory, with ongoing insurgency in the **Indian-administered Kashmir.** Pakistan reacted strongly, downgrading diplomatic relations with India and expelling the Indian High Commissioner.

- **Cross-Border Terrorism:** Pakistan-based militant groups targeting India are a major security concern for India.

  » **Pulwama Attack:** On February 14, 2019, a suicide bombing by the **Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)** killed 40 Indian paramilitary personnel in Pulwama, Kashmir.

  » **Operation Balakot:** In a significant shift from its usual policy, India conducted preemptive airstrikes on February 26th against a JeM training camp in **Balakot, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.**

- **Water Sharing:**India's issuance of a notice to Pakistan on January 25, 2023, seeking modification of the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** of 1960 has escalated tensions between the two countries.

- **Limited Trust:** Deep suspicion and a lack of open communication fuel hostility.

INDIA - BANGLADESH

OPPORTUNITIES

☼ **Strong Trade Ties:** Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia, and India is Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner in Asia. India is Bangladesh's largest export destination in Asia, with **approx USD 2 billion of Bangladeshi exports to India in FY 2022-23.** This offers significant economic benefits for both countries.

☼ **Energy Cooperation**: India can potentially assist Bangladesh in meeting its growing energy demands by collaborating on energy projects.

  » **IBFP (India Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline)** is the first cross border energy pipeline between India and Bangladesh with a capacity to transport 1 **Million Metric Ton Per Annum (MMTPA) of High-Speed Diesel (HSD) to Bangladesh.**

☼ **Connectivity and Infrastructure:** Improved infrastructure projects, like rail links and ports, can boost trade and economic cooperation.

  » Both Prime Ministers jointly inaugurated Indian assisted development cooperation projects of **Akhaura-Agartala cross border rail link and Khulna-Mongla Port rail line** in Bangladesh on 1 November 2023 virtually.

  » **Five bus services routes** are currently operational between India and Bangladesh connecting cities of Kolkata, **Agartala and Guwahati to Dhaka and further up to Khulna**

☼ **Water Sharing**: Cooperative agreements on sharing water resources from common rivers can benefit both nations and address a longstanding challenge.

  » India and Bangladesh signed an MoU on October 5, 2019, allowing India to withdraw 1.82 cusecs of water from the **Feni River** for Sabroom town. Another MoU on September 6, 2022, permits both nations to withdraw up to 153 cusecs each from the **Kushiyara River** during the dry season.

☼ **Security Cooperation:** Collaboration on counter-terrorism and border security can enhance regional stability.

  » Both countries focus on managing their **4,096 km** border through measures like border fencing, joint inspections of boundary pillars, and joint boundary demarcation, including riverine boundaries.

  » The joint military exercise **'Exercise SAMPRITI-XI'** between the Indian and Bangladesh armies was held at Joint Training Node, Umroi, on October 16, 2023. The exercise aimed to achieve interoperability and familiarise each other with joint task force operations

  » The 5th Annual Defence Dialogue and **4th Tri-Services Talks took place in Dhaka in August.**

☼ **Cultural Exchange:** Promoting cultural exchange programs and people-to-people contact can foster deeper understanding and empathy.

  » The **Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre and the Indian Cultural Centre in Dhaka** celebrate common cultural links between India and Bangladesh.

  » In June 2022, India launched a revamped **Bangladesh Youth Delegation** campaign to attract top Bangladeshi talent from various disciplines

CHALLENGES

● **Water Sharing Issues:** While agreements exist, **disagreements over water sharing from the Teesta River's** reduced flow into Bangladesh during the lean season and potential upstream infrastructure projects by India remain a point of tension.

● **Non Tariff Trade Barrier:** These are mainly in the form of **inefficient customs procedures, excessive paperwork, cumbersome export-import procedures, absence of testing facilities, lack of harmonised systems, congestion, inadequate road infrastructure**, high demurrages, and sub-optimal trade related infrastructure.

● **Chinese influence:** China's substantial infrastructure investments in Bangladesh include a proposed nearly $1-billion **loan for a Teesta River management** and restoration project. This initiative aims to enhance river basin management, mitigate floods, and address Bangladesh's water scarcity issues.

» A Chinese company committed a big investment for setting up a factory in the Mongla Export Processing Zone (EPZ) that is located adjacent to the Mongla Port in 2023

🔴 **Immigration Issues:** The influx of undocumented immigrants into India following Bangladesh's formation in 1971 has been a persistent issue, impacting states along the eastern border. This influx has raised significant concerns about resource strain and demographic challenges across India.

INDIA - MYANMAR

AREAS OF COOPERATION

☼ **Strategic Partnership:** India views Myanmar as a strategic partner for its "**Act East**" policy, seeking greater regional integration in Southeast Asia.

☼ **Security Cooperation:** India and Myanmar collaborate on counter-insurgency efforts along their shared border and maintain military-to-military cooperation.

☼ **Economic Ties: India is the fifth largest trading partner** of Myanmar and 10th largest investor in Myanmar, with significant investments in infrastructure, energy, and telecommunications sectors.

☼ **Connectivity Projects:** Both countries are working on developing infrastructure projects to improve connectivity between India's Northeast and Southeast Asia.

» India's projects in Myanmar include the **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and the Trilateral Highway Project**, linking India's Northeast with Myanmar and Thailand to enhance regional connectivity.

☼ **Cultural and Historical Ties:** Buddhism and shared heritage create a foundation for cultural exchange and people-to-people connections.

» Initiatives such as the **restoration of the Ananda Temple in Bagan** and the preservation of numerous pagodas highlight India's commitment to cultural conservation in Myanmar.

» The Indian Embassy in Yangon hosts the **Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre,** which organises various events including yoga sessions, cultural competitions, and seminars.

CHALLENGES

🔴 **Political Instability:** The recent **military coup in Myanmar** and the ongoing civil unrest raise concerns about stability and human rights. This has led India to adopt a cautious approach in its engagement with the Myanmar junta.

🔴 **Border Issues:** Porous borders,immigration and insurgent activity along the India-Myanmar border pose challenges.

» India announced on February 8,2024 its decision to terminate the **Free Movement Regime (FMR)** along the Myanmar border to safeguard India's internal security and preserve the demographic integrity of its Northeastern states,

🔴 **Rohingya Crisis:** The plight of the **Rohingya Muslim minority** displaced from Myanmar and seeking refuge in India is a humanitarian concern and a potential source of tension.

A COMPARISON OF CURRENT STATUS

Comparison	
China	A contentious relationship marked by unresolved border disputes, mutual suspicion, and China's close ties with Pakistan. Dialogue occurs, but trust remains low.
Pakistan	Strained relations stemming primarily from the Kashmir issue. Backchannel talks are attempted, but progress is slow and arduous.
Myanmar	An uncertain situation due to the recent military coup and the Rohingya crisis. Security cooperation persists, but India cautiously navigates its interactions with the junta.
Bangladesh	A largely positive relationship with strong economic and infrastructural cooperation. However, water sharing and trade barriers require further negotiation.

WAY FORWARD

❋ **Diplomatic Dialogue and Confidence Building Measures**

» **Regular High-Level Engagements:** Foster regular dialogues at the highest levels of government to discuss **bilateral issues and build trust.**

» **Track-II Diplomacy:** Encourage non-official dialogues, such as **academic exchanges and think tank interactions**

❋ **Conflict Resolution and Management**

» **Resolving Border Disputes**: **Pursue peaceful resolution** of border disputes through bilateral negotiations and adherence to existing agreements.

» **Conflict Prevention**: Establish mechanisms for early warning and conflict prevention to manage potential flare-ups and avoid escalation.

❋ **Economic Cooperation and Integration**

» **Enhanced Trade Relations**: Strengthen economic ties through increased trade, investment, and joint infrastructure projects that benefit both countries.

» **Regional Economic Integration**: Explore opportunities for regional economic cooperation and connectivity initiatives that **promote stability and shared prosperity.**

❋ **Security and Counterterrorism Cooperation**

» **Joint Counterterrorism Efforts**: Collaborate closely on intelligence sharing, **joint military exercises, and capacity building to combat terrorism and extremist activities.**

» **Border Security**: Enhance border management and security cooperation to address cross-border threats and prevent illegal activities.

❋ **Humanitarian and People-Centric Initiatives**

» **Humanitarian Assistance**: Extend humanitarian aid and support for vulnerable populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons.

» **Cultural and Educational Exchanges**: Promote cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and tourism to enhance mutual understanding and foster **lasting ties between people.**

❋ **International Engagement and Multilateral Cooperation**

» **Engagement with International Organizations**: Work together within international forums and organisations to address global challenges such as **climate change, pandemics, and sustainable development.**

» **Multilateral Initiatives**: Participate in multilateral initiatives and frameworks that promote regional stability, security, and economic cooperation.

CONCLUSION

By fostering trust, promoting regional cooperation, and addressing core issues with its neighbours, India can navigate this complex neighbourhood and ensure a more secure and prosperous future for itself and the region.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) India's relationship with its neighbours is crucial for its regional security and economic prosperity. Analyse the opportunities and challenges India faces in this regard and suggest a way forward for India to navigate these complex relationships. **(10 marks)(150 words)**

AGNIPATH

> **Syllabus: GS II - Government Policies**

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *Reforming the government delivery system through the Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme is a progressive step, but it has its limitations too. Comment. (2022)*

SHORT TAKES

Conscription: It is the **mandatory enrollment of people** in a national service, typically the military.Countries implement conscription for various reasons, such as maintaining a sufficient military force, **bolstering national defence, or responding to threats to national security.** It has been a contentious issue throughout history, with debates centering around individual freedoms, national defence needs, and the societal impacts of mandatory military service. Countries practising conscription includes, Israel, Russia, Norway, South Korea, Egypt etc.

WHY IN NEWS?

The demand for rollback of the **Agnipath recruitment scheme** for the defence services has gathered momentum after the results of the general elections were announced with **even ex-servicemen** voicing concern demanding its total recall.

INTRODUCTION

The Agnipath scheme, introduced by the central government in 2022, focuses on recruiting **individuals below officer rank** into the **armed forces.** The initiative aims to deploy physically fit and younger troops in frontline roles, **under four-year contracts.**

FEATURES

➡ **Eligibility:**

Anyone from anywhere in India between the age of **17.5 years to 23 years** will be eligible for enrolling in the Agnipath scheme.It is only for personnel below officer ranks.

➡ **Tenure:**

4 years. Upon completing their engagement period, Agniveers will have the opportunity to apply for enrollment in the permanent cadre of the Armed Forces. Up to **25% of Agniveers** will be selected for enrollment as regular cadre members.

➡ **Fiscal Benefits:**

Under this scheme, youth will receive an **annual package of 4.76 lakh** in the first year, **which increases to 6.9** lakh by the fourth year of their service.Upon completion of the four-year period, each soldier will **receive a lump sum amount of Rs 11.71 lakh**, which will be exempt from taxes.

➡ **Insurance:**

Agniveers will get a Rs **48 lakh life insurance cover** for the four years.In case of death during service, the payout will be **over Rs 1 crore,** including pay for the unserved tenure.

➡ **Employability**:

Agniveers may be assigned various duties as per organisational needs, including postings to different regiments or units. They will receive priority for placements in **CAPFs, Assam Rifles, police**, and allied forces across several states.

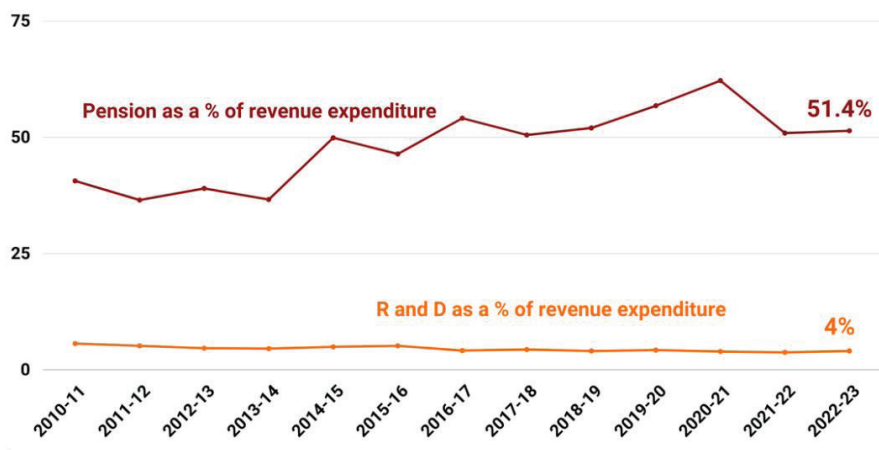➡ **Agniveer Skill Certificate:**

At the end of the engagement period, a detailed skill set certificate **will be provided to the Agniveers**, highlighting the skills and level of competency acquired by the personnel during their engagement period.

ADVANTAGES

🌀 **Reducing pension burden:**

At present, over **70% of the defence budget** is used for revenue expenditure, with over **50% specifically being used for pensions**. Funding for research and development receives **less than 5%** and capital expenditure, meant for the modernisation of the forces, **receives only about 30%.**By offering fixed-term contracts,the scheme limits the number of individuals who qualify for pension benefits

🌀 **Share of pension in defence budget**

🌀 **Develops young armed force:**

Agniveers serve on fixed-term contracts of four years, ensuring regular personnel turnover and a younger, more dynamic workforce. The average age in the forces will drop from 32 to 26 years within six to seven years, creating **"future-ready"** soldiers.

🌀 **Development of skilled workforce with employability:**

After four years, only **25% of Agniveers** will be retained as regular cadre. The **remaining 75% will re-enter society** with valuable experience, potentially easing their employment. States like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh have pledged to give Agniveers preference in police recruitments. This scheme could enhance the skilled workforce, **contributing to GDP growth.**

🌀 **Ease the burden associated with defence budget :**

A report by the standing committee on defence revealed a consistent shortfall of **over Rs 70,000 crore** between the military's requested and allocated budgets. The Agnipath scheme can help reduce this budget burden by cutting salary and pension expenditures.

🌀 **Financial Security:**

The government believes this scheme can assist youth who cannot afford education. It offers a substantial **₹11-12 lakh Seva Nidhi package** to demobilised Agniveers. Additionally, they will receive priority for bank loans to kickstart their second careers. **Opportunities in CAPFs, police, Assam Rifles, and allied forces** in various states will also be prioritised for those seeking employment.

ISSUES

🔴 **Job Insecurity & absence of pension benefit:**

» Previously, **soldiers had job security for around 17 years**, followed by pension and subsidised healthcare. If a soldier died in action, these benefits continued for their family.

» Under the Agnipath scheme, candidates will face **unemployment after four years** of service and will receive a single lump sum of just over Rs 11 lakh, which does not equate to a regular pension..

🔴 **Inexperience & Training concerns:**

» It takes 7-8 years for an individual to **become a fully-trained combatant.** This scheme will post the retained Agniveers to difficult locations for which they might not be ready for.With 4 years of experience the scheme can put thousands of lives of Agniveers at risk.

● **Quality of jobs**:

» In 2020-21, 54% of salaried workers in India were not eligible for social security benefits. Moreover, close to **64% had no written contract** for their jobs and **about 48% were not eligible for paid leave according to PLFS 2020-21**.Given that the Agniveers have no pension or gratuity benefits, the scheme will further worsen the quality of jobs on offer in India.

● **Ex army men unable to secure jobs:**

» Ex-servicemen have vacancies reserved for them in government jobs.Agniveers who exit the service may also get absorbed in similar quotas.

» For example: **ex-servicemen have a 24.5% quota in group D jobs** in Central Public Sector Undertakings. However, as of June 2021, **only 0.3% were filled by them**. They have a **10% quota in Group C** jobs under Central Armed Police Forces; however **only 0.47% were filled by them**.

● **Cohesion & Loyalty issues**:

» Unit cohesion is vital for military success, involving strong bonds and shared purpose. The **Agnipath scheme may dilute this by creating a short-tenure force**, potentially reducing soldier loyalty.

» Traditionally, soldiers see their role as a higher purpose with values like honour and brotherhood. Agnipath might shift this to a view of the military as just an occupation.

SOLUTIONS

☼ **Inverse Induction Scheme:**

In this scheme the recruitment of Agniveers first happens through the Central and State Armed Police Forces **(CAPF/SAPF)** and not the Indian armed forces directly. These new CAPF recruits are then inducted into the Indian armed forces for a service period of seven years. The Indian armed forces train the incoming personnel per their standards **for one year,** after which **they serve for six years.** After the Agniveer term ends, the recruit is sent back to the parent CAPF.

☼ **Rehabilitation of Agniveers:**

Proper government and private sector collaboration is needed to ensure **Agniveers receive employment and social security after service.** Without adequate rehabilitation, the appeal of a military career may diminish, potentially affecting the quality of future recruits.

☼ **Increasing the Retention Quota of Agniveers :**

The retention rate for regular service among Agniveers should be raised from the **current 25% to around 60%** and service period should be increased to **7-8 years.**

☼ **Promoting unit cohesion** :

Proper value education and character development can cultivate unit cohesion. Emphasising individual character growth establishes discipline, motivation, and teamwork, which are crucial for battlefield effectiveness and unit camaraderie.

☼ **Raising the benefits and entitlements**:

Agniveers should receive a contributory pension scheme, generous gratuity for their services. They should also have access to opportunities in other security forces, veteran status, and priority consideration for government jobs, all under a transparent system to ensure easy transition to normal life.

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

✳ **United Kingdom**: The British Armed Forces allow voluntary enlistment with **different terms of service depending on the branch** (Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force), ranging from short-term commitments to longer careers.

✳ **South Korea**: **Conscription(required military service)** is mandatory for men, who serve around 18 to 22 months in the military or alternative services.

CONCLUSION

Agnipath scheme has the potential to reform the Defence system in the country.By addressing concerns, optimising the structure, and fostering open communication, the scheme can evolve to be beneficial for both the armed forces and the youth who serve.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Explain the features of the Agnipath recruitment scheme?Discuss the issues associated with it? **(15 marks)(250 words)**

EU ELECTIONS

Syllabus: GS II - International Relations

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *The newly tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede the existing partnerships in the region? Discuss the strength and impact of AUKUS in the present scenario.* **(2021)**

SHORT TAKES

➤ **General Data Protection (GDPR) Regulation:**

It is a comprehensive data protection law that was enacted by the **European Union (EU)**.It aims to strengthen and unify data protection for individuals within the EU, as well as regulate the export of personal data outside the EU and **European Economic Area (EEA).**

➤ **New Pact on Migration and Asylum:**

It was adopted by the European Parliament on April 10, 2024 and the Council on May 14, 2024. It aims to limit the entry of migrants to the EU, accelerating asylum procedures, facilitating returns, and better sharing asylum responsibilities among states.

WHY IN NEWS

The results of the June 6-9 10th parliamentary elections of the **European Parliament in 27 EU countries** indicated a shift in political dynamics. The right-wing and far-right parties made gains while left and liberal parties faced losses.

INTRODUCTION

The European Parliament serves as a crucial platform for political discourse and decision-making within the EU. The European Parliament is the **world's only directly elected transnational assembly.** The Members of the European Parliament represent the interests of EU citizens at the European level.

DETAILS

➡ In European elections, citizens of European Union countries elect their representatives as **Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).**

➡ **Strength of parliament:** As a general rule, the number of MEPs is decided before each election. The **total cannot exceed 750 plus the president. In 2024, 720 MEPs were elected.**

➡ **National Administration**: Each EU Member State manages its own election process according to established national laws and regulations. Thus, each country may have its own system of election.

➡ **Proportional Representation**:

» The number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) elected from each political party is **proportional to the number of votes received by that party.**

» The number of MEPs elected from each EU country is agreed before each election and is based on the principle of **degressive proportionality**, which means each MEP from a larger country represents more people than an MEP from a smaller country.

» The **minimum number of MEPs from any country is six and the maximum number is 96.**
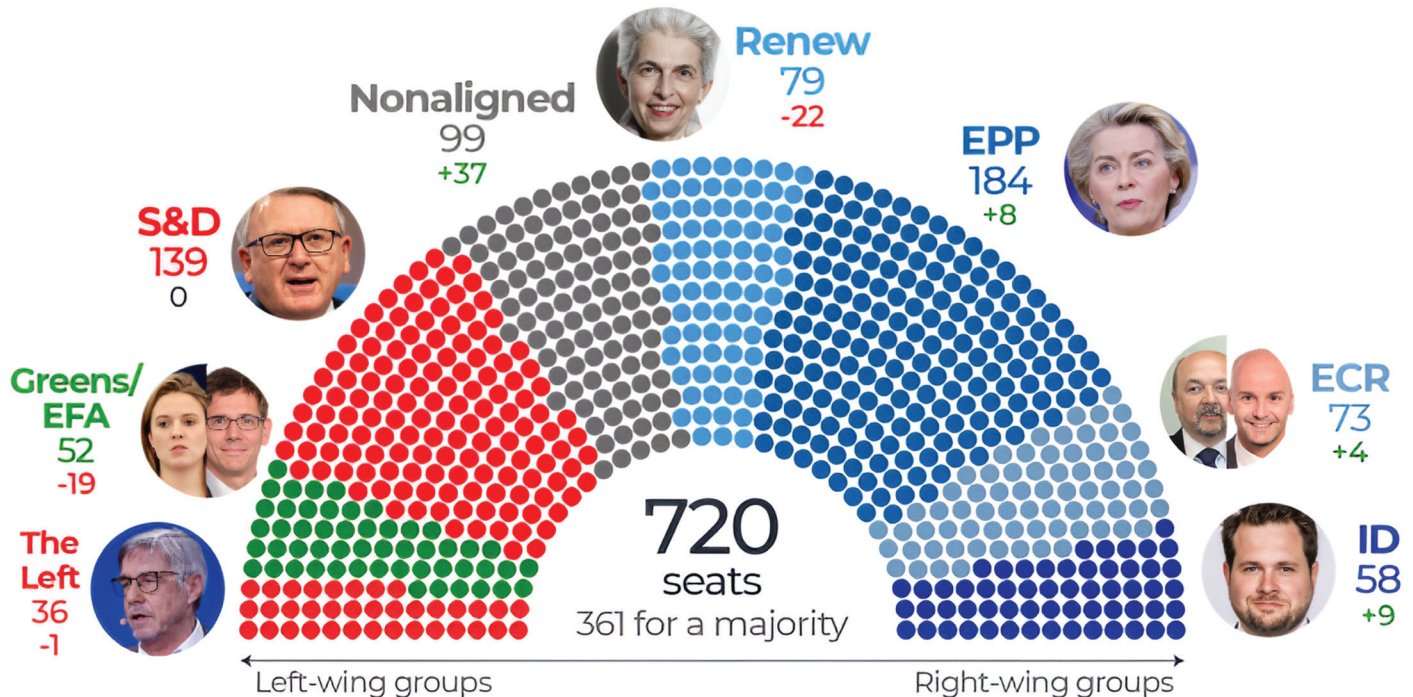
ELECTION PROCESS

◆ **Principles that govern the conduct of elections**:

» Elections occur over a **four-day period every 5 years**, the last being in 2019.

» Proportional representation of MEPs based on the votes **received by each political party.**

» EU citizens **residing in another Member State** can both vote and run for election there.

» Each citizen is entitled to vote once.

◆ **Counting and Results**: Votes are counted and **results are tallied at national levels**, with each country determining its own procedures for counting and reporting results.

◆ **Seat sharing and groups:** Elections are contested by national political parties but once MEPs are elected, most **opt to become part of transnational political groups based on their shared ideals and party affiliations**. Each group has a minimum of 23 MEPs from at least a quarter of EU countries. There are seven groups in the current Parliament. Those who don't want to be part of the group stay non-aligned.

RECENT TRENDS IN EUROPEAN UNION ELECTIONS

EUROPE

European Union parliamentary elections

Far-right parties have made significant gains in the European Parliament elections that took place across the 27 EU member states from June 6 to 9.

Nonaligned 99 +37

Renew 79 -22

EPP 184 +8

S&D 139 0

ECR 73 +4

Greens/ EFA 52 -19

ID 58 +9

The Left 36 -1

720 seats
361 for a majority

Left-wing groups — Right-wing groups

Provisional results Group	Seats	% of seats	Change
EPP	184	25.6%	+8
S&D	139	19.3%	0
Renew	79	11.0%	-22
ECR	73	10.1%	+4
ID	58	8.1%	+9
Greens/EFA	52	7.2%	-19
The Left	36	5.0%	-1
Nonaligned	99	13.8%	+37

Source: results.elections.europa.eu | June 10, 2024

@AJLabs ALJAZEERA

🌀 **Increase in youth voter turnout:**

Participation among 16/18-24-year-olds **rose to 42%**, a **50% increase from the 28% youth** turnout in 2014.

🌀 **Increased focus on transnational Issues**:

EU elections increasingly centre around transnational issues such as **climate change, migration, economic inequality, and digital rights**.

🌀 **Rise of Populist and far right parties**:

Across many EU member states, there has been a rise in support for **populist, anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic parties**. These parties often campaign on platforms critical of the EU's handling of issues such as immigration, sovereignty, and economic policies**.**

Eg- **Identity and Democracy (ID)** and the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the far right wing groups in the EU, have increased their seats.

◉ **Fragmentation of the Political Landscape**:

Traditional centre-right and centre-left parties have faced challenges from smaller, more niche parties and alliances. This **fragmentation has led to more diverse political representation in the European Parliament.** But at the same time established political parties, particularly those aligned with mainstream ideologies, have faced challenges in maintaining their traditional voter bases.
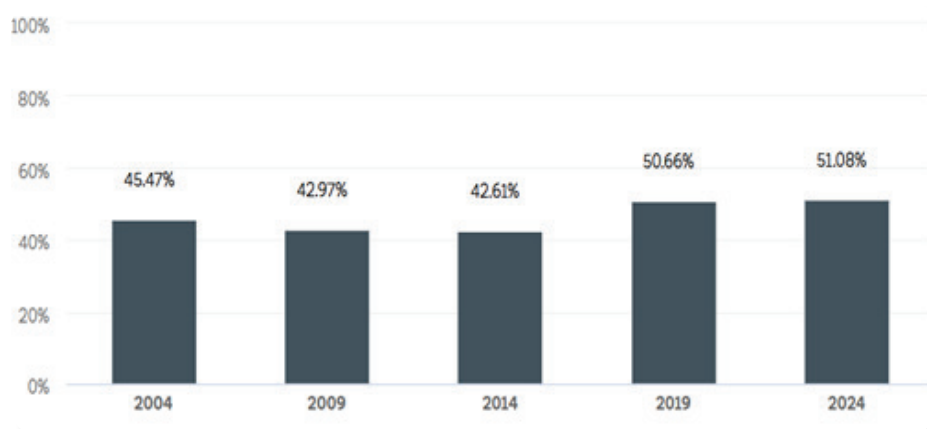
◉ **Waning Green Wave**:

The Greens, representing the environmental interests in the EU saw a huge fall in votes this time. They were a dominant force in the outgoing Parliament but faced backlash due to the EU climate policies and farmer protests in many EU nations against such climate regulations that affected their way of agriculture.

Eg: Many consider the loss of votes as a negative public sentiment of the **European Green Deal 2020**, a set of policy **initiatives by the European Commission** to make the EU climate neutral in **2050**.

ISSUES

🔴 **Voter Turnout**:

Low voter turnout is a persistent issue, with many EU citizens showing apathy or disinterest in EU-level elections compared to national ones. This can undermine the democratic legitimacy of the process.For example, in the 2024 European Parliament elections, overall turnout was **around 51.08%**, which was an increase compared to previous years but still lower than national elections in many member states.

🔴 **Language Barriers**:

Language differences across Member States can pose challenges for candidates and voters, impacting communication and understanding of campaign messages and electoral materials.The European Union recognizes **24 official languages**. Voters may face challenges in accessing information about EU elections in their native language, particularly in smaller member states where fewer resources may be allocated to translation and interpretation services.

🔴 **Representation and Diversity**:

Ensuring adequate representation of diverse political views, genders, ethnicities, and regions within the European Parliament remains a challenge, reflecting broader societal issues.Eg-As of **2019 elections, women typically make up only around 30-40% of the members of the European Parliament (MEPs).**

🔴 **Transnational Issues**:

Issues such as **economic disparities, climate change issues, and the influence of non-EU actors** complicates electoral processes and raise questions about fairness and impartiality.Eg- The economic disparities between northern and southern European countries, exacerbated by austerity measures following the Eurozone crisis, led to debates over EU fiscal policies and the role of the **European Central Bank (ECB)**. This influenced the 2014 elections and resulted in the rise of Eurosceptic parties.

🔴 **Cybersecurity and Disinformation**:

Like in many modern elections, EU elections are vulnerable to cybersecurity threats and disinformation campaigns, which undermine trust in the electoral process and manipulate public opinion. For example,during 2019 EU elections, **there were fake claims that the EU planned to ban memes** or impose extreme regulations on everyday activities, which were designed to provoke public outrage and undermine trust in EU institutions.

🔴 **Post-Election Cooperation**:

Once elected, MEPs must navigate complex political alliances and negotiate with other EU institutions, impacting

the effectiveness of legislative and policy-making processes.Political groups within the European Parliament vary in their ideological orientations, ranging from centre-right to centre-left, as well as **Eurosceptic and pro-EU factions.** These ideological differences can complicate cooperation on **key policy areas such as economic governance, migration, and environmental regulations.**

● **Migration and Asylum Policies**:

Migration continues to be a contentious issue, with debates focusing on asylum policies, border control, burden-sharing among member states, and integration of migrants. Differences in national approaches to migration management fuel political polarisation and influence voter attitudes towards **EU institutions.**

Eg- 2015 refugee crisis which resulted in a large influx of refugees, primarily from war-torn countries like Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq led to political polarisation and rise of anti immigration parties during elections.

SOLUTIONS

✦ **Fact-Checking and Verification:**

Support independent fact-checking organisations to **verify information and combat the spread of false narratives** during election campaigns.The European Commission issued guidelines in March 2024 under **the Digital Services Act**, outlining measures to mitigate against risks that could impact election integrity digitally.

✦ **Data privacy & Cybersecurity:**

Ensure full compliance with the **GDPR(General Data Protection Regulation)**, which sets strict standards for the protection of personal data of EU citizens. Electoral authorities, political parties, and organisations involved in election campaigns must adhere to GDPR principles when collecting, processing, and storing voter information.

✦ **Improve voter participation:**

Engaging young voters through targeted campaigns, digital platforms, and initiatives that address their concerns and interests and implementing measures to ensure inclusive participation of minority groups, immigrants, and marginalised communities through culturally sensitive outreach and language accessibility helps to increase voter turnout.

✦ **Multilingual communication & information dissemination:**

Provide comprehensive translation services for electoral materials, including voting instructions, candidate information, and **ballot papers, into all official languages of the EU.** Maintaining multilingual websites, language hotlines or help desks help voters seek assistance in their preferred language.

✦ **Efficient functioning of New Pact on Migration & Asylum:** The new reform on migration includes speedier vetting of irregular arrivals, creating border detention centres, and accelerated deportation for rejected asylum applicants. **Implement a fair and transparent system for distributing asylum** seekers and refugees among member states and introduction of fast-track asylum procedures to swiftly identify and process legitimate asylum claims can enhance the effectiveness this pact.

✦ **Emphasise on Climate Change & Environment centred policies**:

Increasing concern over climate change has propelled environmental sustainability to the forefront of EU elections. Voters prioritise policies addressing carbon emissions, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and adaptation measures. Youth-led movements like **Fridays for Future** and **Extinction Rebellion** have mobilised large numbers of young voters around climate change issues.Formulating effective policies around climate change through comprehensive approach would suffice.

CONCLUSION

EU elections are pivotal moments that shape the direction of European integration, influence national and EU-wide policies, and impact the EU's role in global politics.By addressing the challenges associated with elections, the union can promote democratic values, enhance electoral integrity, and reinforce trust in the European democratic process.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Analyse the recent trends associated with European Union Elections.discuss the issues associated with it. **(15 M) (250 W)**

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) You have been recently appointed as a District Magistrate of a predominantly backward district which often experiences disasters like cyclones and floods. The district also faces scarcity of essential resources like clean drinking water and nutritional food .The local level bureaucracy is corrupt and indifferent to the issues and the response from central and state govt. Is lackadaisical.To make the matters worse, the unemployment rate among the youth is very high, resulting in their migration to urban areas.This has left the life of elders,women and children in misery.

a. What are the ethical issues involved in the above case?

b. As a district collector, what would be your course of action for solving the problem?

c. What long term measures would you take to prevent further recurrence of the issues?

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

1. **Leadership and Innovation:** Media baron Cherukuri Ramoji Rao, honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 2016, passed away. Rao founded influential firms like Eenadu newspaper, ETV channels, and Ramoji Film City, providing thousands of jobs and impacting millions of lives in Andhra Pradesh.

2. **Environmental Ethics:** Japan's tourism industry grapples with overtourism, straining historical sites and local infrastructure. With the return of tourists post-pandemic and China lifting its group tour ban, tour operators are focusing on off-the-beaten-track itineraries to promote sustainable tourism.

3. **Accountability:** The Supreme Court of India issued a notice to the National Testing Agency (NTA) in response to allegations of irregularities and concerns over paper leaks in the NEET UG 2024 results. This action follows the filing of several petitions seeking a CBI probe into the matter.

4. **Social Justice and Welfare:** Maharashtra's government schools will introduce a new mid-day meal menu from this academic year, featuring 15 nutritious recipes including pulao with peas and soyabean, sprouts, rice and vegetables, along with sweet dishes such as rice-kheer and millet-pudding.

5. **Media Ethics:** In the EU parliament elections, far-right parties capitalised on platforms like TikTok and YouTube to appeal to young voters, diverting attention from environmental issues to pandemic responses and economic challenges, while emphasising migration and national identity.

6. **Environmental Ethics:** Kerala's Malinya Mukta Nava Keralam campaign promotes sustainable waste management through updated SCERT textbooks for Classes III, V, VII, and IX, aiming to educate students and instil an environmentally conscious mindset.

7. **Perseverance:** Hetal Dave, India's first female professional sumo wrestler, began her journey with her father as her coach due to the lack of other options in India. Overcoming initial challenges and stereotypes, she pursued sumo wrestling abroad with the steadfast support of her family.

MODEL ESSAY

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit"

Introduction

- Quote by American historian and philosopher Will Durant
- Briefly explain the quote: our habits define who we are, and excellence is achieved through consistent effort.
- Habits shape our daily routines and influence our decisions. Eg:A regular exercise routine leads to a healthy lifestyle over time.

Need to build habits

- **Mastery Through Repetition:** Consistent practice is the foundation for developing skills- refines our knowledge and ability- leading to mastery over time.
- **Reaching Goals:** Small, consistent actions add up over time, propelling us steadily towards our aspirations. Sporadic bursts of effort yield minimal results, while consistency ensures progress.
- **Building Trust:** Consistent behaviour builds trust and a reputation for dependability. People appreciate knowing what to expect from us, and consistent actions demonstrate reliability.

Absence of Habits

- **Wasted Decision Fatigue:**In the absence of habits, valuable mental energy is spent on deciding mundane tasks, leading to "decision fatigue" which hinders focus on more important choices.
- **Reduced Productivity and Inefficiency:**Without established routines, tasks require constant re-evaluation, resulting in decreased productivity and inefficiency in accomplishing goals.
- **Procrastination and Missed Opportunities:** Lack of habits often leads to procrastination on important tasks, causing missed deadlines and valuable opportunities.
- **Increased Stress and Frustration:**The ongoing decision-making and inefficiency due to the lack of habits cause stress and frustration, leading to feelings of being overwhelmed and negatively impacting overall well-being.

Way forward

- **Define Your Goals:** The first step is to identify what you want to achieve. Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals
- **Embrace Continuous Learning:** Develop a growth mindset and seek opportunities to expand knowledge and skills throughout your life.
- **Develop Strategic Action Plan:** Breaking goals down into smaller, actionable steps. Create a plan that outlines the specific actions you need to take, resources required, and timelines for completion.
- **Cultivate Consistency and Discipline:**Consistent effort drives progress. Develop discipline to follow through on your plans, even when faced with challenges or setbacks.
- **Seek Support and Feedback:** Seek feedback to identify areas for improvement and stay motivated on the path to success.

Examples

- **Michael Jordan:** Famously known for his relentless efforts- Widely considered the greatest basketball player of all time-winning six NBA championships and numerous individual accolades.
- **Ikea**:Focuses on efficient design -cost effectiveness-constantly innovating furniture products- Became a global leader in affordable and functional furniture

Conclusion

- Reiterate the importance of cultivating positive habits for achieving excellence in any field -reflect on habits and how they can be shaped to achieve goals.

Sample Quotes

- *What is above all needed is to let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about.- George Orwell*
- *Writing Laws is easy, but governing is difficult.- Leo Tolstoy*
- *It is not enough to win a war. It is more important to organise the peace - Aristotle*

MAINS JOT DOWN

GS- III - *SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY*

- Sun's image captured **by Aditya-L1's** payloads released by ISRO.
- The images were taken by remote sensing instruments, specifically **the Solar UltraViolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) and Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC)**, which are mounted on the Aditya-L1 spacecraft.
- **Aditya L1 marks** India's inaugural space mission aimed at observing the Sun from a halo orbit positioned around **Lagrange point 1 (L1)** of the **Sun-Earth system.**
- It gives a clear understanding of **Coronal heating and solar wind acceleration** as well as provides data for studying particle dynamics from sun
- Year **2025** is chosen as the **International Year of Quantum Science and Technology by UN.**
- **Quantum Technology** refers to the exploration and application of the principles of quantum mechanics, which dictate the behaviour of matter and energy at atomic and subatomic levels.
- It has its application in Industry, infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, climate action etc.
- India's initiative in the field of quantum technology includes **National Quantum Mission (2023)** and **Quantum Enabled Science & Technology (QuEST).**

GS- I - *GEOGRAPHY*

- **National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**, announced that the El Nino conditions had ended and were replaced **by El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO)** neutral phase **in Pacific Ocean.**
- **ENSO is a cyclic climate** phenomenon characterised by fluctuations in sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- It suppresses **rainfall over India during monsoon and brings rain to South America** coupled with dry spells in Australia.

GS- II - *SOCIAL JUSTICE*

- World Economic Forum (WEF) released the **Global Gender Gap Report 2024.**
- **Iceland, Finland, Norway**, New Zealand, and Sweden ranked as the top five countries.
- **India was ranked 129th** out of 146 countries, and 5th in South Asia after Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.
- The report relies on the **Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)**, which annually assesses the present status and progress of gender equality using **14 indicators across four main dimensions.**

GS- III - *ENVIRONMENT*

- Year 2024 marked the **30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).**
- Established in 1994, the UNCCD is the only legally binding international agreement that integrates environmental and developmental aspects for sustainable land management.
- It's committed to a **bottom-up approach**, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification.
- Its initiatives include **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** target setting programme, International **Drought Resilience Alliance (2022)**, **G20 Global Land Initiative (2020), etc.**
- Montreal Protocol successfully reduced emissions of **Ozone-Depleting Substances (ODS)** according to a study published by Nature journal
- Established in 1987, this global treaty aims to eradicate the production and use of Ozone-Depleting Substances (ODS).
- India has achieved complete **phase-out of HCFC-141b** in line with its commitment under Montreal Protocol for Substances that Deplete Ozone Layer.

GS- III - *AGRICULTURE*

➡️ Prime Minister **released 17th instalment** of **PM Kisan Nidhi scheme.**

➡️ launched by the Government of India under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare,** it aims to provide income support to small and marginal farmers across the country.

➡️ These farmers receive direct income support of ₹6,000 per year in three equal installments of ₹2,000 each.

➡️ The funds are directly transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.** This ensures transparency and eliminates intermediaries, thereby reducing leakages.

➡️ State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024 report released. Released by **Food & Agricultural Organisation.**

➡️ **India secured the second position** in aquatic animal production, contributing 8 percent to the global total.

➡️ With **1.9 million tonnes, India ranked first** in Inland fisheries production.

GS- II - *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS*

➡️ **50th G7 meeting** concluded in Italy.

➡️ **India was involved in the G7 outreach** session focusing on Artificial Intelligence, Energy, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

➡️ It launched **G7 Apulia Food Systems Initiative (AFSI)**,named after the **Southern Italian region** hosting the summit to overcome barriers in food security and nutrition.

➡️ It also announced support for implementation of the International **Code of Conduct** for **Organizations Developing Advanced AI Systems.**

➡️ India is set to host its inaugural **multinational air exercise, Tarang Shakti, in August.**

➡️ Named Tarang Shakti, the upcoming exercise is poised to become India's largest-ever air exercise, demonstrating the nation's dedication to enhancing international military alliances.

➡️ The exercise is expected to include participation **from air forces of France, Australia, the US, and the UK, among others.**

➡️ The exercise aims to enhance the mutual understanding and compatibility between the participating air forces, promoting regional stability and security.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

ECOTAX
• A tax on products and services that damages the environment that is designed to change the consumption behaviour and spark green innovation.

WINDFALL GAINS
• Windfall profits are substantial and unforeseen gains that arise from fortunate circumstances. These profits typically exceed historical averages and can stem from factors like sudden price surges or supply shortages, whether temporary or enduring.

HEDGE FUNDS
• Hedge funds are investment funds that pool capital from accredited or institutional investors and employ various strategies to generate returns for their investors. Unlike mutual funds, hedge funds typically have more flexibility in their investment strategies and can invest in a wide range of assets, including stocks, bonds, commodities, derivatives, and currencies.

EUROZONE
• Eurozone refers to the group of countries that use the euro (€) as their official currency. It is a monetary union comprising 19 of the 27 European Union (EU) member states. These countries have adopted the euro through the process of economic and monetary integration.