

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**Nuclear Submarine Alliance: AUKUS**

Recently, Australia, the US and the UK signed an agreement allowing the exchange of sensitive “naval nuclear propulsion information” between their nations. It is the first agreement on the technology to be publicly signed since the three countries announced the formation of a defence alliance, AUKUS, to confront strategic tensions in the Pacific where China-US rivalry is growing.

Under the AUKUS deal, Australia would obtain eight state-of-the-art, nuclear-powered but conventionally armed submarines capable of stealthy, long-range missions.

AUKUS**About:**

- In September 2021, the US announced a new trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific, between Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS).
- The major highlight of this arrangement is the sharing of US nuclear submarine technology to Australia.
- Its Indo-Pacific orientation makes it an alliance against China's assertive actions in the South China Sea.
- It will involve a new architecture of meetings and engagements between the three countries, as well as cooperation across emerging technologies (applied AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities).

Impact on Indo-Pacific Realm/QUAD:

- There is concern that AUKUS could leave a deep scar on US-EU relations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and weaken the international coalition in the Indo-Pacific.
 1. NATO was established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of 4th April, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
 2. NATO's primary goals are the collective defence of its members and the maintenance of a democratic peace in the North Atlantic area.
- France had cancelled a scheduled meeting of the foreign ministers of Australia, France, and India at the UN. In the last couple of years, the trilateral has become an important element in the emerging Indo-Pacific architecture. But the cancellation of the meeting is a blow to the trilateral engagement.
- It is not clear whether the QUAD and AUKUS will reinforce each other or remain mutually exclusive. There are some beliefs that the “Anglosphere nations” — which share common cultural and historical ties to the UK — inspire more confidence in each other. QUAD is a grouping of India, USA, Australia and Japan which aims to safeguard the interests of democratic nations in the Indo-Pacific region and address global challenges.

Implications for India:

- India has stated that the new partnership is neither relevant to the Quad, nor will it have any impact on its functioning.
- Despite indifference towards AUKUS, India may derive secondary benefits from the AUKUS arrangement having three advanced nations with arguably the most sophisticated military power in the world coming together to support a free and open Indo-Pacific in the light of the increasingly assertive attitude of China in the region. This could provide some degree of deterrence to China.
- Also, India's concerns regarding ‘encirclement’ by China may be partially mitigated by AUKUS. China has made massive inroads in India's neighbourhood in terms of infrastructure development projects and presence.
- There is apprehension, the deal may eventually lead to crowding of nuclear attack submarines (SSNs/submersible ship nuclear) in the Eastern Indian Ocean, eroding India's regional pre-eminence.

Way Forward

- While the warming of the Indo-US relationship brings comfort to Indians, India should beware of hyperbole, obscuring reality, in the bilateral discourse. American offers of help “to make India a great power” and declarations that “two of the world's great democracies should also have the world's two greatest militaries,” must be taken with a generous pinch of salt.
- We need all the technologies being offered to Australia, in addition to “know-how” and “know-why” of much else, including stealth fighters, jet engines, advanced radars and nuclear propulsion for submarines as well as aircraft-carriers.

- As India discovers that every European nation, from tiny Luxembourg to a rising Poland, has something to offer, Europe has become a thriving hub of India's international relations. The last few years have seen an intensification of India's strategic engagement with France. For example, the government has overcome the earlier reluctance in Delhi to work with France on Indian Ocean security.
- One is to remind France, Australia, the UK and US of the shared interests in securing the Indo-Pacific and the dangers of letting the current quarrel undermine that larger goal.

ECONOMY

Gig Workers

The surge in demand for gig workers, particularly in the shared services and logistics segments, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic led to mushrooming of job discovery platforms.

Key Points

About Gig Economy:

- A gig economy is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organisations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements.
- According to a report by Boston Consulting Group, India's gig workforce comprises 15 million workers employed across industries such as software, shared services and professional services.
- An estimated 56% of new employment in India is being generated by the gig economy companies across both the blue-collar and white-collar workforce.

Different Collar Jobs

- **Blue-Collar Worker:** It is a member of the working class, who performs manual labour and earns an hourly wage.
- **White-Collar Worker:** It is a salaried professional, typically referring to general office workers and management.
- **Gold-Collar Worker:** It is used to refer to highly-skilled knowledge people who are highly valuable to the company. Example: Lawyers, doctors, research scientists, etc.
- **Grey-Collar Worker:** It refers to the balance of employed people not classified as white or blue-collar. Although grey-collar is something used to describe those who work beyond the age of retirement. Example: Firefighters, police officers, health care professionals, Security Guards, etc.
- **Green-Collar Worker:** It is a worker who is employed in the environmental sectors of the economy. Example: People working in alternative energy sources like solar panels, Greenpeace, World Wide Fund for nature, etc.
- **Pink-Collar Worker:** It is employed in a job that is traditionally considered to be women's work and is often low-paid.
- **Scarlet-Collar Worker:** It is a term often used to refer to people who work in the pornography industry, especially women entrepreneurs in the field of internet pornography.
- **Red-Collar Worker:** Government workers of all types.
- **Open-Collar Worker:** It is a worker who works from home, especially via the internet.

Reasons Gig Economy's Exponential Growth:

- In the digital age, the worker need not sit at a fixed location—the job can be done from anywhere, so employers can select the best talent available for a project without being bound by geography.
- The millennial generation seems to have quite a different attitude to careers. They seek to do work that they want to do rather than have careers that may not satisfy their inner urges.
- Heightened migration and readily available job training.

Associated Challenges:

- **Unregulated Nature:** The gig economy thrives largely unregulated, therefore workers have little job security and few benefits. However, few argue that the gig economy in India with respect to workers not getting any social security, insurance, etc. is an extension of India's informal labour, which has been prevalent for a long time and has remained unregulated.
- **Need for Skills:** A worker needs to be skilled enough. Unless a person is extremely talented, his bargaining power will necessarily be limited. While companies routinely invest in training employees, a gig-economy worker will have to upgrade his skills on his own at his own cost.
- **Demand-Supply Mismatch:** There are already many more potential online independent workers than jobs, and this demand-supply mismatch will only get worse over time, depressing wages.

Impact of Pandemic on Gig Economy:

- Businesses got disrupted because of Covid-19 and these people were looking for an income source to sustain. This led to the pandemic-led boom in demand for gig workers. For instance, in August 2020, Google announced the India launch of its Kormo Jobs app to connect job seekers with opportunities in industries like on-demand businesses, retail and hospitality.
- However, as the number of gig workers has grown over the years, especially with consumer internet companies like Zomato, Swiggy, Uber, Ola, Urban Company, etc, the workers have increasingly complained of a fall in their incomes.
- It has had two significant implications on the contractual labour ecosystem:
 1. Firstly, it has created new business models to cater to the growing requirement for on-demand staffing.
 2. Secondly, it has once again put the spotlight on the labour codes that recognise gig workers and provide for a universal minimum wage.

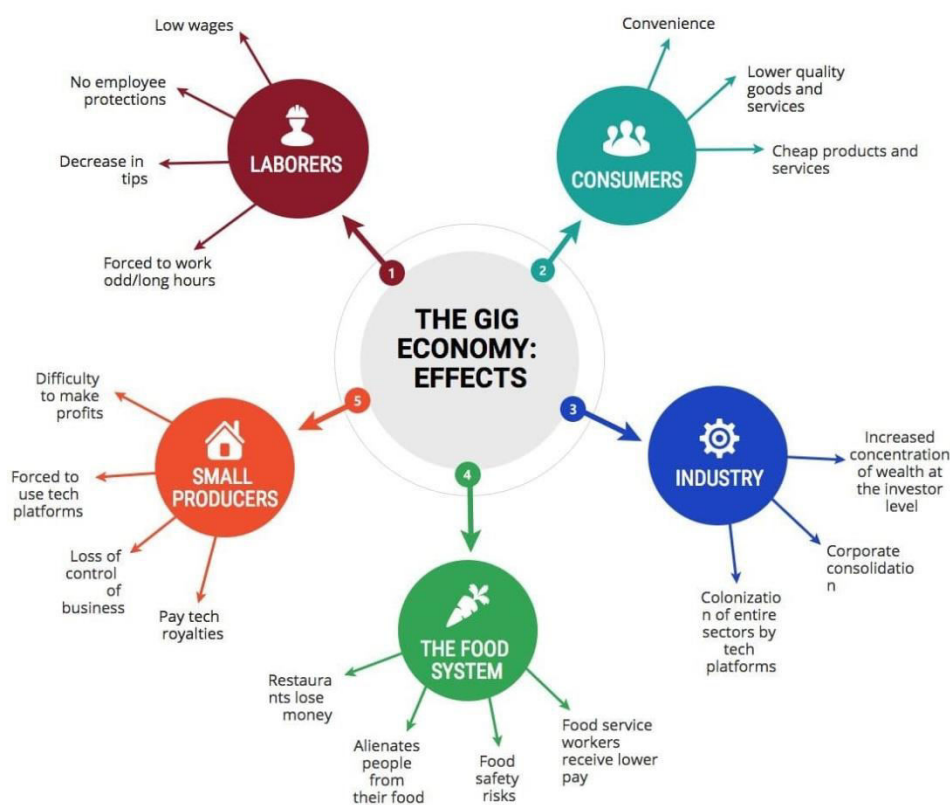
Labour Code for Gig Economy

Existing Legislation:

- The Code on Wages, 2019, provides for universal minimum wage and floor wage across organised and unorganised sectors, including gig workers.
- The Code on Social Security, 2020, recognises gig workers as a new occupational category. It defines a gig worker as a person who performs work or participates in work arrangement and earns from such activities, outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship.

Associated Issues in the Security Code:

- **No Guarantee of Benefits:** In the Code on Social Security bill, 2020, platform workers are now eligible for benefits like maternity benefits, life and disability cover, old age protection, provident fund, employment injury benefits, etc.
 1. However, eligibility does not mean that the benefits are guaranteed.
 2. None of the provisions secure benefits, which means that from time to time, the Central government can formulate welfare schemes that cover these aspects of personal and work security, but they are not guaranteed.
- **No Fixed Responsibility:** The Code states the provision of basic welfare measures as a joint responsibility of the Central government, platform aggregators, and workers. However, it does not state which stakeholder is responsible for delivering what quantum of welfare.



Way Forward

- **Need For Clarity:** A categorical clarification could ensure that social security measures are provided to workers without compromising the touted qualities of platform work.
- **Joint Accountability:** There is a need for a socio-legal acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of work in the gig economy, and the ascription of joint accountability to the State and platform companies for the delivery of social services.
- **Concerted Efforts:** To mitigate operational breakdowns in providing welfare services, a tripartite effort by the State, companies, and workers to identify where workers fall on the spectrum of flexibility and dependence on platform companies is critical.

ENVIRONMENT

Flex Fuel Vehicles

Recently, the Government has advised the Automobile Manufacturers in India, to start manufacturing Flex Fuel Vehicles (FFV) and Flex Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles (FFV-SHEV) complying with BS-6 Norms in a time bound manner.

Key Points

About FFV and FFV-SHEV:

- **Flex-fuel vehicles (FFV):** They have engines that can run on flexible fuel — a combination of petrol and ethanol, which can include up to 100% ethanol.
- **Flex Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles (FFV-SHEV):** When FFV is integrated along with strong hybrid electric technology, it is referred as FFV-SHEVs.
 1. Strong hybrid is another term for full hybrid vehicles, which have the capability to run solely on either electric or petrol modes.
 2. In contrast, mild hybrids cannot run purely on one of these modes and use the secondary mode merely as a supplement to the main mode of propulsion.
- In order to accelerate the introduction of FFVs, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has included automobile and auto components of flex fuel engines.

Significance of the Move:

- **Easing Pressure on Import Bill:** The policy is expected to reduce the demand for petroleum products. India presently imports more than 80% of its petroleum requirement, and this also represents one of the biggest outflows of money from the country.
- **Benefiting Farmers:** The wide uptake of ethanol or methanol as a fuel is intended to create an additional revenue stream for farmers. This will provide direct benefits to farmers and help in doubling the farmer's income.
- **Boost to Atma Nirbhar Bharat:** It is in line with Prime Minister's vision of Atma Nirbhar Bharat and government's policy on promoting ethanol as a transport fuel.
- **Reducing Greenhouse Gas & Tackling Climate Change:** This move will drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles on a well-to-wheel basis. Thereby, helping India to comply with its commitment made at Conference of parties (COP26) to reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030.

Related Government Initiatives:

1. National Policy on Biofuels-2018
2. E100 Project.
3. Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana, 2019
4. GOBAR (Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources) DHAN Scheme, 2018
5. Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO)

BS-VI Fuel Norms:

- The Bharat Stage (BS) are emission standards instituted by the Government of India to regulate the output of air pollutants from motor vehicles.
- India directly shifted from BS-IV to BS-VI norms. The switch to BS-VI vehicles was to happen in 2022 but looking at the poor air condition, the move was advanced by four years.
- In BS-VI fuel, the volume of Particulate Matter 2.5 ranges from 20 to 40 micrograms per cubic metre whereas in BS-IV fuel it is up to 120 micrograms per cubic metre.
- BS-VI fuel will bring down sulphur content by 5 times from the current BS-IV levels. It has 10 ppm of sulphur as against 50 ppm in BS-IV. Sulphur in the fuel contributes to fine particulate matter emissions. High sulphur content in the fuel also leads to corrosion and wear of the automobile engine.

- With BS-VI fuel, for every one kilometre, a car will emit 80% less particulate matter and nearly 70% less nitrogen oxide.
- Air pollutants in BS-VI fuel are much less as compared to BS-IV fuel.
- BS-VI norms also seek to reduce the level of certain harmful hydrocarbons in the emissions that are produced due to incomplete combustion of fuel.

PRELIMS FACT

Apatani Textile Product

Recently, an application seeking Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the Arunachal Pradesh Apatani textile product has been filed by a firm.

Key Points

About:

- The Apatani weave comes from the Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh living at Ziro, the headquarters of lower Subansiri district. The Apatani community weaves its own textiles for various occasions, including rituals and cultural festivals.
- The woven fabric of this tribe is known for its geometric and zigzag patterns and also for its angular designs. The tribe predominantly weaves shawls known as jig-jiro and jilan or jackets called supuntarii.
- The people here use different leaves and plant resources for organic dyeing the cotton yarns in their traditional ways. Only women folk are engaged in weaving.
- The traditional handloom of this tribe is a type of loin loom, which is called Chichin, and is similar to the traditional handloom of the Nyishi tribe. It is portable, easy to install and operated by a single weaver, especially the female members of the community.

Apatani Tribes:

- Apatani are a tribal group of people living in the Ziro valley in Arunachal Pradesh.
- They speak a local language called Tani and worship the sun and the moon.
- They follow a sustainable social forestry system.
- They celebrate major festivals – Dree with prayers for a bumper harvest and prosperity of all humankind and Myoko to celebrate Friendship.
- The Apatanis practice aquaculture along with rice farming on their plots. Rice-fish culture in the valley is a unique practice in the state, where two crops of rice (Mipya and Emoh) and one crop of fish (Ngihi) are raised together.
- It is a scheduled tribe in Arunachal Pradesh.

Present GI Products from Arunachal Pradesh

- Arunachal Orange (Agricultural)
- Idu Mishmi Textiles (Handicraft)

Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh

- **The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh include:** Abor, Aka, Dafla, Galong, Khampati, Khowa, Mishmi, Monpa, Momba, Any Naga tribes, Sherdukpen, Singpho.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. India's substantive engagement of the past with Afghanistan was aimed at the realisation of a stable polity and it remains the most viable option as Afghanistan enters a new phase in its turbulent political evolution. Examine. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

Taliban have seized power in Afghanistan and captured Kabul triggered by the U.S. withdrawal. The recent decision of Delhi to send a consignment of medicines to Afghanistan is another sign that the government is now coming around to the reality of the Taliban regime in Kabul and is finding ways to reach out to them.

Body

India-Afghanistan engagement before Taliban

- **Trade relations:** India is the second-largest destination for Afghan exports.
- **Infrastructure development by India:** India is the sixth largest donor to Afghanistan in diverse development projects in infrastructure, education and agriculture.
 1. Some of the major projects include, construction of a 218 km road from Zaranj to Delaram for facilitating movement of goods and services to the Iranian border.

2. Construction of Afghan-India Friendship Dam (Salma Dam) in Herat province.
3. Construction of Afghan Parliament.
- **Political & Security Relations:** During the Soviet-Afghan war (1979-89), India was the only South Asian nation to recognize the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.
- India also provided humanitarian aid to then Afghan President Najibullah's government. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, India continued to provide Najibullah's government with humanitarian aid.
- **Strategic partnership:** India was the first country Afghanistan chose to sign a strategic partnership agreement with.
 1. India signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2011 to assist in "the training, equipping and capacity- building programs for the Afghan National Security Forces".
 2. India aided the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in fighting the scourge of terrorism, organized crime, trafficking of narcotics and money laundering.
- **Defence relations:** India donated three Mi-25 attack helicopters to Afghanistan as part of the bilateral strategic partnership to counter the Taliban.

India's strategic interest in Afghanistan

- **Economic importance:** Afghanistan has significant oil and gas reserves and has rich source of rare earth materials.
- **Threat to financial and strategic investments:** Over the past years, India has invested an estimated \$3 billion in projects across Afghanistan and has engaged in other soft power tactics to strengthen friendship and goodwill between two nations. Taliban takeover not only poses a security threat to India's assets, but also lays waste to India's efforts.
- **Increasing influence of China and Pakistan:** The nexus between the Taliban and the Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan raises concerns about Pakistan's increasing influence within the country. Also, absence of U.S. financial and military aid opens up avenues for China to gain influence over the nation.
- **Security:** Stable government in Kabul is essential to reduce terror activities across south Asia also in Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, the most important goal for India remains the prevention of Pakistan from regaining its central role in Afghan affairs. However, with Taliban takeover and Pakistan's influence, security situation now seems precarious.
- **Gateway to energy rich central Asia:** Afghanistan is situated at crossroads between South Asia and Central Asia and South Asia and the Middle East.

Way forward for India

- **Establishing informal links with the Taliban government:** It would put New Delhi in a stronger position to ensure that its assets and investments in Afghanistan aren't imperiled.
- **Broader Diplomatic Engagement:** India should consider appointing a special envoy dedicated to Afghan reconciliation. The envoy can ensure that Indian views are expressed at every meeting, broaden engagement with the Afghan government and other political actors, and reach out to certain Taliban representatives.
- **Developmental and Humanitarian aid:** Given the continued levels of violence and the impact of the coronavirus on the Afghan economy, India should expand its development assistance.
- **Working With and Through Others:** India should look to broaden its engagements with Iran and Russia, explore opportunities for cooperation with China, and find common ground with the United States on Afghanistan's future. Such engagements should include investing in a wider diplomatic initiative with the view to carve out areas of convergence.

Conclusion

India needs a long-term strategic approach towards Afghanistan that weaves political, economic, military and diplomatic dimensions into a coherent whole within the framework of a grand strategy. India's Afghan policy must be based on a clear-cut understanding of India's strategic goals in the region, and the regional and global strategic environment

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the S-400 missile system?

1. It is a surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.
2. It can engage all types of aerial targets within the range of 1400km.
3. It can track 100 airborne targets and engage six of them simultaneously.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

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

Q2. Consider the following statements about the Group of Seven (G7):

- 1. It was founded in 1999 in response to several world economic crises.
- 2. Its members are the world's largest IMF advanced economies and wealthiest liberal democracies.
- 3. It is not based on a treaty and has no permanent secretariat or office.

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

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system in India:

- 1. The MSP is the rate at which the government purchases crops from farmers.
- 2. It is based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers.
- 3. The MSP is fixed thrice a year on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

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

Q4. The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) is an attached office of the:

- a. NITI Aayog.
- b. Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- c. Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- d. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**

Q5. Which of the following statements is/are incorrect about the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)?

- 1. It is an association of Indian banks and financial institutions based in Mumbai.
- 2. It serves as a deposit insurance and credit guarantee for banks in India.
- 3. It insures all bank deposits.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

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