



## Designating Russia as a 'State Sponsor of Terrorism'

**For Prelims:** Location of Russia, International Atomic Energy Agency, UNHRC, UNSC

**For Mains:** Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, Russia-Ukraine Conflict and its impact on global geopolitics

### Why in News?

Recently, Ukraine has requested US to **designate Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism"**.

- The designation would **activate perhaps the harshest suite of sanctions available with the US** against Russia.



### What is Terrorist Designation?

- **About:**
  - The US Secretary of State (the minister primarily in charge of foreign relations) has the power to designate countries that **"have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism"** as **"State Sponsors of Terrorism"**.
  - The US can **place four categories of sanctions on countries** that are on this list:
    - Restrictions on US foreign assistance
    - A ban on defence exports and sales
    - Certain controls over exports of dual use items
    - Miscellaneous financial and other restrictions
  - Sanctions can **also be placed on countries and persons** that engage in certain trade

with designated countries.

▪ **Countries on the List:**

- As of now, there are **four countries on the list** of state sponsors of terrorism.
  - **Syria** (Designated on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1979)
  - **Iran** (Designated on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1984),
  - **North Korea** (Designated on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017).
  - **[Cuba was re-designated](#)** as a state sponsor of terrorism on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021

## What are the Statutes which authorise Designation?

- There are currently **three statutes that authorise the Secretary of State to designate a foreign government** for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism:
  - **Foreign Assistance Act of 1961:** It prohibits the transfer of most aid,
  - **Arms Export Control Act (AECA):** It **prohibits exports, credits, guarantees, other financial assistance, and export licensing** overseen by the State Department, and
  - **Export Controls Act of 2018**
- Of these three statutes, **only the AECA identifies objectionable activities** as part of the definition while none of the three Acts defines the overarching term **“international terrorism.**

## What has been India’s Stand on Russia - Ukraine Conflict?

- Initially, India **abstained** on a US-sponsored **[United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#)** resolution that deplores in the strongest terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine.
- India again **abstained** from voting at the UNSC on the Russia drafted resolution on the Humanitarian situation in Ukraine which demanded that calling for a negotiated ceasefire for enabling safe, rapid, voluntary and unhindered evacuation of civilians.
  - Unlike during the past abstentions relating to Ukraine, it was the **first time that India sided with the West in this conflict (even if by an abstention).**
- India **[abstained on a vote at the UN Human Rights Council](#)** in Geneva. The Council moved the resolution to set up an international commission of enquiry into Russia’s actions in Ukraine.
- India, China and 33 other nations recently abstained from a **[United Nations General Assembly](#)** resolution that censured Russia for its military actions in Ukraine.
- India also abstained from the **[International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#)** resolution that was related to safety at four nuclear power stations and a number of nuclear waste sites including **[Chernobyl](#)**, as the Russians seized control of them.

## Way Forward

- The **Russia’s attack on Ukraine**, although a gross violation of international law, is not terrorism for the purposes of this designation but Russia has provided plenty of other grounds in the past decade.
  - To designate a country as a state sponsor of terrorism, the secretary of state **must determine that the nation’s government has repeatedly provided support for acts** of international terrorism, such as assassinations or financing terrorist groups.
- India has good ties with both the countries. If the tension between the two - USA and Russia escalates, it is **important for India to rationally balance the relationships.**
  - India’s relations with Russia are not as multifaceted as India’s ties with the U.S., Europe, or even Japan. They are focused primarily on energy and defence.
  - India-Russia bilateral trade stands at only USD 11 billion — but Indian purchases of Russian military equipment are its most significant element.

**[Source: IE](#)**

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# National Cyber Security Strategy

**For Prelims:** Data Security Council of India (DSCI), Government Initiatives for Cyber Security, Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), Related Initiatives

**For Mains:** Challenges to Internal Security Through Communication Networks, National Cyber Security Strategy, Cyber Security

## Why in News?

In 2020, the [National Cyber Security Strategy](#) was conceptualised by the [Data Security Council of India \(DSCI\)](#) headed by **Lt General Rajesh Pant**. The report focused on 21 areas to ensure a safe, secure, trusted, resilient, and vibrant cyberspace for India.

- However, amid a surge in [cyberattacks on India's networks](#), the Centre is yet to implement the **National Cyber Security Strategy**.

# STATE OF INDIAN CYBERSECURITY

Indian cybersecurity product ecosystem grew from 175 firms mapped in 2018 to 225 in 2020

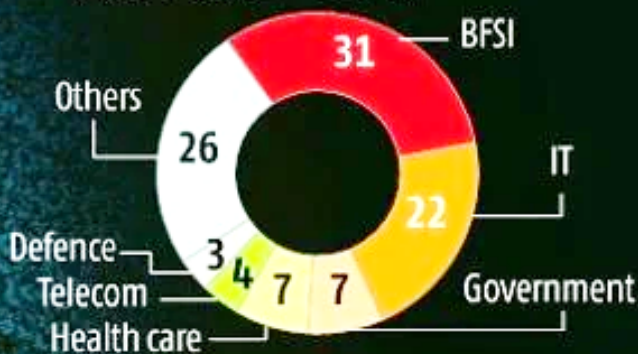


Cybersecurity products industry revenue grew from \$275 mn in 2016 to \$1060 mn in 2020

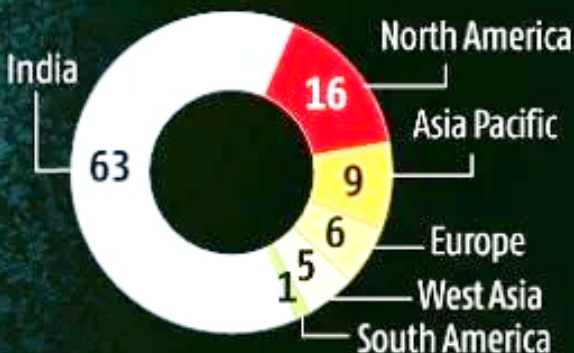
Figures in \$ mn



## REVENUE SPLIT BY SECTOR



## REVENUE SPLIT BY GEOGRAPHY



## KEY PRODUCTS IN DEMAND

**PERIMETER SECURITY:** Multi-factor authentication and user entity behaviour analytic, software defined networking in a wide area network

**GATEWAY SECURITY:** Anti-phishing tools, web application security, e-mail security

**OPERATION SECURITY:** Endpoint detection and response, managed detection and response, and security orchestration, automation and response

**CLOUD SECURITY:** For the longer-term, businesses are prioritising investments in cloud security and cloud workload protection platform

**CYBERSECURITY FRAMEWORKS:** Zero test, continuous adaptive risk and trust assessment (CARTA) and active defence

## What is the Need for a National Cyber Security Strategy?

- **Increasing Number Of Cyber Attacks:** As per **American cybersecurity firm Palo Alto Networks' 2021 report**, Maharashtra was the **most targeted state in India** — facing 42% of all ransomware attacks.
  - The report stated that India is among the more **economically profitable regions for hacker groups** and hence these hackers ask Indian firms to pay a ransom, usually using cryptocurrencies, in order to regain access to the data.
  - **One in four Indian organisations suffered a ransomware attack in 2021** — higher than the global average of 21%.
- **Cyber Warfare Offensives:**
  - The **US** is just one of many countries that have invested significant amounts of money in developing not just defences against attack, but the ability to mount **damaging cyber warfare offensives**.
  - The countries which are believed to have the most developed cyber warfare capabilities are the **US, China, Russia, Israel and the United Kingdom**.
- **Increased Digital usage Post-Covid:**



- Critical infrastructure is getting **digitised in a very fast way** — this includes financial services, banks, power, manufacturing, nuclear power plants, etc.
- **For Protecting Critical Sectors:**
  - It is particularly significant given the increasing interconnectedness of sectors and proliferation of entry points into the internet, which could further grow with the **adoption of 5G**.
  - There were **6.97 lakh cyber security incidents** reported in the first eight months of 2020, nearly equivalent to the previous four years combined, according to information reported to and tracked by the [Indian Computer Emergency Response Team \(CERT-In\)](#).
- **Recent Cyber Attacks:**
  - There has been a steep rise in the use of resources like [malware](#) by a Chinese group called **Red Echo to target “a large swathe” of India’s power sector**.
  - Red Echo used malware called **ShadowPad, which involves the use of a backdoor to access servers**.
  - The Chinese hacker group known as **Stone Panda had “identified gaps and vulnerabilities** in the IT infrastructure and supply chain software of Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India.
- **For Government:**
  - A local, state or central government maintains a huge amount of confidential data related to the **country (geographical, military-strategic assets etc.)** and citizens.
- **For Individuals:**
  - Photos, videos and other personal information shared by an individual on social networking sites can be inappropriately used by others, leading to serious and even life-threatening incidents.
- **For Businesses:**
  - Companies have a lot of data and information on their systems.
  - A cyber attack may lead to loss of **competitive information** (such as patents or original work), and loss of employees/customers’ private data resulting in complete loss of public trust in the integrity of the organisation.

## What are the Main Components of the National Cyber Security Strategy?

- **Large Scale Digitisation of Public Services:** Focus on security in the early stages of design in all digitisation initiatives.
  - **Developing institutional capability** for assessment, evaluation, certification, and rating of the core devices
  - Timely reporting of vulnerabilities and incidents.
- **Supply Chain Security:** Monitoring and mapping of the supply chain of the **Integrated Circuits (ICT)** and electronics products.
  - Leveraging the country’s [semiconductor](#) design capabilities globally at strategic, tactical and technical levels.
- **Critical Information Infrastructure Protection:** Integrating **Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA)** security
  - Maintaining a repository of vulnerabilities.
  - Preparing an aggregate level **security baseline of the sector** and tracking its controls.
  - Devising **audit parameters for threat preparedness** and developing cyber-insurance products.
- **Digital Payments:** Mapping and modelling of devices and platforms deployed, supply chain, transacting entities, payment flows, **interfaces and data exchange**.
- **State-Level Cyber Security:** Developing state-level cybersecurity policies,
  - Allocation of dedicated funds,
  - Critical scrutiny of digitization plans,
  - Guidelines for security architecture, operations, and governance.
- **Security of Small And Medium Businesses:** Policy intervention in cybersecurity granting incentives for a higher level of cybersecurity preparedness.
  - Developing security standards, frameworks, and architectures for the adoption of the [Internet of Things \(IoT\)](#) and [industrialisation](#).

## What steps does the report suggest?

- **Budgetary Provisions:** A minimum allocation of **0.25% of the annual [budget](#)**, which can be **raised upto 1%** has been recommended to be set aside for cyber security.
  - In terms of separate ministries and agencies, **15-20% of the IT/technology expenditure should be earmarked for cybersecurity.**
  - It also suggests setting up a **Fund of Funds for cybersecurity** and providing Central funding to States to build capabilities in the same field.
- **Research, Innovation, Skill-Building And Technology Development:** The report suggests investing in modernisation and **digitisation of ICT**, setting up a short and long term agenda for cyber security via outcome-based programs and providing investments in deep-tech **cyber security innovation.**
  - DSCI further recommends creating a '**cyber security services**' with cadres chosen from the **Indian Engineering Services.**
- **Crisis Management:** For adequate preparation to handle a crisis, DSCI recommends **holding cybersecurity drills** which include real-life scenarios with their ramifications.
- **Cyber Insurance:** Cyber insurance being a yet to be researched field, must have an actuarial science to **address cybersecurity risks in business and technology** scenarios as well as calculate threat exposures.
- **Cyber Diplomacy:** Cyber diplomacy plays a huge role in **shaping India's global relations.** Hence cyber security preparedness of key regional blocks like [Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation \(BIMSTEC\)](#) and [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#) must be ensured via programs, exchanges and industrial support.
  - To further better diplomacy, the government should promote brand India as a responsible player in cyber security and also create '**Cyber envoys**' for the key countries/regions
- **Cybercrime Investigation:** With the increase in cybercrime across the world, the report recommends unburdening the judicial system by creating laws to resolve spamming and fake news.
  - It also suggests charting a **5-year roadmap factoring possible technology** transformation, setting up exclusive courts to deal with cybercrimes and removing the backlog of cybercrime.
  - Moreover, DSCI suggests advanced forensic training for agencies to keep up in the age of AI/ML, [Blockchain](#), IoT, Cloud, Automation.

## What are Present Government Initiatives for Cyber Security?

- [Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative.](#)
- [Cyber Swachhta Kendra.](#)
- [Online cybercrime reporting portal.](#)
- [Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre \(I4C\).](#)
- [National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre \(NCIIPC\).](#)
- [Information Technology Act, 2000.](#)

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q. The terms 'WannaCry, Petya and EternalBlue' sometimes mentioned in the news recently are related to (2018)**

- (a) Exoplanets
- (b) Cryptocurrency
- (c) Cyber attacks
- (d) Mini satellites

**Ans: (c)**

- Ransomware is a form of malicious software (or malware). Once it takes over the computer, it threatens users with harm, usually by denying access to data. The attacker demands a ransom from the victim, promising to restore access to the data upon payment.
- WannaCry, Petya and EternalBlue are a few of the ransom ware, which created havoc by demanding the victim ransom payment in bitcoin ([cryptocurrency](#)).

[Source: TH](#)

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## Award for Excellence to UDAN Scheme

**For Prelims:** UDAN, Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration, Civil Service Day.

**For Mains:** Significance of UDAN Scheme in improving Aerial connectivity. Achievements under UDAN Scheme.

### Why in News?

Recently, the [UDAN \(UdeDeshkaAamNagrik\)](#) Scheme has been selected for [Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration 2020](#) under the category "**Innovation (General) - Central**".

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation will receive the award on [21<sup>st</sup> April, i.e. Civil Service Day](#). The government of India celebrates Civil Services Day, every year as an **occasion for the civil servants to rededicate themselves** to the cause of serving citizens and renew their commitments to public service and excellence in work.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation plans and commits to construct **100 new airports by 2024 in India with 1,000 new routes under UDAN Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) scheme by the year 2026**.

### What is the PMs Award for Excellence in Public Administration?

- **About:**
  - It was constituted in 2006 by the Government of India **to acknowledge, recognize and reward the extraordinary and innovative work done** by districts and organisations of the Central and State Governments.
  - The award consists of **a trophy, scroll and an incentive of Rs. 10 lakh to the awarded district or organisation** to be utilised for implementation of project/ programme or bridging resource gaps in any area of public welfare.
- **Restructuring:**
  - The Scheme was restructured in **2014** for recognizing the **performance of District Collectors in Priority Programs, Innovations and Aspirational Districts**.
  - The Scheme was restructured again in **2020, to recognize the performance of District Collectors towards economic development of the District**.
  - The Scheme has been **revamped** with a new approach in **2021** with the **objective to encourage Constructive Competition, Innovation, Replication and Institutionalisation of Best Practices**.
    - Under this approach emphasis would be on [good governance](#), **qualitative achievement and last mile connectivity**, rather than only on achievement of quantitative targets.

## What is the UDAN Scheme?

- **Launch:**
  - It was launched as a RCS under the Ministry of Civil Aviation in **2016**.
- **Objectives:**
  - To develop the **regional aviation market**.
  - To provide affordable, economically viable and profitable air travel on **regional routes to the common man even in small towns**.
- **Features:**
  - The scheme **envisages providing connectivity to un-served and underserved airports of the country through the revival of existing air-strips and airports**. The scheme is operational for a period of 10 years.
    - Under-served airports are those which do not have more than one flight a day, while **unserved airports are those where there are no operations**.
  - **Financial incentives from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended** to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and under-served airports, and keep airfares affordable.

## What are the Achievements of UDAN?

- **Connecting Northeast:** Till date, **387 routes and 60 airports** have been operationalised out of which 100 routes are awarded in the North East alone.
  - Under the **KRISHI UDAN Scheme**, 16 airports have been identified to enhance the export opportunities of the North East region establishing dual benefits of enhancement of cargo movements and exports.
- **Economic Growth:** UDAN has a **positive impact on the economy of the country** and has witnessed an excellent response from industry stakeholders especially airlines operators and state governments.
- **Balanced Regional Growth:** More than **350 new city pairs are now scheduled to be connected under the scheme, with 200 already connected** and are widely spread geographically providing connectivity across the length and breadth of the country as well as ensuring balanced regional growth resulting in economic growth and employment to the local population.
  - The scheme led to development of new **GreenField Airports** such as **Pakyong** near Gangtok in Sikkim, **Tezu** in Arunachal Pradesh and **Kurnool** in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Increased Passenger Share:** The scheme led to **5% incremental growth in domestic passenger share** of non-metro airports.

## What are the Phases of UDAN?

- **UDAN 1.0:**
  - Under this phase, **5 airlines companies were awarded 128 flight routes to 70 airports** (including 36 newly made operational airports).
- **UDAN 2.0:**
  - In 2018, the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced **73 underserved and unserved airports**.
  - For the first time, helipads were also connected **under phase 2 of the UDAN scheme**.
- **UDAN 3.0:**
  - Inclusion of Tourism Routes under UDAN 3 in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism.
  - Inclusion of **Seaplanes for connecting Water Aerodromes**.
  - Bringing in a number of routes in the North-East Region under the ambit of UDAN.
- **UDAN 4.0:**
  - In 2020, **78 new routes were approved under the 4<sup>th</sup> round of RCS-UDAN** to further enhance the connectivity to remote & regional areas of the country.
  - Kavaratti, Agatti, and Minicoy islands of Lakshadweep will be connected by the new routes of UDAN 4.0.
- **UDAN 4.1:**
  - The **UDAN 4.1 focuses on connecting smaller airports**, along with special helicopter



- and seaplane routes.
- Some new routes have been proposed under the [Sagarmala Seaplane services](#).
  - Sagarmala Seaplane Services is an ambitious project under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways with potential airline operators.

## Way Forward

- Airlines have leveraged the scheme **strategically towards gaining additional slots** at congested tier-1 airports, monopoly status on routes and lower operational costs. Thus, **stakeholders should work towards making the UDAN scheme sustainable on its own and improve its efficiency.**
- Airlines should undertake marketing initiatives so that more and more people can take advantage of the UDAN scheme.
- More infrastructure is required for the **successful implementation of the scheme across the country.**

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products Scheme

**For Prelims:** Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme, Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS)

**For Mains:** Export Promotion, Government Policies & Interventions

## Why in News

Recently, the government had left out sectors such as **iron and steel, chemicals and pharmaceuticals**, from the [Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products \(RoDTEP\) scheme](#).

- These sectors were omitted from the scheme, as **iron and steel** were **'already booming'** and the [pharma industry's](#) business had also increased during the [pandemic](#).

## What is the RoDTEP Scheme?

- **About:**
  - The RoDTEP scheme would **refund to exporters the embedded central, state and local duties or taxes that were so far not been rebated or refunded** and were, therefore, placing India's exports at a disadvantage.
  - The rebate under the scheme **would not be available** in respect of duties and taxes already exempted or remitted or credited.
- **Launch:**
  - It was **started in January 2021** as a replacement for the [Merchandise Export from India Scheme \(MEIS\)](#), which was not compliant with the rules of the [World Trade Organisation](#).
    - The MEIS scheme provided additional benefits of **2% to 7% on the Freight On Board (FOB) value** of eligible exports.

- For garment exporters, the [Rebate of State and Central Levies and Taxes \(RoSCTL\) Scheme](#) has been notified separately.
- **Rates:**
  - The tax refund rates **range from 0.5% to 4.3%** for various sectors.
  - The rebate will have to be claimed as **a percentage of the Freight On Board value of exports.**
- **Issuance:**
  - Rebates will be issued in the form of a **transferable duty credit/ electronic scrip (e-scrip)** which will be maintained in an electronic ledger by the [Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs \(CBIC\)](#).

## What is the Significance of the RoDTEP scheme?

- **Enhance India's Competitiveness:**
  - The reimbursement of taxes such as duty on power charges, [Value-Added Tax](#) on fuel in transportation, [Farm Sector](#) etc. will make Indian products competitive in global markets.
  - It is expected to significantly **impact India's competitiveness**, trade flows and export numbers over the next **5-10 years**.
- **Par with International Standards:**
  - Indian exporters will be able to meet the international standards for exports **as affordable testing and certification will be made available to exporters** within the country instead of relying on international organizations.
  - This would **increase the economy of the country and the working capital** for the enterprise.-
- **Automated Tax Assessment:**
  - Also under it, **tax assessment is set to become fully automatic for exporters.**
  - Businesses will get access to their refunds for [GST \(Goods and Services Tax\)](#) via an automatic refund route.

## Freight on Board

- Also called Free on Board (FOB) is a term used to **indicate who is liable for goods damaged or destroyed during shipping.**
  - "**FOB origin**" means the buyer is at risk and takes ownership of goods once the seller ships the product.
  - "**FOB destination**" means the seller retains the risk of loss until the goods reach the buyer.
- The terms of FOB **affect the buyer's inventory cost**, adding liability for shipped goods increases inventory costs and reduces net income.

[Source: TH](#)

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## World Haemophilia Day

**For Prelims:** World Haemophilia Day, World Federation of Haemophilia.

**For Mains:** Haemophilia and its treatment, Health.

## Why in News?

**World Haemophilia day** is celebrated on **17<sup>th</sup> April every year**, aiming to increase awareness about haemophilia and other inherited bleeding disorders.

- The day is **celebrated in the honour of Frank Schnabel**, founder of the World Federation of Haemophilia (WHF).
- **This year's (2022) theme** is "Access for All: Partnership. Policy. Progress. Engaging your government, integrating inherited bleeding disorders into national policy".

## What is Haemophilia?

- **About:**
  - Haemophilia is a medical condition, **mostly inherited, in which the ability of blood to clot is severely reduced**, so that even a **minor injury can cause severe bleeding**.
    - Haemophilia is caused by a mutation or change, in one of the genes, that provides instructions for making the clotting factor proteins needed to form a blood clot.
    - This change or mutation can prevent the clotting protein from working properly or to be missing altogether. These genes are **located on the X chromosome**.
  - Because of the genetics involved in the way the sex of a child is determined, **men are more vulnerable** to haemophilia than women.
  - It is quite a rare disease, about 1 in 10,000 people are born with it.
- **Types:**
  - The most common type of Haemophilia **is called Haemophilia A**. This means the person does not have enough **clotting factor VIII (factor eight)**.
  - **Haemophilia B is less common**. A person with Haemophilia B does not have enough **factor IX (factor nine)**.
    - Haemophilia A, occurs in about 1 in 5,000 births, while Haemophilia B is even rarer at about 1 in about 20,000 births.
- **Symptoms:**
  - Big bruises.
  - Bleeding into muscles and joints.
  - Spontaneous bleeding (sudden bleeding inside the body for no clear reason).
  - Prolonged bleeding after getting a cut, removing a tooth, or having surgery.
- **Treatment:**
  - The main treatment for Haemophilia is **Replacement Therapy**.
  - Concentrates of clotting factor VIII (for Haemophilia A) or clotting factor IX (for Haemophilia B) are slowly dripped or injected into a vein. These infusions help replace the clotting factor that is missing or low.

## What is the Indian Scenario of Haemophilia?

- According to the World Federation of Haemophilia's Annual Global Survey 2017, there were over **1.96 lakh persons living with haemophilia across the world in 2017**.
- In the country-wise data, **India emerges with the highest count at nearly 19,000**.
- It is estimated that 80% cases go unregistered, so that the actual count is close to 2 lakh.

## REGISTERED CASES

India	18,966
US	17,750
China	14,390
Brazil	12,432
France	7,524
World	1,96,706

### What is the World Federation of Haemophilia (WFH)?

- It is an international not-for-profit organization that was established in 1963.
- It is a global network of patient organizations in 140 countries and has official recognition from the World Health Organization.
- Its mission is to improve and sustain care for people with inherited bleeding disorders around the world.

[Source: IE](#)

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## World Heritage Day

### Why in News?

Every year, 18<sup>th</sup> April is celebrated as **International Day for Monuments and Sites**, also known as '[World Heritage Day](#)'.

- The theme for World Heritage Day 2022 is "**Heritage and Climate**".

### What is World Heritage Day?

- The **International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)** established the day in 1982 and the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) approved it in 1983.
- The aim of the day is to **create awareness about Heritage among communities**.

### What are UNESCO's World Heritage Sites?

- A [World Heritage Site](#) is a place that is listed by UNESCO for its special cultural or physical significance.
- The list of World Heritage Sites is maintained by the international 'World Heritage Programme', **administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee**.
- This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the

World Cultural and Natural Heritage, **adopted by UNESCO in 1972.**

## What are the World Heritage Sites in India?

- India is home to a total of **3691 monuments and sites**. Of these **40 are designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.
- Including places like the Taj Mahal, [Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves](#). World Heritage Sites also include natural sites like the [Kaziranga National Park in Assam](#).
  - Harappan city of [Dholavira](#) in Gujarat as India's **40<sup>th</sup> world heritage site**.
  - [Ramappa Temple \(Telangana\)](#) was India's 39th World Heritage Site.
  - [Khangchendzonga National Park](#), Sikkim has been inscribed as India's first and the only "Mixed World Heritage Site".
- In 2022, the Union Ministry of Culture **nominated [Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas temples](#)** for consideration as a **World Heritage site** for the year **2022-2023**.

## What is UNESCO?

- It was founded in 1945 to develop the "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" as a means of building lasting peace. It is located in **Paris, France**.
- **Major Initiatives of UNESCO:**
  - [Man and Biosphere Programme](#)
  - [World Heritage Programme](#)
  - [Global Geopark Network](#)
  - [Network of Creative Cities](#)
  - [Atlas of World Languages in Danger](#)

## What is ICOMOS?

- It is a **global non-governmental organization** associated with UNESCO. It is located in Paris, France.
- Its mission is to promote the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of monuments, building complexes and sites.
- It is an **Advisory Body of the World Heritage Committee** for the implementation of the **World Heritage Convention of UNESCO**.
  - As such, it reviews the nominations of cultural world heritage and ensures the conservation status of properties.
- Its **creation in 1965** is the logical outcome of initial conversations between architects, historians and international experts that began in the early twentieth century and that materialized in the adoption of the Venice Charter in 1964.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q. Recently, which one of the following was included in the UNESCO's World Heritage list? (2009)**

- (a) Dilwara Temple
- (b) Kalka-Shimla Railway
- (c) Bhiterkanika Mangrove Area
- (d) Visakhapatnam to Araku valley railway line

**Ans: (b)**



- **Kalka-Shimla Railway:** It is a 96-km long, single track working rail link built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to provide a service to the highland town of Shimla.
- The historic, approximately 111 years old Kalka- Shimla Railway line, became a UNESCO declared World Heritage railway line, in 2008 and is listed under “Mountain Railways of India”.

[Source: LM](#)

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## 40th Hunar Haat

### Why in News

Recently, the 40<sup>th</sup> edition of the '[Hunar Haat](#)' was inaugurated in **Mumbai**. In this edition, more than a thousand craftsmen and artisans coming from **31 states and Union Territories** participated.

### What are Key Points Associated with Hunar Haat?

- **About:**

- Hunar Haat has been conceptualized **to protect and promote the country's ancestral legacy of arts and crafts** in the current global competition and to support the traditional artisans and craftsmen.
- The artisans selected in the Hunar Haat exhibition are those whose **forefathers were involved in such traditional handmade work** and are still continuing the profession.

- **Theme:**

- [Vocal for Local](#) and “**Best from Waste**”.

- **Aim:**

- To provide market **exposure and employment opportunities** to artisans, craftsmen and traditional culinary experts.
- **Boosting the skills** of craftsmen, weavers and artisans who are already engaged in the traditional ancestral work.

- **Organizer:**

- These are organized by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under [USTTAD \(Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development\) scheme](#).
  - The USTTAD scheme aims to promote and preserve the rich heritage of the traditional arts & crafts of the minority communities.

- **Significance:**

- [Aatmanirbhar Bharat](#) is being strengthened by initiatives like Hunar Haat.
- Skill training is provided so that you do not become job-seekers, instead become job-givers.

- **For Example:**

- [‘Tejas’a skilling programme](#) which has been launched by the Government of India.
- Under this initiative, India will send skilled manpower to the UAE. Within a year, 30,000 skilled job-seekers will be sent to the UAE.
- Through Hunar Haats one will get to witness [‘Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’](#) and

experience the essence of '[Unity in Diversity](#)'.

## Way Forward

- The **Ministry of Minority Affairs** should examine the feasibility of conducting short term Skill training courses concurrently in the **future edition of Hunar Haats planned across the country**.
- Also, the Ministry of Minority Affairs can tie up with the **universities, colleges and schools so that students** can be brought to the Expo and given demonstrations about how '**Best from Waste**' can be created.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Vaquita Porpoise

### Why in News?

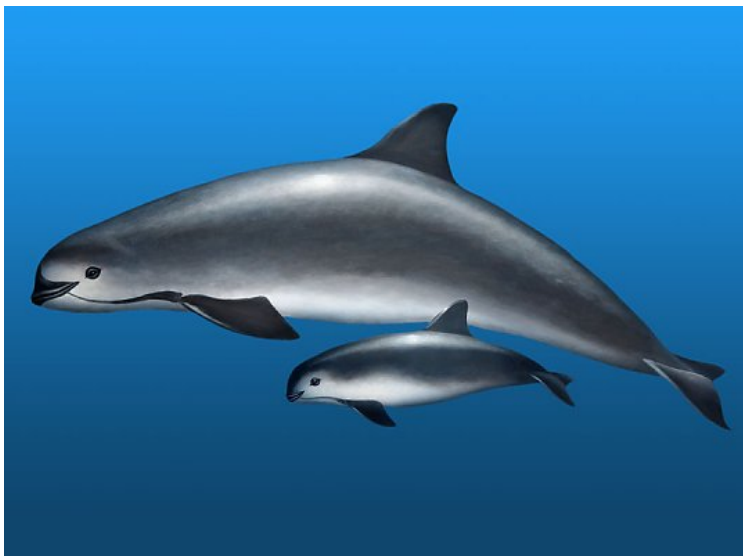
According to the United States Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), **Vaquita porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*)** is nearing extinction and immediate measures are needed to save the remaining population.

### What are Porpoises?

- Porpoises are among the smallest members of the [cetacean family](#) (**whales, porpoises and dolphins**).
- They are only **distant relatives of dolphins** (they last had a common ancestor roughly 15 million years ago).
- There are only seven species of porpoise; the most popular being the widely distributed harbour porpoise.
- Many species, including the **vaquita, are barely studied**. Most of what we know about them comes from examining animals that have been washed ashore.

### What is Vaquita Porpoise?

- **About:**



- The vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*) is the world's smallest cetacean. Its name means "**little cow**" in Spanish.
- It has a dark ring around the eyes **is its most striking feature**, along with a proportionally **large dorsal fin**.
- It is unique **among the porpoises as it is the only species of that family found in warm waters**, and the size of the dorsal fin is believed to be an adaptation to that, allowing for extra body heat to dissipate.
- Like many other species of porpoise, vaquita tend to be shy and elusive, avoiding boats when approached.
- **Habitats:**
  - Found only in the northern Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez) in Mexico. Most commonly seen in shallow waters up to 50 metres deep.
- **Threats:**
  - The vaquita population has been in sharp decline for decades, recently accelerated by **illegal fishing with gill-nets for the vulnerable totoaba**, a large fish sought after for its swim bladder.
  - The small animal frequently gets caught in fixed fishing nets (gill-nets), as by-catch.
- **Protection Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered.
  - **CITES:** Appendix I

**[Source: DTE](#)**

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