

**INTRNATIONAL RELATION**

**India, France to set up Indo-Pacific Trilateral Framework**

- Recently, India and France agreed to expand cooperation in the Indo-Pacific body.

**More about the news**

- **Indo-Pacific trilateral framework:**
  - India and France recently agreed to set up an Indo-Pacific trilateral framework to roll out development projects.
    - India and France also decided to expand cooperation in the Indo-Pacific under separate trilaterals with Australia and the United Arab Emirates.
- **Overall Indo-Pacific cooperation:**
  - France and India share a comprehensive strategy for the Indo-Pacific that seeks to provide tangible solutions for maritime security, regional cooperation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity protection, and healthcare.
- **Ukraine war & food crisis:**
  - Both nations decided to expand strategic cooperation and vowed to work closely to deal with pressing global challenges such as the food crisis triggered by the Ukraine war.
  - France is determined to work with India addressing the "terrible consequences" of the war.
- **International platforms/groupings:**
  - **Significance of upcoming G20 summit:**
    - In dealing with the global food crisis, an initiative could be proposed at the upcoming G20 summit in Indonesia to ensure that the most vulnerable countries "don't remain too exposed to these food security issues.
    - France extended full support to India's upcoming G20 presidency
  - **India's permanent seat at UNSC:**
    - France committed to continue to push for a permanent seat for India at UNSC.
- **Other:**
  - **India - country of honour:**
    - India will be the first "country of honour" at the Sea Tech Week in Brest, France, a major international event bringing together blue economy stakeholders.
  - **UPI in France:**
    - both the ministers welcomed the launch of India's Unified Payment Interface (UPI) in France.

**India and France Relations**

- **Strategic partnership:**
  - In 1998, the two countries entered into Strategic Partnership which is emblematic of their convergence of views on a range of International issues apart from a close and growing bilateral relationship.
  - France has stood by India through thick and thin, beginning with 1998 when India conducted nuclear tests and the entire world was against us.
- **Support:**
  - France has continued to support India's claim for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council and the reforms of the United Nations.
  - France's support was vital in India's accession to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and Australia Group (AG).
  - France continues to support India's bid for accession to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
- **Indo-Pacific:**
  - France is a preferred partner in the Indo-Pacific and there is now a blueprint for cooperation in this field in the form of a Joint Strategic Vision for cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region concluded by both countries in 2018.
- **Economic Cooperation:**
  - Both India and France have important bilateral investments and trade and commercial cooperation, particularly in sectors involving IT corridors, smart-cities, railways, capital and trade exchanges, skill development etc.
- **Defence:**
  - Cooperation in defence is the cornerstone of the India France strategic partnership.
  - The two countries have a Ministerial level Defence dialogue, which has been held annually since 2018.
  - The three services also have regular defence exercises; viz.

- Exercise Shakti (Army; the last one took place in November 2019 in India),
- Exercise Varuna (Navy; is scheduled to be held in the gulf of Oman from 25 to 27 April 2021),
- Exercise Garuda (Air Force; July 2019 in France).
- **Purchase of Rafale aircraft:**
  - The Inter-governmental agreement for purchase of 36 Rafale fighter aircrafts (30 fighter aircrafts and 6 trainers) by India in flyaway condition was signed in New Delhi on 23 September 2016.
- **P-75 Scorpene Project:**
  - The contract for six Scorpene submarines from DCNS (Naval Group) was signed in October 2006.
- **Space:**
  - Space has always been central to the strategic partnership of our two countries.
  - India and France have a rich history of cooperation in the field of space for over 50 years with ISRO and the French Space Agency (CNES) carrying on various joint research programmes and launch of satellites.
- **Environment and Renewable Energy:**
  - France is a founding member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), announced by PM Modi in 2015 at UN Climate Change CoP21.
- **Cooperation in the fields of S&T and Education:**
  - In the field of S&T, the Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advance Research (CEFIPRA) based in New Delhi, established in 1987, plays a major role by identifying and funding joint proposals for research projects.
- **Counter-terrorism:**
  - India and France have consistently condemned terrorism and have resolved to work together for adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in the UN.
- **New areas of cooperation:**
  - India and France are increasingly engaged in new areas of cooperation like security in the Indian Ocean region, climate change including the International Solar Alliance, and sustainable growth and development among others.
- **Maritime Security:**
  - India and France already have a high level dialogue on maritime security, and this enables the two to raise strategic issues in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Blue economy:**
  - Both nations have inked a roadmap to enhance their bilateral exchanges on the blue economy and forge a common vision of ocean governance based on the rule of law and cooperate on sustainable and resilient coastal and waterways infrastructure.
- **Culture:**
  - Indian culture enjoys a wide following amongst the people of France.
  - The International Day of Yoga has been organised by the Embassy of India in Paris and other cities of France since 2016 and has received wide acclaim and press coverage.
- Year long celebrations have also been organised to commemorate 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, 550th Birth Anniversary of Shri Gurunanak Devji.

## SOCIAL ISSUES

### India Discrimination Report 2022: Oxfam India

- Recently, Oxfam India Report stated that discrimination in India causes 100 percent of employment inequality faced by women in rural areas in the labour market and 98 percent in urban areas.
  - Report's findings are based on Government's data on employment and labour from 2004-05 to 2019-20.

### Key Highlights

- **Declining Women Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):**
  - It is the proportion of the working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work.
  - For women in India, it declined from 42.7% in 2004-05 to 25.1% in 2021, showing withdrawal of women from the workforce despite rapid economic growth during the same period.

- **Male-Female Pay Gap:**
  - In 2019-20, 60% of all males aged 15 and above had regular salaried or self-employed jobs; the rate for females was 19%.
- **Discrimination in Labour:**
  - Female casual workers earn about Rs 3,000 less than their male counterparts.
- **Increased discrimination for SC/ST:**
  - Self-employed SC/STs earn Rs 5,000 less than non-SC/STs and discrimination accounts for 41% of this gap
- **Gender Discrimination in rural and urban areas:**
  - Gender discrimination in India is structural which results in great disparities between earnings of men and women under 'normal circumstances'.
  - This can be inferred from the data for 2004-05, 2018-19 and 2019- 20. The earning gaps are large, both in rural and urban areas for casual workers ranging between 50 percent and 70 percent.

#### **Reasons for Discrimination**

- Societal and Employers prejudices are responsible for women's lower wages.
- Poor access to the education system and work experience.
- A large segment of the well qualified women want to join the workforce because of household responsibilities or social status.
- A massive drop in casual employment for women in urban areas during the first quarter of the pandemic.

#### **Recommendations/ Way Ahead**

- Actively enforce legislation for the protection of the right to equal wages and work.
- Work to actively incentivise the participation of women in the workforce, including enhancements in pay, upskilling, job reservations, easy return-to-work options, particularly after maternity leave, and the option to work from home, wherever possible.
- Need to ensure a more equitable distribution of household work and childcare duties between women and men.
- Implementing "living wages" as opposed to minimum wages, particularly for all informal workers, and formalise contractual, temporary, and casual labour as much as possible.

### **PRELIMS**

#### **1. Qutb Shahi Tombs**

- The restored Qutb Shahi tombs complex in Hyderabad would be open to tourists and it will help make a strong case for Unesco World Heritage City.

#### **About Qutb Shahi Tombs**

- Built by the Qutub Shahis, these tombs are considered to be among the oldest historical monuments of Hyderabad.
- Located in the Ibrahim Bagh (garden precinct), close to the famous Golconda Fort. They are located one kilometer north of Golconda Fort's called Banjara Darwaza.
- They contain the tombs and mosques built by the various kings of the Qutub Shahi dynasty.

#### **2. Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)**

- The 26th Meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) was chaired by the Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister

#### **Major Outcomes**

- The Council, inter alia, deliberated on the Early Warning Indicators for the economy and our preparedness to deal with them,
- Improving the efficiency of the existing Financial/Credit Information Systems, issues of governance and management in Systemically Important Financial Institutions including Financial Market Infrastructures

#### **The Financial Stability and Development Council FSDC**

- It has been constituted vide GOI notification dated 30th December, 2010.
- It is chaired by the Union Finance Minister
- It has been set up by the government in consultation with financial market regulators, to strengthen and institutionalise the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, enhance inter-regulatory coordination and promote financial sector development.
- The FSDC Sub-committee has also been set up under the chairmanship of Governor, RBI.

- Functions :It monitors macro-prudential supervision of the economy, including functioning of large financial conglomerates, and addresses inter-regulatory coordination and financial sector development issues.
  - It also focuses on financial literacy and financial inclusion.

### **3. F16 Package to Pakistan**

- Recently, India conveyed its concern over the recent U.S. approval of a \$450-million sustenance package for Pakistan's F-16 fighter fleet.

#### **About the deal**

- Pakistan first received the F-16 aircraft package from the Ronald Reagan administration in the 1980s despite heavy objection from the Government of India which cautioned that the aircraft would be used against Indian targets.
  - Indian objection was based on the findings that Pakistan would arm the F-16s with nuclear weapons that it had procured in a clandestine manner.
- The supply of F-16 multi role aircraft continued throughout the post-9/11 era till the Biden administration and the latest package shows the consistent nature of partnership between US and Pakistan.
  - The US assistance will improve the precision-ability of the F-16 aircraft and allow Pakistan to access the latest air attack software from the United States.

### **4. GEF Small Grants Programme**

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in collaboration with UNDP is implementing the GEF Seventh Operational Phase of the Small Grants Programme in India (SGP-OP7).
  - The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) has been appointed the National Host Institution for executing this Project.

#### **About GEF Small Grants Programme**

- The Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme provides financial and technical support to projects that conserve and restore the environment while enhancing the lives of local communities.
- Launched in 1992, SGP works closely with and complements other GEF projects and programs, supporting 136 countries since its inception.
- Evaluations led by the Independent Evaluation Offices of the GEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have proven that civil society-led initiatives can generate environmental benefits, while supporting sustainable livelihoods, gender equality and civil society empowerment.
- The programme provides grants of up to \$50,000 directly to local communities including indigenous people, community-based organisations and other non-governmental groups for projects in Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management, International Waters and Chemicals.

## **ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. E-commerce is emerging as a key enabler and critical determinant of India's growth and economic development. Analyse the statement in light of India's e commerce policy (150)**

#### **Introduction**

- E-Commerce marketplaces are digital platforms, i.e. online platforms on which goods (physical or digital) or services are sold. An e-commerce marketplace is expected to provide all-round benefits in comparison to its physical counterpart, by an increase in access and economies of scale in operation.
- The global economy is swiftly moving towards digitization. Automation in the manufacturing sector, use of artificial intelligence, online retail, etc are few indicators of reduced human interference and increased technology adoption. India too is not left untouched by these developments. The E-commerce sector in India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors and is expected to grow from 38.5 billion in 2017 to \$200 billion by 2026 in India.
- ❖ **e-commerce provides the following benefits to its users and the economy overall:**
  - Domestic manufacturers/MSMEs/start-ups/sellers/retailers stand to benefit from the enhanced visibility provided by e-commerce platforms.
  - e-Commerce provides an opportunity to sellers or traders and consumers to communicate and connect beyond the limitations of geography and time, thus providing avenues for exports.
  - Consumers have benefitted from increased competition in the market by way of getting access to a greater variety of products at competitive prices.



