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Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

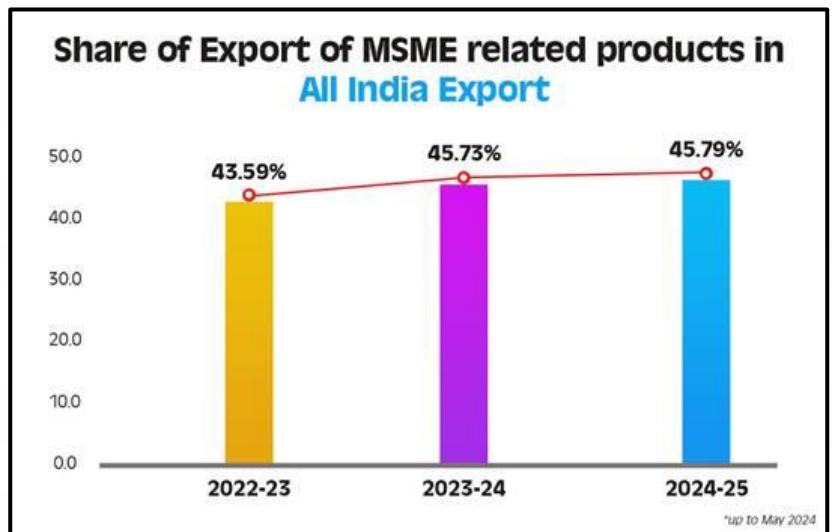
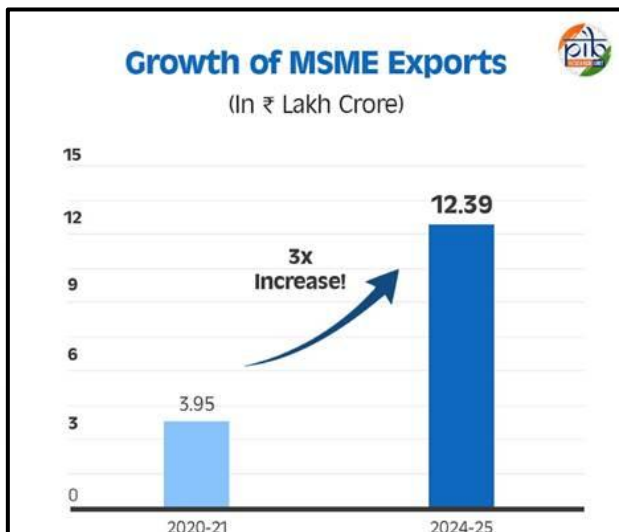
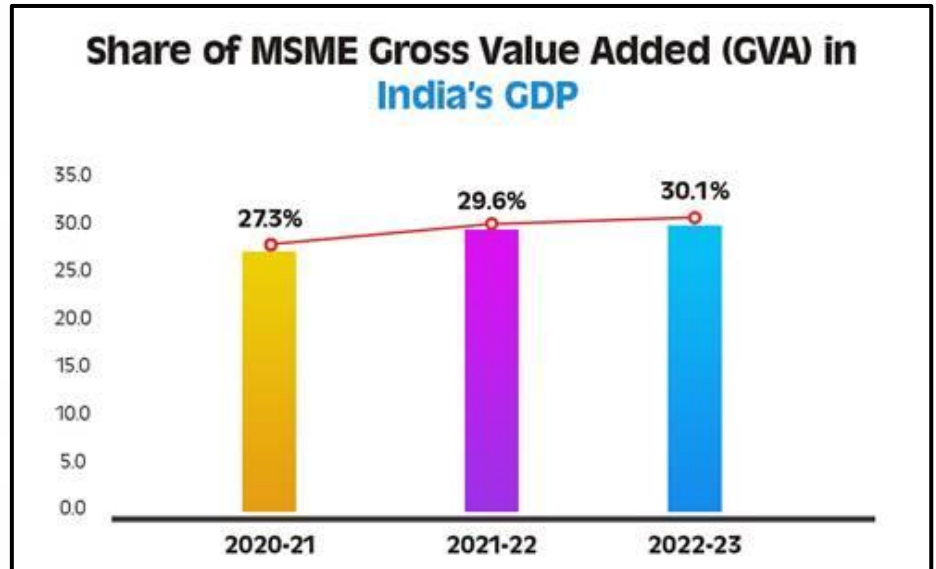
27th March 2025



CONTEXT: Statement of the CEO of NITI Aayog

Significance:

- Growth Engine
- Gross Value Added
- Exports
- Manufacturing - 36%
- Rural Development
- Employment - 7.5 cr
- Social Inclusion
- Innovation

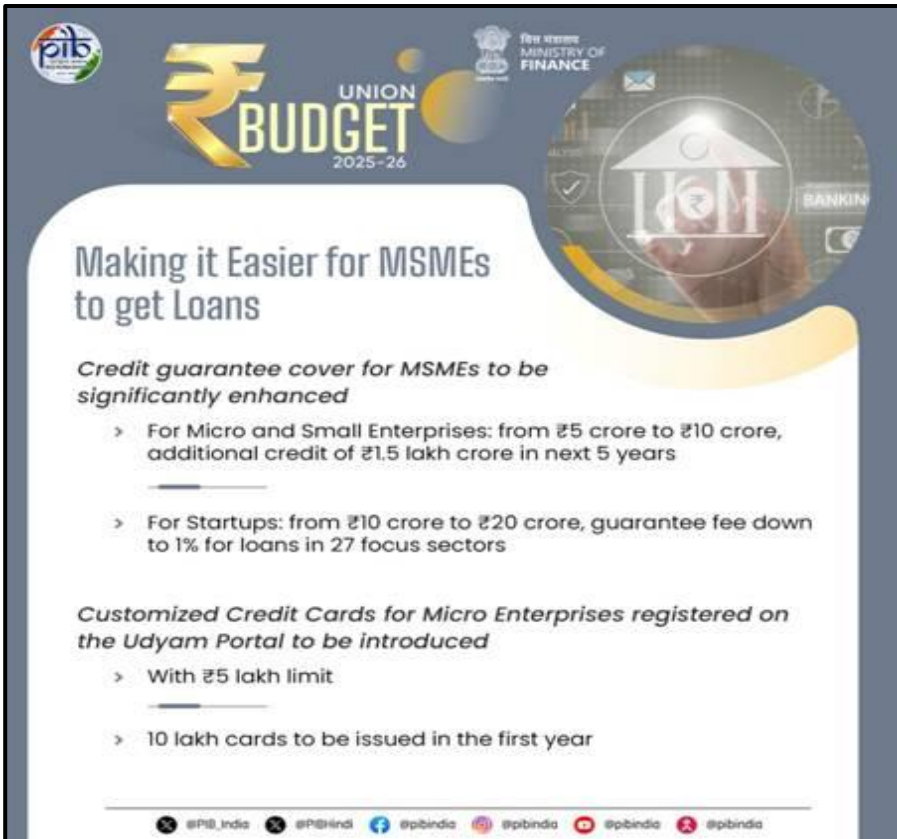


Rs. in Crore	Investment		Turnover	
	Current	Revised	Current	Revised
Micro Enterprises	1	2.5	5	10
Small Enterprises	10	25	50	100
Medium Enterprises	50	125	250	500



CONTEXT: Statement of the CEO of NITI Aayog

Budget 2025-26



₹ UNION BUDGET 2025-26

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Making it Easier for MSMEs to get Loans

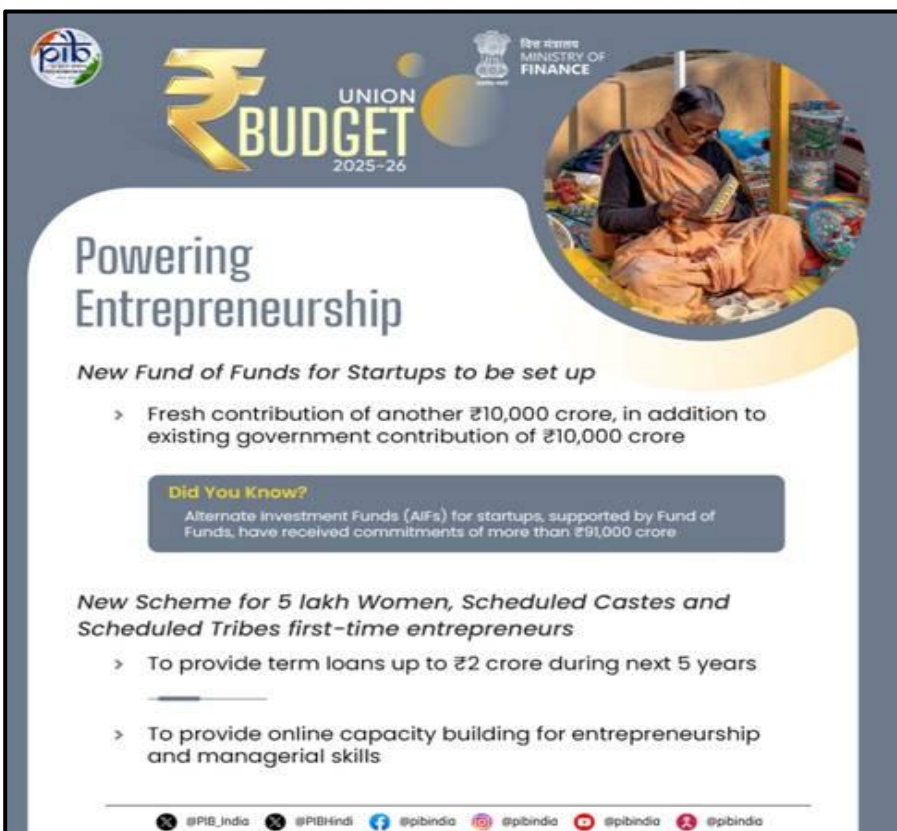
Credit guarantee cover for MSMEs to be significantly enhanced

- > For Micro and Small Enterprises: from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore, additional credit of ₹1.5 lakh crore in next 5 years
- > For Startups: from ₹10 crore to ₹20 crore, guarantee fee down to 1% for loans in 27 focus sectors

Customized Credit Cards for Micro Enterprises registered on the Udyam Portal to be introduced

- > With ₹5 lakh limit
- > 10 lakh cards to be issued in the first year

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₹ UNION BUDGET 2025-26

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Powering Entrepreneurship

New Fund of Funds for Startups to be set up

- > Fresh contribution of another ₹10,000 crore, in addition to existing government contribution of ₹10,000 crore

Did You Know?
Alternate Investment Funds (AIFs) for startups, supported by Fund of Funds, have received commitments of more than ₹91,000 crore

New Scheme for 5 lakh Women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes first-time entrepreneurs

- > To provide term loans up to ₹2 crore during next 5 years
- > To provide online capacity building for entrepreneurship and managerial skills

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CONTEXT: Statement of the CEO of NITI Aayog



UNION BUDGET 2024-25

वित्त मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Manufacturing & Services

MSMEs

- New mechanism announced for facilitating continuation of bank credit to MSMEs during their stress period
- Limit of Mudra loans increased from ₹ 10 lakh to ₹ 20 lakh
- Turnover threshold of buyers for mandatory onboarding on TReDS platform to be reduced from ₹ 500 Cr to ₹ 250 Cr
- Financial support for 50 multi-product food irradiation units in MSME sector
- E-Commerce Export Hubs to be set up in PPP* mode to enable MSMEs & traditional artisans to sell their products in international markets

*Public Private Partnership

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Budget 2025

- **Export Promotion Mission**
- **Focus on Labour Intensive Sectors**
 - Focus Product Scheme - footwear and leather sector
 - New scheme for toy sector
 - National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management
- **Manufacturing & Clean Tech**
 - National Manufacturing Mission
 - Emphasis - PV cells, EV batteries, wind turbines etc.

Other Initiatives;

- PM Vishwakarma
 - integrating into global value chains
 - 5-day 'Basic Training' program
- Udyam Registration Portal
 - free, paperless, and self-declaration-based registration process
- PM Employment Generation Program
 - Margin Money (Subsidy) to beneficiaries availing loan for setting up new enterprises



CONTEXT: Statement of the CEO of NITI Aayog

- Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme – tech upgradation
- Credit Guarantee Trust Fund for MSE
- Raising & Accelerating MSME Performance – market & credit access
- ASPIRE – business incubators
- SFURTI
- MSME Sambandh – PPP for MSMEs
- MSME Samadhan
- Fin Support for ZED certification
- Digitalisation – Digital Saksham, Udyam, e-Shram
- Supreme Court, 2024 – banks must identify early signs of stress in MSME accounts before NPA

Challenges:

- **Registration**
- **Formal Credit access** – 16% of MSMEs – Standing Committee on Finance report on ‘Strengthening Credit Flows to the MSME Sector’
- **Tech Adoption**
- **Skill Gaps**
- **Market access** – Tariffs, export support infrastructure
- **Regulatory compliance** – frequent changes in tax laws, GST slabs
- **Infrastructure constraints** – power, logistics, operational cost
- **Delayed payments**

Suggestions:

- **Credit Access**
 - Collateral free via fintech
 - Strict payment timelines under MSME Samadhan
- **Compliance Burden**
 - Single window clearance
 - MSME Coordination Council
 - Simplify GST registration
- **Tech Adoption**
 - Digital MSME 2.0 – cybersecurity, cloud computing, digital marketing, adopt AI/IoT
 - Innovation & Incubation Hubs at IITs
- **Workforce & Skilling**
 - Wages, Insurance
 - Skill India, PMKVY
- **Infrastructure**
 - Industrial Parks & clusters

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION:

“MSMEs contribute significantly to employment and GDP growth in India. Discuss the key challenges faced by MSMEs, analyze the government initiatives to support this sector, and provide suggestions for further strengthening the MSME ecosystem.”



Bioeconomy of India



CONTEXT: The India BioEconomy Report has pegged the value of India's bioeconomy in 2024 at >\$165 bn, accounting for 4.2% of GDP.

Bioeconomy Subsectors:

BioPharma and BioMedical



Sector includes the development of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, diagnostics, and lab-grown organoids. It focuses on areas like cancer immunotherapy, gene editing, precision medicine, and biologics, encompassing MedTech and diagnostics.

BioAgri



Focusing on agricultural biotechnology, this subsector covers genetically modified crops, precision agriculture, and bio-based products. Bt Cotton is a key example, highlighting biotech's role in boosting agricultural yields and sustainability.

BioIndustrial

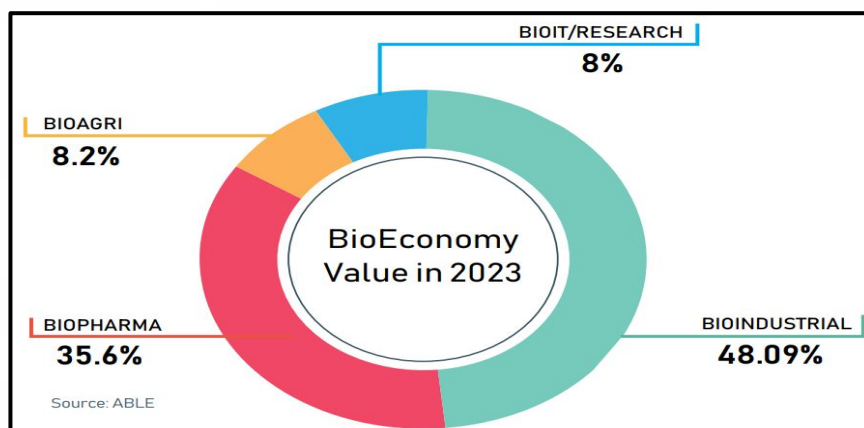


This emerging sector deals with bio-based chemicals and products created using enzymes, biosynthetic processes, and recombinant DNA technology. It includes biofuels, bioplastics, biogas, and enzymatic applications across industries ranging from beverages to detergents.

BioResearch and BioIT (BioServices)



This segment involves contract research, clinical trials, biotech software and databases, specialized equipment, and bioscience education services.



Bioeconomy of India



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India Bioeconomy Report 2024:

BioEconomy Growth:

- **2023 Value:** \$151 bn (4.25% of GDP)
- **Growth:** 10% YoY
- **Target:** \$300 billion by 2030

Major Achievements

- **Vaccine Manufacturing:**
 - India supplies 25% of WHO's vaccines; Serum Institute's global share rose to 24%.
 - Indigenous vaccines: CERVAVAC (HPV), ZyCoV-D (DNA-based COVID vaccine).
- **Biofuels:**
 - Ethanol blending - 12%
 - 3rd-largest producer globally
- **Startups:**
 - 1,776 new biotech startups added
- **Innovations:**
 - CAR-T cell therapy for cancer, AI-powered diagnostics, CRISPR-based tests

Segments

BioIndustrial

- **Alcoholic Beverages:** 31% share
- **Biofuels:** Ethanol
- **Enzymes:** Textile, detergent, food industries

BioPharma

- **Vaccines:** 3B+ doses produced annually
- **Biosimilars:** \$13.4B market; affordability focus
- **Diagnostics:** \$19.4B; AI-driven tools

BioAgri

- **Bt Cotton:** 95%
- **Biofertilizers:** \$1.4B market

BioServices

- **BioIT:** AI, data analytics in biotech

Policy & Regulatory Reforms

- **BioE3 Policy:** Focus on biomanufacturing, sustainability, and employment - Bio foundaries
- **BioRRAP Portal:** Streamlined approvals for biological research
- **IP Guidelines:** Flexible licensing for public-funded research
- **National Medical Device Policy:** Single-window clearances
- **Green Hydrogen Mission**
- **Investments & Infrastructure**
 - **FDI:** \$1.5B in pharma/MedTech (2023)
 - **PLI Schemes:** pharma; medical devices.
 - **Bio Incubators:** 95+

Socio-Economic Impact

- **Employment:** 4M+ jobs (direct/indirect)
- **MSMEs:** 90-91% of biotech sector
- **Vaccine Leadership:** SII supplies 65% of global child vaccines
- **Affordability:** Biosimilars reduce cancer treatment costs by 65%
- **Rural Development:** Biofuels support 3.6M farmers



Bioeconomy of India

CONTEXT: The India BioEconomy Report has pegged the value of India's bioeconomy in 2024 at >\$165 bn, accounting for 4.2% of GDP.

Why do we need a sustainable and circular bioeconomy?

Global challenges such as climate change and ecosystem degradation, along with growing demands for food and energy, force us to find **new ways of producing and consuming** in a world of finite resources.

The bioeconomy has enormous potential for...



Job creation
Create millions of green jobs, especially in rural and coastal areas.



Renewal and modernisation of the industrial fabric
Introduce innovations in agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and other industries.



Climate mitigation and carbon neutrality
Reduce atmospheric emissions and our dependence on fossil resources.

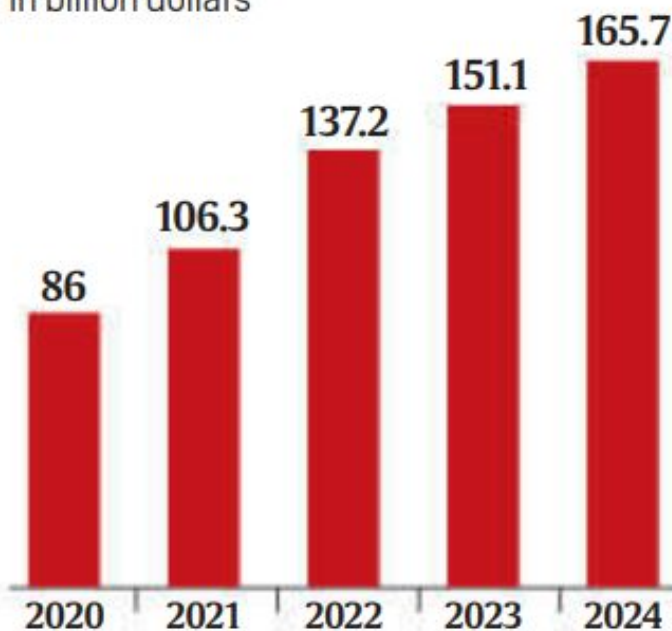


Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration
Aligned with the SDGs, recover part of the degraded ecosystems.



VALUE OF INDIA'S BIOECONOMY

in billion dollars



CONTEXT: The India BioEconomy Report has pegged the value of India's bioeconomy in 2024 at >\$165 bn, accounting for 4.2% of GDP.

Challenges:

- **Regulatory Hurdles:** GM crop approvals
- **Feedstock shortages for biofuels**
- **Innovation Needs:** AI in biotech, waste-to-energy solutions
- **Pandemic Induced volatility**

Future Outlook & Global

Bioeconomy:

- **2050 Projection:** \$30T (12% of global GDP)
- **India's Rank:** Top 5; 6.5–12% GDP share by 2050
- **2030 Projections:**
 - **BioEconomy:** \$300B
 - **Jobs:** 35M
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Bio-AI hubs, biomanufacturing, climate-resilient agriculture

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION:

"Bioeconomy is emerging as a key driver of sustainable development. Discuss the current status of bioeconomy in India, the challenges it faces, and the potential it holds for future economic growth."



SYLLABUS : GS 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

Newspaper : Indian Express **Page Number :** World

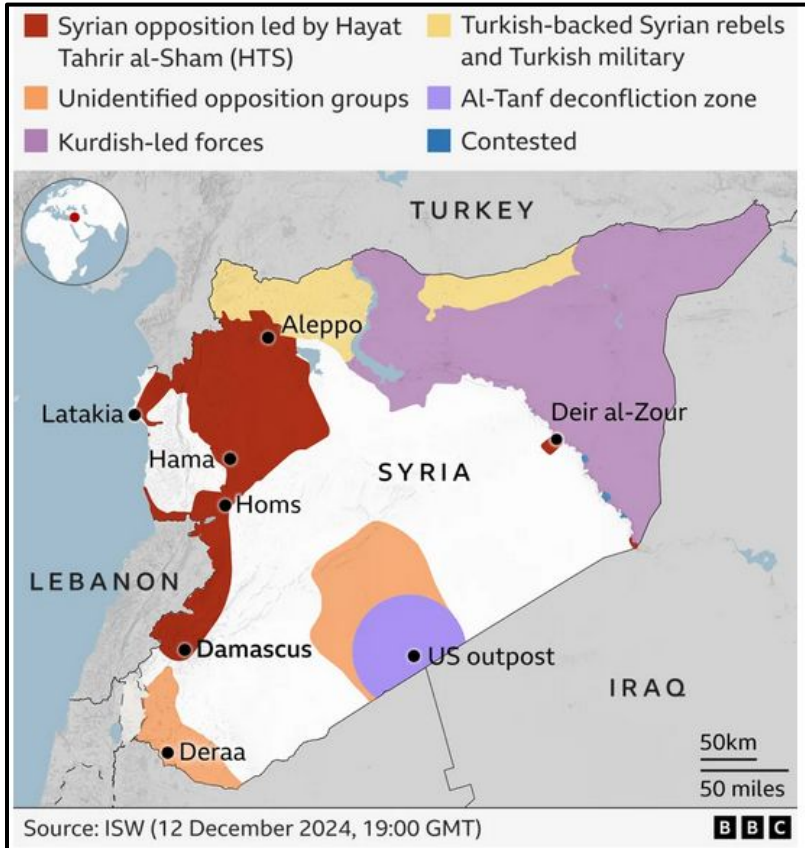
The era of Assad

- 2011 - Protests against Assad - civil war
- U.S. - resign. EU backed rebels. Turkey, Saudi Arabia - proxies
- Assad (Alawite) help from Iran (ground), Russia (air) and Hezbollah
- 2015 - before Russian intervention - Damascus to the coast
- 2023
 - most of Syria - except Idlib and the Kurdish territories
 - Kurds autonomy in the border region with Turkey
- 2025 - Ahmed al-Sharaa

Powers at Play

Israel vs Iran

- Israeli Goals
 - disrupt Iranian supplies for Hezbollah and other Shia militias
 - stop the militias advancing towards the de facto border (Golan Heights)
 - weaken Iran's presence in Syria
- Iran
 - only ally in the region - Syria, a vital link with Hezbollah
 - military influence from Tehran to southern Lebanon
 - strategic pressure on Israel - military infrastructure, deploying Shia militias



Interests of Turkey

- Buffer, drive the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia out of this buffer, "safe zone," and resettle some Syrian refugees

Russian Roulette

- Saving Assad, bolster Russia's position in West Asia (Tartus naval base) and send a message to his rivals in the West.
- Not get stuck, like the Soviet or the U.S. later in Afghanistan
- No collapse and result in chaos and breed terrorists

US Withdrawal

- IS consolidation if interventionism failure
- Refugee crisis - pressure of EU allies
- U.S. shale oil boom
- "overweighted in the Middle East and underweighted in Asia" - China



SYLLABUS : GS 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

Newspaper : Indian Express **Page Number :** World

REUTERS

DAMASCUS, MARCH 26

SYRIA'S PRESIDENT Ahmed al-Sharaa has a lot to prove to win over Western powers. If the first few weeks of his rule are anything to go by, he may be heading in the wrong direction.

The West is watching Syria's leaders closely to ensure they rein in the Islamist jihadis who killed hundreds of Alawites, create an inclusive government with effective institutions, maintain order in a country fractured by years of civil war and prevent a resurgence of Islamic State or al Qaeda.

Three European envoys made clear in a March 11 meeting with Foreign Minister Asaad



Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa. *File*

al-Shibani in Damascus that cracking down on the jihadi fighters was their top priority and that international support for the nascent administration could evaporate unless it took decisive action. The meeting has not previously been reported.

"The abuses that have taken place in recent days are truly intolerable," said French Foreign Ministry spokesman Christophe Lemoine. "There is no blank check for the new authorities."



SYLLABUS : GS 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

Newspaper : The Hindu **Page Number :** 10

US Commission on International Religious Freedom

- independent, bipartisan U.S. federal govt agency
- 1998 International Religious Freedom Act
- **Functions:** reviews the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and makes policy recommendations to US
- **Composition:**
 - 9 Commissioners appointed by either the President or Congressional leaders of each political party
- **Annual report**
 - assesses the US govt implementation of IRFA
 - highlights "Countries of Particular Concern" engaging in severe religious freedom violations
 - documents the conditions of religious freedom in many countries
- **Article 18 of UDHR**
 - Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

DIVYA A

NEW DELHI, MARCH 26

INDIA HAS rejected a US panel's latest religious freedom report which says minorities in the country face deteriorating treatment and — for the first time — recommends targeted sanctions against the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) over its alleged involvement in assassination plots against Sikh separatists.

The report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), released on March 25, recommended designating India as "country of particular concern" among 15 others including Afghanistan, Russia, China, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

In a response Wednesday, the Ministry of External Affairs

(MEA) called the report "biased and politically motivated".

Responding to questions, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "The USCIRF's persistent attempts to misrepresent isolated incidents and cast aspersions on India's vibrant multicultural society reflect a deliberate agenda rather than a genuine concern for religious freedom."

"Such efforts to undermine India's standing as a beacon of democracy and tolerance will not succeed. In fact, it is the USCIRF that should be designated as an entity of concern," he said.

The latest report documents religious freedom conditions in 2024 and recommends action to the White House, Congress and State Department. These recommendations are not binding.

The independent, bipartisan US federal government agency



SYLLABUS : GS 2: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Judiciary
Newspaper : Indian express **Page Number :** 16

Historical Background of Judicial Appointments

- **1950:** Federal court judges transitioned to SC; Justice Harilal Kania – first CJI
- **Executive Dominance (1950–1977):** Govt appointed judges; judiciary struck down laws but appointments remained unaffected
- **1970s Political Interference:**
 - **1973:** IG govt superseded 3 senior judges to appoint Justice A.N. Ray as CJI
 - **1977:** Justice Beg made CJI, bypassing senior-most Justice H.R. Khanna
- **Judicial Response:** collegium system to curb executive interference

Collegium System

- **Established via 3 Key Cases:**
 - interpreted **Articles 124 & 217**
 - **judiciary's primacy** in appointments is part of the basic structure
- **Structure:**
 - **SC Collegium:** CJI + 4 senior-most judges (appoints SC judges, HC CJs, transfers HC judges)
 - **HC Collegium:** CJI + 2 senior-most judges

NJAC: The Proposed Alternative

- **2014: 99th Constitutional Amendment + NJAC Act** to replace collegium
- **Widespread Support:**
 1. **Lok Sabha:** 367 MPs in favor, none opposed
 2. **Rajya Sabha:** 179 in favor; only Ram Jethmalani opposed
 3. **Ratified by 16 states**, including Congress/Left-ruled ones

NJAC Composition:

1. CJI (Chairperson)
 2. 2 senior SC judges
 3. Union Law Minister
 4. 2 eminent persons (selected by CJI, PM, LoP); 1 from marginalized groups
- **Veto Power:** Any 2 members could block appointments

Why NJAC Was Struck Down (2015)

- **Key Issue:** Veto power risked **executive dominance** (Law Minister + 2 eminent members could override 3 judges)
- **SC Ruling (4:1 Majority):**
 - Violated **judicial independence**
 - **Dissent:** Justice Chelameswar supported NJAC
- **Missed Compromise?**
 - Some suggested **CJI's casting vote** to ensure judicial primacy
 - Ex-SC judge Sanjay Kishan Kaul argued NJAC could have worked with tweaks

Current Debate

- Collegium opacity vs. concerns over executive influence
- **NJAC judgment:** Any new law must preserve **judiciary's primacy** to survive SC scrutiny



SYLLABUS : GS 2: Health

Newspaper : Indian Express Page Number : 8

About PM Matru Vandana Yojana:

- **Centrally Sponsored DBT** scheme launched in 2017
- **Objectives**
 - partial compensation for wage loss in terms of cash incentive - woman can take rest before and after delivery of the first child
 - improve health-seeking behaviour amongst Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers
- **Features**
 - maternity benefits to socially and economically disadvantaged women
 - first two living children provided the second child is a girl
 - Rs. 5,000 to the expecting mothers
 - 3 installments
 - First Rs. 1,000 at the time of registration of the pregnancy
 - Second installment of Rs. 2,000 - completing 6 months of pregnancy, receiving at least one antenatal checkup
 - Third installment of Rs. 2,000 - after the birth and registration, first cycle of immunization for BCG, OPV, DPT and Hepatitis-B
 - Additionally, Rs. 1,000 under JSY post-institutional delivery
 - Miscarriage/stillbirths treated as fresh cases
- **NFSA 2013 mandate**
 - a minimum financial aid of ₹6,000 per child
 - all pregnant women, except those in the formal sector, are entitled to maternity benefits

Wednesday alleged that the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) scheme is severely underfunded and violating key provisions of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, under which it was implemented.

Last week, in response to a question in RS on March 19, MoS for Women and Child Development Savitri Thakur had provided data on PMMVY that said that only 48% of the 53.40 lakh enrolled beneficiaries were paid under the scheme in 2023-2024, the lowest percentage from 2019-20 onwards.

In 2022-23, for example, 118.35% of enrolled beneficiaries were paid, with the ministry clarifying in its response that the percentage of beneficiaries can be more than 100% if beneficiar-

On delays in disbursal of benefits, Thakur had said in her response that a new portal (PM Matru Vandana Yojana Software - PMMVYSoft) was launched in March 2023, and through this, Aadhaar authentication was done "so that funds are directly transferred" to Aadhaar-seeded bank accounts. The response added that implementation of the scheme using the new software is done by the states and UTs and funds are released to the states "provided they utilise the funds" available in their account on time.



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 2: Education
Newspaper : Indian express Page Number : 9

About PM Shri:

- Centrally sponsored scheme
- **Objective:** Development of >14,500 schools by strengthening the existing schools (managed by Centre/State/UT/local bodies)
- Nurture students - engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for an equitable, inclusive, and plural society (NPE 2020)
- **2022-23 to 2026-27** - then responsibility of the States/UTs to maintain the benchmarks achieved
- **Selection** of PM SHRI schools through Challenge Mode - schools compete
- **Features:**
 - selected schools act as exemplar schools offering mentorship to other schools in their vicinity
 - as Green Schools
 - pedagogy more experiential, holistic, integrated, play/toy-based (particularly in the foundational years), inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centric, discussion-based, flexible, and enjoyable
 - focus on learning outcomes of every child in every grade
 - Assessment based on conceptual understanding and application of knowledge to real-life situations
 - Linkage with Sector Skill Councils and local industry for enhancing employability
 - A School Quality Assessment Framework specifying KPIs to measure outcomes

WITHHOLDING SAMGRA Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) funds to states for not entering into agreements for separate schemes like PM-SHRI is "not justified", a parliamentary standing committee

said. "However, the Committee takes the view that this reasoning is not factual or justified. The SSA predates PM SHRI and is intended to help States to achieve the targets of the Right to Education Act. The RTE is a law duly passed by Parliament and confers education as a fundamental right onto every child. The SSA, as a scheme that enforces the fundamental right-based RTE, cannot be bypassed by the NEP, which was an executive policy statement," the report added.

This comes amid a war of words between the Tamil Nadu

government and the Centre over release of ₹2,152 crore under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. In his letter to PM Narendra Modi last month, CM M K Stalin had expressed deep concern over the Centre's insistence on linking the funds to the implementation of the NEP and reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to its two-language policy.



Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the PM Shri (Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India) scheme:

1. It is a central sector scheme.
2. It aims to establish 14,500 new schools across the country.
3. The selection of PM SHRI schools follows a transparent Challenge Method.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding PM Matru Vandana Yojana:

1. It provides maternity benefits to women from socially and economically disadvantaged sections.
2. Benefits are given for the first two living children, regardless of their gender.
3. A financial assistance of ₹5,000 is provided in three installments.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: b

Q3. Which of the following countries shares a land border with Syria?

1. Turkey
2. Iran
3. Jordan
4. Lebanon

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- a) 1, 2, and 3 only
- b) 1, 3, and 4 only
- c) 2, 3, and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Answer: b

Q4. The term "Bioeconomy" refers to:

- a) The financial valuation of ecological services.
- b) The economic significance of biodiversity conservation.
- c) Use of biological resources to create products, processes, and services within a sustainable economic framework.
- d) The trade of genetically modified organisms.

Answer: c

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India:

1. An enterprise is classified as small if its annual turnover is less than 100 crore.
2. An enterprise with investments in plant and machinery of up to Rs 5 crore is classified as a micro enterprise.
3. There are separate criteria of annual turnover and investment for the manufacturing and service sectors.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: a





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