

INTERNATIONAL RELATION
Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Recently, the Russian President Vladimir Putin visited India. At the meeting, India signed many agreements with Russia. The meeting is significant as it was the first 2+2 meeting between the foreign and defense ministers of the two countries. In April 2021, to build on the common “resilient” ground, Indian and Russian Foreign Ministers addressed each other’s concerns on a wide range of issues.


Key Points

- **First Indo-Russia 2+2 Dialogue:** It is the first 2+2 meeting between the foreign and defense ministers of the two countries. India has held a 2+2 format of meetings with member nations of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) — the US, Japan and Australia.
- **Agreement for Kalashnikov Rifles:** The two sides signed two contracts for the manufacture of nearly 600,000 AK-203 rifles under a joint venture in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Agreement for Military Cooperation:** The two countries also signed an agreement for military technology cooperation for the next decade, from 2021 to 2031.
 1. India underlined its goal of becoming Russia’s defense development and production partner from just a buyer.
 2. The two sides are now looking at expanding the format of exercises to make them more complex as well as Ideas for expanding India-Russia cooperation In Central Asia.
- **Moving Ahead on Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement:** Beyond defense sales, a Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS), as well as a Navy to Navy cooperation MoU are at advanced stages of conclusion.
- **Singing of Military Protocol:** The two countries also signed the Protocol of the 20th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC).
 1. The IRIGC-M&MTC “is a well-established mechanism since last two decades” and provides “a platform to discuss and implement mutually agreed agenda for defense cooperation”.
- **Go Ahead With S-400 Air Defense System Deal:** India asserted that it follows an “independent foreign policy”, hinting at the US’ Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). This is referred to in the context of supply of S-400 air defence missile systems which began this month and will continue to happen.
- **Discussion on Geopolitical Hotspots:** The situation in Afghanistan and the Middle East has wider repercussions including for Central Asia.
 1. Maritime security and safety is another domain of shared concern.
 2. The issue of China’s aggressive posture along the northern border was also brought up at the meeting.
 3. Both the countries proposed greater engagements in Central Asia and the Indian Ocean Region.

Importance of Russia for India

- **Balancing China:** The Chinese aggression in the border areas of eastern Ladakh, brought India-China relations to an inflection point, but also demonstrated that Russia is capable of contributing to defusing tensions with China. Russia organized a trilateral meeting among the

foreign ministers of Russia, India, and China following deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley in the disputed territory of Ladakh.

- **Emerging New Sectors of Economic Engagement:** Apart from traditional areas of cooperation such as weapons, hydrocarbons, nuclear energy, and diamonds, new sectors of economic engagement are likely to emerge — mining, agro-industrial, and high technology, including robotics, nanotech, and biotech. India's footprint in the Russian Far East and in the Arctic is set to expand. Connectivity projects may get a boost too.
- **Combating Terrorism:** India and Russia are working to close the gap on Afghanistan and are calling for early finalization of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.
- **Support At Multilateral Forums:** Additionally, Russia supports India's candidacy for permanent membership of a reformed United Nations Security Council and of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- **Russia's Military Exports:** Russia has been one of the largest arms exporters to India. Even as Russia's share in India's arms imports fell by over 50% in the last five-year period compared to the previous five years (2011–2015). In the last 20 years, India imported arms and weapons worth USD 35 billion from Russia, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute which tracks global arms trade.

Way Forward

- **Russia To Provide Timely Maintenance Support:** Timely supply of spares and support to the large inventory of Russian hardware in service with the Indian military has been a major issue from India.
 1. To address this, Russia has made legislative changes allowing its companies to set up joint ventures in India to address it following an Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in 2019.
 2. This agreement needs to be implemented in a time bound manner.
- **Acknowledging Importance of Each Other:** Russia will remain a key defense partner for India for decades to come. On the other hand, Russia and China are currently in a quasi-alliance setup. Russia repeatedly reiterates that it does not see itself as anybody's junior partner. That's why Russia wants India to act as a balancer.
- **Joint Military Production:** The two countries have been discussing how they can cooperate in using India as a production base for exporting to third countries Russian-origin equipment and services.

SOCIAL ISSUE

World Human Rights Day

Every year Human Rights Day is celebrated on 10th December all around the world. Freedom in the World 2021 report released earlier this year had downgraded India's status from 'Free' to 'Partly Free'.

Key Points

World Human Rights Day:

- **About:** On that day, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR established a set of common basic values both with regard to the view of human beings and to the relationship between the state and the individual.
- **Theme 2021:** "EQUALITY – Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights".
- **Objective:** To promote equality, peace, justice, freedom and the protection of human dignity. Every individual is entitled to rights irrespective of race, colour, religion, sex, language, or social status.

Human Rights:

- These are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.
- These include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more.

- Nelson Mandela had stated 'To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity'.

International Human Rights Conventions and Bodies:

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):**
 1. The 30 rights and freedoms include civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy and economic, social and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health and education, etc. India took an active part in drafting of the UDHR.
 2. The UDHR is not a treaty, so it does not directly create legal obligations for countries.
 3. The UDHR, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols (on the complaints procedure and on the death penalty) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its Optional Protocol, form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights.
- **Other Conventions:**
 1. These include the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), among others. India is a party to all these Conventions.
- **Human Rights Council:**
 1. The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights. It is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly.
 2. The most innovative feature of the Human Rights Council is the Universal Periodic Review. This unique mechanism involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN member states once every four years.
 3. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) serves as the secretariat for the Human Rights Council.
- **Amnesty International:** An international organisation of volunteers who campaign for human rights. This organisation brings out independent reports on the violation of human rights all over the world.

Human Rights in India

- **Enunciated in the Constitution:**
 1. Since inception, the Indian Constitution incorporated most of the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration in two parts, the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy.
 - **Fundamental Rights:** Articles 12 to 35 of the Constitution. These include the Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right Against Exploitation, Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural & Educational Rights, Saving of Certain Laws and Right to Constitutional Remedies.
 - **Directive Principles of State Policy:** Article 36 to 51 of the Constitution. These include 'right to social security, right to work, to free choice of employment, and protection against unemployment, right to equal pay for equal work, right to existence worthy of human dignity, right to free & compulsory education, equal justice & free legal aid and the principles of policy to be followed by the State.'
- **Statutory Provisions:** Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (as amended in 2019) provided for the constitution of a National Human Rights Commission at the Union level, which steers State Human Rights Commission in States and Human Rights Courts for better protection of Human Rights and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Related Initiatives:

- **For Poor:**
 1. Jan Dhan Account
 2. Rupay card

3. Ujjwala gas connections
4. Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin
- **For Women:**
 1. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)
 2. Triple talaq
- **For trans-genders:** National Portal for Transgender Persons, Garima Greh
- **Children:** PM-CARES for Children Scheme
- **Divyang Jan:**
 1. Assistance to Disabled Persons Scheme
 2. Accessible India Campaign: Creation of Accessible Environment for PwDs:
 3. DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme
- **Migrants:** One Nation-One Ration Card

ENVIRONMENT

Kasturirangan Committee on Western Ghats

Recently, the Government of Karnataka has informed the Center government that the state is opposed to the Kasturirangan Committee report on Western Ghats. The Kasturirangan committee report has proposed 37% of the total area of Western Ghats to be declared as Eco-Sensitive Area (ESA).

The Karnataka's Government is of the opinion that declaring Western Ghats as ESA would adversely affect the livelihood of people in the region.

Key Points

About Eco-Sensitive Areas:

- Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESAs) are located within 10 kms around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- ESAs are notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under Environment Protection Act 1986.
- The basic aim is to regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to minimize the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.

About Recommendations Of The Kasturirangan Committee Report:

- **Area to be Covered:** The Kasturirangan committee report proposes roughly 60,000 square kilometers, to be declared as eco-sensitive area (ESA).
 1. Out of this, 20,668 sq km of the area falls in Karnataka covering 1,576 villages.
 2. The boundary of the sites, are in most cases, boundaries of the legally demarcated national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves and forest divisions and therefore, already accorded with high level of protection.
- **Desired and Banned Activities:** The report recommended a blanket ban on mining, quarrying, setting up of red category industries and thermal power projects. It also stated that the impact of infrastructural projects on the forest and wildlife should be studied before permission is given for these activities.
- **UNESCO Tag:** It also stated that the UNESCO Heritage tag is an opportunity to build global and domestic recognition of the enormous natural wealth that exists in the Western Ghats. The 39 sites are located across the Western Ghats and distributed across the states (Kerala 19), Karnataka (10), Tamil Nadu (6) and Maharashtra (4).
- **Role of State Governments:** The state governments should view this development and build a plan to protect, conserve and value the resources and opportunities of the region.

Opposition of Karnataka Government:

- **Impeding Developmental Progress:** Karnataka has extensive forest cover and the government has taken care to protect the biodiversity of Western Ghats. The state government believes that implementation of the report will halt the developmental activities in the region.
- **People-Centric Developmental Model:** The Kasturirangan report has been prepared based on the satellite images, but the ground reality is different.
 1. People of the region have adopted agriculture and horticultural activities in an eco-friendly manner.

2. Priority has been accorded for environment protection under the Forest Protection Act 1980.

Way Forward

- **Preventive Approach:** Considering the changes in climate, which would affect the livelihood of all people and hurt the nation's economy, it is prudent to conserve the fragile ecosystems.
 1. This will cost less compared to the situation prone to calamities than spending money /resources for restoration / rejuvenation.
 2. Thus, any further delay in the implementation will only accentuate degrading of the most prized natural resource of the country.
- **Engaging With All Stakeholders:** a proper analysis based on scientific study followed by consensus among various stakeholders by addressing respective concerns is required urgently. Holistic view of threats and demands on the forest land, products and services, devising strategies to address these with clearly stated objectives for the authorities involved must be taken.

PRELIMS FACT

World Soil Day

Recently, ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) – Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute (CCARI) celebrated 'World Soil Day' (WSD) on 5th December 2021.

Key Points

- It was recommended by the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) in 2002. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has supported the formal establishment of WSD as a global awareness-raising platform under the leadership of the Kingdom of Thailand within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership. 5th December 2014 was designated as the first official WSD by the UN General Assembly (UNGA).
- 5th December was chosen because it corresponds with the official birthday of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand, who officially sanctioned the event.

FAO gives two awards in line with this day:

- **The King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award:** An annual award that honours individuals, communities, organizations and countries that organized remarkable and engaging World Soil Day activities or campaigns in the previous year.
- **The Glinka World Soil Prize:** An annual award for dynamic change-makers dedicated to solving one of our world's most pressing environmental issues: soil degradation. It honors individuals and organizations whose leadership and activities have contributed, or are still contributing to the promotion of sustainable soil management and the protection of soil resources.

India Initiatives to Improve Soil Health:

1. Soil Health Card Scheme
2. Organic Farming
3. Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana
4. Fertilizer Self-Sufficiency
5. Digital Agriculture
6. Carbon Farming
7. The Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme

2. Reports of Global Arms Trade: SIPRI

According to a report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which tracks global arms trade, three Indian companies are among the world's top 100 for combined arms sales in 2020. The three Indian companies are Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Indian Ordnance Factories, and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). The three were ranked among the top 100 in arms sales in 2019 as well.

Key Points

Top Countries:

- The USA has the high-est number of companies in the top 100 worldwide.. Together, their arms sales amounted to USD 285 billion, an increase of 1.9 % compared with 2019.
- China was second at 13 %, followed by the UK at 7.1 %.

- Russia and France were fourth and fifth with 5 % and 4.7 % respectively of the combined arms sales for the top 100 companies.

Indian Companies:

- Indian Ordnance Factories are at the 60th spot, with USD 1.9 billion in sales, up 0.2 % from the previous year.
- HAL is at number 42 with USD 2.97 billion, up 1.5 % from 2019 sales.
- BEL is ranked 66, with USD 1.63 billion in arms sales, up 4 % compared to 2019. India's share of arms sales globally in 2020 was 1.2 %. Their aggregated arms sales of USD 6.5 billion were 1.7 % higher in 2020 than in 2019 and accounted for 1.2 % of the top 100 total.

Factors for Increasing India's Share in Arm Sales:

- Domestic procurement has helped to shield Indian companies against the negative economic consequences of the pandemic.
- In 2020, the Indian Government announced a phased ban on imports of more than a hundred different types of military equipment to support domestic companies and enhance self-reliance in arms production.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. India has a huge population size and profound demographic diversity. Hence, a differential planning approach is needed in education, health and skill development to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend. Discuss. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

India has long been touted as the next big economic growth story after China. India has one of the youngest populations in an aging world. By 2020, the median age in India will be just 28 years. One of the primary reasons for that has been its young population which constitutes 59% of all Indians. Since 2018, India's working-age population (people between 15 and 64 years of age) has grown larger than the dependent population. This bulge in the working-age population is going to last till 2055, or 37 years from its beginning. The hope has remained that as the young Indian population enters the working age, it will lead to higher economic growth.

Body

Challenges in India to reap the demographic dividend:

• **Health:**

1. Healthcare provisions in India is grossly inadequate and access to healthcare is highly inequitable. Lack of efficient public healthcare and burden of out-of-pocket health expenditures reduces people's capacity or disables them from investing in the human capital of their children.
2. ineffective functioning (corruption and leakages) of the public distribution system (PDS), growing economic inequalities and lack of nutritional awareness pose challenges in combating malnutrition

• **Education:**

1. Basic literacy (the ability to read and write) in the overall population has progressed modestly. However, there is persistent gender differentials, and major differentials by caste and religion.
2. The state of functional literacy and professional skills is poor. Indian graduates have low employability and does not meet changing economic structure or support global competitiveness.

• **Rising Inequality:**

1. In India, a large portion of the population is below the poverty line, therefore, they do not have easy access to primary health and education.
2. There is growing inequality across social groups and income groups which translates itself into poor socio-economic mobility.
3. Lack of socioeconomic mobility hinders human capital development and traps a large section of population to be in the vicious circle of poverty.

• **Lack of Skilling:**

1. According to the National Sample Survey, out of the 470 million people of working age in India, only 10% receive any kind of training or access to skilled employment opportunities.

2. There's a huge mismatch between demand and supply when it comes to skilled workforce and employment opportunities, which could place a strain on the economy in the long run
3. Inadequate use of knowledge bases from technology developments:
4. There is a disconnect between India's rate of technological growth and ability to distribute the gains from it by adequately focusing on skilling and health.
5. The use of technical advancements has been concentrated in few sectors and benefits accrued by a few elitist sections of the society.

• **Jobless growth:**

1. India's high growth rate phase (2004-05 to 2010-11) has created significantly fewer jobs as compared to previous decades of economic growth.
2. Around 47 % of India's population is still dependent on agriculture which is notorious for underemployment and disguised unemployment.
3. Majority of the workforce is employed by the unorganized sector where workers are underpaid and lack any kind of social security.

• **Falling female labour force participation:**

1. According to data from International Labour Organization and World Bank, India's female labour force participation rates have fallen from 34.8 % in 1990 to 27 % in 2013.
2. Socio-cultural factors and rising family incomes have been identified as the main reasons for this decline.
3. Another appalling concern is that a significant proportion of qualified women drop out of the workforce for reasons ranging from no suitable jobs in the locality—particularly in rural areas—to family responsibilities and marriage.

A differential planning approach is needed:

- To engineer an inclusive and sustainable growth for India, the social infrastructure like education, health and social protection are being given utmost priority by the Government
- The gaps in the expenditure on social infrastructure like health and education should be closed by strengthening the delivery mechanisms of the government initiatives. Protecting and investing in people's health, education, and skilling is vital for reducing income inequality, and sustained inclusive economic growth.
- India needs to increase its spending on health and education. As recommended by the National Health Policy 2017 and the NEP 2020, India needs to increase its spending on health and education to at least 2.5 % in 6 % of GDP respectively from its current levels. Enhancing policies to maintain and even increase health and longevity will therefore be necessary.
- The current situation calls for more and better schools, especially in rural areas. It also calls for better transportation links between rural areas and regional urban hubs.
- India has to invest more in human capital formation at all levels, from primary education to higher education, cutting-edge research and development as well as on vocational training to increase the skill sets of its growing working-age population.
- The flagship schemes such as Skill India, Make in India, and Digital India have to be implemented to achieve convergence between skill training and employment generation.
- Bridging the gender gaps in education, skill development, employment, earnings and reducing social inequalities prevalent in the society have been the underlying goals of the development strategy to enhance human capabilities.
- Improved infrastructure, skill development, access to easy finance, reducing barriers to entrepreneurship and forums for mentorship of emerging entrepreneurs in partnership with corporates are some of measures.
- **Decentralized models of development:** Social policies for each state must be differentiated to accommodate different rates of population growth. The populations in south and west India are growing at a much slower pace than in the central and eastern states.

Conclusion:

A multi-pronged approach is imperative to reap the demographic dividend. There is also a need to engage with the youth and create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship. The demographic dividend offers them a unique opportunity to boost living standards, but they must act now to manage

their older populations in the near future by implementing policies that ensure a safe and efficient transition from the first demographic dividend to the second demographic dividend.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements about Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana,

1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme.
2. It provides health cover up to Rs. 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization.
3. It covers poor and vulnerable families based on deprivation and occupational criteria as per SECC database.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q2. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) plus include which of the following nations?

1. Azerbaijan
2. Bahrain
3. Brunei
4. Malaysia
5. Mexico

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a. 2, 3 and 4 only
- b. 1, 2, 3 only
- c. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5**

Q3. Consider the following statements about the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

1. The creation of SCO was announced on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai (China).
2. It was preceded by the Shanghai Five mechanism.
3. The SCO's official languages are English and Chinese.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q4. Consider the following statements about the Interpol Executive Committee:

1. It supervises the execution of the Interpol General Assembly's decisions.
2. It meets three times a year and sets organisational policy and direction.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q5. Consider the following statements about Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):

1. It was created by an executive order.
2. It is headed by a non-executive Chairperson, appointed by the President.
3. It is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the regulation and supervision of food safety.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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