

GOVERNANCE**Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan**

The Government has approved the scheme of Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) for continuation till 31st March, 2026 or till further review, whichever is earlier. The proposal entails an expenditure of Rs. 12929.16 crore out of which Central Share is Rs. 8120.97 crores and the State Share is of Rs. 4808.19 crores. It has been envisaged to support around 1600 projects under the new phase of the scheme.

What is RUSA?

- It is the centrally sponsored scheme launched in October 2013 that aims at providing strategic funding to higher education institutions throughout the country.
- The central funding (in the ratio of 60:40 for general category States, 90:10 for special category states and 100% for union territories) is norm based and outcome dependent.
- The funding flows from the Ministry of Education through the state governments/union territories to the State Higher Education Councils before reaching the identified institutions. The funding to states would be made on the basis of critical appraisal of State Higher Education Plans, which would describe each state's strategy to address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.

What is envisaged in the News Phase?

- New phase of RUSA targets to reach out the unserved, underserved areas, remote/ rural areas, difficult geographies, LWE (Left-Wing Extremism) areas, NER (North Eastern Region), Aspirational Districts, tier-2 cities, areas with low GER (Gross enrolment ratio) etc., and to benefit the most disadvantaged areas and SEDGs (Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups).
- The new phase of the scheme has been designed to implement some of the recommendations and aims of the New Education Policy, which suggests some key changes to the current higher education system to revamp and re-energize it and thereby deliver quality higher education, with equity and inclusion.
- State Governments will be supported for Gender inclusion, Equity Initiatives, ICT, Enhancing employability through vocationalisation & skill upgradation.
- States will also be supported for creation of new Model Degree Colleges.
- State Universities will be supported for Multi-Disciplinary Education and Research.
- Grants will be provided for strengthening both accredited and non-accredited Universities and Colleges for undertaking various activities including teaching-learning in Indian languages.

What are the Objectives?

- Improve the overall quality of state institutions by conforming to the prescribed norms and standards.
- Adoption of accreditation (certification of competency) as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
- Promoting autonomy in state universities and improving governance in institutions.
- Ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination system.
- Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
- Create an enabling atmosphere for research in the higher education system.
- Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by setting up institutions in unserved and underserved areas.
- Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities to the disadvantaged.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**Reserved Forest**

Recently, a virtual summit was held between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Earlier in September 2021, India and the UAE formally launched negotiations on the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

What are the Key Highlights of the Meeting?

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:** Issued a Joint Vision Statement "Advancing the India and UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: New Frontiers, New Milestone". The Statement establishes a roadmap for a future-oriented partnership between India and UAE and identifies focus areas and outcomes. The shared objective is to promote new trade, investment and innovation dynamics in diverse sectors.

- **Defence and Security:** Agreed to enhance maritime cooperation contributing to maintenance of peace and security in the region. Reaffirmed joint commitment to fight against extremism and terrorism, including cross-border terrorism, in all forms, at both regional and international levels.
- **Climate Action and Renewables:** Agreed to support each other's clean energy missions and establish a joint Hydrogen Task Force to help scale up technologies, with special focus on production of Green Hydrogen.
- **Emerging Technologies:** Agreed to expand cooperation on critical technologies and mutually promote e-businesses and e-payment solutions and promote start-ups from both countries.
- **Education Cooperation:** Agreed to establish an Indian Institute of Technology in the UAE.
- **Health Cooperation:** Decided to collaborate in research, production and development of reliable supply chains for vaccines and enhance investments by UAE entities in the health infrastructure in India as well as collaborate in providing healthcare in underprivileged nations.
- **Food Security:** Acknowledged the need to enhance the resilience and reliability of food supply chains. Also decided to expand cooperation through enhanced bilateral food and agriculture trade and, promote and strengthen the infrastructure and dedicated logistic services connecting farms to ports to final destinations in the UAE.
- **Skills Cooperation:** Agreed to enhance cooperation in skill development so as to align with the market needs and address the changing needs for the future of work.
- **Released Joint Commemorative Stamp** on the occasion of 75th anniversary of India's independence and 50th year of UAE's foundation.
- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):** In a significant development, the two sides inked a CEPA to further boost trade and investment ties.
 1. Plastic, agriculture, food products, automobile, engineering, pharmaceuticals are some of the areas that will be boosted because of the pact.
 2. The deal will open up to 10 lakh jobs for the young people in the country and would also open access to broader African and Asian markets for India.
 3. The CEPA is expected to increase bilateral trade from the current level of USD 60 billion to USD 100 billion in the next five years (2022-27).

What is CEPA?

- It is a kind of free trade pact which covers negotiation on the trade in services and investment, and other areas of economic partnership. It may even consider negotiation on areas such as trade facilitation and customs cooperation, competition, and Intellectual Property Rights.
- Partnership agreements or cooperation agreements are more comprehensive than Free Trade Agreements.
- CEPA also looks into the regulatory aspect of trade and encompasses an agreement covering the regulatory issues.
- India has signed CEPAs with South Korea and Japan.

What is the Current State of India-UAE Relations?

About:

- India and the UAE enjoy strong bonds of friendship based on age-old cultural, religious and economic ties between the two nations.
- The relationship flourished after the accession of H.H. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan as the Ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966 and subsequently with the creation of the UAE Federation in 1971.

Political Relations:

- In 2019, UAE awarded the ZAYED Medal, their highest civilian award, to the Prime Minister of India for consolidating the long-standing friendship and joint strategic cooperation between the two nations.
- The Indian Prime Minister's visit to the UAE in August 2015 marked the beginning of a new and comprehensive and strategic partnership.

Economic Relations:

- India-UAE trade was around USD 60 billion making UAE, India's third-largest trading partner for the year 2019-20 after China and the USA.
- The UAE is the second-largest export destination of India with an amount of over USD 29 billion for the year 2019-20.
- For the UAE, India is the second-largest trading partner for the year 2019 with an amount of around USD 41.43 billion for non-oil trade.

Cultural Relations:

- The two nations share historical ties and have maintained regular cultural exchanges both at official and popular levels.
- They signed a Cultural Agreement in 1975 and the embassies continue to organise various cultural activities on their own as well as by collaborating with other cultural organisations.

Indian Community:

- The UAE is home to the Indian expatriate community of more than 2.6 million, the largest expatriate community in the UAE, which has played a major role in the economic development of the UAE.
- Recently, India has asked the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which also includes UAE, to facilitate the return of Indians who want to resume work with the relaxing of Covid-19-related restrictions.

SCIENCE

ISRO's Launch Vehicles

Recently, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) launched an Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-04) along with two other smaller satellites into space using a PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) rocket. This was the 54th flight of the PSLV rocket.

What are Launch Vehicles and Satellites?

- The rockets have powerful propulsion systems that generate the huge amount of energy required to lift heavy objects like satellites into space, overcoming the gravitational pull of the earth.
- Satellites carry one or more instruments that do the scientific work for which they are sent into space. Their operational life sometimes extends up to decades. But rockets, or launch vehicles, become useless after the launch. Rockets' only job is to take the satellites to their intended orbits.
- **Rockets have several detachable energy-providing parts.**
 1. They burn different kinds of fuels to power the rocket. Once their fuel is exhausted, they detach from the rocket and fall off, often burning off in the atmosphere due to air-friction, and getting destroyed.
 2. Only a small part of the original rocket goes till the intended destination of the satellite. Once the satellite is finally ejected, this last part of the rocket either becomes part of space debris, or once again burns off after falling into the atmosphere.

What are the Types of Launch Vehicles?

For Lower Earth Orbits:

- Several satellites need to be deposited only in the lower earth orbits, which starts from about 180 km from earth's surface and extends up to 2,000 km. Most of the earth-observation satellites, communication satellites, and even the International Space Station, a full-fledged laboratory in space that hosts astronauts, function in this space.
- It takes a smaller amount of energy to take the satellites to low-earth orbits, and accordingly smaller, less powerful, rockets are used for this purpose.

For Higher Orbits:

- There are other satellites which need to go much deeper in space.
- Geostationary satellites, for example, have to be deposited in orbits that are about 36,000 km from earth's surface.
- The planetary exploration missions also need their rockets to leave them much deeper in space.
- For such space missions, much more powerful rockets are used. In general, there is a trade-off between the weight of the satellite that needs to be launched, and the distance it needs to be taken to. The same rocket can take smaller satellites much deeper into space compared to a heavier satellite.

What are the Launch vehicles used by ISRO?

Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV):

- The first rocket developed by ISRO was simply called SLV, or Satellite Launch Vehicle.
- It was followed by the Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle or ASLV.

Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV):

- SLV and ASLV both could carry small satellites, weighing up to 150 kg, to lower earth orbits.
- ASLV operated till the early 1990s before PSLV came on the scene.

Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV):

- PSLV's first launch was in 1994, and it has been ISRO's main rocket ever since. Today's PSLV, however, is vastly improved and several times more powerful than the ones used in the 1990s. It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages.
- PSLV is the most reliable rocket used by ISRO till date, with 52 of its 54 flights being successful. It successfully launched two spacecraft – Chandrayaan-1 in 2008 and Mars Orbiter Spacecraft in 2013 – that later traveled to Moon and Mars respectively. ISRO currently uses two launch vehicles – PSLV and GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle), but there are lots of different variants of these.

Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV):

- GSLV is a much more powerful rocket, meant to carry heavier satellites much deeper into space. Till date, GSLV rockets have carried out 18 missions, of which four ended in failure.
- It can take 10,000-kg satellites to lower earth orbits.
- The indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS), forms the third stage of GSLV Mk II.
- Mk-III versions have made ISRO entirely self-sufficient for launching its satellites. Before this, it used to depend on the European Ariane launch vehicle to take its heavier satellites into space.

Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV):

- SSLV is targeted at rising global demand for the launch of small and micro-satellites.
- SSLV is meant to offer cost-effective launch services for satellites up to 500 kg.
- It is supposed to carry an indigenous earth observation satellite EOS-03 into space.

Reusable Rockets/ Future Rockets:

- The future rockets are meant to be reusable. Only a small part of the rocket would be destroyed during the mission.
- The bulk of it would re-enter the earth's atmosphere and land very much like an airplane, and can be used in future missions.
- Reusable rockets would cut down on costs and energy, and also reduce space debris, which is becoming a serious problem because of the large number of launches.
- Fully-reusable rockets are still to be developed, but partially-reusable launch vehicles are already in use.
- ISRO has also developed a reusable rocket, called RLV-TD (Reusable Launch Vehicle Technology Demonstrator) which has had a successful test flight in 2016.

PRELIMS FACT

Army Tag for New Gecko

Recently, a team of herpetologists have recorded a new species of bent-toed gecko from a wooded part of the Umroi Military Station in Meghalaya. Its scientific name is *Cryptodactylus exercitus* and its English name is Indian Army's bent-toed gecko.

- Further, another new bent-toed gecko, the *Cryptodactylus siahaensis* named after Mizoram's Siaha district where it was found.
- A herpetologist is someone who specializes in the study of reptiles and amphibians.

What are Geckos?

- Geckos are reptiles and are found on all the continents except Antarctica.
- These colorful lizards have adapted to habitats from rainforests, to deserts, to cold mountain slopes.
- Over a long period of time, geckos have developed special physical features to help them survive and avoid predators.
- Gecko tails serve many purposes. They help balance their weight as they climb branches, they act as fuel tanks to store fat, and as camouflage to help them disappear into their environment. Geckos are also able to shed their tails if a predator grabs them.
- Most geckos are nocturnal, which means they are active at night, but day geckos are active during the day and nibble on insects, fruits, and flower nectar.
- Most geckos make noises such as chirping, barking, and clicking when they are defending their territory or attracting a mate.
- There are many species of geckos. Depending on the species, their endangered status can range from least concern to critically endangered.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. India's carefully calibrated policy towards Indo-pacific is centred on two pillars of strengthening engagement and stronger partnerships with likeminded countries. Elaborate. (250 words)

Introduction

Tide of international politics has shifted to Asia in general, and the Indo-Pacific in particular, with the economic rise of countries like India, China, Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia among others. The Indo-Pacific is a geopolitical construct which represents an integrated theatre that combines the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, and the land masses that surround them.

Body
About Indo- Pacific

- It has gained relevance in the recent times due reasons such as presence of important sea lines of communication, maritime security concerns, rise of Asian Economy and China's aggressive military and foreign policy.
- Several regional and extra regional countries like India, Japan, USA, Australia, France etc have released policies focused on the Indo-Pacific acknowledging the strategic shift towards the region and to strengthen relations and to expand cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries

India's calibrated policy towards Indo-Pacific

- **Peace and security in the Indian Ocean:** Nearly 50% of India's trade is centred in the Indo-Pacific Region and the Indian Ocean carries 90% of India's trade and its energy sources. India wants to assure freedom of navigation, secure choke points, resolve conflicts peacefully and address non-traditional security threats in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region):** A holistic policy that aims to pursue and promote India's geo-political, strategic and economic interests on the seas, particularly in the Indian Ocean.
- **Geo-political aspirations:** To expand its own presence in the region, especially in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia and maintain its role as a net security provider. It is also teaming up with like-minded nations to contain China's domination. QUAD was formed with USA, Japan, Australia to ensure that China's
- **Countering China:** Ensuring that China does not gain a significant strategic foothold in the region.
- **Enhancing Trade and Investment Cooperation:** by encouraging greater flow of goods, services, investment and technology between India and other countries in the region.
- **Promoting sustainable development:** In the coming times, climate change is set to adversely affect India. Thus, India favours sustainable development of the region through development of blue economy.

Steps taken by India towards Indo-Pacific

- **Strengthening and preserving traditional roles in IOR o Security Provider:** India has been the primary security provider for and strategic partner to most of its smaller neighbours like Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka.
- **First Responder:** India's navy is among the first to reach nations requiring humanitarian assistance or medical aid in times of crisis and disasters. E.g., Operation Vanilla at Madagascar.
- **Foreign Policy and Initiatives:** Establishment of Indo-Pacific Division in 2019, involving in regional groupings like BIMSTEC, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Mekong Ganga Cooperation and Forum for India-Pacific Islands cooperation for collaboration on multitude of subjects, and partnerships with countries through platforms like QUAD, ASEAN etc. Initiatives like Indo Pacific Oceans' Initiative, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (increase maritime cooperation), Asia Africa Growth Corridor (for development and cooperation projects; quality infrastructure and institutional capacity) were taken up.

Challenges India face in the region

- **Limited Naval Capacity and Lack of military bases:** With a meagre allocation of 15 percent of India's military budget.
- **Slow pace of developments:** g. since the release of the AAGC, there has been very little movement on this initiative. Challenges to trade due to tariff and non-tariff measures, poor infrastructure etc.

- **Balancing Continental and Maritime Strategies:** Overemphasizing the Indo-Pacific runs the risk of antagonizing China. While the US and Australia are physically distant from China; India has to secure its continental margins with China and suitably allocate resources for the same.
- **Barriers to fruitful partnerships in the region:** This includes lack of definitional consensus and differences in priorities with each nation having different political appetite and available resources for the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Way forward

- **Enhancing engagements with non-traditional players:** India should now look to other non-traditional players with great potential such as Micronesia to address shared interests in the region. E.g. Pacific island nations.
- **Strategic use of Island Territories:** India in collaboration with its Indo-Pacific partners, must utilize the potential of island territories to extend its reach etc.
- **Innovative mechanisms such as QUAD+:** g. Recent Quad Plus talks with South Korea, Vietnam and New Zealand, convened to address challenges brought about by the COVID-19 crisis in the Indo-Pacific region, are a step in the right direction

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. "Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar" is instituted by the Centre to recognise the work in the field of

- Border Security
- Cyber Security
- Disaster management**
- Specific act of bravery or special service by the citizens

Q2. The District Good Governance Index (DGGI) has been prepared by the

- NITI Aayog
- National Sample Survey Organization
- Central Statistics Office
- Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances**

Q3. Consider the following statements about Pangong Tso:

- It is very close to Shaksam Valley.
- It is formed from Tethys geosyncline.
- It is a salt water lake.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 3 only
- 2 and 3 only**
- 1, 2 and 3

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Global Tiger Forum (GTF):

- Global Tiger forum is an Inter-Governmental international body working exclusively for the conservation of Tigers.
- India is the only member country from Asia to join the initiative.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- 1 only**
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Jing kieng jri or living root bridges are predominantly found in

- Assam
- Nagaland
- Manipur
- Meghalaya**