



## UN Resolution Condemning Russian Aggression

**For Prelims:** Location of Ukraine and Neighbourhood, United Nations Security Council, Russia, Ukraine, Veto Power, LAC, QUAD.

**For Mains:** Important International Institutions, Global Groupings, International Treaties & Agreements, India and its Neighbourhood, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, India's Stand on the Resolution, Reasons for India's Stand and Way Forward.

### Why in News?

Recently, the [United Nation Security Council](#) voted on the draft resolution by the US and Albania that sought to **condemn Russian aggression** and called for the **immediate cessation of violence** and withdrawal of Russian military from Ukraine.

### // How much of Ukraine does Russia control?



### What was the Resolution About?

- The Council's resolution **reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty, independence,**

- **unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine** within its internationally recognised borders.
- The resolution “**deplores in the strongest terms Russia’s aggression against Ukraine**” and decides that **Russia “shall immediately cease its use of force** against Ukraine and shall refrain from any further unlawful threat or use of force against any UN member state”.
  - The **original version was too strong, as it invoked UN Chapter VII**, which authorises the use of force against Russian troops in Ukraine.
- It also asked **Russia to “immediately and unconditionally reverse the [decision related to the status of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions](#) of Ukraine”**.
- The resolution **did not pass since the permanent member and President of the Security Council** for the month of February **Russia**, used its veto.
- The resolution received 11 votes in favour and three abstentions. **China and India both abstained.**

## What is India’s Stand on the Current Crisis?

- India is deeply disturbed by the recent turn of developments in Ukraine. India urged that **all efforts shall be made for the immediate cessation of violence and hostilities.**
- **Dialogue is the only answer to settling differences and disputes**, however daunting that may appear at this moment. It is a matter of regret that the path of diplomacy was given up.
- With this **India has managed to hold its balancing act** again, despite the considerable pressures from the West to vote against Russia, as well as pressures from Russia to support it.
  - Earlier in January 2022, **India abstained from a vote on whether to hold a discussion on the Ukraine situation**, and also indicated support for Russia’s legitimate security interests.
- India has been in touch with all sides, **urging parties concerned to return to the negotiating table.**

## What is India’s Dilemma?

- India’s strategic ambivalence at this big turning point in world geopolitics is born out of its **friendships and strategic partnerships on both sides.**
- **Russia is India’s biggest and time tested supplier of defence weapons.** Despite its growing friendship with China, Russia has boosted India’s defence capabilities with the **[S-400 air defence system](#).**
- India’s Defence Minister visited Russia at the height of India’s crisis with the **Chinese Army at the [Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#) in June 2020.** And **Russia has stood behind India at the UNSC on all issues.**
- At the same time, **[India has a deep partnership with the United States](#)**, which includes defence pacts, trade and investment, technology, and not least, a huge connection through the Indian diaspora and people to people contacts.
  - With thousands of students leaving Indian shores every year to study in American universities.
- The same with Europe. Additionally, **France as one of the P-5 (Permanent Five) is a vital friend of India in the UN Security Council.** India needs all these friends as it deals with China’s moves at the LAC.

## What is the Need of the Hour for India?

- Dealing first-hand with the consequences of **[Chinese expansionism](#) and adventurism** on its own borders, and a South Asian region suddenly **[vacated by America's military presence in Afghanistan](#).**
- **India needs both the US and Russia** to fend off a Chinese strategic and geo-economic threat in Asia.
- If the **India-Russia partnership is critical on land in Asia**, the **[QUAD](#)** - an alliance between America, Japan, Australia and India - is imperative when it comes to **countering Chinese maritime expansionism in the [Indian Ocean region](#).**
- The imperative to **counter China remains a cornerstone of Indian foreign policy**, everything-including Delhi's position on Russian action in Ukraine- flows from that.

- Within India's foreign policy establishment, **there is ongoing debate on what India might gain or lose by its neutrality and the consequences of siding with the West.**
- There is also the thinking that the **West cannot afford to cut away from India at this point, as it needs India's markets**, and India's heft as a democracy as it seeks partners to contain China.
- But there is an **inbuilt tension in this realist position that speaks about rules violations** in one part of the world but does not call it out in another.
- Therefore, **India's position may have to be calibrated constantly** as the situation evolves especially if confronted by growing casualties in Ukraine.

[Source:IE](#)

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## Russian Banks Excluded from SWIFT

**For Prelims:** Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), System for Transfer of Financial Messages, Cryptocurrencies.

**For Mains:** Bilateral Groupings & Agreements , Russia's war over Ukraine, Impact of sanctions on Russia, SWIFT and its Significance.

### Why in the News?

Recently, in a move to counter [Russia's war over Ukraine](#), the US and the [European Commission](#) issued a joint statement to **exclude some Russian banks from the [Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication \(SWIFT\) messaging system](#).**

- The intention behind this action is to further **isolate Russia from the international financial system.**
- The move against Russia is **only partly implemented for now**, with only some Russian banks being covered.
- The option of expanding it further to a pan-country ban is something that the US and its allies are holding back as a further escalatory move.

### What is the SWIFT Messaging System?

- SWIFT provides the **trusted messaging platform** that enables financial institutions to **exchange information about global monetary transactions** such as money transfers.
- While SWIFT does **not actually move money**, it operates as a **middleman to verify information of transactions** by providing secure financial messaging services to more than **11,000 banks in over 200 countries.**
  - Most of the world trade takes place with financial messaging passing through SWIFT.
- It was **established in 1973** and is **based in Belgium.**
- It is overseen by the central banks from **eleven industrial countries:** Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, besides Belgium.
  - **India's** financial system **has access to the SWIFT.**
- Prior to SWIFT, the only reliable means of message confirmation for international funds transfer was **Telex.**
  - It was discontinued due to a range of issues such as low speed, security concerns, and a free message format.

## What will be Impact on Russia?

- Russia is **heavily reliant on the SWIFT platform** for its **key natural resources trade**, especially the payments for its oil and gas exports.
  - It will freeze the assets of Russia's central bank, which would stop Russia from **"using its war chest"**, referring to its [forex reserves](#).
  - Further, the curbs on Russia's central bank will prevent it from dipping into its **forex deposits to limit the effect of sanctions**.
- Targeting only some Russian banks seems to be aimed at both keeping the **option of further escalation open**.
  - it also envisages that the sanctions have the maximum possible impact on Russia, but prevent a major impact on European companies dealing with Russian banks for payments for their gas imports
- There is going to be a **catastrophe on the Russian currency market**.
- Prior to this, **only one country had been cut off from SWIFT — Iran**. It resulted in it losing a third of its foreign trade.

## How did Russia React?

- Russia has worked on alternatives, including the SPFS (**System for Transfer of Financial Messages**) — an equivalent of the SWIFT financial transfer system **developed by the Central Bank of Russia**.
- Russia is reported to be **collaborating with the Chinese** on a possible venture which will be a potential challenger to SWIFT.
  - There are plans to integrate it with China's Cross-border Inter-bank Payments System (CIPS).

## What are Other Global Alternatives to SWIFT?

- There are **financial technology companies like Ripple, which has been offering its platform based on interledger protocol** (the same technology behind [cryptocurrencies](#)) as an alternative.
- **Cryptocurrencies** are another avenue for cross border remittances. Russia has also been working on a **'digital' rouble**, which is still not launched.

## ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS MAY GET BOOST

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ SWIFT, which offers banks a <b>fast &amp; secure messaging platform</b> for fund transfers, is a cooperative with HQ in Belgium</li></ul>	<p>plans to integrate it with China's counterpart CIPS. This would <b>allow trade between the two</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Used by over 11,000 institutions in more than 200 countries, it <b>can block specific banks or certain types of transactions</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Russia is also working on launching a <b>digital version of its rouble</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Russia set up its own SWIFT counterpart called SPFS, with</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ India, Russia &amp; China were using the <b>BRICS grouping to create an alternative to SWIFT</b> — this could get a boost now</li></ul>



## How will the Sanctions Impact India?

- Following the collapse of the **Soviet Union in 1991, India had entered into a rupee-rouble trade arrangement** with Russia to ensure that defence and other imports could continue.
- In 2018, a pilot project was run where Indian importers paid in roubles for diamond imports.
- These payments were made to the Indian branch of **Russia's Sberbank. SBI and Canara Bank have a joint venture** (The Commercial Indo Bank), which might be able to help Indians there.

[Source: IE](#)

## Operation Ganga

**For Prelims:** India's Evacuation Operations, Location of Ukraine and other neighbouring countries

**For Mains:** Ukraine-Russia Conflict and India's Interests in Ukraine and Russia, Implications of Conflict on India.

### Why in News?

The **Government of India** has launched a '**multi-pronged**' initiative named '**Operation Ganga**'.

- A dedicated Twitter handle '**OpGanga Helpline**' to assist Indian evacuation from Ukraine has also been announced.
- The [tensions between Russia and Ukraine](#) are currently heightened, with war erupting in Ukraine after the Russian military launched a series of attacks recently.



### What is Operation Ganga?

- It is an evacuation mission to **bring back all the Indian nationals who are currently stranded in Ukraine.**
  - There were **around 20,000 Indians** including students stuck in Ukraine.
  - Till now, three Air India flights have been able to bring back more than 900 Indians from Ukraine to India.
- The Indian evacuation flights are **operating from neighbouring countries like Romania and Hungary.**
- The government is **also facilitating evacuation of stranded Indians from its borders crossing Romania, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.**

#### What are the Evacuation Operations carried out by India?

<b>Operation Ganga (2022):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is an evacuation mission to <b>bring back all the Indian nationals who are currently stranded in Ukraine.</b></li> <li>▪ The <b>tensions between Russia and Ukraine</b> are currently heightened, with war erupting and Russian military launched a series of attacks recently.</li> </ul>
<b>Vande Bharat (2020):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When the <b>Covid-19 pandemic</b> hit the world, the Centre launched the Vande Bharat operation to bring back Indians stranded in foreign countries.</li> <li>▪ In the multiple phases of the operation, <b>about 60 lakh Indians</b> were brought back to India.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Samudra Setu (2020):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It was a <b>naval operation</b> as part of the national effort to bring home Indian citizens stranded in foreign countries during the <b>pandemic.</b></li> <li>▪ It successfully brought back <b>3,992 Indian citizens</b> to their homeland by sea.</li> <li>▪ Indian Naval ships <b>Jalashwa (Landing Platform Dock)</b>, and <b>Airavat, Shardul and Shakti</b> participated in this operation which lasted over 55 days and involved traversing more than 10,000 nautical miles.</li> </ul>
<b>Evacuation from Brussels (2016):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In March 2016, Belgium was hit by terrorist strikes at Brussels Airport in Zaventem, a central Brussels.</li> <li>▪ A total of 242 Indians, including 28 crew members, returned to India in a Jet Airways flight.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Raahat (2015):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In 2015, a conflict raged between the <b>Yemeni government and Houthi rebels.</b></li> <li>▪ Thousands of Indians were stranded and Yemen was not accessible by air due to a no-fly zone.</li> <li>▪ Under Operation Raahat, India <b>evacuated nearly 5,600 people from Yemen.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Operation Maitri (2015):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is the <b>joint relief and rescue operation</b> by the Indian government and the Indian Army to help Nepal after the 2015 Nepal earthquake.</li> <li>▪ The joint Army-Air Force operation brought over 5,000 Indians back from Nepal by Air India. The Indian Army successfully <b>evacuated 170 foreign nationals</b> from the US, the UK, Russia and other countries.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Safe Homecoming (2011):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ India launched 'Operation Homecoming' to <b>bring back Indian citizens stranded in Iraq.</b></li> <li>▪ Under the operation, <b>India evacuated 15,400 Indian nationals.</b></li> <li>▪ The air-sea operation was conducted by the Indian Navy and Air India.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Sukoon (2006):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As Israel and Lebanon broke into military conflict in July 2006, India rescued its stranded citizens from Lebanon in a large-scale operation, which is now famously known as <b>the 'Beirut Sealift'.</b></li> <li>▪ It was the <b>largest naval rescue mission</b> since the 'Dunkirk' evacuation.</li> <li>▪ The task force <b>evacuated about 2,280 people</b> including some Nepalese and Sri Lankans.</li> </ul>
<b>1990 Kuwait Airlift (1990):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In 1990, when 1,00,000 Iraqi soldiers armed with 700 tanks marched into Kuwait, the UN imposed a blockade on Iraq, cutting off its access to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.</li> <li>▪ The general public was left behind to fend for themselves.</li> <li>▪ <b>Over 1,70,000</b> of those stranded in Kuwait were Indians.</li> <li>▪ India <b>kicked off the evacuation process</b> in which over <b>1,70,000 Indians</b> were evacuated to India.</li> </ul>

**Source: TH**



# World NGO Day

**For Prelims:** World NGO Day, Non-Governmental Organisations.

**For Mains:** Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Indian Democracy, Issues associated with NGOs, Challenges faced by NGOs and way ahead

## Why in News?

Every year, **27<sup>th</sup> February** is observed as the **World NGO day** all over the world.

- India has over **three million** [Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO\)](#) that work across a range of arenas and play important roles of facilitator, catalyst or partner in bringing social transformation.

## What is the History of World NGO Day?

- The day assumed its official status when **12-member countries of the IX [Baltic Sea NGO Forum](#)** on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2010 formally recognised it.
  - In 2012, the forum's Final Statement Resolution adopted the day.
- Although the day was recognised officially in 2010, it was only in 2014, that for the **first time World NGO Day was observed** by the [United Nations](#).
- The main man behind this day was **Marcis Liors Skadmanis**, an UK-based social entrepreneur, who inaugurated the **2014 World NGO Day**.
- The day was **conceived to spread awareness of the tremendous contributions** of NGOs all around the world and honour the relentless efforts of the social workers both in the public and private sectors.

## What is the Role of NGOs in Indian Democracy?

- Bridging the Gap:**
  - NGOs endeavour to **plug gaps in the government's programmes** and reach out to sections of people often left untouched by state projects. For example, **providing aid to migrant workers in Covid-19 crisis**.
  - In the present scenario, when **India is still combating [Covid-19](#)**, non-profits have been **on the ground, working tirelessly to directly supplement the government's efforts** to bring relief and actively engage in vaccination drives to the most vulnerable communities.
  - These NGOs also look into **accelerating activities** like
    - Issues dealing with [poverty alleviation](#), water, environment, women's rights and literacy.
    - They have been **dynamic in almost all sectors**: Health, education, livelihood in rural and urban areas etc.
- Role of an Enabler:**
  - Community-level outfits and [self-help groups](#) are critical for bringing any change in the ground.
  - In the past, **such grass roots organisations have been enabled by collaborations with bigger NGOs** and research agencies that have access to foreign funding.
- Acting as a Pressure Group:**
  - There are **political NGOs that mobilise public opinion** against government's policies and actions.
    - To the extent such **NGOs are able to educate the public** and put pressure on public policy, they act as important [pressure groups](#) in a democracy.

- **Role in Participative Governance:**
  - Many civil society initiatives have contributed to some of the path-breaking laws in the country, including the **Environmental Protection Act-1986**, [Right to Education Act-2009](#), [Forests Rights Act-2006](#) and [Right to Information Act-2005](#), [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act \(MNREGA\)](#) [Juvenile Justice](#), [Integrated Child Protection Scheme \(ICPS\)](#).
  - NGOs also partnered with the government to successfully implement major campaigns like [Swachh Bharat Abiyaan](#) and [Sarva Siksha Abiyaan](#).
- **Acting as a Social Mediator:**
  - **Social inter-mediation** is an intervention of different levels of society by various agents to change social and behavioural attitudes within the prevailing social environment for achieving desired results of change in society.
    - In Indian context wherein people are still steeped in superstition, faith, belief and custom, **NGOs act as catalysts and create awareness among people.**

## What are the issues Emanating from NGOs?

- **Lack of Credibility:**
  - During the last few years, **numerous organisations have mushroomed** which claim to work for the cause of helping the poor.
    - Under the garb of being an NGO, **these NGOs often mint money from donors** and are also involved in money laundering activities.
- **Lack of Transparency:**
  - India's disproportionate number of NGOs and the **sector's lack of transparency and accountability is clearly an issue that needs reforms.**
    - Further the **allegations of corruption against NGOs are ignored.** In the past many NGOs were blacklisted after being found to have indulged in misappropriation of funds.

## What are the main Challenges NGOs Face?

- **Lack of Funds:**
  - Many NGOs find it difficult to **garner sufficient and continuous funding** for their work. Gaining access to appropriate donors is a major component of this challenge.
  - Earlier, **the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** cancelled the [Foreign Contribution \(Regulation\) Act \(FCRA\), 2010](#) registration of various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
    - Suspension of FCRA licence **means that the NGO can no longer receive fresh foreign funds** from donors pending a probe by the Home Ministry. The FCRA is **mandatory for associations and NGOs to receive foreign funds.**
- **Absence of Strategic Planning:**
  - Many NGOs suffer from the **lack of a cohesive, strategic plan** that would facilitate success in their activities and mission, rendering them unable to effectively raise and capitalize on financial support.
- **Poor Governance and Networking:**
  - Many NGOs have a **deficit of understanding** as to why they must have a Board and how to set one up.
  - **Poor or disorganized networking** is another major challenge, as it can cause duplicated efforts, time inefficiencies, conflicting strategies and an inability to learn from experience.
  - Many NGOs **do not maximize the use of current technologies** that could facilitate better communication and networking.
- **Limited Capacity:**
  - NGOs often **lack the technical and organizational capacity** to implement and fulfill their mission, and few are willing or able to invest in training for capacity building.
  - Weak capacity **affects fundraising ability, governance, leadership and technical areas.**
- **Development Approaches:**
  - Many NGOs favor a **“hardware” approach to development through building infrastructure** and providing services instead of empowering people and institutions



locally.

## Way Forward

- India is committed to **SDGs till 2030 and a long-term strategy is important** to keep the focus while also pursuing sustainable growth and development.
- It is, however, important to note that **success of a long-term strategy depends not only on the lessons learnt** from implementing the short- or medium-term development strategies, but also **cooperation and coordination from various sectors — the government, India Inc and NGOs.**
- **Capacity building and training can help to provide crucial new skills.** NGOs can then more readily train staff and cultivate the necessary skills within the organization to address challenges going forward.
- It is necessary to regulate corrupt NGOs, however excessive regulation on foreign contribution may affect working of the NGOs which are helpful in implementing government schemes at the grassroots.

[Source: DTE](#)

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## Veer Savarkar

**For Prelims:** Veer Savarkar, Morley-Minto reform (Indian Councils Act 1909), Abhinav Bharat Society, India House, Free India Society, Hindu Mahasabha

**For Mains:** Veer Savarkar and his role in freedom struggle, Veer Savarkar

## Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister has **paid tributes to freedom fighter Veer Savarkar** on his Punya tithi (26<sup>th</sup> February).



## Who was Veer Savarkar?

- **Birth:** Born on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1883 in Bhagur, a village near **Nashik in Maharashtra.**
- **Related Organisations and Work:**
  - Founded a secret society called **Abhinav Bharat Society.**
  - Went to the United Kingdom and was **involved with organizations such as India House and the Free India Society.**
  - He was the **president of Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943.**
  - Savarkar wrote a book titled '**The History of the War of Indian Independence**' in which he wrote about the guerilla warfare tricks used in [1857 Sepoy Mutiny.](#)
  - He also wrote the book '**Hindutva: who is hindu?**'.
- **Trial and Sentences:**
  - **Arrested in 1909** on charges of plotting an armed revolt against the [Morley-Minto reform \(Indian Councils Act 1909\).](#)
  - **Arrested in 1910** for his connections with the **revolutionary group India House.**
  - One of the charges on Savarkar was **abetment to murder of Nashik Collector Jackson** and the second was waging a conspiracy under Indian Penal Code 121-A against the King emperor.
  - Following the two trials, Savarkar was **convicted and sentenced to 50-years imprisonment** also known as **Kala Pani** and transported in 1911 to the Cellular Jail in the [Andaman and Nicobar Islands.](#)
- **Death:** He died on **26<sup>th</sup> February 1966** due to fasting on his own wish of death.

### Abhinav Bharat Society (Young India Society)

- It was a secret society founded by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and his brother Ganesh Damodar Savarkar **in 1904.**
- Initially founded at Nasik as Mitra Mela, the society was associated with several revolutionaries and political activists with branches in various parts of India and London.

### India House

- It was **founded by Shyamji Kishan Verma in 1905** in London.
- It was opened to promote nationalist views among Indian students in London.

### Free India Society

- **Savarkar** went to London in 1906. He soon founded the Free India Society, based on the thoughts of the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini (Savarkar had written a biography of Mazzini).

### Hindu Mahasabha

- **Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha** is one of the oldest organizations of India as it was **formed in 1907.** Eminent leaders **extended this Organization in 1915 on ALL India basis.**
- The Eminent personalities who founded this Organisation and who presided over the ALL INDIA Sessions held include Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lal Lajpat Rai, Veer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, etc.

[Source: PIB](#)

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# Variability in Ct Values

**For Prelims:** Viral Load, Ct Values, RT-PCR Test.

**For Mains:** Significance of Ct Value in RT-PCR Test and factors of its Variability.

Why in News?

Recently, a survey of 700 laboratories in the US using standardised proficiency testing material from the same batch found **a variability in [Ct \(Cycle Threshold\) values](#) by 14 cycles.**

- Even within the same test at the same lab the **Ct values could vary by 3 cycles for different target genes**, and up to **12 cycles for the same target gene** across labs.

## What is the Cause of Variability in Ct Values?

- **Dynamic Measure and Evolves Rapidly:**
  - A low Ct value at the time of diagnosis **does not mean that it will stay low the next day.**
  - Similarly, a swab done very early in the infection may reveal **a high Ct value, which if repeated a day or two later, may reveal a lower** Ct value.
  - It is possible for this reason that **Ct values have not been convincingly correlated with disease severity, and serve no role in predicting the trajectory** for a patient (yet, this is commonly used as an argument to prescribe tests and medicines).
- **Influence of Technical and Logistical factors:**
  - The way specimens are collected, the type of specimen, the medium in which the swab is transported, the time lag between collection of the specimen and processing.
  - All of **this can influence the quantum of viral genetic** material present, and **subsequently, the Ct value.**

## What is RT-PCR Test and Ct Value?

- **RT-PCR Tests:**
  - In an **[RT-PCR \(Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction\) test](#), [RNA \(Ribonucleic acid\)](#)** is extracted from the swab collected from the patient. It is then converted into **[DNA \(Deoxyribonucleic acid\)](#)**, which is then amplified.
  - Amplification refers to the process of creating multiple copies of the genetic material - in this case, DNA.
    - This **improves the ability of the test to detect the presence of the virus.**
  - Amplification takes place through a series of cycles—one copy becomes two, two becomes four, and so on—and it is after multiple cycles that a detectable amount of virus is produced.
- **Ct Value:**
  - Ct is short for **'Cycle Threshold'**.
  - The Ct value refers to the **number of cycles after which the virus can be detected.**

- If a higher number of cycles is required, **it implies that the virus went undetected when the number of cycles was lower.**
- The lower the **Ct value, the higher the viral load**-because the virus has been spotted after fewer cycles.
- It has been found that the **time since the onset of symptoms has a stronger relationship with Ct values** as compared to the severity of the disease.

## What is Viral Load?

- It refers to the **amount of genetic material, commonly RNA**, of a virus present in an infected person's blood.
- This is expressed as the **total number of viral particles present in each millilitre of blood.**
- A higher viral load in the blood means that **the virus is replicating and the infection is progressing.**
- An infected person with a high viral load is **more likely to shed more virus particles**, in the process known as "viral shedding".

[Source: TH](#)

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## India has the Opportunity to Export more Wheat

### Why in News?

The [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#) may give India an opportunity to ship more wheat in the global markets.

### What are the Key Points?

- More than a quarter of the world's wheat export comes from Russia and Ukraine.
  - **Russia is the world's largest exporter of wheat**, accounting for more than 18% of international exports.
  - In 2019, **Russia and Ukraine together exported more than a quarter (25.4 %)** of the world's wheat.
- The **top five countries that exported** the highest dollar-value worth of wheat include Russia > United States > Canada > France > Ukraine.
- **Egypt is the world's biggest importer of wheat.**
- **Turkey is also a big spender on Russian and Ukrainian wheat** with 74% of its imports coming from those two countries in 2019.
- **India is the second largest producer of wheat** with a share of around 13.5% of world total production.
  - India produces **around 107.59 MT of wheat annually** while a major chunk of it goes towards domestic consumption.
  - India accounts for even **less than 1% in world wheat export**. However, its share has increased from 0.14% in 2016 to 0.54% in 2020.
- Presently, India's central pool stands at 24.2 million tonnes, **twice more than the buffer and strategic needs.**

## What are the Key Points related to Wheat?

### ▪ About

- **This is the second most important [cereal crop](#) in India after rice.**
- It is the main food crop, in north and north-western part of the country.
- Wheat is a **rabi crop** that requires a cool growing season and bright sunshine at the time of ripening.
- Success of the Green Revolution contributed to the growth of Rabi crops, especially wheat.
- Macro Management Mode of Agriculture, **[National Food Security Mission](#)** and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana are few government initiatives to support wheat cultivation.
- **Temperature:** Between 10-15°C (Sowing time) and 21-26°C (Ripening & Harvesting) with bright sunlight.
- **Rainfall:** Around 75-100 cm.
- **Soil Type:** Well-drained fertile loamy and clayey loamy (Ganga-Satluj plains and black soil region of the Deccan).
- **Top Wheat Producing States:** Uttar Pradesh > Punjab > Haryana > Madhya Pradesh > Rajasthan > Bihar > Gujarat

[Source: TH](#)

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## Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

### Why in News?

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment will distribute 4,800 daily living aids and assistive devices among 895 senior citizen beneficiaries under **[Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana \(RVY\)](#)**.

### What is Rashtriya Vayoshree Yojana?

#### ▪ About:

- It was launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It is a **[central sector scheme](#)** funded from the **Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund**. The fund was notified in the year 2016.
  - All unclaimed amounts from small savings accounts, PPF and EPF are transferred to this fund.

#### ▪ Aim:

- It aims to provide aids and assistive living devices to **[senior citizens](#) belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL)** category who suffer from **age-related disabilities such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth** and locomotor disabilities.
  - The aids and assistive devices, viz walking sticks, elbow crutches, walkers/crutches, tripods/quad pods, hearing aids, wheelchairs, artificial dentures and spectacles are provided to eligible beneficiaries.
  - As per the Census figures of 2011, the population of senior citizens in India is 10.38 crore. More than 70% of the population of senior citizens live in rural areas of the country. A sizeable percentage (5.2%) of the senior citizens suffers from some sort

of disabilities related to old age.

▪ **Implementation:**

- The Scheme is being implemented by the **Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO)**, a PSU (Public Sector Undertaking) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

## What are the other Schemes Related to Elderly?

- [SAMPANN Project](#)
- [SACRED Portal for Elderly](#)
- [Elder Line: Toll-Free Number for Elderly](#)
- [SAGE \(Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine\) Initiative](#)
- [Integrated Programme for Older Persons \(IPOP\)](#)
- [Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme \(IGNOAPS\).](#)
- [The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana](#)
- [Vayoshreshtha](#)
- [Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens \(MWPC\) Act, 2007](#)

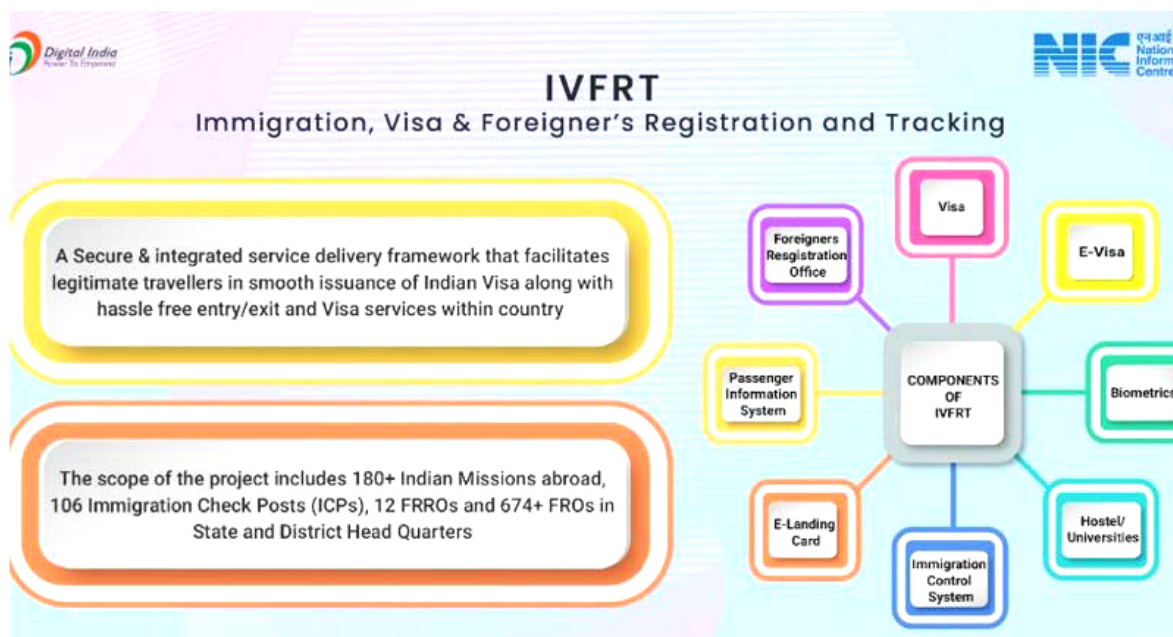
[Source: PIB](#)

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## IVFRT Scheme

### Why in News?

Recently, the Government has approved the continuation of the **Immigration Visa Foreigners Registration Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme** for a period till **31<sup>st</sup> March 2026** with a financial outlay of **Rs.1,364.88 crore**.



### What is the IVFRT Scheme?



- It **seeks to interlink and optimise functions** relating to immigration, visa issuance, registration of foreigners and tracking of their movements in the country.
- Its core objective is **modernisation and upgradation of immigration and visa services**.
- It has been identified and **included as one of the Mission Mode Projects to be undertaken by the Ministry of Home Affairs** under the [National e-Governance Plan \(NeGP\)](#).
- Currently, it covers **192 Indian missions across the globe, 108 Immigration Check Posts in India**, 12 Foreigners Regional Registration Officers and offices and more than 700 Foreigners Registration Officers, Superintendents of Police/Deputy Commissioners of Police across the country.
- After the commencement of IVFRT, the **number of visa and Overseas Citizen of India cards issued increased from 44.43 lakh in 2014 to 64.59 lakh in 2019** at a **Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 7.7%**.

[Source: PIB](#)

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