



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

22nd June 2025



2025 Yoga Day & India's Soft Power

CONTEXT: President Droupadi Murmu described yoga as a shining example of India's soft power and said it has now become a shared legacy of entire mankind.

What is International Yoga Day?

- Celebrated every year on **21st June**—the summer solstice






Theme: "Yoga for One Earth, One Health"

- ✓ Adopted by UN in 2014
- ✓ Now marked globally as a symbol of physical, mental, and spiritual harmony

Why It Matters:

- ✓ Yoga now a **\$300B global industry**
- ✓ **Diplomatic Tool**
- ✓ Recognized by **WHO**

How the World Celebrated Yoga Day 2025

Location	Highlights
 UN HQ	1,200+ people, meditation by Dr. Deepak Chopra
 Times Square	10,000+ practitioners, multicultural yoga day
 London Strand	Message from King Charles, fusion dance finale
 Visakhapatnam	PM's call for peace via yoga
 Everywhere	Digital yoga wave via livestreams and social media


WHY THIS IS A SOFT POWER

MASTERSTROKE

WHAT IS SOFT POWER?

Definition: Coined by Joseph Nye, soft power is the ability to shape global opinions through attraction, culture, and diplomacy—not force.

 Culture	 Spiritual
 Education	 Democracy
 Diplomacy	 Diaspora
 Humanitarian Aid	 Technology
 Media	 Ethos

 **Smart Power** = Soft Power + Hard Power

 **USA:** Hollywood + NATO

 **China:** Confucius Institutes + Belt & Road + Debt

Eg: Soft Power	Hard Power
Culture  (Bollywood, Yoga)	Military  (Wars, Threats)
Values  (Democracy, Gandhi)	Economic Sanction 
Diplomacy  (UN, BRICS)	Coercion  (Regime Change)



2025 Yoga Day & India's Soft Power

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WHY THIS IS A SOFT POWER MASTERSTROKE

Cultural Influence

🌐 Bridges East-West divides

Health Diplomacy

🏥 Alternative to Big Pharma – \$2T global healthcare costs

Diaspora Mobilization

🇮🇳 NRIs lead events – India's global networks.

Countering China

🧘 Yoga vs. Tai Chi – "mindfulness war".

Key Pillars of India's Soft Power

Culture

Yoga 🧘, Ayurveda 🌿, Bollywood 🎬, Indian cuisine 🍛

Diaspora & History

35M+ Indian diaspora 🌐, civilizational ties with Asia & Africa

Democracy & Ideals

Gandhian non-violence 🕊 inspired Mandela & MLK

Tech & Development

Vaccine Maitri, UPI, Aadhaar, digital governance exports

Education

ITEC scholarships, IITs/IIMs attracting global students 📖

Humanitarian Aid

Operation Sindhu (2025), CDRI, Sri Lanka economic help

Multilateral Forums

Active in UN, G20, BRICS, NAM, WHO as voice of Global South

Challenges to India's Soft Power

Institutional Gaps

ICCR lacks strategic clarity; fragmented **coordination** among MEA, AYUSH, Tourism

Limited Multilateral Diplomacy

UNESCO, BRICS, G20; weak **Track 2 & 3** diplomacy

Low Funding

No **soft power budget** parity with China or US

No Formal Study

No clear benchmarking (Confucius Institutes / British Council)

Diaspora Underused

Lack of integration of **NRI voices** in foreign policy

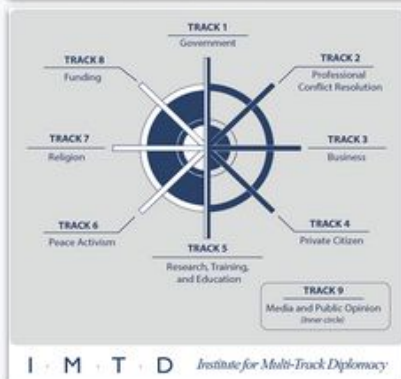
Limited Multilateral Diplomacy

Global media narrative or foreign cultural institutions

Confucius Institutes Around the World



Source: Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban)



2025 Yoga Day & India's Soft Power

CONTEXT: President Droupadi Murmu described yoga as a shining example of India's soft power and said it has now become a shared legacy of entire mankind.

✓ Way Forward: Strengthening India's Global Appeal

1. Soft Power Policy Blueprint:

- Formal **national cultural diplomacy strategy**
- Institutionalize **Track 2 & Track 3 diplomacy**

2. Restructure Key Institutions:

- Rehaul **ICCR** (per Veena Sikri Committee)
- Create **Cultural Diplomacy Task Force**
- Build **global media**

(e.g., Doordarshan International) 🌐 📺

3. Leverage Global Platforms:

- UNESCO, BRICS, G20 cultural programs
- Expand cultural centers abroad 🏠

4. Diaspora & Educational Diplomacy:

- Empower diaspora
- Expand ITEC, "Study in India", and **scholarship programs** 🎓

Mains Practise Question

Through strategic investments, institutional reforms, and people-to-people diplomacy, India can elevate itself as a civilizational soft power aligned with global leadership. Comment.

(15 Marks, 250 words)



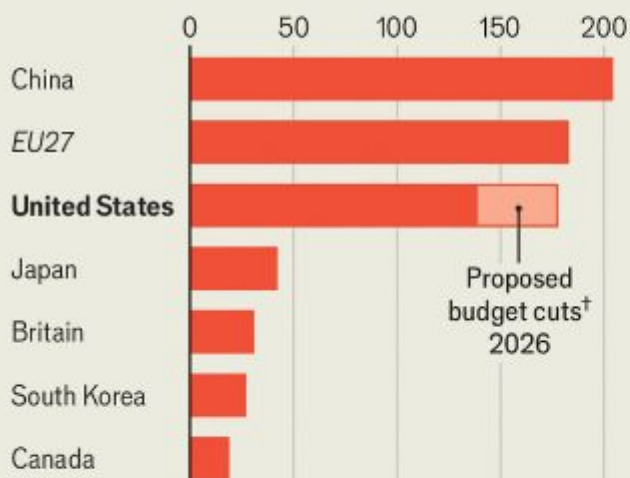
"India is not a magnet for Global Science"

CONTEXT: Funding, infrastructure, general environment woes unattractive for senior international scientists to work in India: Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan

GLOBAL CONTEXT: U.S. SCIENCE **SILENT** BRAIN DRAIN

Scientific powerhouses

Research spending at government institutions and universities, 2023 or latest, \$bn at PPP*



*Purchasing-power parity †Selected cuts from CDC, DOE, EPA, NASA, NIH, NIST, NOAA, NSF and USGS
Sources: OECD; The White House; The Economist

U.S. slashing research budgets

NIH: \$18B cut (2026).
NSF: \$5B cut.
NASA: 25% budget reduction.

Scientists fleeing (Nature Data)

- **32% spike** in U.S. researchers applying to Europe (Nature, 2025).
- **75% of U.S. scientists** want to **leave**

But India isn't benefiting. **Why?**



INDIA'S R&D CRISIS: WHY TOP RESEARCHERS ARE STAYING AWAY

What is R&D, and Why Does It Matter?

Systematic investigations and experiments to create new technologies, products, or processes

Key players in the R&D Sector

- **Businesses**
- **Universities & Research Institutes**
- **Government Agencies**

Nobel Laureate Venki Ramakrishnan

- ❌ **0.6% GDP on R&D** vs. China's 2.4%
- ❌ **Grants stuck, scholarships unpaid**
- ❌ **Labs lag behind global standards**
- ❌ **Pollution, trash, unsafe public spaces**



WHY INDIA CAN'T COMPETE

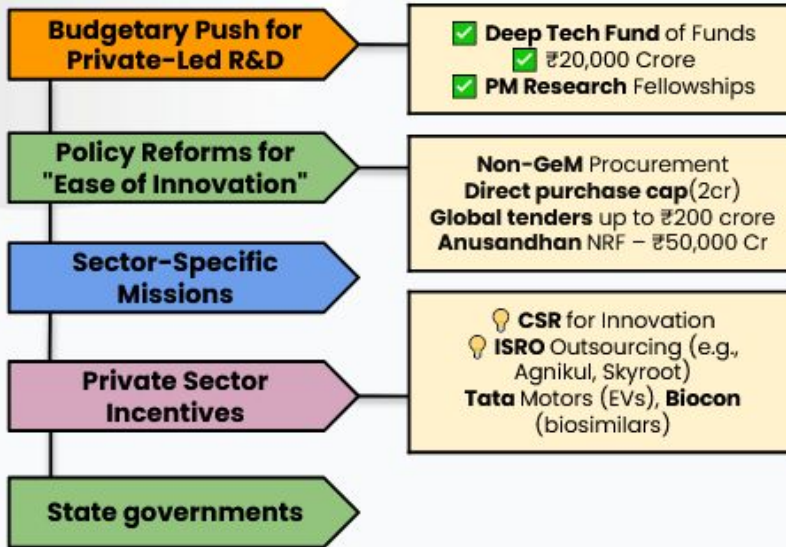
Factor	India	U.S./Europe/China
R&D Spending	0.6%	2-3%
Private Funding	Negligible	2x govt funding
Salaries	Low	2-3x higher
Infrastructure	Patchy	Cutting-edge
Quality of Life	Polluted	Efficient cities



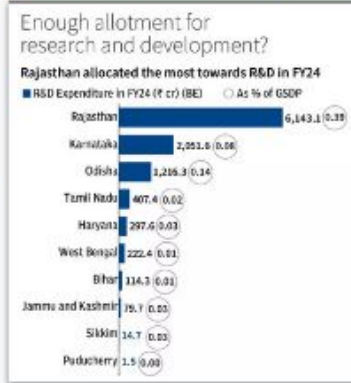
"India is not a magnet for Global Science"

CONTEXT: Funding, infrastructure, general environment woes unattractive for senior international scientists to work in India: Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan

Key Initiatives for Innovation



Initiative	Focus
National Geospatial Mission	AI-powered urban planning, climate resilience
Bio-RIDE Scheme	Biotech startups & bio-manufacturing
Quantum & Supercomputing	Next-gen computing
Gene Bank for Crops	Food security via genetic research



Solutions & Recommendations

- ✓ At least 2% of GDP in R&D by 2030
- ✓ Strengthening Core R&D Infrastructure
- ✓ Public-private partnerships
- ✓ Tax breaks for corporate R&D funding
- ✓ Skill Development & Workforce Training
- ✓ Fast-track grants
- ✓ Clean air, working sidewalks, safe transit
- ✓ Elite institutes push

Promise, but gaps

Nobel Laureate **Venkatraman Ramakrishnan** explains why India may not actually benefit from the U.S. science funding cuts:



There will be a few scientists who will move, but I do not see a mass exodus

India's R&D investment as a fraction of GDP is much less than China's and is about a third or less of what many developed countries have

Neither the funding, the infrastructure nor the general environment in India is attractive for top-level international scientists to...

work in India

In many developed countries, the ratio of private to public investment is almost two or more. In India, it is almost the opposite

India has a demographic dividend. ...However, this is a temporary advantage, and if India squanders it, it may find itself unable to be competitive in the future with other Asian countries and the West

■ With the U.S. firing thousands of federal scientists and cancelling high-value research grants, many scientists are eyeing other countries

■ U.S. applications for European vacancies shot up by 32% in March 2025 compared with March 2024



"India is not a magnet for Global Science"



CONTEXT: Funding, infrastructure, general environment woes unattractive for senior international scientists to work in India: Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan

UPSC PYQ (P) 2015

Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding National Innovation Foundation-India (NIF)?

1. NIF is an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology under the Central Government.
2. NIF is an initiative to strengthen the highly advanced scientific research in India's premier scientific institutions in collaboration with highly advanced foreign scientific institutions.

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

UPSC PYQ (P) 2019

Atal Innovation Mission is set up under the

- (a) Department of Science and Technology
(b) Ministry of Labour and Employment
(c) NITI Aayog
(d) Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Mains Practise Question

India has bright minds but broken systems. Without urgent reforms, it will remain a scientific also-ran.

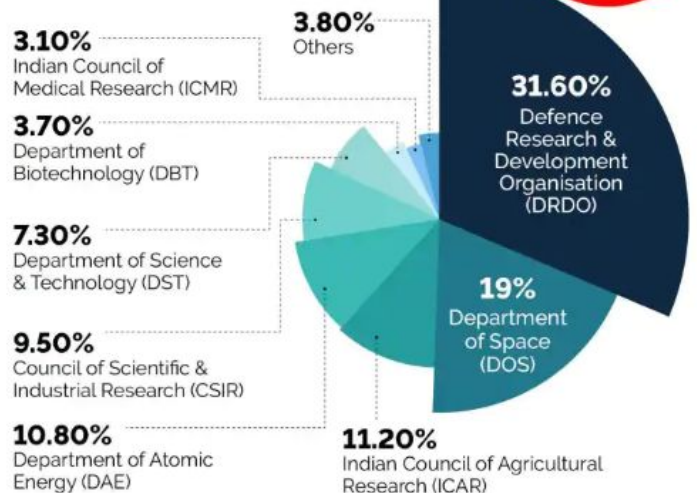
Analyse the statement.

(15 Marks, 250 words)

HOW INDIA SPENDS ITS R&D BUDGET

Most of the R&D expenditure incurred by the Central Government sources is channelled through these major scientific agencies

Share of R&D Expenditure by Major Scientific Agencies (2017-18)



DNPA calls for Copyright Protection

SYLLABUS: Prelims: General Science

GS 3: Issues relating to intellectual property rights

Newspaper : The Hindu, **Page No : 7**



DNPA VS. AI: THE **BATTLE FOR NEWS COPYRIGHT IN THE AI ERA**

⚡ WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Digital News Publishers Association



What's the **Issue**?



Copyright Concern



Demand for **Fair Compensation**

- Chatbots
- Search assistance
- AI-generated summaries

💡 WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- AI's "**Free Lunch**" Problem
- **Global Precedents**

Country

Action Taken

USA

New York Times sued OpenAI for \$1B.

EU

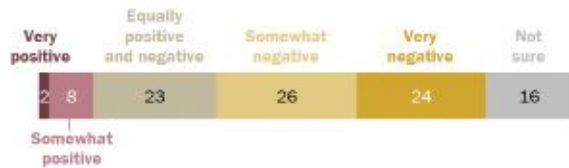
AI Act forces transparency on training data.

Australia

Google/Facebook pay \$200M/year to media.

Americans are far more negative than positive about AI's long-term impact on the news people get

% of U.S. adults who say artificial intelligence will have a(n) ____ impact on the news people get in the U.S. over the next 20 years



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 12-18, 2024.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER



DNPA'S DEMANDS

- **Compulsory Licensing** – AI firms must negotiate fees with publishers.
- **Opt-Out Option** – Publishers can block AI crawlers (like EU's GDPR).
- **Revenue Share** – AI companies must share profits from AI-generated news summaries.



LEGAL & ECONOMIC IMPACT

Scenario	Outcome
Govt. Backs DNPA	AI firms pay → Media survives, quality journalism
No Regulation	AI keeps freeloading → Newsrooms shrink, fake news rises.
Compromise Deal	Limited licensing (e.g., only premium publishers).



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Social Development

GS 2, 3: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; Linkages between development and spread of extremism

Newspaper : The Hindu, **Page No :** 7



Forest Rights Act, 2006

Rights for the dwellers

What the Forest Rights Act, 2006, entails

- Tenurial security over the forestland under occupation prior to December 13, 2005
- Recognition of community right over forest and forest products
- Protection and conservation of community forest resources
- Conversion of all forest villages and habitation located inside the forestland into revenue villages
- In situ rehabilitation of displaced persons evicted without compensation prior to December 13, 2005
- Recognition of ancestral domain (habitat) right to



Residents of Gunduribadi village in Odisha's Nayagarh district get ready for mapping their land boundaries for the Forest Rights Act implementation. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

- Seasonal access to nomadic, pastoral and semi-nomadic communities over forestland
- Conversion of all leases granted by erstwhile governments, zamindars and king into permanent land records

 **Empowered Gram Sabha**

 **Protection from Eviction**

 **Title Deeds Issued**

 **Sustainability Focus**

 **Gender Sensitivity**

 **Who Are Eligible?**

1. Scheduled Tribes Residing + dependent
(13 Dec 2005.)

2. OTFD Residing + dependent at least 75 yrs
prior to 2005.






What Rights Are Recognised Under FRA?



1. Individual Forest Rights

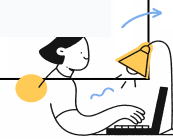
-  Right to hold + live in forest land for **residence or self-cultivation** (up to **4 hectares per family**, if under occupation before 13 December 2005).

2. Community Rights

-  Right to access and use **Minor Forest Produce**
-  Rights for **grazing**, collection of firewood, fishing, and access to **water bodies** within forests.
-  Rights of seasonal access to **sacred groves** and religious sites.

3. Community Forest Resource Rights

-  Right of Gram Sabhas to **protect, regenerate, conserve, and manage** forest areas sustainably.
-  Legal protection against external commercial exploitation or eviction.



Forest Rights Act, 2006 & Naxalism

SYLLABUS: Prelims: Social Development

GS 2, 3: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; Linkages between development and spread of extremism

Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No :** 7

FRA & Naxalism: Chhattisgarh's Ground-Level Strategy


Even as joint security forces continue operations across several States to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah's resolve on a 'Naxal-mukt Bharat' by March 2026, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said his government's "foremost priority is to ensure that every forest land lease holding family received their rightful entitlements".

40% of Chhattisgarh is Naxal-affected, Old Tactics Failed

 **Fauti Naamantaran**

Surrender & Rehab Policy (2025)
Land titles + ₹10K/month stipend
+ skill training

Central Govt Push (300+ FRA cells)

 **Simplified inheritance**

 Legal heirs face **no bureaucratic hurdles**

 Enables access to **government schemes**

 **CCFR**

Over **4,300 titles** granted in last 1.5 years

 **Individual vs. Community Titles**
(2024-25 data)

Community titles > Individual titles (a reversal of earlier trends)

UPSC PYQ (P) 2021

Consider the following statements:

1. Moringa (drumstick tree) is a leguminous evergreen tree.
2. Tamarind tree is endemic to South Asia.
3. In India, most of the tamarind is collected as minor forest produce.
4. India exports tamarind and seeds of moringa.
5. Seeds of moringa and tamarind can be used in the production of biofuels.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (b) 3, 4, and 5
- (c) 1, 3 and 4
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 5

UPSC PYQ (P) 2021

At the national level, which ministry is the nodal agency to ensure effective implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006?

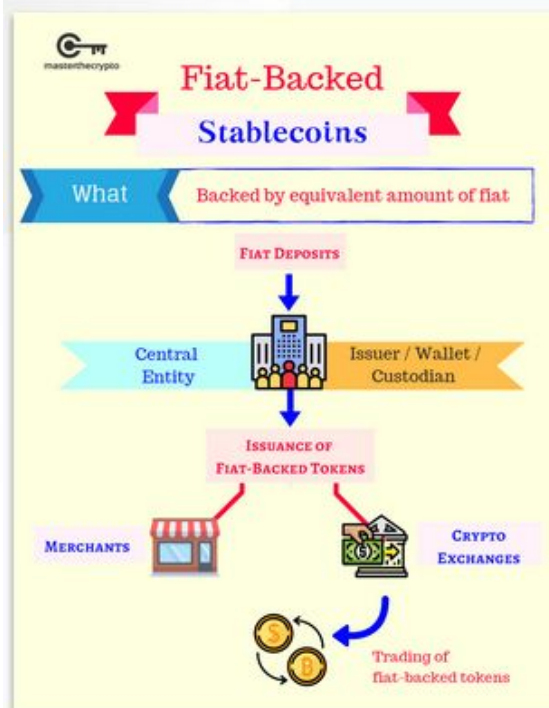
- (a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- (b) Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- (c) Ministry of Rural Development
- (d) Ministry of Tribal Affairs



GENIUS Act on Stablecoins

SYLLABUS: Prelims: Economic Development
GS 3: Indian Economy; Awareness in the fields of IT
Newspaper : The Hindu, **Page No : 13**

Back to Basics: What Are Stablecoins?



Type	Backed By	Examples
<i>Fiat - Collateralized</i>	US \$\$ (1:1)	(Tether) (Circle) DAI Binance USD
<i>Commodity - Backed</i>	Gold, Oil	PAX Gold (PAXG)
<i>Algorithmic</i>	Smart Contracts (Risky!)	UST (Collapsed in 2022)

Global Context:

- 2025 SC market cap = **\$251.7 billion** (+22%)
- US aims to control stablecoin issuance
- Stablecoins = **top holders of US Treasury bills**

GENIUS Act: WHY TRUMP & WALL STREET LOVE THIS

Feature	GENIUS Act	STABLE Act
Passed By	US Senate	US House (Pending)
Issuer Flexibility	Broader base of issuers	Restricted issuers (e.g. regulated banks)
Reserve Assets	Flexible (US Treasuries + others)	Limited to certain safe assets
State Oversight	National uniformity	Greater state-level discretion

\$320M from \$TRUMP Memecoin

Family Crypto Platform (Pak, BRICS)

Countering De-Dollarization

Dollar Supremacy Lock-In

GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

India's **Crypto Dilemma**
(RBI/ e₹?)

Risk	Opportunity
✗ Loss of monetary sovereignty	✓ Access to stable savings
✗ US Treasury exposure	✓ Dollar access without FX volatility
✗ Cyber risk (Iran)	✓ Payment revolution for unbanked



GENIUS Act on Stablecoins



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Economic Development
GS 3: Indian Economy; Awareness in the fields of IT
Newspaper : The Hindu, **Page No : 13**

UPSC PYQ (P) 2020

With reference to "Blockchain Technology", consider the following statements:

1. It is a public ledger that everyone can inspect, but which no single user controls.
2. The structure and design of blockchain is such that all the data in it are about cryptocurrency only.
3. Applications that depend on basic features of blockchain can be developed without anybody's permission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Social Development

GS 2: Issues relating to development & management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Newspaper : The Hindu, **Page No : 9**

INDIA'S BLOOD REVOLUTION: e-Rakt Kosh & Rare Donor Registry Integration



What is **Rare Donor Registry of India**

by **ICMR-NIIH** + 4 partner institutes
Database of **4,000+ screened rare donors**, tested for **300+ rare blood markers**
Includes ultra-rare groups:

- **Bombay Blood Group** (0.0004%)
- **P-null**
- **Rh-null** (1 in 6 million)

DNA-based multiplex PCR tests

Beyond Rare Blood: Other innovations

Innovation in **Hematology**

Tackling Hemoglobinopathies

- ICMR-NIIH developed **Point-of-Care** test kits for:
 - **Sickle Cell Anemia**
 - **Thalassemia**

Cost reduced ₹350 to **under ₹50/test**

Saves over ₹1,857 crore in government spending

Tech Transfer

The POC technology was transferred to **Bhat Biotech (Bengaluru)**

Marketed as **Bio-Scan** since Aug 2023

Advancements in Testing for Bleeding Disorders

Developed **rapid visual card tests** for:

- **Hemophilia A**
- **Von Willebrand Disease (vWD)**

Validated by **World Federation for Hemophilia**

Usable even in **Primary Health Centres**

✓ 1.4 lakh+ Indians live with **Hemophilia** (2nd highest; after Brazil)



B-2 Bombers: US attacks Iran

SYLLABUS: Prelims: Current events of national and international importance
Newspaper : The Indian Express, **Page No : 12**

✈ U.S. DEPLOYS B-2 STEALTH BOMBERS TO GUAM

Comparing Stealth Bombers

The new B-21 Raider bears a family resemblance to the B-2 Spirit, but the two bombers will differ substantially in size, and likely their number of engines and payload. Critically, the B-21 will also be far more advanced in terms of low-observable technology—at least two generations beyond its elder stablemate. Northrop Grumman is the prime contractor for both bombers.



💣 WHY B-2 BOMBERS?

Stealth Tech	Near-invisible to radar
GBU-57 "Bunker Buster"	13,000 kg bomb, penetrates 200 ft of concrete
Long-Range Strike	6,000+ miles unrefueled

⚡ WHAT'S HAPPENING?

US MILITARY

US military presence around the world

The US has about **750 bases** in at least **80 countries** around the world. It has approximately **173,000 troops** deployed in **159 countries**.



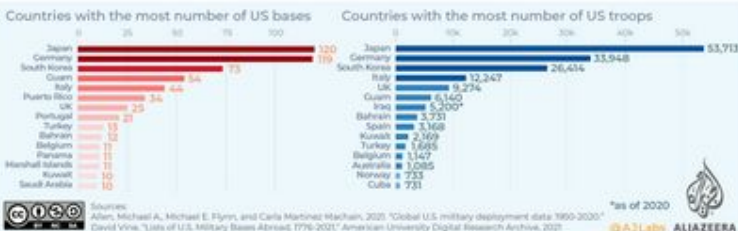
Mission: *Potential* strikes on Iran's **Fordow** nuclear site

Why Guam?

- Close enough to strike Iran but **out of missile range**
- **Evade** Iranian air defenses (S-300/S-400)

🎯 OUTCOMES

- 🔥 **U.S. Joined War**
- 🕊 **Diplomatic Pause**
- 👤 **Proxy War Escalation**



B-2 Bombers: US attacks Iran



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Current events of national and international importance
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UPSC PYQ (M) 2018

With reference to Agni-IV Missile, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is a surface-to-surface missile.
2. It is fuelled by liquid propellant only.
3. It can deliver one-tonne nuclear warheads about 7500 km away.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

UPSC PYQ (P) 2018

What is "Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)", sometimes seen in the news?

- (a) An Israeli radar system
- (b) India's indigenous anti-missile programme
- (c) An American anti-missile system
- (d) A defence collaboration between Japan and South Korea.



Q1. Consider the following statements regarding International Yoga Day:

1. It is celebrated annually on 21st June, which is also the summer solstice.
2. The 2025 theme for Yoga Day was "Yoga for Self and Society".
3. It was formally adopted by the United Nations in 2014.

How many of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

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

Answer: a

Q2. Arrange the following departments/organization in descending order based on their share in India's R&D expenditure:

1. Department of Biotechnology (DBT)
2. Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO)
3. Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)
4. Department of Space (DOS)

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) 1 > 3 > 4 > 2
- b) 2 > 3 > 4 > 1
- c) 2 > 4 > 3 > 1
- d) 2 > 4 > 1 > 3

Answer: c

Q3. Regarding the Forest Rights Act (FRA), consider the following statements:

1. Individual Forest Rights include the right to live on and cultivate forest land.
2. Community Rights include grazing, collecting firewood, and access to Minor Forest Produce.
3. Community Forest Resource Rights empower Panchayats to manage and lease forest land to private parties.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: a

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Stablecoins:

1. Stablecoins are digital assets pegged to fiat currencies or commodities like gold or oil.
2. The GENIUS Act of the European Union seeks to regulate stablecoins within the EU financial systems.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Rare Donor Registry of India:

1. The registry was established through collaboration between ICMR-NIIH and four other partner institutes.
2. It maintains a database of over 4,000 rare blood donors.
3. Ultra-rare blood groups such as Bombay Blood Group, P-null, and Rh-null are part of this registry.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: d





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