

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES & INTERVENTION**

❖ **What India needs to do to plug its defence gap**

❖ **Context:** DefExpo 2022 held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat in October drew attention to a major policy initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi — the need for India to acquire the appropriate degree of “aatmanirbharata” (self-reliance) in the defence sector and the arduous path ahead. This objective is unexceptionable and the Modi government is to be commended for keeping this critical issue on the national radar.

- Even as India aspires to become a \$5-trillion economy, it is evident that it faces many national security inadequacies. The high dependency index on foreign suppliers (traditionally the former USSR now Russia) for major military inventory items is stark. This dependency induces a macro national vulnerability and dilutes India’s quest for meaningful and credible strategic autonomy. Furthermore, the current gaps in combat capacity expose the chinks in the Indian ability to safeguard core national security interests. The Galwan setback apropos China is illustrative.
- DefExpo had an India focus — only domestic entities were allowed to participate. PM Modi asserted there that Make in India is becoming a success story in the defence sector and added: “Our defence exports have grown eight times in the last five years. We are exporting defence materials and equipment to more than 75 countries of the world”.
- In 2021-22, defence exports from India reached \$1.59 billion (about Rs 13,000 crore). The government has now set a target of \$5 billion (Rs 40,000 crore).” his is an ambitious target and will demand mission-mode resolve to be realised.
- Unexpected exigencies such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine and other factors including the Covid that disrupted the global economy and related supply chains, further exacerbated by a weakening rupee add to the challenges faced by the Indian defence manufacturing ecosystem. The management of this extended turbulence across different axes will be the biggest challenge for governance. Cumulatively, these multi-layered challenges and the opportunities embedded in moving towards “aatmanirbharata” ought to provide the framework for an informed and objective debate about the way ahead though this kind of discourse has remained elusive.
- A quick recap of the more recent defence-related events includes, inter alia, the commissioning of the indigenously-designed and built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant; the firing of an SLBM (submarine-launched ballistic missile) from the INS Arihant; the radical decision to award the manufacture of a military transport aircraft (C 295) to a major private sector entity; the induction of the made in India Prachand LCH (light combat helicopter); and the conclusion of a deal with Russia to manufacture a Kalashnikov-type light weapon/small arms in India. These achievements have been applauded as the success of the indigenous effort.
- However, an objective review of the “made in India” initiatives is revealing. Regrettably, India does not yet have the domestic competence to fully design and manufacture any significant combat weapon/platform and is dependent on the foreign supplier for the critical components that lie at the core of the combat index of the equipment in question. Thus, while it is commendable that India is now going to manufacture the C295 transport aircraft in a collaboration with Airbus, France, the reality is that the engine, avionics, landing gear, etc, will come from abroad and the integration will be done by the Indian entity. This is true for almost every major platform in the three services. While there are some promising green shoots — for instance, the 155-mm artillery guns being designed and manufactured in the country — meaningful indigenisation and credible “aatmanirbharta” calls for sustained funding support, fortitude and an ecosystem that will nurture this effort.
- At the heart of this challenge is the grim reality that historically, India has not invested enough in the national research and development (R&D) effort. As per data collated by the World Bank, India has been able to allocate only 0.66 per cent of GDP (2018) towards R&D, while the world average is 2.63 per cent. The comparable individual R&D allocation (per cent of GDP) for some other nations is as follows: Israel 5.44; USA 3.45; Japan 3.26; Germany 3.14; China 2.4; and Turkey 1.09.
- While the Modi government has identified national security as a major priority, the emphasis has been on earnest nationalist flourish, often with an eye on the voter. Composite combat and manufacturing capabilities have not been reviewed and honed appropriately. Thus, while India now claims that it will soon become a major arms exporter, the composition of such inventory leans towards the “soft” category (clothing, helmets, surveillance equipment) and yes, the Brahmos missile.
- While there is an aspiration to add helicopters to this list — the ALH and the LCH — the reality check is that the engines for both these platforms are imported. Providing a sustained fillip to the national R&D effort across the board (state, corporate and academia) remains critical if India is to emerge as a credible

military power and one would identify this as a high-priority issue for the national security apex — the CCS (cabinet committee on security).

- India missed the industrial design and manufacturing bus, a national competence demonstrated by nations like South Korea and China, over the last five decades. Technological advances have made the design and manufacture of the semiconductor chip the new currency of national prosperity and military power. The US and China are now locked in intense competition in this domain and India is yet to acquire a profile that would be deemed relevant.
- Paradoxically, Indian brain power is very visible in the global semiconductor/chip fabrication effort but more at the lower end of the food chain, often as employees of the global venture capitalists. Progressively changing this techno-strategic landscape in India's favour should be accorded the highest priority in the national policy debate.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

❖ **Context:** Mumbai is currently witnessing an outbreak of measles.

❖ **What is measles?**

- Measles or as it is called 'khasra', is a highly contagious viral disease which affects mostly children.
- It is one of the leading causes of death and disability among young children.
- There is no specific treatment for measles but there is a vaccine to stay protected from the disease, which is both safe as well as cost effective.
- Measles spreads by:
  - ✓ coughing and sneezing,
  - ✓ close personal contact or
  - ✓ direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions.

- Death due to measles are caused by the complications associated with the disease

like blindness, encephalitis, severe diarrhoea and pneumonia.

- The condition of an infected child turns severe in cases of poor nourishment, Vitamin A deficiency and if the child is immunocompromised.

❖ **How important is it to take measles vaccines?**

- The WHO recommends immunization for all children with two doses of measles vaccine, either alone, or in a measles-rubella (MR) or measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) combination.

- As per the guidance of National Health Mission, in India, measles vaccination is given under the Universal Immunisation Programme at 9-12 months of age and the second dose at 16-24 months of age.

❖ **About Universal Immunisation Programme:**

- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare provides several vaccines to infants, children and pregnant women through the Universal Immunisation Programme.
  - ✓ Immunization is the process whereby a person is made immune or resistant to an infectious disease, typically by the administration of a vaccine.
  - ✓ Vaccines are substances that stimulate the body's own immune system to protect the person against subsequent infection or disease.

❖ **Vaccines provided under UIP:**

• **BCG**

- ✓ BCG stands for Bacillus Calmette-Guerin vaccine.
- ✓ It is given to infants to protect them from tubercular meningitis and disseminated TB.

• **OPV**

- ✓ OPV stands for Oral Polio Vaccine.
- ✓ It protects children from poliomyelitis.

• **Hepatitis B vaccine**

- ✓ Hepatitis B vaccine protects from Hepatitis B virus infection.

• **Pentavalent Vaccine**

### Measles

A preventable highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus

#### Infection

Airborne virus spreads through coughing and sneezing

The virus remains active and contagious in the air or on infected surfaces for up to 2 hours

#### Complications

- Include:
- Blindness
  - Encephalitis
  - Diarrhoea
  - Pneumonia
- Severe risk to pregnant women, including possible miscarriage

Sources : CDC/WHO/History of vaccines.com

#### Symptoms

Start with a fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes, and sore throat  
Followed by a rash that spreads all over the body

**Deaths**  
Caused by complications associated with the disease

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- ✓ Pentavalent Vaccine is a combined vaccine to protect children from five diseases Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Haemophilis influenza type b infection and Hepatitis B.
- ✓ When to give - Three doses are given at 6, 10 and 14 weeks of age (can be given till one year of age).
- ✓ Route and site-Pentavalent vaccine is given intramuscularly on anterolateral side of mid thigh
- **Rotavirus Vaccine**
  - ✓ RVV stands for Rotavirus vaccine.
  - ✓ It gives protection to infants and children against rotavirus diarrhoea.
- **PCV**
  - ✓ PCV stands for Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine.
  - ✓ It protects infants and young children against disease caused by the bacterium Streptococcus pneumoniae.
- **fIPV**
  - ✓ fIPV stands for Fractional Inactivated Poliomyelitis Vaccine.
  - ✓ It is used to boost the protection against poliomyelitis.
- **Measles/ MR vaccine**
  - ✓ Measles vaccine is used to protect children from measles.
  - ✓ In few states Measles and Rubella a combined vaccine is given to protect from Measles and Rubella infection.
- **JE vaccine**
  - ✓ JE stands for Japanese encephalitis vaccine.
  - ✓ It gives protection against Japanese Encephalitis disease.
- **DPT booster**
  - ✓ DPT is a combined vaccine; it protects children from Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis.
- **Tetanus and adult diphtheria (Td) vaccine:**
  - ✓ TT vaccine has been replaced with Td vaccine in UIP to limit the waning immunity against diphtheria in older age groups and is administered to adolescents at 10 and 16 years of age and to pregnant women.

### PRELIMS

#### 1. **President Droupadi Murmu launches e-KUMBH portal in Bhubaneswar**

❖ **Context:** President Droupadi Murmu on Friday, November 11, 2022 launched e-KUMBH (Knowledge Unleashed in Multiple Bharatiya Languages) portal in which engineering courses and books would be available in 12 scheduled Indian languages.

- Ms. Murmu also released engineering books of All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in Odia language and glossary of 50,000 technical terms in Odia language developed by Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT)
- "These are commendable steps in the direction of making education accessible to all. It has been observed that many students face difficulty in understanding technical education in English. That is why under the National Education Policy-2020, the government has taken steps to provide technical education in the regional languages," said the President.
- Ms. Murmu asserted that there is no doubt that mother tongue helps intellectual development in students and learning in mother tongue would develop creative thinking and analytical skills among students providing equal opportunities to urban and rural students.
- Stating that technical education in regional languages used to face hurdles due to non-availability of textbooks in vernacular languages, she appreciated AICTE for its efforts in removing this hurdle.
- "We must ensure that each and every child in our country has access to education at every level. We have to do our best to make the education available to all without any discrimination. Language should be an enabling factor not a hindrance for educating the students. The introduction of learning in regional and local languages would go a long way towards building a well-educated, aware and vibrant society," said Ms. Murmu in her address.
- Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan informed that AICTE had completed translation of engineering courses available only in English in 12 scheduled Indian languages. Engineering books have been translated in Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Kannada, Punjabi, Odia and Assamese while book translation in Urdu and Malayalam languages is underway.
- "Many argue that without English the technical education is meaningless. World's leading economic powerhouses such as China, German and Japan do not depend on English. Their text books are in their own language which is easier to comprehend," said Mr. Pradhan.

- “When sculptor had built Konark, Lingaraj and Jagannath Temple, there was no IIT or NIT or architectural institute where they had received English education. To strengthen art and culture, importance of native language is well acknowledged,” he emphasized.
  - Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, “In technical education, introduction of Odia language as a medium of instruction has to be complemented with the availability of books and other study materials. I am happy to know that AICTE has made the Odia translated version of the original books available for first year studies of both B. Tech and Diploma in engineering courses.”
- 2. Eat Right Station Certification**
- ❖ **Context:** Indian Railways’ Bhopal Railway Station has been awarded a 4- star 'Eat Right Station' certification for providing high-quality, Nutritious food to passengers.
  - ❖ About Eat Right Station certification:
    - This certification is granted by Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) to railway stations adhering to standard food storage and hygiene practices.
      - ✓ FSSAI is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
    - The 'Eat Right Station' certification is awarded by FSSAI to railway stations that set benchmarks in providing safe and wholesome food to passengers.
    - The certification is part of the 'Eat Right India' movement- a large-scale effort by FSSAI to transform the country's food system to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all Indians.
    - The stations are awarded a certificate upon a conclusion of an FSSAI-empowered third-party audit agency with ratings from 1 to 5.
    - The other railway stations with this certification include:
      - ✓ Anand Vihar Terminal Railway Station (Delhi),
      - ✓ Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (Mumbai),
      - ✓ Mumbai Central Railway Station (Mumbai),
      - ✓ Vadodara Railway Station,
      - ✓ Chandigarh Railway Station.
  - ❖ **About Eat Right Movement:**
    - It is an initiative of FSSAI to transform the country's food system in order to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all Indians.
    - Eat Right Movement is aligned to the National Health Policy 2017 with its focus on preventive and promotive healthcare.
    - This movement adopts a judicious mix of regulatory, capacity building, collaborative, and empowerment approaches to ensure food safety.
- 3. Himalayan Grey Langoor**
- The Himalayan Gray Langur or the Chamba Sacred Langur (*Semnopithecus ajax*) is a colobine, meaning leaf-eating monkey.
  - It is considered an endangered species globally.
  - The Himalayan Gray Langur was once considered a sub-species of the *Semnopithecus entellus*, commonly known as the Bengal Sacred Langur or Hanuman Langur, but it was separated as a species in 2005.
  - In India, most langurs comes under the genus *Semnopithecus*.
  - Prior to 2001, *Semnopithecus entellus* (Hanuman Langur) was considered only one species, with several subspecies.
  - It was in 2001 that these subspecies were recommended as separate species under the genus *Semnopithecus*.
  - Accordingly, seven different species have been recognised which include *Semnopithecus ajax*.
  - In the Indian Subcontinent, their distribution is reported from Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and from Pakistan and Nepal.
  - *S ajax* is an endangered species according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List but after reassessment in 2004, it was re-designated as 'Critically Endangered'.
  - It is considered endangered due to its restricted range habitat.

### ANSWER WRITING

**Q. Assess the performance of various initiatives taken by the government to reform direct and indirect taxation systems in India. Also enumerate the issues still plaguing the taxation system in India.**

**Answer:** Over the last few years, the Central and various State Governments have undertaken various policy reforms towards great predictability, fairness and automation. This has led to India's meteoric rise in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking in 2020 as India jumped 79 positions from 142<sup>nd</sup> (2014) to 63<sup>rd</sup> (2019).

**Reforms & their Impact:**

- **Indirect Tax:**
- **GST:** GST is a destination based indirect tax levied on the sale of goods & services launched in India on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 as a comprehensive indirect tax for the entire country.
- **Achievements:**
  - Reduced compliance cost due to unification (harmonization) of indirect taxes.
  - Removal of cascading effects of taxes and check over tax-evasion through robust IT-based monitoring.
  - Improved revenue collection. For example, in 2017 September, GST collection was 92,150 crore rupees whereas in 2022 September, GST collection was 1,47,686 crore rupees.
- **Challenges:** 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission has highlighted following concerns about GST:
  - Shortfall in GST collections vis-à-vis advance estimates.
  - Multiplicity of tax slabs & higher tax rates.
  - Issues of GST compensation to states eroding fiscal federalism.
- **Other initiatives:**
  - **Reduction in Customs Duties:** In 1990, the custom duty on non-agricultural products was around 128%. Currently, the average custom duties are 11-12%.
  - **ATITHI Mobile App:** For international travelers to file the customs details.
- **Direct Tax:**
  - **Faceless Tax Assessment Scheme:** The scheme was launched in 2020 with the objective of promoting an efficient and effective tax administration, minimizing physical interface & increasing accountability.
    - ✓ **Achievements:**
      - Reduction in tax terrorism as was prevalent during Inspector-Licensing Raj period.
      - This scheme removes the individual biases and the scope of subjective judgment.
    - ✓ **Challenges:**
      - There are long-standing and recurring technical glitches, issues related to the e-portal server, difficulty in uploading data, and many others.
      - Another issue is the lack of time afforded to the taxpayer to respond to notices during assessments.
  - **Vivad se Vishwas Scheme:** This scheme was enacted with the goal to reduce pending income tax litigation, generating timely revenue for the government and benefiting.
    - ✓ **Achievements:**
      - Reduction in Pendency of Cases: 1,32,353 cases were settled till August 2021.
      - Tax Amount: Government received Rs 53,684 crore as payments against disputed tax till August 2021.
    - ✓ **Challenges:**
      - Both honest and dishonest tax payers are treated equally. Even dishonest tax payer can now settle without paying interest/penalty.
- **Other Initiatives:**
  - Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) has also been reduced from 18.5% to 15%.
  - The Finance Act, 2020 removed the Dividend Distribution Tax(DDT).
- **Following are the issues plaguing taxation system in India:**
  - **Parallel Economy:** White paper issued by the Indian government on black money in 2012 tells that a parallel economy **exists** with the same amount of Indian GDP.
  - **Tax to GDP Ratio:** The year 2021-22 marked the highest tax-GDP ratio of 11.7%. This figure is quite low as compared to other emerging economies like Brazil (31.6% as of 2020).
  - **Agricultural Income Tax:** Despite agriculture being the foremost sector of the Indian economy, practically, there is no tax on agricultural income.
  - **Regressive Nature of Indirect taxes:** The regressive nature of a consumption tax is exacerbated by the current GST system, where biscuits are taxed at 18% but gold is taxed at only 3%.
  - **Tax Avoidance:** According to the December 2017 report of the income-tax department, only 1.6% of Indians pay income tax.

Earlier tax reforms suffered from increased red-tapism and other bureaucratic hurdles that resulted in the development of a complex tax system. The last few years, however, have witnessed the central and a host of state governments push for various initiatives, policy reforms and automation which have made the taxation system simple & easy to approach.

#### MCQs

1. With reference to India's Aircraft Carriers, Consider the following statements
  1. INS Vikrant is the only Indigenous Aircraft Carrier built by Cochin Shipyard Ltd.
  2. Presently, the Indian Navy operates a single aircraft carrier, INS Vishal, bought from Russia.
 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
2. With reference to Light Combat Helicopter (LCH), Prachand, consider the following statements;  
1. Chetak and Cheetah are indigenous light combat attack helicopters.  
2. The LCH is the only attack helicopter in the world which can land and take off at an altitude of 5,000 meters.  
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
3. Which of the following goods are included to estimate food inflation in India?  
1. Wheat                      2. Paddy                      3. Tobacco                      4. Sugar  
Select the correct answer using the code given below:  
a) 1, 2 and 3                      b) 2, 3 and 4                      c) 1, 3 and 4                      d) 1, 2 and 4
4. Consider the following statements:  
1. The IUCN status of Himalayan Grey Langur is Critically Endangered.  
2. They inhabit areas between 2,200-4,000 metres above mean sea level in the subtropical, tropical moist temperate, alpine, coniferous and broadleaved forests and scrublands.  
3. It is endemic to the Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal regions of western Himalayas, where the ecosystem is vulnerable and susceptible to the impact of anthropogenic pressures.  
4. It is also reported from Pakistan and Nepal.  
Select the correct answer using the code given below:  
a) 1, 2 and 3                      b) 2, 3 and 4                      c) 1, 3 and 4                      d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
5. Consider the following statements:  
1. DefExpo is a flagship biennial event of the Ministry of Defence, showcasing the land, naval, air as well as homeland security systems.  
2. The 12th Edition of DefExpo 2022 is being held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat with the Theme: Path to Pride.  
Select the correct answer using the code given below:  
a) 1 only                      b) 2 only                      c) Both 1 and 2                      d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following statements, with reference to Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC)  
1. MAC initiative is led by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which also includes India.  
2. It was launched at the 27th Session of Conference of Parties COP-26 at Glasgow  
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
7. Consider the following statements regarding East Asia Summit (EAS).  
1. It is a forum for strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues.  
2. EAS is an initiative of ASEAN.  
3. India has been participating in the EAS since its very inception.  
Which of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) 1 and 2 only                      b) 1 and 3 only                      c) 2 and 3 only                      d) 1, 2 and 3
8. Which of the following statements regarding 'Green Climate Fund' is/are correct?  
1. It is intended to assist the developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.  
2. It is founded under the aegis of UNEP, OECS, Asian Development Bank and World Bank.  
Select the correct answer using the code given below.  
a) 1 only                      b) 2 only                      c) Both 1 & 2                      d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. Consider the following statements regarding UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).  
1. The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system.  
2. The Council is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN Security Council.  
3. The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 2006.  
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
a) 1 only                      b) 1 and 3 only                      c) 3 only                      d) 1, 2 and 3
10. Consider the following statements  
1. Eat Right Station certification is granted by Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) to railway stations adhering to standard food storage and hygiene practices.  
2. Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) is comes under Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD).  
Which of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) 1 only                      b) 2 only                      c) Both 1 and 2                      d) Neither 1 nor 2