

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**21st SCO Summit**

The 21st Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State was held recently via video Conferencing in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. At the meet the focus was primarily on the ground situation in Afghanistan and its global repercussions. Iran has been accepted as the ninth full member of the organisation.

Key Points**India's Stand:**

- It took a strong stance against radicalisation and extremism, urging the panel to come up with a joint approach and frame a code of conduct to stop terror financing and cross-border terrorism. It also stressed upon the importance of moderate Islam in Central Asia.
- Flagged concerns over the serious humanitarian crisis unfolding in Afghanistan, noting that the economic woes of the Afghan people are increasing due to the blockage in financial and trade flows.
- Pointed out that the developments in the country could lead to an uncontrolled flow of drugs, illegal weapons and human trafficking.
- It is committed to increasing its connectivity with Central Asia. Asserting that there should be respect for the territorial integrity of all countries.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:

- **About:**
 1. It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation. It was created in 2001.
 2. The SCO Charter was signed in 2002, and entered into force in 2003.
 3. It's a Eurasian political, economic and military organisation aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
 4. It is seen as a counterweight to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), It is a nine-member economic and security bloc and has emerged as one of the largest transregional international organisations.
- **Official Languages:** Russian and Chinese.
- **Permanent Bodies:**
 1. SCO Secretariat in Beijing
 2. Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent.
- **Chairmanship:** It is by rotation for a year by Member States.
- **Genesis:**
 1. Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five.
 2. Shanghai Five (1996) emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China to ensure stability along the borders.
 3. Following the accession of Uzbekistan to the organisation in 2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
 4. India and Pakistan became members in 2017. Iran is the ninth and the newest member of SCO. India was made an observer at the SCO in 2005 and has generally participated in the ministerial-level meetings of the grouping which focus mainly on security and economic cooperation in the Eurasian region.

ECONOMY**Agreement on Agriculture: WTO**

Recently, while addressing the G-33 Virtual Informal Ministerial Meeting, India's Commerce and Industry Minister pointed out the imbalances in the Agreement on Agriculture at the World Trade Organization (WTO). He claimed that it was in favour of developed countries and historical asymmetries and imbalances must be corrected to ensure a rule-based, fair and equitable order.

G-33

- It is a forum of developing countries formed during the Cancun ministerial conference of the WTO, to protect the interest of the developing countries in agricultural trade negotiations. India is a part of the G33, which is a group of 47 developing and least developed countries.
- It was created in order to help group countries which were all facing similar problems. The G33 has proposed special rules for developing countries at WTO negotiations, like allowing them to continue to restrict access to their agricultural markets.

Key Points**About:**

- It is aimed to remove trade barriers and to promote transparent market access and integration of global markets.
- The WTO's Agriculture Committee oversees implementation of the Agreement and provides a forum for members to address related concerns.

Three pillars of Agreement on Agriculture:

- **Domestic Support:** It calls for reduction in domestic subsidies that distorts free trade and fair price. Under this provision, the Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) is to be reduced by 20% over a period of 6 years by developed countries and 13% over a period of 10 years by developing countries.
- **Market Access:** Market access for goods in the WTO means the conditions, tariff and non-tariff measures, agreed by members for the entry of specific goods into their markets. Market access requires that tariffs fixed (like custom duties) by individual countries be cut progressively to allow free trade. It also required countries to remove non-tariff barriers and convert them to Tariff duties.
- **Export Subsidy:** Subsidy on inputs of agriculture, making export cheaper or other incentives for exports such as import duty remission etc are included under export subsidies. These can result in dumping of highly subsidized (and cheap) products in other countries and damage the domestic agriculture sector of other countries.

2. World Bank Stops ‘Ease of Doing Business’ Report

The World Bank would discontinue the practice of issuing ‘Doing Business report’ following an investigation reported “data irregularities” in its 2018 and 2020 editions (released in 2017 and 2019, respectively) and possible “ethical matters” involving bank staff. It will be working on a new approach to assessing the business and investment climate.

Key Points

Ease of Doing Business Report:

- The report was introduced in 2003 to provide an assessment of objective measures of business regulations and their enforcement across 190 economies on ten parameters affecting a business through its life cycle.
- 10 different parameters namely, Starting a Business, Dealing with Construction permits, Electricity availability, Property registration, Credit availability, Protecting minority Investors, Paying Taxes, Trading across borders, Contracts enforcement, and Resolving Insolvency.
- It ranks countries on the basis of Distance to Frontier (DTF) score that highlights the gap of an economy with respect to the global best practice. For example, a score of 75 means an economy was 25 percentage points away from the frontier constructed from the best performances across all economies and across time.

India’s Performance:

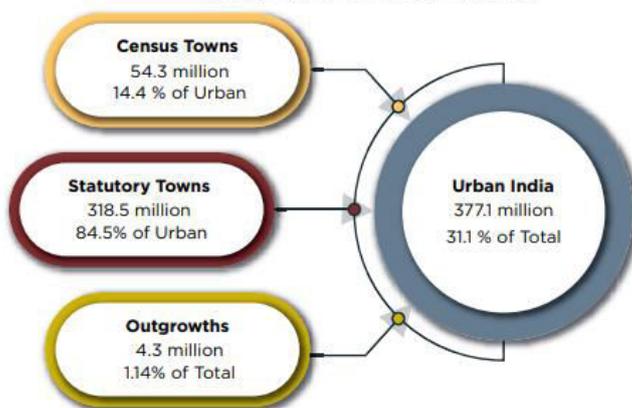
- Notably, in three reports, released in 2017, 2018 and 2019, India ranked among the top 10 economies showing “the most notable improvement”. Of the 79 positions in the Bank’s Doing Business rankings that India gained between 2014 and 2019, 67 rank improvements happened 2017 onwards, with the biggest 30-rank jump happening in the Doing Business 2018 report, released in October 2017.
- The latest report, published in October 2019, placed India at 63rd in Doing Business, compared with 77th in 2018 and 100 in 2017.
- 1. India, along with other top improvers, had implemented 59 regulatory reforms in 2018-19, accounting for a fifth of all reforms recorded worldwide.
- 2. During 2018-19, India had implemented reforms across parameters such as ‘starting a business’, ‘dealing with construction permits’, ‘trading across borders’, and ‘resolving insolvency’. The government’s goal was to be among the top 50 economies by 2020.
- The scores for India used to be based on coverage of just two cities, with Mumbai carrying a weight of 47% and Delhi a weight of 53%.

GOVERNANCE

Urban Planning Reforms: NITI Aayog

Recently, NITI Aayog has launched the report titled ‘Reforms in Urban Planning Capacity in India’.

Composition of Urban Population



Key Points

- **Urbanisation in India:**

1. **Urbanisation Level (National):**

- India's population stood at 1210 million in 2011, with an urbanisation level of 31.1% (Census of India 2011). Urbanisation is an increase in the number of people living in towns and cities.
- The distribution of urban centres and the pace of urbanisation is not uniform across the country. Over 75% of the urban population of the country is in 10 States: Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Kerala.

- **State-wise Scenario:**

2. Above National Average: Goa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Gujarat have attained over 40% urbanisation.
3. Below National Average: Bihar, Odisha, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh continue to be at a lower level of urbanisation than the national average of 31.1%.
4. Union Territories: NCT of Delhi, Daman and Diu, Chandigarh, and Lakshadweep, show above 75% urbanisation.

Need for Reforming Urban Planning Capacity:

- **Increasing Urbanisation:** India's urban population is 11% of that of the world.

1. However, in absolute numbers, the urban population in India is more than highly urbanised countries/regions like the United States, Japan, Western Europe, and South America.
2. During 2011-36, urban growth will be responsible for 73% of the rise in total population in India.

- **Urbanisation is Central to India's Economy:** Urbanisation contributes nearly 60% to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, there exists large, untapped economies of scale.

- **India's National Growth Targets:**

1. Economic Growth Target: USD 5 trillion economy by 2024.
2. Employment Target: Total workforce estimated to be 0.64 billion by 2030, of which 0.26 billion to be employed in urban areas.
3. Infrastructure Targets: Creation of 11 large industrial corridors as part of the National Industrial Corridor Programme, several multi-modal logistic parks, etc.
4. Environmental Protection Targets: River rejuvenation, clean air in cities, etc.

- **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP):** The urban sector has a significant share of 17% in the NIP. NIP facilitates infrastructure projects in the country with a projected investment of Rs 111 lakh crore during the period 2020-25.

- **India's Global Commitments:**

1. SDGs (Goal 11): Promote urban planning as one of the recommended methods for achieving sustainable development.
2. UN-Habitat's New Urban Agenda: It was adopted at Habitat III in 2016. It puts forth principles for the planning, construction, development, management, and improvement of urban areas.
3. UN-Habitat (2020) mentions spatial sustainability, as a concept. It suggests that the spatial conditions of a city can enhance its power to generate social, economic and environmental value and well-being.
4. Paris Agreement: India's National Determined Contributions (NDCs) includes the goals to reduce the emission intensity of the country's GDP by 33 to 35% by 2030 from 2005 level.

Recommendations:

- **Planning of Healthy Cities:** Central Sector Scheme '500 Healthy Cities Programme', for a period of 5 years, wherein priority cities and towns would be selected jointly by the states and local bodies. The Programme can lead to optimum utilization of urban land as well.

- **Re-engineering of Urban Governance:** To bring in more institutional clarity and also multi-disciplinary expertise to solve urban challenges. The formation of an apex committee at the state level is recommended to undertake a regular review of planning legislations (including town and country planning or urban and regional development acts or other relevant acts).

- **Strengthening the Role of the Private Sector:** These include the adoption of fair processes for procuring technical consultancy services, strengthening project structuring and management skills in the public sector, and empanelment of private sector consultancies.

- **Measures for Strengthening Human Resource and Match Demand-Supply:** The constitution of a 'National Council of Town and Country Planners' as a statutory body of the Government of India. Also, a 'National Digital Platform of Town and Country Planners' is suggested to be created within the National Urban Innovation Stack of MoHUA.

- Citizen Outreach Campaign' for demystifying urban planning.

- Strengthening Urban Planning Education System.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

SPIN Scheme: KVIC

Recently, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) launched the SPIN (Strengthening the Potential of India) scheme to make potters self-sustainable.

Key Points

SPIN Scheme:

- **About:** Under SPIN, KVIC will facilitate potters to get easy loans from banks that will help the potters to diversify their activities and enhance their income.
- **Objective:** It is aimed at sustainable development by creating local self-employment which is aligned with the Prime Minister's commitment of "Job to Every Hand" (Har Hath Me Kaam).
- **Features:**
 1. It is a no-subsidy program.
 2. KVIC facilitates potters to get bank loans under Pradhan Mantri Shishu Mudra Yojana.
 3. No financial burden on the exchequer.
 4. Beneficiaries can repay the loans in easy installments.
- **Significance:** It will reduce their dependence on government subsidy and thus make potters self-reliant.

Other Related Schemes:

1. Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana.
2. Terracotta Grinder.
3. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

- It was launched by the government in 2015 for providing loans up to Rs. 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro-enterprises. Loans under this scheme are collateral-free loans.
- Under this, three products have been created, i.e. 'Shishu', 'Kishore' and 'Tarun' as per the stage of growth and funding needs of the beneficiary micro unit.
 1. **Shishu:** Covering loans up to Rs. 50,000.
 2. **Kishore:** Covering loans above Rs. 50,000 and up to Rs. 5 lakh.
 3. **Tarun:** Covering loans above Rs. 5 lakh and up to Rs. 10 lakh.

2. Earthshot Prize 2021

Recently, two Indians (Vinisha and Vidhut) among 15 finalists were selected for the first ever Earthshot Prize 2021, which will be held in London. A 14-year-old Tamil Nadu schoolgirl's solar-powered ironing cart and a Delhi entrepreneur's agricultural waste recycling concept named among finalists.

Key Points

About:

- The prize was launched by Britain's Prince William in October 2020 in order to search for inspiring and innovative solutions to problems facing the planet.
- The prize is inspired by US President John F Kennedy's "Moonshot" programme, which resulted in the US Apollo lunar launches and the first man setting foot on the Moon in 1969.

Theme: It is centred around five "Earthshots", simple but ambitious goals for the planet, which if achieved by 2030 will improve life for all, for generations to come.

Five Earthshots:

- Protect and restore nature
- Clean our air
- Revive our oceans
- Build a waste-free world
- Fix our climate.

Awards Ceremony: It will take place in different cities across the world each year between 2021 and 2030, at which the five winners for each of the Earthshots will be selected from 15 finalists.

Benefits to Winners:

- After the awards, each winner will receive a global platform and prestigious profile, with their stories being showcased over the decade with the ambition that their solutions lead to mass adoption, replication and scaling. The 1 million pound in prize money will support environmental and conservation projects that are agreed with a winner.

Eligibility: Prizes can be awarded to a wide range of individuals, teams or collaborations such as scientists, activists, economists, community projects etc, which make a substantial contribution to achieving the Earthshots.

Prize Management: In addition to the Prize Council, the Earthshot Prize is supported by its Global Alliance, a network of organisations worldwide which share the ambition of the Prize to repair the planet.

3. Free Education to 112 Aspirational Districts

Recently, the NITI Aayog launched an initiative with BYJU'S (an edutech giant) to provide free access to tech-driven learning programmes to children from India's 112 aspirational districts.

Key Points

- Students of Classes 6-12 in government schools across 112 'Aspirational Districts (AD)' will get free access to the company's "premium learning resources". ADs are the districts which are affected by poor socio-economic indicators. They are aspirational in the context, that improvement in these districts can lead to the overall improvement in human development in India.
- BYJU'S will also provide "free" coaching classes to over 3,000 "meritorious" students of Classes 11 and 12, offered by Aakash Institute, for engineering and medical entrance examinations.
- It aims to make the supplemental learning resources available to children in the government schools in the Aspirational Districts on a pro-bono basis (without charge or very less fees).
- It is also aimed to improve the online education system in India and mitigate the digital divide in education.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Why is India so prone to crimes against women? The government must rethink its policies and better coordinate its efforts to make safer spaces for women. Analyse. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

- The latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) paints a frightful picture of a steady rise in rape cases. India recorded 32,033 rape cases in 2019. This implies that at least 88 women were raped every day. In the past week, three heinous crimes against women were reported in different parts of the country.
- These horrific, unrelated crimes point to a common denominator: India remains unsafe for women. The Delhi gang rape of 2012, which led to stricter laws, is now a distant memory, as horrific cases of sexual violence continue to shock the country.

Body

- **Crimes against Women: Statistics** In 2019, 400,000 cases of crimes against women were reported, up from about 378,000 in 2018. These account for only 10% of the crimes against women. The conviction rate for rape cases is a dismal 30%.
- **Culture of crimes against women in India**
 1. **Entrenched Patriarchy:** India is a deeply patriarchal society. Popular culture equates masculinity with sexual aggression and encourages men and boys to bully and harass women, even rape them, to "tame" them and teach them a lesson.
 2. **Gender and caste violence:** Raping Dalit women takes this misogyny further. A Dalit woman is raped not just to punish and humiliate the woman but also her family and community. It is aimed at underscoring the powerlessness of Dalit men and the larger Dalit community to protect "their" women.
 3. **Justice system:** It is a social fact that the criminal legal system often merely re-arranges a system of illegalities. For example, rape survivors are routinely pressurized to "compromise" illegally and turn hostile in trials, failing which they may be threatened or even killed.
 4. **Humiliation to victim:** Victims, instead of getting justice, had to face several unnecessary humiliating questions.
 5. **Crime in home:** Most crimes still happen within the confines of homes & victims are raped by people they know well like relatives/friends/etc, most of these cases don't even make it to the statistics.
 6. **No preventive measures:** In case of any crime committed against women, the discussion always goes towards punishment for the crime only, but never towards the prevention of crime.
- **Rethinking policies to make safer spaces for women**
 1. Law enforcement must swiftly bring the perpetrators to book and state governments must ascertain areas of high crime rates and double safety protocols in those areas.
 2. Men and young boys must be brought into the conversation to dismantle patriarchy and power structures that destroy the lives of women.
 3. **Plugging Gaps in Justice Delivery:** The most severe gaps in the justice delivery system are reporting a police complaint. Therefore, the focus of the criminal justice system needs to shift from sentencing and punishment to the stages of reporting, investigation, and victim-support mechanisms. In this context, the following measures must be ensured:
 - ✓ The victim reports a case without any fear.
 - ✓ Police to conduct a sound investigation.

- ✓ Victim protection throughout the trial.
- ✓ Making testification as easy and as quick as possible.
- ✓ Allocation of resources and more robust implementation of the law than is currently evident.
- **Sensitisation At a Broader Level:** Despite the ever-increasing ambit of the death sentence, there has been little effort to address prejudices in society. Addressing the prejudices in the society against sexual offences requires sensitisation of functionaries of the justice system & more importantly society.
- **Victim protection:** Adequate protection must be given to the victim until the case is closed to ensure they are not threatened.

Conclusion

Crimes against women are on the rise in recent times. Safety of women is of utmost important to ensure that the society will prosper. The extent of violence against women in India is shameful, and shows little sign of abating. While, as a community, it is possible to pass laws to criminalise the violence, law alone will not ask men to respect the opposite gender. What needs to be ingrained in the society is this “stronger people don’t put others down; they lift them up”. The year 2012 brought a drastic change in the way the State and society began viewing the epidemic of sexual violence; nine years later, India still has a long way to go.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT):

1. It is a quasi-judicial body which was formed under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
2. It is headed by a judicial member who is supposed to be a retired or serving judge of a Supreme Court.
3. It deals with matters mainly related to company’s law and the insolvency law.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- a. **1 and 2 only**
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 3 only

Q2. What is Cas9 protein that is often mentioned in news?

- a. **A molecular scissors used in targeted gene editing**
- b. A biosensor used in the accurate detection of pathogens in patients
- c. A gene that makes plants pest-resistant
- d. A herbicidal substance synthesized in genetically modified crops

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. National Intelligence Grid or NATGRID is a government initiative to deal with cybercrime in India.
2. Its creation was recommended in 2001 by a Group of Ministers (GoM) that was tasked with studying the Kargil Review Committee (1999) report.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. **Neither 1 nor 2**

Q4. With reference to India’s Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) – Tejas, consider the following statements:

1. It is a twin-engine lightweight multi-role fighter jet.
2. It is manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
3. It has a limited reach of a little over 760-km.

Which of the given statements above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. **2 only**
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. Subansiri River originates in the Tibet Plateau and enters India through Mishmi hills in Arunachal Pradesh.
2. It is the largest tributary of the Brahmaputra.

Which of the given statements above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. **2 only**
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2