

Space Surveillance Network

❖ Context

- The **Chief of Air Force** said that **anti-satellite** tests by major countries, including India, point towards the need for a comprehensive Space Situational Awareness, at the **12th Annual Conference and Exhibition on Geospatial Intelligence** organised by the **Indian Space Association**.



❖ Space Based Assets

- In recent times, the increased focus on **military space application** has been accelerated by two key factors;
 - Firstly, the **increased geo-political churning**s which have aggravated the threat scenario in the region.
 - Secondly, the growing realisation that the boundaries that separate civil and military space assets are getting blurred and **most of the applications are dual use cases**.
- Space-based assets have **revolutionised warfare** by enhancing capacities in intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance, communications, early warning, weather forecasting and navigation.
- **Increased exploitation of the space domain will lead to increased contestation**.
- Space-based assets will become **centres of gravity** that are likely to be targeted in war and less than war situations.
- This is leading to evolution of concepts of **force projection, protection and targeting in space**.

- The availability of comprehensive SSA, enables a complete **“defensive counter space stance”** as well as usage of India’s anti-satellite (ASAT) capability.
- The key areas for the armed forces would be the development of **Missile Defence Radars** for SSA, **space-based sensors** and **optical telescopes** to track adversarial objects.
- ISRO and DRDO’s existing capabilities would need to be **“integrated into the Air Surveillance picture”** of the Air Force, **beyond the present 100 km altitude**.
- This integration would provide a gradual progression to a Space Surveillance Network.
- **Collaboration with other countries** for sharing of information would also be essential to enhance SSA.

❖ SSA

- In this context, a **Comprehensive Space Situational Awareness (SSA)** is needed through a robust **Space Surveillance Network (SSN)**.

❖ Civil-military Fusion

- Capability enhancement in multiple domains of space application can only be fast tracked if civil-military fusion is increased.
- The **Defence Space Agency (DSA)**, the lead agency for aggregating the requirements of Armed Forces, would play a key role in synergising civil-military space cooperation.
- It is a **tri-service agency** of the Indian Armed Forces, established in **2019**, headquartered in **Bengaluru** and tasked with operating the space-warfare and Satellite Intelligence assets of India.

PARAKH

❖ Context

- **AICTE** conducted a **learning assessment survey** known as Parakh between September 2021 and June 2022 to evaluate the **quality of technical education**.



❖ Objective Of The Survey

- The objective of PARAKH is **improving higher order thinking skills among students**.
- The industry is looking for **problem-solving, decision-making abilities** among students. They want students capable of **critical thinking, offering fresh ideas**.
- It will help colleges identify learning gaps so that students can be made industry-ready while they are pursuing their courses.
- It goes beyond improving the employability factor of students by assessing to **what extent students can tackle unknown problems**.

- **Civil engineering students** are the **lowest performers** in “fundamental subjects”.
- Second year students were the **best performers**.
- **IoT, AI, Data Science, Robotics and Cyber security** are emerging areas among third and fourth year students.

❖ Key Findings Of The Survey

- **Average maths score** of first year engineering students below **40%**.

❖ Background

- Overall in technical education, there are around **10,000 institutes** with an annual intake capacity of **32 lakh**.
- Around **19-20 lakh admissions** take place every year of which 15 lakh students pass and **6-7 lakh students get jobs**.
- Around **10-12 lakh seats remain vacant**.

Face to Face Centres



Agnipath Scheme

❖ Context

➤ Recently, the government unveiled its new **Agnipath scheme for recruiting soldiers** across the three services.

❖ Key Highlights

- The new defense recruitment reform has been **cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security**.
- It will come into effect immediately. The soldiers recruited under the scheme will be called **Agniveers**.

❖ Agnipath Scheme

- **About:** Under this scheme, around **45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually**.
 - Most of them will leave the service in just four years.
 - Only **25% of annual recruits will be allowed to continue for another 15 years** under permanent commission.
- **Significance:** It will make the permanent force levels **much leaner** for the over 13-lakh strong armed forces in the country.



Agnipath Scheme

- Age 17.5-21 years
- Duration of service is four years, including training period
- 1st year salary package of Rs. 4.76 lakh (approx.) with upgradation of up to Rs. 6.92 lakh (approx.) in 4th year
- Post release: Seva Nidhi package of approx. Rs. 11.71 lakh, including interest (tax free)
- Non-contributory insurance cover of Rs. 48 lakh
- Agniveer skill certificate will assist in post release job opportunities
- 46,000 Agniveers to be recruited this year

- It will considerably **reduce the defense pension bill**.
- The **average age** in the forces is 32 years today, which will go down to **26 in six to seven years**.
- It will create **“future-ready” soldiers**.
- It will **increase employment opportunities**.

- **Eligibility Criteria:** The new system is **only for personnel below officer ranks**.

- Aspirants **between the ages of 17.5 years and 21 years** will be eligible to apply.



Agnipath Scheme

Terms of service

- Agniveers will be enrolled for a duration of 4 years, including training period
- Agniveers will meet the medical eligibility conditions as applicable
- Agniveers can opt out of enrollment into regular cadre
- Upto 25% of Agniveers from each batch will be enrolled in regular cadre of Armed Forces

- **Recruitment:** The recruitment standards will remain the same.
 - Recruitment will be done **twice a year through rallies**.

- **Training Period:** After selection, the aspirants will go through **training for six months**. After that, aspirants will be **deployed for three and a half years**.

- **Salary and Benefits:** Starting salary = Rs 30,000 + Additional benefits. It will go up to Rs 40,000 by the end of the four-year service.

- During this period, **30% of their salary will be set aside under a Seva Nidhi programme**.
- The government will contribute an equal amount every month, and **it will also accrue interest**.
- At the end of the four-year period, each soldier will get **Rs 11.71 lakh as a lump sum amount**, which will be **tax-free**.



Agnipath Scheme

Terminal benefits – Seva Nidhi package

- Each Agniveer will contribute 30% of monthly salary to the individual's Agniveer Corpus Fund
- On release, one-time Seva Nidhi package of approx. Rs. 11.71 lakh will be paid (tax free)
- It will comprise Agniveer contribution, interest thereon and matching contribution from govt
- Option for bank loans for Agniveers

- They will also get a **Rs 48 lakh life insurance cover** for the four years. For those who are re-selected, the initial four-year period will not be considered for retirement benefits.

Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) for 2020-21

❖ Context

➤ The annual report of the **Periodic Labor Force Survey for July 2020 to June 2021** showed that the **unemployment rate**, as per usual status, **eased to 4.2 % from 4.8 % in 2019-20**. PLFS was launched in 2017.

❖ Key Findings

- **Rural areas** unemployment rate = 3.3%.
- **Urban areas** unemployment rate = 6.7%.
- **Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** The percentage of persons in the labor force (that is, working or seeking work or available for work) in the population.
 - It was 41.6% during 2020-21.
 - It was 40.1% in the previous year.
- **Worker Population Ratio (WPR):** It is defined as the percentage of employed persons in the population.
 - It was 39.8% during 2020-21.
 - It was 38.2% in the previous year.
- **Unemployment Rate (UR):**
 - It is defined as the **percentage of persons unemployed among the persons** in the labor force.
 - It decreased to 4.2% from 4.8% in 2019-20.
 - Rural- 6.1%
 - Urban- 6.7%
 - Male- 4.5%, Female- 3.5%

• Migration

- Migrants are defined in the survey as a household member whose **last usual place of residence, at any time in the past, was different from the present place of enumeration**.
- The migration rate is 28.9%.
- The migration rate among women was 48% and 47.8% in rural and urban areas.

- While the overall employment situation showed improvement, the **rise was seen in low-quality, unpaid work**.

Looking for work | The labour force participation rate (LFPR) has continued to improve further in 2020-21, according to the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey. The graph shows LFPR over years across genders



- The share of the **labor force engaged in agriculture** continued to show a rise in 2020-21.

- It increased to 46.5% from 45.6% in 2019-20 and 42.5% in 2018-19.

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News in Between the Lines

Haploptychius Sahyadriensis



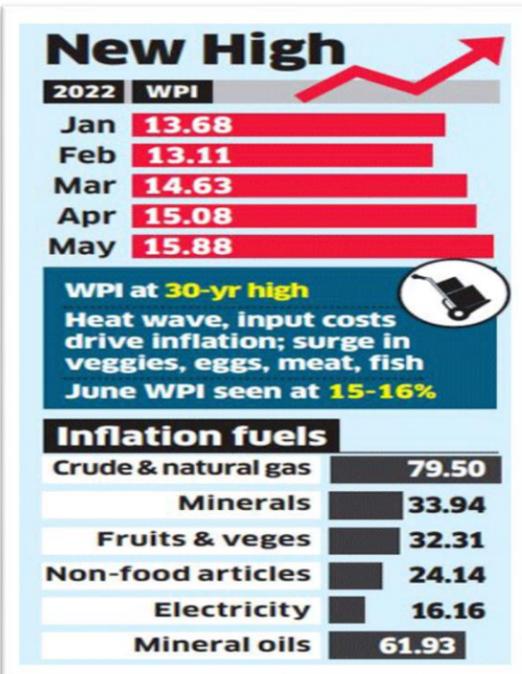
❖ Context

- Recently, the Western Ghats of Maharashtra have yielded a carnivorous land snail (*Haploptychius sahyadriensis*) new to the world of science.

❖ Key Highlights

- The *Haploptychius sahyadriensis*, recorded from the northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra, is the third member of the genus *Haploptychius*.
- The other two - *H. andamanicus* and *H. pfeifferi* – were recorded in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the 1860s.
- The new snail has been described in the latest issue of **Molluscan Research**, an international journal.
- This species is endemic to **Vishalgad Conservation Reserve** in Shahuwadi tehsil of Maharashtra's Kolhapur.
- It is named after the type locality of the species in the northern part of the Western Ghats, which is Sahyadri in Sanskrit.
- The 'Sahyadri snail' is distinguished from other Indian and Southeast Asia's **Haploptychius** in having a sub-oblique helical shell, low spire and presence of a strong parietal lamella.
- The new species also has a **unique genital anatomy**.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation



❖ Context

- Recently, the wholesale based inflation surged to **15.88% in May** as against 15.08% in April and 13.11% in the corresponding period of last fiscal.

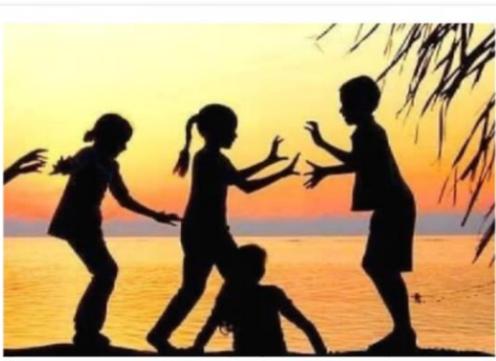
❖ Key Highlights

- This data was released by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- **Factors contributing to the rise:** Vegetable inflation grew dramatically to 56.36% in May from 23.24% in April.
 - Increased prices of mineral oils, crude petroleum & natural gas, food and non-food articles and chemical and chemical products.
- **Retail inflation in May was 7.04 per cent**, remaining above the Reserve Bank's inflation target for the fifth straight month.

❖ About WPI

- WPI is an index that measures and tracks the changes in the price of goods in the stages before the retail level.
- **Published by-** Office of Economic Advisor (Ministry of Commerce & Industry).
- **Base year** for the WPI- 2011-12.
- **Services are not included** in the WPI.
- **Composition of Wholesale Price Index:**
 - Manufactured products - 64.2%.
 - Primary articles - 22.6%.
 - Fuel and power - 13.1%.

Child Labour Week



❖ Context

- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** is celebrating Elimination of Child Labour Week in the honour of World Day Against Child Labour from 12th June to 20th June, 2022.

❖ Key Highlights

- The child rights' body is celebrating 'Elimination of Child Labour Week' by **mounting raid and rescue operations at 75 places**.
- The rescue operations are being carried out in **scrap and automobile markets** across the country where children are forced to take up labour.
- It is celebrated each year on 12 June. **Theme for 2022 is "Universal Social Protection to End Child Labour"**.
- **Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** calls on the global community to end child labour in all its forms by 2025.

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I2U2



❖ Context

- The US President will host a virtual summit with the Indian PM, Israel PM and UAE President during his visit to West Asia from July 13 to 16, 2022.

❖ Key Highlights

- A senior US administration official has informed that the new grouping will be called "I2U2" - "I" for India and Israel and "U" for the US and UAE.
- In **October 2021**, a meeting of the **foreign ministers** of the four countries took place in **Israel**. At that time, it was called the '**International Forum for Economic Cooperation**'. This time, the meeting will take place at the level of heads of government/state.
- It dealt with issues concerning **maritime security, infrastructure, digital infrastructure and transport**. At that time, the Ambassador of UAE to India, had referred to the new grouping as the '**West Asian Quad**'.

Iran Test New Transit Corridor To India



❖ Context

- Iran's state-run shipping company said it started its first transfer of Russian goods to India, using a new trade corridor that transits the country.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Russian cargo consists of two 40-foot (12.192 metres) containers of wood laminate sheets, weighing 41 tons, that departed **St Petersburg** for the Caspian Sea port city of **Astrakhan**.
- From Astrakhan, the cargo will cross the length of the Caspian to the northern Iranian port of **Anzali** and will be transferred by road to the southern port of **Bandar Abbas** on the Persian Gulf.
- From there it will be loaded onto a ship and sent to the Indian port of **Nhava Sheva**.
- Since Russia was sanctioned over its war on Ukraine, Iranian officials have been keen to revive a stalled project to develop the so-called **North-South Transit Corridor** that uses Iran to link Russia to Asian export markets.
- The plan involves eventually building a **railroad line** that can transfer goods arriving at Iranian **Caspian Sea ports to the southeastern port of Chabahar**.

MAP & Vivad se Vishwas



❖ Context

- The **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** has issued a set of guidelines on the **interplay between two key schemes** meant for **minimising litigation**--the Vivad se Vishwas direct tax dispute settlement scheme and the **mutual agreement procedure (MAP)**.

❖ Key Highlights

- The set of guidelines clarifies how tax officials and businesses should approach disputes under these different schemes.
- **MAP** is a way of resolving tax disputes over **cross-border transactions of multinational companies** by the tax authorities in their respective countries.
- The **Vivad se Vishwas scheme** for direct tax disputes allows taxpayers to **pay** only the **principal tax amount** and enjoy waiver of interest and penalty.
- The **scheme introduced in 2020 covers direct tax** cases barring those related to wealth tax, securities transaction tax, commodity transaction tax and the equalisation levy.
- CBDT explained that in cases where a resident taxpayer had resolved a tax dispute over a cross-border transaction under the Vivad se Vishwas scheme and its associate company in the other country had sought resolution under MAP before the tax authority in that country, then CBDT has to be notified.
- It also provides that **where a non-resident taxpayer has opted for Vivad se Vishwas scheme, access to MAP to such non-resident taxpayer will not be available**.
- Basically, according to experts, taxpayers should not hope to achieve a different outcome under MAP in cases where there exists overlap with prior settlement under **Vivad se Vishwas scheme**.

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