



Caste Based Discrimination

Prelims: Caste System, Important articles of the Constitution, Related government schemes

Mains: Role of caste in society and economy, Status of caste system, Initiatives

Why in News?

Recently, Seattle became **the first U.S. city to ban caste-based discrimination**. It included caste as a class to be protected against discrimination, alongside race, gender, and religion.

- It has been hailed by anti-caste movement activists as a historic win.

What is the Status of Social Discrimination in India?

▪ About:

- **Caste**, through its **rigid social control** and networks **facilitates economic mobility for some and erects barriers for others** by mounting disadvantages on them.
- It also **shapes the ownership pattern** of land and capital and simultaneously regulates **access to political, social, and economic capital** too.
- According to the **Census (2011)**, there are an estimated **20 crore Dalits** in India.

▪ **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Data:**

- In **2021, 50,900 cases of crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs)** were registered, an increase of 1.2% over 2020 (50,291 cases).
- The **rate of crime** was particularly **high in Madhya Pradesh** (63.6 per lakh in a SC population of 113.4 lakh) and **Rajasthan** (61.6 per lakh in a SC population of 112.2 lakh).

▪ **India Discrimination Report by Oxfam India:**

- **Decline in discrimination in Urban Areas:** It has been the case due to education and supportive government policies.
- **Difference in Earning:** The average earning of self-employed workers in 2019-20 was Rs 15,878 for people from non-SCs/ST categories, while it is Rs 10,533 for those from SC or ST backgrounds.
 - Self-employed **non-SC/ST workers earn a third more than** their counterparts from **SC or ST backgrounds**.
- **Rise in Discrimination in Rural areas:** The SC and ST communities in rural India are facing an increase in discrimination in casual employment.

What are the Safeguards against Discrimination in India?

▪ **Constitutional Provisions:**

◦ **Equality Before Law:**

- **Article 14** says that no person shall be denied treatment of equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
- The right is extended to all persons whether citizens or foreigners, statutory corporations, companies, registered societies or any other type of legal person.

◦ **Prohibition of Discrimination:**

- **Article 15** of the Constitution of India states that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.
- **Equality of Opportunity:**
 - **Article 16** of the Constitution of India states that there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters of employment under the State. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth or any of them, be ineligible for any office under the State.
- **Abolition of Untouchability:**
 - **Article 17 of the constitution** abolishes **Untouchability**.
- **Promotion of Educational and Socio-economic Interests:**
 - **Article 46** requires the State 'to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- **Claims of Schedule Castes:**
 - **Article 335** provides that the claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.
- **Reservation in Legislature:**
 - **Article 330 and Article 332** of the Constitution respectively provide for reservation of seats in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and in the legislative assemblies of the States.
- **Reservation in Local Bodies:**
 - **Under Part IX relating to the Panchayats and Part IXA** of the Constitution relating to the Municipalities, reservation for SC and ST in local bodies has been envisaged and provided.

What are the Related Government Initiatives?

- **Land Reforms:**
 - **Land reforms** were brought for more equitable distribution of land and upliftment of the marginalised. The Land Reforms of the independent India had four components:
 - The Abolition of the Intermediaries
 - Tenancy Reforms
 - Fixing Ceilings on Landholdings
 - Consolidation of Landholdings.
- **Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950 (amended in 1956 & 1990):**
 - It recognized **Hindu Dalits**, Dalits who had converted to **Sikhism and Buddhism** as Scheduled Castes. The Supreme Court is hearing a bunch of petitions now seeking **inclusion of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims as Scheduled Castes**.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):**
 - It aims to mobilise youth to take up skill training with the aim of increasing productivity and aligning the training and certification to the needs of the country.
- **SANKALP Scheme:**
 - Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood (SANKALP) is an outcome-oriented programme of the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** with a special focus on decentralised planning and quality improvement.
- **Stand Up India Scheme:**
 - It was launched in April 2016 to promote entrepreneurship at the grass-root level focusing on economic empowerment and job creation.
 - To leverage the institutional credit structure to reach out to the underserved sector of people such as SCs, STs and Women Entrepreneurs.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana:**
 - It provides funding to the non-corporate small business sector through various last-mile financial institutions like Banks, **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** and **Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs)**.
 - Loans have been given to disadvantaged sections of society such as women entrepreneurs,

SC/ST/OBC borrowers, Minority community borrowers, etc. The focus has also been on new entrepreneurs.

Way Forward

- **Effective Implementation of Laws and Policies** to protect marginalized communities, such as Dalits and Adivasis, against discrimination.
- **Education and Awareness-Raising** among people, especially in rural areas, to highlight the harmful effects of caste discrimination and the violation of constitutional rights.
- **Economic Empowerment of Marginalized Communities** through schemes such as Stand-Up India, PMKVY, and Mudra Yojana, along with **2nd generation land reforms** for more equitable distribution of land, and
- **Collaboration and Dialogue among Civil Society** organizations, government agencies, and marginalized communities to address caste discrimination.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to 'Stand Up India Scheme', which of the following statements is/are correct? (2016)

1. Its purpose is to promote entrepreneurship among SC/ST and women entrepreneurs.
2. It provides for refinance through SIDBI.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (c)

- Stand Up India Scheme was launched on 5th April, 2016. It seeks to promote entrepreneurship among Scheduled Caste/Schedule Tribe and Women. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Scheme is expected to benefit a large number of such entrepreneurs, as it is intended to facilitate at least two such projects per bank branch (Scheduled Commercial Bank) on an average one for each category of entrepreneur.
- Refinance window through Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) with an initial amount of `10, 000 crore. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Mains

Q1. Has caste lost its relevance in understanding the multi-cultural Indian Society? Elaborate your answer with illustrations. **(2020)**

Q2. "Caste system is assuming new identities and associational forms. Hence caste system cannot be eradicated in India." Comment. **(2018)**

Q3. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)? **(2017)**

Q4. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, despite having divergent approaches and strategies, had a common goal of amelioration of the downtrodden. Elucidate. **(2015)**

Q5. Debate the issue of whether and how contemporary movements for assertion of Dalit identity work towards annihilation of caste. **(2015)**

Human Immunodeficiency Virus

For Prelims: Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Bone-marrow transplant, CCR5-delta 32 Mutation.

For Mains: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome stage (AIDS), Antiretroviral therapy, Stem Cell Transplant.

Why in News?

An old man from Germany, referred to as the **Dusseldorf patient**, has become at least the **third person to have been “cured of HIV”** with the virus not being detectable in his body even four years after stopping the medicine.

- This was achieved with a **bone-marrow transplant** from people carrying a specific **HIV-resistant genetic mutation**.

What are the Other Reported Recoveries from HIV?

- A Berlin patient became the first person to **overcome HIV after receiving two stem cell transplants** in 2007 and 2008 for his blood cancer.
 - The doctors selected a donor with a **genetic mutation called CCR5-delta 32** that makes carriers almost immune to HIV.
- In 2019, **similar results were replicated in the London patient**. Two more cases of successful treatment were reported in 2022.

What is CCR5-delta 32 Mutation?

- **Cysteine-cysteine chemokine receptor 5 (CCR5)** is the main **HIV co-receptor** involved in the virus and cell-to-cell spread.
- The CCR5 receptors on CD4 cells are used as a doorway by HIV. The **CCR5-delta 32 mutation prevents these receptors** from forming on CD4 cells, which effectively removes the doorway.
- **Only 1% of people worldwide have two copies of the mutation**, and **20% carry one copy, mostly those of European descent**. Those with the mutation are almost **immune to HIV**, although some cases have been reported.

What is HIV?

- **About:**
 - HIV stands for **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**, which is a virus that attacks the **immune system** in the human body.
 - It primarily **targets and damages CD4 immune cells**, which are essential for the **body's ability to fight infections and diseases**.

- Over time, HIV weakens the immune system, leaving the body **vulnerable to opportunistic infections and [cancers](#)**.

- **Transmission:**

- HIV is primarily spread through the exchange of certain bodily fluids such as **blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk**.

- **Severity:**

- If left untreated, the virus destroys a person's immune system and they are said to be in the **[Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome stage \(AIDS\)](#)** where they get **several opportunistic infections that may result in death**.

- **Cure:**

- Although there are **no cures for the infection at present**, the disease can be managed using **[antiretroviral therapy](#)**.
 - These medicines suppress the replication of the virus within the body, **allowing the number of CD4 immune cells to bounce back**.

What is Bone Marrow Transplant?

- A bone marrow transplant is a medical treatment that **replaces one's bone marrow with healthy cells**.
 - The **replacement cells can either come from the person's own body or from a donor**.
- A bone marrow transplant is also **called a stem cell transplant** or, more specifically, a hematopoietic stem cell transplant.
 - Transplantation can be used to treat certain types of cancer, such as **leukemia, myeloma and lymphoma**, and other blood and immune system diseases that affect the bone marrow.
- Bone marrow transplants may use cells from the same person (**autologous transplant**) or from a donor (**allogeneic transplant**).

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following diseases can be transmitted from one person to another through tattooing? (2013)

1. Chikungunya
2. Hepatitis B
3. HIV-AIDS

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

[Source: IE](#)

Menstrual Leaves

For Prelims: Public Interest Litigation, Right of Women to Menstrual Leave and Free Access to Menstrual Health Products Bill, 2022.

For Mains: Issues Related to Women, Attempts for Menstrual Leaves in India.

Why in News?

The [Supreme Court of India](#) rejected a PIL ([Public Interest Litigation](#)) regarding [menstrual leave](#) for workers and students across the country.

- The court called it a **policy matter** and pointed out that **menstrual pain leave has different dimensions** and may also act as a **disincentive for employers from engaging female employees**.

What Kind of Menstrual Leave Policies are in Place Globally?

- **About:**
 - **Menstrual leave** or period leave refers to all policies that allow **employees or students to take time off** when they are experiencing menstrual pain or discomfort.
- **Countries Promoting Menstrual Leaves:**
 - **Spain, Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea, Zambia, South Korea and Vietnam.**
 - Spain has **become the first European country** to grant paid menstrual leave to workers, with the **right to three days of menstrual leave per month**, which can be expanded to five days.

What Attempts for Menstrual Leaves are Being Made in India?

- Some companies in India have introduced [menstrual leave policies](#), including **Zomato**, which announced a 10-day paid period leave per year in **2020**.
 - Other companies, such as **Swiggy and Byjus**, have also followed suit.
- **Bihar and Kerala** are the only Indian states that have introduced menstrual leave policies for women.
 - **Bihar's policy was introduced in 1992**, allowing employees two days of paid menstrual leave every month.
 - **Kerala recently announced that the state's higher education department will grant menstrual and maternity leaves** for students in universities under the department, and a Kerala school has also introduced a similar system.

What are the Legislative Measures Being Taken Regarding Menstrual Leaves?

- **Attempts Made in the Past:**
 - Parliament has seen attempts to introduce menstrual leave and menstrual health products bills, but **they have not been successful so far**.
 - Example: **The Menstruation Benefits Bill, 2017'** and **Women's Sexual, Reproductive and Menstrual Rights Bill in 2018**.
- **Right of Women to Menstrual Leave and Free Access to Menstrual Health Products Bill, 2022:**
 - The proposed Bill provides for three days of paid leave for women and transwomen during the period of menstruation and seeks to extend the benefit for students.
 - The Bill cites research that indicates that approximately **40% of girls miss school during**

their periods, and nearly **65%** said it had an impact on their daily activities at school.

[Source: TH](#)

State of Rural India

Prelims: Union Budget 2023-24, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), health insurance, Pensions.

Mains: State of Rural India, challenges and Potential.

Why in News?

Rural India is already in distress, yet the [Union Budget 2023-24](#) did not offer much to revive the economic growth, instead **it made severe cuts in the allocations to subsidy schemes**, with some crucial schemes receiving marginal rises in allocations.

How has the Union Budget Fared for Rural India?

- **Agriculture and Allied Activities:**
 - There is marginal rise in the allocation of agriculture and allied activities, including [PM KISAN](#), from Rs 1.36 trillion crore in FY23 to Rs 1.44 trillion crore in FY24 (an increase of 5.8 %).
- **Agriculture Research and Development:**
 - On agriculture R&D, the allocation is only Rs 9,504 crore, although it is higher than Rs 8,658 crore in FY23.
 - This is only 0.4 % of agri gross value added, while other countries spend 1-2 % of [agri Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#).
- **Agri Subsidy:**
 - The **Food Subsidy saw a 31% cut** in this budget. It now has an allocation of Rs 197,350 crore, from Rs 287,194 crore last year.
 - **Fertilizer subsidy saw a 22% cut** from last year and now has an allocation of Rs 175,099 crore.
 - Subsidies on [Liquified Petroleum Gas \(LPG\)](#) for the poor have been reduced by 75% to Rs 2,257 crore now.
 - The budget for the **procurement of cotton by Cotton Corporation under Price Support Scheme** has been reduced to Rs 1 lakh from Rs 782 crore in 2022-23.

What is the State of Rural Economy?

- **About:**
 - As per the [Economic Survey 2022-23](#), 65% of India's population lives in the rural areas and **47% of the population is dependent on agriculture for livelihood**.
 - Contrary to the common perception about predominance of agriculture in the rural economy, about **two thirds of rural income is now generated in nonagricultural activities**.
 - According to the Economic Survey, the agriculture sector has grown at an **average annual growth rate of 4.6% in the past six years**. However, agriculture and **rural incomes are under stress for several reasons**.
- **Economic Situation:**

- **Before Pandemic:**
 - According to the **National Statistical Office**' Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of agricultural households for the 2018-19, showed the unprecedented crisis in India's economy driven by declining demand and supply disruptions.
 - Even before 2014, **there were signs of distress following a sharp slowdown in the economy** and a rise in input costs driven by rising wages, faulty implementation of India's fertilizer-subsidy reforms and higher fuel prices.
 - The back-to-back drought in 2014 and 2015 added to the misery.
 - But before the agricultural sector could revive in 2016, **demonetization** caused disruptions that left many farmers unable to sell.
 - Since then, the economy has experienced **a sharp slowdown, followed by the covid pandemic.**
- **After Pandemic:**
 - Per capita incomes in real terms in 2021-2022 are still below the 2018-2019 levels, and the overall growth between 2016-2017 and 2021-2022 is at its lowest level of **3.7% for any five-year period** in the last four decades.

What are the Challenges to the Rural Economy?

- **Inflation:**
 - The purchasing power of the rural population has declined due to higher **Inflation** in rural areas. Real rural wage growth **has been negative due to high inflation.**
 - Weak rural demand has been **a concern for fast-moving consumer goods** and other consumer durables, although we see a few green shoots now.
- **Agriculture Sector Issues:**
 - Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for many rural households in India.
 - Issues such as lack of **irrigation facilities, inadequate credit facilities, low prices for agricultural produce,** and unpredictable weather conditions can lead to crop failures, mounting debt, and declining incomes for farmers.
- **Lack of Rural Employment Opportunities:**
 - Limited employment opportunities in rural areas have forced **people to migrate to urban areas** in search of work, leading to **social and economic dislocation** of rural communities.
- **Poor Infrastructure:**
 - Lack of access to basic amenities such as water, electricity, healthcare, and education facilities in **rural areas have limited the potential** of these areas to develop and grow.
- **Inadequate Social Protection:**
 - Lack of adequate social protection mechanisms such as **health insurance, old age pensions, and disability benefits** has resulted in increased vulnerability of rural households.
- **Lack of Fiscal Autonomy:**
 - Panchayats **have only limited powers with regard to setting tax rates** and revenue base since broad parameters for such exercises are fixed by the state government.
 - Resultantly, the extent of vertical gap and volume of conditional grants are much higher.
 - It reduces the **fiscal autonomy** of the Grama Panchayats and allows only feeble scope for freedom of borrowing and development.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Rural Development in India?

- **Article 40** enshrines one of the **Directive Principles of State Policy** lays down that the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.
- Panchayati Raj Institutions was constitutionalized through the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992** to build democracy at the grass roots level and was entrusted with the task of rural development in the country.
- **The Eleventh Schedule** of the Constitution places as many as **29 functions within the purview of the Panchayati Raj bodies** including agricultural extension, land improvement, implementation of land reforms etc.
 - Panchayats are empowered to prepare plans for economic development and social justice

in respect of subjects as devolved by law to the various levels of Panchayats including the subjects as illustrated in Eleventh Schedule.

What are the Initiatives Related to Rural Empowerment?

- [Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana](#)
- [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act](#)
- [National Rural Livelihood Mission](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana](#)

Way Forward

- The Economic Survey 2022-23 highlights **the need for reorientation in the face of challenges** such as climate change, rising input costs, and low productivity.
- Investment in infrastructure and R&D needs to be increased by relooking at subsidies, and **focus is needed on diversification to millets, pulses, oilseeds**, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairying, and fisheries.
- The survey also **calls for attention to be given to the rural non-farm sector and for policies to revive incomes and employment for MSMEs.**
- States in India spend 60% of government expenditure, 70% of education and health spending, and a larger share in public capital expenditure. The **Centre has to work closely with states in improving incomes and livelihoods**, inclusive growth and sustainability in agriculture and rural areas.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. Which of the following grants/grant direct credit assistance to rural households? (2013)

1. Regional Rural Banks
2. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
3. Land Development Banks

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Q2. How does the National Rural Livelihood Mission seek to improve livelihood options of rural poor? (2012)

1. By setting up a large number of new manufacturing industries and agribusiness centres in rural areas
2. By strengthening 'self-help groups' and providing skill development
3. By supplying seeds, fertilisers, diesel pump-sets and micro-irrigation equipment free of cost to farmers

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

[Source: DTE](#)

Neutrinos

Why in News?

Recently, physicists working with **the Kamioka Liquid Scintillator Antineutrino Detector (KamLAND) in Japan** reported that after analysing two years' data, they **could not find signs that [neutrinos](#) could be their own anti-particles.**

What was the Experiment?

- KamLAND looks for an event called **neutrinoless double beta-decay**.
 - In normal double beta-decay, **two neutrons in an atom turn into two protons** by emitting two electrons and two electron antineutrinos.
 - In neutrinoless double beta-decay, **the anti-neutrinos aren't emitted, which can happen only if anti-neutrinos are just different kinds** of neutrinos.

What are Neutrinos?

- **About:** Neutrinos are the **second most abundant particles in the Universe after photons** (light particles), produced in copious amounts in the **cores of stars**.
- **Properties:** Because they are so ubiquitous, **their properties are windows into the microscopic structure of the universe**.
 - For example, one open question about neutrinos is whether they are their own antiparticles. If they were, physicists will have a way to explain why the universe has more matter than antimatter.
- **Significance:** Probing of oscillations of neutrinos and their relations with mass are crucial in studying the origin of the universe.
- **Sources of Neutrinos:** Neutrinos are created by various radioactive decays; **during a [supernova](#), by cosmic rays striking atoms etc.**

What are Anti-Particles?

- Every elementary particle has an antiparticle. If the two meet, **they will destroy each other** in a flash of energy.
- The electron's antiparticle is the positron. Similarly, **neutrinos have anti-neutrinos**.
- However, an **electron is distinguishable from a positron** because they have opposite charges.
- **Neither neutrinos nor anti-neutrinos have electric charge**, nor any other properties to really differentiate between them.
- One way to classify subatomic particles is as matter particles and force-carrying particles. **Neutrinos are matter particles, or fermions**. Fermions can be further split as Dirac fermions or Majorana fermions. Dirac fermions are not their own anti-particles, whereas Majorana

fermions are.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. In the context of modern scientific research, consider the following statements about 'IceCube', a particle detector located at South Pole, which was recently in the news: (2015)

1. It is the world's largest neutrino detector, encompassing a cubic kilometre of ice.
2. It is a powerful telescope to search for dark matter.
3. It is buried deep in the ice.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

[Source: TH](#)

National Data and Analytics Platform

Why in News?

Government of India creating new roadmaps by enabling the development of a rich data ecosystem through **National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP)**.

What is NDAP?

▪ About:

- In May 2022, the [NITI Aayog](#), in collaboration with ministries and state governments launched a transformational open data platform called the **NDAP**.
- It serves **foundational datasets from central and state government entities** in machine-readable formats, with user-friendly interface and powerful analytics.
- The platform uses **cutting-edge methods to link diverse datasets from across the government and enables** the use of several types of data at once.
- NDAP's target users include policymakers, civil servants, university students and researchers, journalists, innovators, and civil society groups.
- As of Feb 2023, **NDAP hosts 885 datasets from across 15 sectors and 46 Ministries**.

▪ Objective:

- It is designed **to solve the issues that limit the use of government data today**, the design process of NDAP was preceded by extensive research with diverse data users to learn about their demand for government data, skills to use it effectively and challenges faced in doing so.

[Source: IE](#)

INS Sindhukesari in Indonesia

Why in News?

In line with the expanding **military cooperation with [Southeast Asian nations](#)**, an Indian Navy Kilo class conventional submarine, **INS Sindhukesari**, docked in **Jakarta, Indonesia**, for the first time from February 22 to 24, 2023.

- It travelled through the **Sunda Strait** and undertook the maiden docking in **Indonesia for [Operational Turnaround \(OTR\)](#)**.



What is INS Sindhukesari?

- **INS Sindhukesari** is part of the Russian-made **Sindhughosh-class submarines**.
 - The submarine was first commissioned to the **Indian Navy** in 1989 before being refitted in 2018.
- **Sindhughosh class submarines are the Kilo class diesel-electric submarines**. The submarines have a displacement of 3,000 tonnes.

What is the Current Conventional Submarine Strength of the Indian Navy?

- The [Indian Navy](#) has **16 conventional submarines in service, 7 Russian Kilo-class, 4 German-origin HDW submarines and 5 French [Scorpene class submarines](#).**
- With the **Kilos and the HDWs ageing, a Medium Refit cum Life Certification (MRLC)** programme is underway to increase their life.
 - INS Sindhukesari, which was inducted in February 1989, underwent the MRLC at Severodvinsk, Russia in 2018.
- Of the **10 Kilo class submarines originally procured from Russia, Sindhurakshak** was lost in an accident, **Sindhuvir was transferred to Myanmar and [Sindhudhvaj](#) was decommissioned** in July 2020 after 35 years.
 - Meanwhile, another Kilo class submarine, [INS Sindhukirti](#), reached Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam.

Note

- The **Kilo class submarines** have a displacement of **2,300 tonnes**, a maximum diving depth of **300 metres**, top speed of 18 knots, and are able to operate solo for 45 days with a crew of 53.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which one of the following is the best description of 'INS Astradharini', that was in the news recently? (2016)

- (a) Amphibious warfare ship
- (b) Nuclear-powered submarine
- (c) Torpedo launch and recovery vessel
- (d) Nuclear-powered aircraft carrier

Ans: (c)

[Source: TH](#)

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

Marconi Prize



Recently, Computer scientist **Hari Balakrishnan** was awarded the **2023 Marconi Prize**. Dr. Balakrishnan **has been cited for fundamental contributions to wired and wireless networking, mobile sensing, and distributed systems**.

The Marconi Prize is a **top honour for computer scientists and is awarded by the U.S.-based Marconi Foundation**. It is given to those who have made a significant contribution to increasing digital inclusivity through advanced information and communications technology. The **Prize recipients are recommended by an independent selection committee and approved by the Marconi Society Board**.

Exercise Cobra Warrior



Indian Air Force (IAF) **will participate in the multilateral air exercise 'Exercise Cobra Warrior'** at the Royal Air Force's (RAF) in the United Kingdom from March 6 to 24, 2023.

The **Exercise Cobra Warrior is a multilateral Air exercise** in which Air Forces from Finland, Sweden, South Africa, the United States of America and Singapore would also be participating alongside the RAF and IAF.

The **aim of the exercise is to participate in various fighter aircraft engagements and learn from the best practices of various Air Forces.**

The other exercise held between both countries include: Ajeya Warrior (Military), Konkan (Navy), Indradhanush (Air Force) and Konkan Shakti (First ever tri-services joint exercise)

Read More: [India-UK Relations](#)

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

UN Secretary-General **will attend the latest and longest-ever session of the UN's Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**, with Iran's foreign minister.

The Human Rights Council is **an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system** responsible for **strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.** The Council **was created by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2006.** It replaced **the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) which is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland** serves as the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council. It is **made up of 47 United Nations Member States** which are elected by the UNGA. Members of the Council **serve for a period of three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election** after serving two consecutive terms.

Read More: [UN Human Rights Council \(UNHRC\)](#), [United Nations \(UN\)](#)

Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas



For the first time, India's indigenously-made Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas will be participating in an international multilateral air exercise — Exercise Desert Flag VIII — in the UAE, reflecting India's increasing efforts at showcasing the jet at the world stage. The exercise is scheduled from 27 February to 17 March, 2023.

The **Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme was started by the Government of India in 1984** when they **established the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)** to manage the LCA programme. It **replaced the ageing Mig 21 fighter planes.**

As per the IAF, Exercise Desert Flag is a multilateral air exercise **that will see participation from the air forces of the UAE, France, Kuwait, Australia, the UK, Bahrain, Morocco, Spain, the Republic of Korea, and the US.** The aim of the exercise is **to participate in various fighter engagements and learn from the best practices of various air forces.**

'Desert Eagle II', is a joint air combat exercise, **between the air forces of India and UAE.**



Read More: [India-UAE Relations](#), [LCA Tejas](#)

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