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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## THE HINDU

### GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

#### 1. The EU's role in the Indo-Pacific

Speedy development of the Quad comprising Australia, Japan, India and the U.S.; the emergence of AUKUS comprising Australia, the U.K. and the U.S.; and other alignments raise the question: where does Europe stand in relation to this churning?

#### Significance of EU's Indo-Pacific strategy

- Europe's Asia connect is old, strong and multi-layered.
- Since 2018, countries such as France, the Netherlands, Germany and the U.K. announced their specific policies towards the Indo-Pacific.
- The announcement by the Council of the European Union of its initial policy conclusions in April, followed by the unveiling of the **EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific** on September 16, are notable.
- **Focus on security and development:** The policy document also says cooperation will be strengthened in sustainable and inclusive prosperity, **green transition, ocean governance, digital governance and partnerships, connectivity, security and defence, and human security.**

#### Way forward for EU

- **Support France:** The EU's **security and defence capabilities** are quite limited, as compared to the U.S. and China.
- To obviate an imbalance in favour of economic links, EU will need to give adequate space and **support to France which has sizeable assets and linkages with the Indo-Pacific.**
- **Coordination with UK:** EU also must forge **strategic coordination with the U.K.** as the latter prepares to expand its role in Asia as part of its 'Global Britain' strategy.
- **Leverage economic power:** As a **major economic power**, the EU has an excellent chance of success in its **trade negotiations** with Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand; economic partnership agreement with the East African Community; and in forging **fisheries agreements and green alliances.**
- To achieve all this and more, EU must increase its readiness to **share its financial resources and new technologies** with partners.
- **Internally coordinated approach:** Many states view China as a great economic opportunity, but others are acutely conscious of the full **contours of the China challenge.**

- Russia next door is the more traditional threat. It is increasingly on China's side.
- Hence, the EU should find it easy to **cooperate with the Quad**.
- AUKUS, endeavours by a part of the western alliance to bolster naval and technological facilities to deal with China should be welcome.

### Way forward for India

- India's pivotal position in the region necessitates a **closer India-EU partnership**.
- Early conclusion of an ambitious and **comprehensive trade agreement and a standalone investment protection** agreement will be major steps.
- Cooperation in **Industry 4.0 technologies** is desirable.
- Consolidating and **upgrading defence ties** with France, Germany and the U.K. should also remain a significant priority.

### Conclusion

The EU can create a vantage position for itself in the Indo-Pacific by being more candid with itself, more assertive with China, and more cooperative with India.

## 2. Assessing the digital gap and learning losses

A recent survey released seeks to analyze the COVID-impact on digital connectivity in the context of healthcare, education, and work.

### About the Survey

- LIRNEasia, an Asia Pacific think tank focussed on digital policy, tied up with the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER).
- They took part in a global study funded by the Canada's International Development Centre to assess the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 .
- They sought to analyse access to services, with a focus on digital technologies in healthcare, education and work.

### Highlights of the Survey:

#### [A] Internet Access and Use

##### (1) Internet users

- The survey found that **47% of the population are Internet users**, a significant jump from the 19% who were identified as Internet users in late 2017.
- At least **5 crores** have already become **new Internet users in 2021**.

## (2) Gender and internet

- Men still use the Internet more than women.
- There is a 37% gender gap among users, although this is half of the 57% gap present four years ago.

## (3) Rural-urban Gap

- The rural-urban gap has **dropped from 48% in 2017 to just 20%** now as more rural residents come online.

## (4) Education

- Among those with college education, **89% are Internet users**, compared to 60% of those who completed secondary school.
- Only 23% of those who dropped out of school after Class 8, and 9% of those without any education, are able to use the Internet.

## Major inferences drawn

- Among non-users, **lack of awareness** is still the biggest hurdle.
- The percentage of non-users who said they do not know what the Internet is dropped from 82% to 49% over the last four years.
- Increasingly, **lack of access to devices and lack of skills** are the reason why people do not go online.

## Loopholes in Remote Education

- **80% of school-age children** in the country had **no access to remote education** at all during the 18 months of lockdown.
- This happened even though **64% of households actually had Internet**
- Situation was worse for those **homes without Internet connections**, where only **8% of children** received any sort of remote education.

## [B] Internet connectivity

- Apart from not having any devices, **poor 3G/4G signal** and **high data cost** were listed as the biggest hurdles.

- Even among the 20% who received education, only half had access to live online classes which required a **good Internet connection and exclusive use of a device**.
- Most depended on **recorded lessons and WhatsApp messages** which could be sent to a parent's phone and downloaded at leisure.
- Others were able to have **more direct contact with teachers** via phone calls or physical visits.

### **Worst consequences: Dropouts**

- Nationwide, **38% of households** said at least **one child had dropped out** of school completely due to COVID-19.
- The situation was significantly worse among those from lower socio-economic classes, or where the head of the household had lower education levels.

### **[C] Internet access and healthcare**

- About 15% required healthcare access for non-COVID related purposes during the most severe national and State lockdown.
- Of the 14% who required ongoing treatment for chronic conditions, over a third missed at least one appointment due to the lockdown.
- Telemedicine and online doctor consultations surged during these times, but only 38% said they were able to access such services.
- With regard to COVID-19, about 40% of respondents depended on television channels for advice as their most trusted source.

## **3. Crisis at the Belarus-Poland Border**

Thousands of migrants have flocked to Belarus' border with Poland, hoping to get to Western Europe.

### **Background of the crisis**

- Belarus was rocked by months of massive protests following the August 2020 election that gave authoritarian President Lukashenko a sixth term in office.
- The opposition and the West rejected the result.
- Belarusian authorities responded to the demonstrations with a fierce crackdown that saw more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police.

- The European Union and the US reacted by imposing sanctions on Lukashenko's government.

### **Immediate trigger**

- The restrictions were toughened after an incident when a passenger jet flying from Greece to Lithuania was diverted by Belarus to Minsk, where authorities arrested a dissident journalist.
- The EU called it air piracy and barred Belarusian carriers from its skies.
- It cut imports of the country's top commodities, including petroleum products and potash, an ingredient in fertilizer.

### **Infused by migration**

- The EU sanctions deprived Lukashenko government of funds needed to contain flows of migrants.
- Planes carrying migrants from Iraq, Syria and other countries began arriving in Belarus, and they soon headed for the borders with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

### **Rising tensions**

- Belarus is estimated to host between 5,000 and 20,000 migrants from the Middle East and Africa.
- Many have run out of money and grown increasingly desperate as the winter approaches.
- Belarusian residents are uneasy about their presence, raising pressure on the authorities to act.

### **Reservations by EU**

- The EU accused Lukashenko of using the migrants as pawns in a "hybrid attack" against the 27-nation bloc in retaliation for the sanctions.
- Lukashenko denies the flow of migrants and said the EU is violating migrants' rights by denying them safe passage.

### **What has been the response by EU countries?**

- Lithuania introduced a state of emergency to deal with small groups of migrants and strengthen its border with Belarus.
- It set up tent camps to accommodate the growing number of migrants.
- Polish authorities prevented hundreds of attempts by migrants to cross reporting many deaths.

- The EU has made a strong show of solidarity with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

### What is Russia's role?

- Belarus has received strong support from its main ally, Russia, which has helped rise Lukashenko's government with loans and political support.
- Russia considers the migrant flows resulting from the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Western-backed Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa.
- It challenged the EU to offer financial assistance to Belarus to deal with the influx.
- At the same time, the Kremlin angrily rejected Poland's claim that Russia bears responsibility for the crisis.

### 4. Iran invites UN nuclear body chief to Tehran for talks

Iran has invited the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for talks after the UN official expressed concern over a lack of contact with Iranian authorities.

### What is IAEA?

- The IAEA is an international organization that seeks to promote the **peaceful use of nuclear energy** and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- As the preeminent nuclear watchdog under the UN, the IAEA is entrusted with the task of upholding the principles of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1970**.
- It was established as an **autonomous organization** on July 29, 1957, at the height of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.
- Though established independently of the UN through its own international treaty, the agency reports to both the UN General Assembly and the UNSC.

### IAEA Missions

The IAEA is generally described as having three main missions:



- **Peaceful uses:** Promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by its member states,
- **Safeguards:** Implementing safeguards to verify that nuclear energy is not used for military purposes, and
- **Nuclear safety:** Promoting high standards for nuclear safety

### What are its safeguards?

- Safeguards are activities by which the IAEA can verify that a State is living up to its international commitments **not to use nuclear programs for nuclear weapons purposes.**
- Safeguards are based on assessments of the correctness and completeness of a **State's declared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities.**
- **Verification measures** include on-site inspections, visits, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Basically, two sets of measures are carried out in accordance with the type of safeguards agreements in force with a State.

1. Verifying state reports of declared nuclear material and activities.
2. Verifying the non-diversion of declared nuclear material and providing assurances as to the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in a State.

### 5. Reopening of the Kartarpur Corridor Project

The government is considering reopening the Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara corridor to Pakistan this week for Gurpurab or Prakash Parv.

#### Kartarpur Corridor

- The Kartarpur corridor connects the Darbar Sahib Gurdwara in Narowal district of Pakistan with the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Gurdaspur district in India's Punjab province.
- The name Kartarpur means "Place of God".
- The first guru of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, founded Kartarpur in 1504 AD on the right bank of the Ravi River.

#### Inception of the project

- The Kartarpur Corridor was first proposed in early 1999 by then PMs Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif as part of the Delhi-Lahore Bus diplomacy.



- The project is now compared to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, as it could help in easing tensions between the two countries.

### **Conditions for the pilgrimage (from Indian side)**

- Only Indians resident or overseas citizens can travel by corridor, Pakistanis cannot.
- Children or aged persons of all ages can register to apply.
- After 15 days of travel by corridor another registration can be done for second visit.
- Registration can only be done online at a mentioned website of Indian Government

### **About Guru Nanak**

- Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539) also referred to as Baba Nanak was the founder of Sikhism and is the first of the ten Sikh Gurus.
- He advocated the 'Nirguna' form of Bhakti. He rejected sacrifices, ritual baths, image worship, austerities and the scriptures of both Hindus and Muslims.
- He appointed one of his disciples, Angad, to succeed him as the preceptor (guru), and this practice was followed for nearly 200 years.
- The fifth preceptor, Guru Arjan, compiled his hymns along with those of his four successors and also other religious poets, like Baba Farid, Ravidas, and Kabir, in the Adi Granth Sahib.

### **6. Iran invites the UN nuclear body chief to Tehran for talks:**

Iran has invited the head of the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** for talks after the UN official expressed concern over a lack of contact with Iranian authorities.

- Previously, the IAEA complained that it had been denied "indispensable" access to a centrifuge component manufacturing workshop where it needed to service equipment.

### **Need for these measures:**

Iran has produced more than 120 kilograms (265 pounds) of 20% enriched uranium, far more than what **the U.N. nuclear watchdog** had reported.

### **The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA:**

The 2015 deal promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for limits on its nuclear program, and is meant to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb.

- **The U.S. unilaterally pulled out of the deal in 2018** under then-President Donald Trump, but Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia have tried to preserve the accord.
- Under the deal with world powers, the other signatories were to provide Iran with 20% enriched uranium needed for its research reactor.
- Under the terms of the nuclear deal, Iran was prohibited from enriching uranium above 3.67% with the exception of its research reactor activities.

### **About IAEA:**

- Set up as **the world's "Atoms for Peace"** organization in 1957 within the United Nations family.
- Reports to both **the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.**
- **Headquarters** in Vienna, Austria.

### **Functions:**

- Works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- Seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

### **Programs:**

1. Program of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT).
2. Human Health Program.
3. Water Availability Enhancement Project.
4. International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles, 2000.

## GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

### 7. Green Bonds:

Corporate **green-bond** issuance has reached new highs as U.S. companies including chip maker Micron Technology Inc., retailer Walmart Inc. and data-center company Equinix Inc. add the bonds as part of larger traditional bond offerings.

#### Need for:

- The increasing issuance of green bonds, which finance environmentally friendly projects, comes as companies face pressure from investors, regulators and employees to show the steps they are taking to improve the environment. One way they do that is by issuing debt tied to sustainability targets.

#### What Is a Green Bond?

A green bond is a **type of fixed-income instrument** that is specifically earmarked to raise money for climate and environmental projects.

These bonds are **typically asset-linked and backed by the issuing entity's balance sheet**, so they usually carry the same credit rating as their issuers' other debt obligations.

- Green bonds may come with tax incentives to enhance their attractiveness to investors.
- The **World Bank is a major issuer of green bonds**. It has issued 164 such bonds since 2008, worth a combined \$14.4 billion. In 2020, the total issuance of green bonds was worth almost \$270 billion, according to the **Climate Bond Initiative**.

#### How Does a Green Bond Work?

Green bonds work **just like any other corporate or government bond**.

- Borrowers issue these securities in order to secure financing for projects that will have a **positive environmental impact**, such as ecosystem restoration or reducing pollution.
- Investors who purchase these bonds can expect to make as the bond matures.
- In addition, **there are often tax benefits** for investing in green bonds.

### Green Bonds Vs Blue Bonds:

**Blue bonds** are sustainability bonds to finance projects that **protect the ocean and related ecosystems**.

- This can include projects to support sustainable fisheries, protection of coral reefs and other fragile ecosystems, or reducing pollution and acidification.
- **All blue bonds are green bonds, but not all green bonds are blue bonds.**

### Green Bonds Vs Climate Bonds:

“**Green bonds**” and “**climate bonds**” are sometimes used interchangeably, but some authorities use the latter term specifically for **projects focusing on reducing carbon emissions** or alleviating the effects of climate change.

## 8. Urban factors, the actual cause of pollution

**Context** In recent affidavits filed by the Centre and the Delhi Government to the Supreme Court, it has been highlighted that farm fires/stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh contributed to only 10% of the pollution.

### Key takeaways

- **Urban factors as major cause:** Urban factors such as construction activities, industry, vehicular exhaust and road dust were actually the major causes of pollution in Delhi and not farmers’ stubble burning.
- In the previous hearing, the court had questioned the narrow focus of the Centre and the Delhi Government on farmers.
- **Firm commitment needed:** The SC, while insisting that stubble burning was not the major cause, urged the Centre, Delhi and the States towards a firm commitment to act against pollution.

- **Too few mechanised road sweepers:** SC was shocked to realise that Delhi had only 69 mechanised road sweepers to cover all the streets of the Capital.
- **Urgent meeting:** The court directed the Centre to call an urgent meeting in 24 hours with Punjab, Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to craft urgent and effective anti-pollution measures and their implementation.
- The court also asked the Centre, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to introduce work from home for now.

## 9. Glasgow Climate Pact: Achievements & Disappointments

The Glasgow Climate Pact was adopted on 13th Nov 2021 and, as was to be expected, it is a mixed bag of modest achievements and disappointed expectations.

### Modest Achievements

- **Tacit consensus on 1.5o target:** The notional target of limiting the global temperature rise to 2 degrees celcius above pre-industrial levels (Paris Agreement) remains but the international discourse is now firmly anchored in the more ambitious target of limiting the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees to match the scale of the climate emergency.
- **Focus on Phasing down Coal:** The Pact is the first clear recognition of the need to transition away from fossil fuels, though the focus was on giving up coal-based power altogether. The original draft had contained a pledge to “phase out” coal. India introduced an amendment at the last moment to replace it with “phase down”.
  - The amendment from phase out to “phase down” came as a result of consultations among India, China, the UK and the US.
- **Recognition of the importance of Adaptation:** World recognised that mere mitigation is not enough and that adaptation needs to be mainstreamed into developmental strategies. There is now a commitment to double the current finance available for this to developing countries.
- **Renewed Commitment for Climate Finance:** The Paris Agreement target of \$100 billion per annum between 2005-2020 was never met with the shortfall being more than half. There is now a renewed commitment to delivering on this pledge in the 2020-2025 period and there is a promise of an enhanced flow thereafter.
- **Compensation for loss and damage for developing countries:** This is now part of the multilateral discourse and the US has agreed that it should be examined in working groups. That is a step forward but is unlikely to translate into a meaningful flow of funds any time soon.

- **Methane Pledge:** Agreement was signed among 100 countries to cut methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030.
- **Reverse deforestation:** Another group of 100 countries has agreed to begin to reverse deforestation by 2030. Since the group includes Brazil and Indonesia, which have large areas of forests that are being ravaged by legal and illegal logging, there is hope that there will be progress in expanding one of the most important carbon sinks on the planet.
- **Clarity on Article 6 of Paris agreement-** There is greater clarity on how bilateral carbon trades can proceed and the creation of a centralised hub that replaces Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism.
  - Criteria have been set out for countries to use CERs from projects registered after January 1, 2013 to meet their first NDC or first adjusted NDC.
  - It also designates a 12-member Supervisory Body to oversee the emerging hub and to review the baselines of recognised credits
- **New commitments by India:** PM announced India's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon by 2070 that compared favourably with China's target date of 2060. His announcements of enhanced targets for renewable energy were also welcomed.
- **Pressure by Youth:** There was incredible and passionate advocacy of urgent action by young people across the world. This is putting enormous pressure on governments and leaders and if sustained, may become irresistible

## Disappoints

- **Inept Diplomacy by India:** As the largest producer and consumer of coal and coal-based thermal power, China prefers a gradual reduction rather than total elimination. The word "phase down" also figures in the US-China Joint Declaration on Climate Change, announced on November 10. India introducing the amendment played negatively with both the advanced as well as a large constituency of developing countries. It should made China to do so.
- **Inadequate Adaptation Finance:** Climate finance for adaptation is currently only \$15 billion, doubling will mean \$ 30 billion. This remains grossly inadequate. According to UNEP, adaptation costs for developing countries are currently estimated at \$70 billion annually and will rise to an estimated \$130-300 billion annually by 2030.
- **India declining to join new initiatives:** India is not a part of the methane pledge group. India also did not join the reverse deforestation group due to concerns over a clause on possible trade measures related to forest products.
- **Bigger methane emergency in Permafrost Problem:** Cutting methane emissions, which is generated mainly by livestock, is certainly useful but there is a much bigger methane emergency as the earth's permafrost areas in



Siberia, Greenland and the Arctic littoral begin to melt that would release huge volumes of carbon and methane.

- **US-China Declaration & India:** The November 10 Joint declaration between US & China on Climate Change implies a shift in China's hardline position. It appears both countries are moving towards a less confrontational, more cooperative relationship overall. This will have geopolitical implications, including for India, which may find its room for manoeuvre shrinking.
- **Lack of Concrete actions:** There is more ambition in the intent to tackle climate change but little to show in terms of concrete actions. These have been deferred to future deliberations. Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are expected to be announced at a meeting next year. There are no compliance procedures, only "name and shame" to encourage delivery on targets.

## Conclusion

- The UK Presidency noted that as on 2019, only 30% of the world was covered by net zero targets and this had now moved close to 90%.
- The text of the Glasgow agreement indicates that all countries should deliver climate plans to the UN on 5-year cycles starting from 2025 (submitting 2035 NDCs in 2025, 2040 NDCs in 2030) which is a step in right in ensuring accountability in climate actions.



## THE INDIAN EXPRESS

### GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

#### 1. What the rise of pan-Turkism means for India

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been playing internationalist card for national benefit. India, which has been worried about Erdogan's Islamist politics, must now begin to pay attention to another political idea from the Turkish president – promoting pan-Turkism.

#### Impact of political ideas on global politics

- Internationalism based on religion, region or secular ideologies has always run headlong into resistance from sectarianism and nationalism.
- Yet, these ideas have a profound impact on global politics.
- Calls for **regionalism and internationalism** as well as religious and ethnic solidarity often end up as instruments for the pursuit of national interest.

#### The rise of pan-Turkism

- **Foundation of OTS:** The international symbol of solidarity among peoples of Turkic ethnicity has been the Council of Turkic States, formed in 2009 by **Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan**.
- At a summit of the Council's leaders last week in Istanbul, it was announced that the forum has been elevated to an "Organisation of Turkic States".
- Hungary, which has a long history of association with Turkic people, and Turkmenistan have observer status.
- At least a dozen other countries have apparently shown interest in getting observer status.
- **Implications:** There is no escaping the fact that Turkey is determined to rewrite the geopolitics of Eurasia.
- The rise of pan-Turkism is bound to have important consequences for Afghanistan, the Caucasus, Central Asia and, more broadly, India's Eurasian neighbourhood.

## Rise of Turkey in Central Asia

- **Soft power initiatives:** Over the last three decades, a number of soft power initiatives – in education, culture, and religion – have raised Turkey’s profile in Central Asia and generated new bonds with the region’s elites.
- **Military power:** It is in the domains of hard power – **commercial and military** – that Turkey’s progress has been impressive.
- Turkey has stunned much of the world with its military power projection into the region.
- That Kazakhstan, a member of the Russia-led regional security bloc, is moving towards strategic cooperation with Turkey, a member of US-led NATO, points to the thickening pan-Turkic bonds in a rapidly changing regional order.
- **The dominance of economy and trade:** Nearly 5,000 Turkish companies work in Central Asia. Turkish annual trade with the region is around \$10 billion.
- This could change as Turkey strengthens **connectivity with Central Asia** through the Caucasus.
- For the Central Asian states, living under the shadow of Chinese economic power and Russian military power, Turkey offers a chance for **economic diversification** and greater strategic autonomy.
- **Connectivity:** Turkey has also made impressive progress in building transportation corridors to Central Asia and beyond, to China, Georgia and Azerbaijan.
- The so-called Lapis Lazuli Corridor now connects Turkey to Afghanistan via Turkmenistan.

## What should be India’s approach towards Turkey?

- Pan-Turkism is a good reason for India to explore a more purposeful engagement with Turkey.
- **Issues:** There is no denying that the current differences between Delhi and Ankara over Kashmir, Pakistan and Afghanistan are real and serious.
- **Need for dialogue:** The current political divergence only reinforces the case for a sustained dialogue between the two governments and the strategic communities of the two countries.
- **Lessons for India:** Turkey’s own geopolitics offers valuable lessons on how to deal with Ankara.
- That Turkey is a NATO member has not stopped Erdogan from a strategic liaison with Russian.
- Purchase of advanced weapons like S-400 missiles from Moscow does not stop Erdogan from meddling in Russia’s Central Asian backyard.

- Criticism of China's repression of Turkic Uighurs in Xinjiang – that was once called “Eastern Turkestan” – goes hand-in-hand with deep economic collaboration with Beijing.
- What does this policy tell India? One, Erdogan's enduring enthusiasm for Pakistan **does not preclude Turkey from doing business – economic and strategic – with India.**
- **Limiting Turkish hegemony:** Erdogan's ambitions have offended many countries in Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Caucasus.
- Many of them are eager to expand strategic cooperation with India in limiting Turkish hegemony.
- This opens a range of new opportunities for Indian foreign and security policy in Eurasia.
- **Imperative to engage:** Sceptics will point to the fact that Erdogan's time is running out.
- That does not, however, alter the Indian imperative to engage with Turkey.

## Conclusion

Independent India has struggled to develop good relations with Turkey over the decades. A hard-headed approach in Delhi today, however, might open new possibilities with Ankara and in Turkey's Eurasian periphery.

## 2. Kartarpur Corridor:

The government is considering reopening **the Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara corridor** to Pakistan this week to allow Sikh pilgrims to cross over, more than 20 months after it was shut down due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

- The plan is to open on **November 19**, the birth anniversary of **the Sikh founder Guru Nanak**, known as **Gurpurab** or “**Prakash Parv**”.

### The Kartarpur corridor agreement:

Please note that **the Kartarpur corridor agreement** allows pilgrims to travel **visa free** through the corridor.

- Indian pilgrims of all faiths and persons of Indian origin can use the corridor.
- Pilgrims need to carry only a valid passport;

- Persons of Indian Origin need to carry OCI card along with the passport of their country.
- The Corridor is open from dawn to dusk. Pilgrims travelling in the morning will have to return on the same day.

### What is the “Kartarpur Corridor” project?

The corridor – often dubbed as **the “Road to Peace”** – will connect Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan’s Kartarpur with Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India’s Gurdaspur district.

### The shrine and its significance:

- The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the bank of **the Ravi**, about 120 km northeast of Lahore.
- It was here that **Guru Nanak** assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539.
- The shrine is visible from the Indian side, as Pakistani authorities generally trim the elephant grass that would otherwise obstruct the view.
- Indian Sikhs gather in large numbers for darshan from the Indian side, and binoculars are installed at Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak.

### 3. Monetary disbursement to States to sustain recovery

The Centre will remit Rs. 95,082 crore to States next week, which is double the funds due to them from the shareable pool of taxes to enable them to deploy more money on capital spending.

- A meeting was held between the states and the Central government to figure out ways to sustain the economic recovery after the second COVID-19 wave and understand States’ concerns and plans
- **The context of the meeting:** After the second wave, India is seeing a robust growth. However, it’s also a time where it plans to sustain the growth, take it as close as possible to a double-digit growth for which the Centre and States have to work together.

### Suggested methods to achieve growth

- States were urged to help India become the fastest growing economy in coming years.
- **Methods suggested**
  - Facilitating investment attractiveness
  - Expediting ease of doing business measures
  - Undertaking power sector reforms.
  - Smoothen land acquisition
  - Create land banks for investors
  - Monetisation of public assets,

#### 4. 41st Scientific Expedition to Antarctica

**In News:** India has successfully launched the 41st Scientific Expedition to Antarctica with the arrival of the first batch of its contingent at the southern white continent.

- The first program encompasses geological exploration of the Amery ice shelf at Bharati station. This will help explore the link between India and Antarctica in the past.
- The second program involves reconnaissance surveys and preparatory work for drilling of 500 meters of ice core near Maitri. It will help in improving the understanding of Antarctic climate, westerly winds, sea-ice and greenhouse gases from a single climate archive for past 10,000 years. The ice core drilling will be done in collaboration with the British Antarctic Survey and the Norwegian Polar Institute. In addition to accomplishing scientific programs, it will replenish the annual supplies of food, fuel, provisions, and spares for operations and maintenance of life support systems at Maitri and Bharati.

#### The Indian Antarctic program

Began in 1981, and has completed 40 scientific expeditions, and built three permanent research base stations in Antarctica, named DakshinGangotri (1983), Maitri (1988) and Bharati (2012). As of today, Maitri and Bharati are fully operational.

- **The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**, Goa – an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Earth Sciences – manages the entire Indian Antarctic program.
- **Dakshin Gangotri:** First Indian scientific research base station established in Antarctica

- **Maitri:** India's second permanent research station in Antarctica. It is situated on the rocky mountainous region called Schirmacher Oasis. India also built a freshwater lake around Maitri known as Lake Priyadarshini.
- **Bharti:** India's latest research station operation since 2012. It is India's first committed research facility.
- **Sagar Nidhi:** In 2008, India commissioned the Sagar Nidhi, for research. An ice-class vessel, it can cut through the thin ice of 40 cm depth and is the first Indian vessel to navigate Antarctic waters.

## GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

### 5. Charting India's path to a 'Digital Rupee'

Recently, Nigeria joined the Bahamas and five islands in the East Caribbean as the only economies to have introduced central bank digital currency (CBDC). This is a shortlist, but one that is likely to be supplemented.

#### Benefits of CBDC

- Desire to make **domestic payments systems** and cross-border remittances cheaper, **faster and more efficient**, and deepen **financial inclusion**, represent key areas of priority for most other emerging market and development economies (EMDEs).
- Between 2019 and 2021, the last three surveys conducted by the **Bank for International Settlements** showed that the primary drivers for central banks of EMDEs to study CBDCs were domestic payments efficiency, financial inclusion and payments safety.

#### Design features of CBDCs

- In theory, the potential of CBDCs are only limited by their design and the capabilities of the central bank issuing it, but their appropriateness and form also depend on the state of the domestic banking and payments industry.
- Ultimately, CBDCs must be seen as a **means to an end**.
- A particular CBDC could, for example, be **account-based or tokenised**, may be distributed directly by the central bank or through intermediaries, may be interest-bearing (even the possibility of a negative interest has been considered), may be programmable, may offer limited **pseudonymity to its holders** (similar to, but not to the extent of, cash) and so on.
- Whether it may be one or the other depends on what its country requires it to be.



## Challenges

- An economy that adopts an **interest-bearing CBDC** could make the interest rate on CBDCs **the main tool of monetary policy transmission domestically** (assuming a high degree of substitution of fiat and fiat-like currency).
- On the other hand, as former RBI Governor D Subbarao recently warned, rendering an Indian CBDC as an interest-bearing instrument could pose an existential threat to the banking system by eroding its critical role as intermediaries in the economy.
- If CBDCs compete with bank deposits and facilitate a reduction of bank-held deposits, banks stand to lose out on an important and stable source of funding.
- Banks may respond by increasing deposit rates, but this would necessitate a **higher lending rate to preserve margins**, and dampen lending activities.
- The resultant shrinking of balance sheets will lead to a more **pronounced disintermediation role for financial institutions**, which could have long-term effects on financial stability, and facilitate easier bank runs.
- The introduction of CBDCs would require central banks to **maintain much larger balance sheets**, even in non-crisis times.
- They would need to replace the **lost funding (because of migration of deposits)** by lending potentially huge sums to financial institutions, while purchasing correspondingly huge amounts of government and possibly private securities.
- CBDCs could also have implications for the state from **seigniorage** as the cost of printing, storing, transporting and distributing currency can be reduced.

## Conclusion

Recent comments by RBI officials have focussed on the desirability of introducing CBDCs. But the path to a “Digital Rupee” is not clear.

### 6. Rashtriya Gokul Mission:

A review meeting on the performance of the Rashtriya Gokul Mission was held recently.

‘Rashtriya Gokul Mission’ was launched in 2014 to conserve and develop indigenous bovine breeds, under the National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development (NPBBD).

### Key objectives of the mission



- Development and conservation of indigenous breeds.
- Undertake breed improvement programme for indigenous cattle breeds so as to improve the genetic makeup and increase the stock.
- Enhance milk production and productivity.
- Upgrade nondescript cattle using elite indigenous breeds like Gir, Sahiwal, Rathi, Deoni, Tharparkar, Red Sindhi.
- Distribute disease free high genetic merit bulls for natural service.

### Implementation

1. It is being implemented through the **“State Implementing Agency”** Livestock Development Boards, i.e., SIA’s (LDB’s).
2. **State Gauseva Ayogs** are mandated to sponsor proposals to the SIA’s (LDB’s) and monitor implementation of the sponsored proposal.
3. **The “Participating Agencies”** like CFSPTI, CCBFs, ICAR, Universities, Colleges, NGO’s, Cooperative Societies and Gaushalas with best germplasm.

### What are Gokul Grams?

The Rashtriya Gokul Mission envisages the establishment of integrated cattle development centers, **‘Gokul Grams’ to develop indigenous breeds** including up to 40% nondescript breeds.

### Gokul Grams will be established in:

- The native breeding tracts and
- Near metropolitan cities for housing the urban cattle.

### Objectives:

- Promote indigenous cattle rearing and conservation in a scientific manner.
- Propagate high genetic merit bulls of indigenous breeds.
- Optimize modern Farm Management practices and promote Common Resource Management.
- Utilize animal waste in an economical way i.e. Cow Dung, Cow Urine.

### Key features of Gokul Grams

- **They will be self-sustaining and will generate economic resources** from sale of **A2 milk** organic manure, vermi-composting, urine distillates, and production of electricity from bio gas for in house consumption and sale of animal products.
- They will also function as **state of the art in situ training centre for Farmers, Breeders and MAITRI’s**.

- Gokul Grams act as **Centres for development of Indigenous Breeds and a dependable source for supply of high genetic breeding stock** to the farmers in the breeding tract.
- The Gokul Gram will maintain **milch and unproductive animals in the ratio of 60:40** and will have **the capacity to maintain about 1000 animals**.
- Nutritional requirements of the animals will be provided in the Gokul Gram through in house fodder production.

### Prelims Practice Questions

#### 1. Consider the following initiatives:

1. Margadarshan and Margadarshak initiative
2. Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY)
3. Manodarpan initiative
4. SARAL initiative

Which of the initiatives mentioned above are taken to improve technical education in India?

- A 1 and 2 only
- B 3 and 4 only
- C 1, 2 and 4
- D 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Answer : A**

#### Explanation

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development (now Ministry of Education) has launched the **Margdarshan and Margdarshak initiatives** of the **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** in order to **improve the technical education** in India.
- The **UchhatarAvishkar Yojana (UAY)** scheme was announced with a view to promote innovation of a higher order that directly impacts the needs of the

**Industry** and thereby improves the competitive edge of **Indian manufacturing**.

- The scheme focuses on a viable industry-academic collaboration where industry shares a part of the cost of **research**.
- **The Manodarpan** initiative is aimed to **provide psychosocial support to students, family members and teachers** for their mental health and well-being during the times of Covid-19 (**Not related to technical education**).
- **'State Rooftop Solar Attractiveness Index'** or SARAL is the first of its kind index to provide a comprehensive overview of state-level measures adopted to facilitate **rooftop solar deployment (Not related to technical education)**.
- **Hence, option A is correct.**

## 2. Consider the following statements:

1. Aos are one of the major Naga tribes.
2. "Shi-ki" is the tribal harvest festival unique to Aos.

**Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Aos are one of the major Naga tribes of Nagaland.
- Some villages in Nagaland are trying to revive a traditional form of punishment using prickly cages meant for shaming offenders.
- Such itchy cages are referred to as khujli ghar in Nagamese, but each Naga community has its own name.
- The Aos, one of the major tribes of Nagaland, call it Shi-ki which means flesh-house.

## 3. Consider the following statements with respect to Chilika Lake:

1. The endangered Gangetic Dolphins are found in the lake.
2. It is the largest coastal lagoon in India.
3. The lake is located at the mouth of the Daya River.

**Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Chilika Lake is Asia's largest brackish water lagoon.
- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the largest brackish water lagoon in the world after the New Caledonian barrier reef.
- The lake is located at the mouth of the Daya River.
- It is a designated Ramsar Site under Ramsar Convention.
- The endangered Irrawaddy Dolphins are found in the lake.

**4. Channapatna Toys are a particular form of wooden toys manufactured in?**

- a. Karnataka
- b. Tamil Nadu
- c. West Bengal
- d. Andhra Pradesh

**Answer : a**

- Channapatna Toys are a particular form of wooden toys and dolls that are manufactured in the town of Channapatna in the Ramanagara district of Karnataka state, India.

**5. Which of the following ministry has launched "E-Daakhil portal"?**

- a. Ministry of Corporate Affairs
- b. Ministry of Home Affairs

- c. Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
- d. Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution

Answer : d

### *E-Daakhil portal*

- Recently, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has provided that 'E-Daakhil portal' is now operational in 15 States/Union Territories.
- It is a consumer grievance redressal platform developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 has provision for e-filing of consumer complaints in the Consumer Commissions and online payment of the fees for filing a complaint.
- The E-filing was launched by National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) in September 2020.

### **National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC)**

- It is a quasi-judicial commission in India which was set up in 1988 under the Consumer Protection Act of 1986.
- It is headed by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court of India.
- It shall have jurisdiction to entertain a complaint valued more than one crore.
- It shall also have Appellate and Revisional jurisdiction from the orders of State Commissions or the District fora as the case may be.

### **6. Consider the following statements with respect to Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)**

1. It is a statutory multi-disciplinary body under the MoEFCC.
2. It is mandated to establish a centralized wildlife crime data bank.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : c

### **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)**

- Under Section 38 (Z) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, it is mandated:
  1. To collect and collate intelligence related to organized wildlife crime activities.
  2. To disseminate the same to State and other enforcement agencies for immediate action so as to apprehend the criminals.
  3. To establish a centralized wildlife crime data bank.
  4. Assist foreign authorities and international organization concerned to facilitate co-ordination and universal action for wildlife crime control.



### **Mains Practice Questions**

**1Q. A technology should be evaluated both on the basis of its utility and the intention of its creator. Critically examine. (250 words)**

#### **Approach**

- Introduce briefly about the growing utility of technologies.
- Discuss some ethical contradictions and concerns arising out of increasing role of technologies.
- Discuss how these technologies should be evaluated on the basis of the intention of its creator.
- Give conclusion.

**2Q. Genome India Project provides an opportunity for India to make great progress in the fields of biotechnology, agriculture and healthcare. Discuss. (250 words)**

#### **Approach**

- Briefly explain Genome India Project
- Highlight the project's applicability in biotechnology, agriculture and healthcare sector, and how such will present opportunity for India towards progress/contribution.
- Highlight some challenges to the project.
- In conclusion, give some measures to overcome these challenges.