



## WHO Reforms

**For Prelims:** Global Covid Summit, Covid-19, TRIPS, WHO

**For Mains:** Significance of India's Participation in the Global Covid Summit

### Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister addressed the **Second Global Covid Virtual Summit** of the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#), where he emphasized WHO Reforms.

- The Indian government has repeatedly raised the need to reform WHO at multilateral forums such as the [G20](#) and [BRICS](#) this year (2021-22). India's calls for WHO reforms, especially after the body's initial handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, **have been backed by countries around the world.**

### What are the Reforms Suggested by India?

- **Strengthening the Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) declaration process:**
  - It is important to devise **objective criteria with clear parameters for declaring PHEIC.**
  - The **emphasis must be on transparency and promptness** in the declaration process.
  - A PHEIC **implies a situation** that is:
    - Serious, sudden, unusual or unexpected;
    - Carries implications for public health beyond the affected State's national border; and
    - May require immediate international action.
- **Funding:**
  - Most of the financing for Programmatic Activities of the WHO comes from extra budgetary contributions, which though voluntary in nature, are normally earmarked. The WHO enjoys very little flexibility in the use of these funds.
  - There is a **need to ensure that [extra budgetary or voluntary contributions](#) are unearmarked to ensure that the WHO has the necessary flexibility for its usage in areas** where they are required the most.
  - There is also a **need to look at increasing the regular budget of the WHO so that most of the core activities of the WHO are financed** from it, without putting an overwhelming financial burden on developing countries.
- **Ensuring transparency of funding mechanism and accountability framework:**
  - There is **no collaborative mechanism** wherein the actual projects and activities are decided in consultation with member states, there is no review with respect to value for money and whether projects are being done as per the member states priorities or if there are abnormal delays.
  - Establishing strong and robust financial accountability frameworks will enable maintaining integrity in financial flows.
  - It is also **crucial to establish a significant amount of transparency with respect to data reporting and disbursement of funds for increased accountability.**

- **Enhancement of the response capacities of the WHO and Member States:**
  - Implementation of the IHR 2005 has highlighted critical gaps in the basic health infrastructure of member States. This has become more evident in their dealing with COVID 19 pandemic.
  - It is important that the **programmatic activities carried out by the WHO, under its General Programme of Work**, should focus on **building and strengthening capacities in member states as required under IHR 2005**, which are found lacking or deficient on the basis of the self-reporting on IHR 2005 done by the Member States.
- **Improvement of the WHO's governance structure:**
  - Being a technical Organisation, most of the work in WHO is done in Technical Committees composed of independent experts. Moreover, considering the growing risks associated with emergence of disease outbreaks the role of the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee (IOAC), responsible for the performance of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE), becomes extremely crucial.
  - It is important that the **member States have a greater say in the functioning of the WHO**, given that it is the States which are responsible for implementation on ground of the technical advice and recommendations coming from the WHO.
  - There is a need to **devise specific mechanisms like a Standing Committee of the Executive Board to ensure effective supervision by member States.**
- **Improvement in IHR Implementation:**
  - The Member States have a **self-reporting obligation under IHR (International Health Regulations) 2005**. However, review of IHR implementation is voluntary.
    - IHR (2005), represents a binding international legal agreement involving 196 countries across the globe, including all the Member States of the WHO.
    - Their aim is to help the international community prevent and respond to acute public health risks that have the potential to cross borders and threaten people worldwide.
  - The review of the **IHR implementation should continue to be on a voluntary basis.**
  - It is critical to **accord priority to enhance international cooperation, which should be directed at aiding** developing countries in areas which they have been identified as lacking the necessary capacity to implement the IHR.
- **Access to therapeutics, vaccines and diagnostics:**
  - It has been felt that the **TRIPS flexibilities** provided for public health, under Doha Declaration, may not be sufficient to deal with crises such as Covid-19 pandemic.
  - It is important **to ensure fair, affordable, and equitable access to all tools for combating Covid-19 pandemic** and, therefore, the need to build a framework for their allocation.
- **Creation of Global Framework for Management of Infectious Diseases & Pandemics:**
  - There is a need to create a monitoring mechanism and support to member states on International Health Regulations, preparedness of infrastructure, human resources and relevant health systems capacities such as testing and surveillance systems.
  - Enhancement of capacities of countries in preparation for and response to infectious diseases of pandemic potential, including guidance on effective public health and economic measures for health emergencies by leveraging a multidisciplinary approach which includes social science alongside health and natural sciences.
- **Role of Hosted Partnerships in pandemic management:**
  - The risks imposed on humankind, by new influenza viruses causing more disease outbreaks are very real.
  - There is an urgent need for the global community to address this issue by making bold efforts and ensuring vigilance and preparedness in our healthcare systems.
  - The primary objective should be to improve capacity for global pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, and strengthening our ability to fight back any such pandemic in future.

# NATO Membership for Finland and Sweden

**For Prelims:** NATO, EU, Baltic Sea, Location of Russia

**For Mains:** Russia-Ukraine Crisis, NATO, NATO-Russia Dynamics

## Why in News?

Recently, Finland and Sweden have shown interest to join the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#).



## Why are Sweden and Finland Not NATO Members?

- **Finland:**
  - It has stayed out of such alliances because it **always wanted to maintain cordial relations with its neighbour, Russia.**
  - For a long time, the idea of not joining NATO or getting **too close to the West was a matter of survival** for the Finns.
    - However, the change in perception and an overwhelming support to join NATO came about following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- **Sweden:**
  - Unlike Finland, whose policy stance was a matter of survival, Sweden has been opposed to joining the organisation for ideological reasons.

## What would a membership mean and will it benefit NATO as well?

- **Give Security Guarantee:**
  - Being a member of NATO will **give the nations a security guarantee** under the alliance's **“Article 5” on collective defence.**
    - The article essentially guarantees a **military response and protection by NATO countries** if any member of the organisation comes under attack.
- **Strengthen the Alliance’s Position:**
  - Finland’s **geographical location plays in its favour** as once it becomes a member, the

length of borders Russia shares with NATO would double and it would also **strengthen the alliance's position in the [Baltic Sea](#)**.

▪ **Counter Russia's Aggression:**

- More sovereign powers siding with the west and increasing its strength is a direct blow to Russia.
- If Sweden and Finland do join NATO, especially under these circumstances, **“it would show Russia that the war is counterproductive** and it only strengthens Western unity, resolve and military preparedness”.

## How have Russia and other Countries Reacted?

▪ **Russia:**

- Russia threatened to **take military measures if the membership goes through** and warned Finland to be aware of the consequences of this move.

▪ **European and US:**

- [European Nations](#) and the United States have welcomed the announcement.
- Norway and Denmark have said they will push for NATO admission faster.
- Until the membership is formally accepted, the US stated it is prepared to provide any necessary defence support or address any concerns.

▪ **Turkey:**

- Turkey opposes Finland and Sweden joining NATO.
- The Turkish government claimed that it could use its membership in the Western alliance to veto moves to admit the two nations.
- The Turkish government cited Sweden and other Scandinavian countries for supporting Kurdish militants and other groups it considers terrorist.

## What is NATO?

- It is a military alliance established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the [Soviet Union](#).
- There are currently 30 member states.
  - Its **original members were** Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
  - Joining the original signatories were **Greece and Turkey (1952), West Germany (1955, from 1990 as Germany), Spain (1982), the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), and [North Macedonia \(2020\)](#)**.
  - France withdrew from the integrated military command of NATO in 1966 but remained a member of the organization, it resumed its position in NATO's military command in 2009.
- **Headquarters:** Brussels, Belgium.
- **Headquarters of Allied Command Operations:** Mons, Belgium.

## What are the Objectives of NATO?

- NATO's essential and enduring purpose is to **safeguard the freedom and security** of all its members by political and military means.
  - **Political objectives:** NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defense and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.
  - **Military Objectives:** NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations.
    - These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO's founding treaty - Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations.
    - NATO has only once invoked Article 5, on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2001 following the 9/11

attacks on the World Trade Center in the US.

## Way Forward

- As Finland joins NATO, Russia could seek to deploy more troops along the Russian-Finland border and further thin-out an already attenuated Russian army.
- Finland and Russia share a **1,300 km border and the Russia's actions against Finland's** (and potentially Sweden's) NATO membership may heavily depend on the potential military asset deployment along the border on the Finnish, and potentially Swedish, side.
- The Finns may **very well not opt for immediate asset deployment** and perhaps would want to use their NATO membership as a signal to Russia but if they continue to feel sufficiently threatened, they may opt for exhaustive asset deployment.

[Source: IE](#)

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## Dollarisation Due to Cryptocurrencies

**For Prelims:** RBI, Dollarisation and De-dollarisation, cryptocurrencies, forex reserves

**For Mains:** Dollarisation Due to Cryptocurrencies, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests

### Why in News?

Recently, [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#) told a parliamentary panel that [cryptocurrencies](#) can lead to "**dollarisation**" of a part of the economy which would be against India's sovereign interest.

### What is Dollarisation?

- Dollarisation is a **form of currency substitution**, where dollars are used in addition to or instead of the local currency of a country.
  - Though only tax havens like Liberia and Panama can be defined as 'dollarized' in a true sense, there are many economies dollarised to a large extent.
- In fact, **two-thirds of dollars are held outside the United States** which issues it.
  - Countries which have been victims of hyperinflation like Bolivia have become dollarised too, with over 80% of the currency in use being dollars.

### What is De-dollarisation?

- It refers to **reducing the dollar's dominance of global markets**. It is a process of substituting US dollar as the currency used for:
  - Trading oil and/ or other commodities
  - Buying US dollars for the [forex reserves](#)
  - Bilateral trade agreements
  - Dollar-denominated assets
- The dominant role of the dollar in the global economy **provides the US a disproportionate**

**amount of influence over other economies.** The US has for long used imposition of sanctions as a tool to achieve foreign policy goals.

- The de-dollarisation is **driven by the desire to insulate the Central Banks of the Countries from geopolitical risks**, where the status of the US dollar as a reserve currency can be used as an offensive weapon.

## How Dollarisation Affects an Economy?

- In spite of its current inflation troubles, **India is far away from dollarisation to this extent.**
  - However, according to some research papers, **Indian EXIM transactions are dominated by dollars.**
- **86% of both Indian imports and exports** are invoiced in dollars.
- **Only 5% of India's imports and 15% of exports** are from and to the US.
  - It shows that **few countries use their own currencies for international transactions** due to the popularity of the dollar abroad.

## What are the Related Concerns?

- **Challenges to the Stability of the Financial System:**
  - Central banks of economies with **high dollarisation, become bodies with no power.**
  - Cryptocurrencies have the **potential to be a medium of exchange and replace the rupee in financial transactions** both domestic and cross border.
    - This is **one of the reasons why RBI has opposed it**, and the Indian finance ministry has backed them by **imposing a 30% crypto tax** on it without officially 'allowing' it in India.
  - This move **aimed to stall Indian rupees going up into purchasing virtual assets** which will then be owned by foreign entities - that cannot be tracked by tax authorities here.
  - The **tax does not apply to individuals** who mine cryptos to earn them but only to those who spend Indian rupees to acquire or trade in it.
- **Threat to Financial Sector of the Country:**
  - Besides being used for **terror financing, money laundering** and **drug trafficking**, cryptos **pose a bigger threat to the stability of the financial system of the country.**
- **Negative Impact on the Banking System:**
  - It will also **have a negative impact on the banking system** as these being attractive assets **people may invest their hard-earned savings** in these currencies which may result in banks having lesser resources to lend.
    - There are an **estimated 15 million to 20 million crypto investors in India**, with total crypto holdings of around USD 5.34 billion.

## Way Forward

- The US dollar is **still the favoured currency for trade** because no other currency is liquid enough. Even if a currency does, there would be apprehensions in nations about that currency becoming a mirror of the US dollar.
- A mere change in regime along with having to bear the same manipulations albeit from a different country is not what the world wants. The only way forward would be to diversify the currency market with no one currency claiming hegemony.

[Source: ET](#)

**For Prelims:** GatiShakti Sanchar Portal, Gati Shakti Scheme

**For Mains:** Government Policies & Interventions, Significance of GatiShakti Sanchar Portal

## Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Communications has launched the “GatiShakti Sanchar” portal for **Centralised Right of Way (RoW) approvals**.

## What is “GatiShakti Sanchar” portal?

- **About:** The portal has been developed keeping in view the vision areas of the **National Broadband Mission** at the core, which are providing broadband infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen, Governance and services on demand, and in particular, digital empowerment of the citizens of the country.
- **Objective:** The portal shall act as an enabler to the objective of **“Ease of doing business”** for telecommunications infrastructure works.

## What is the Significance?

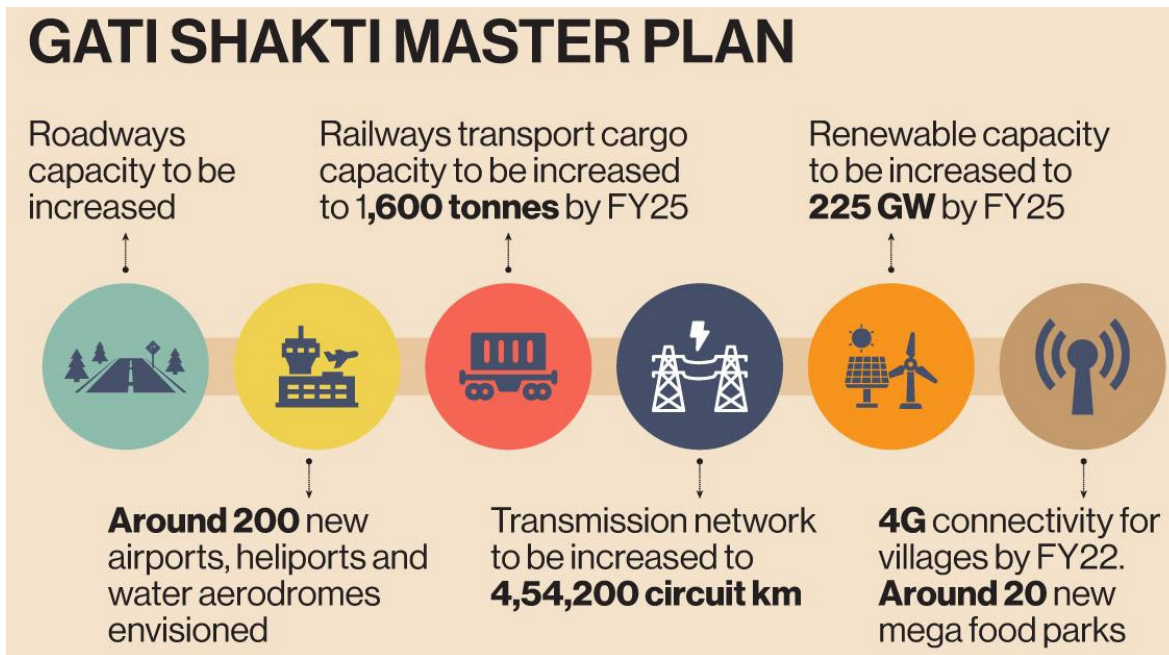
- **Timely Rollout of 5G Network:** The timely disposal of RoW applications of various Service and Infrastructure providers shall enable speedy infrastructure creation which would be an enabler for the timely rollout of the **5G Network** also.
  - For effective monitoring of RoW applications across the country, the portal even comes fitted with a potent dashboard **showing State and District wise pendency status**.
- **Improved Quality of Telecom Services:** This will lead to:
  - Fast laying of more **Optical Fiber Cable** will thus accelerate fiberization.
  - Increased tower density which will **enhance connectivity and improve the quality** of various telecom services.
  - Increased fiberization of telecom towers, thus ensuring better Broadband speed, across the country.
- **Empowerment of the Country:** This portal is expected to give a fillip to the nation’s **‘AatmaNirbhar’ movement**, contributing actively to transforming the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- **Significant for Both Rural and Urban India:** This will ensure uninterrupted digital access, digital delivery of services, and digital inclusion of all, based on technology that is sustainable, affordable and transformative.

## What is the PM Gati Shakti Scheme?

- **About:**
  - In 2021 the government launched the ambitious Gati Shakti scheme or **National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity**, with the aim of coordinated planning and execution of infrastructure projects to bring down logistics costs.
- **Aim:**
  - To ensure integrated planning and **implementation of infrastructure projects in the next four years**, with a focus on expediting works on the ground, saving costs, and creating jobs.
  - The Gati Shakti scheme will subsume the Rs 110 lakh crore **National Infrastructure Pipeline** that was launched in 2019.
  - Besides cutting logistics costs, the scheme is also aimed at **increasing cargo handling capacity** and reducing the turnaround time at ports to boost trade.
  - It also aims to have 11 **industrial corridors** and two new **defence corridors** - one in Tamil Nadu and the other in Uttar Pradesh.
  - Extending **4G connectivity** to all villages is another aim. Adding 17,000 kms to the gas

pipeline network is being planned.

- It will help in fulfilling the **ambitious targets** set by the government for 2024-25, including expanding the length of the national highway network to 2 lakh kms, creation of more than 200 new airports, heliports, and water aerodromes.



### What is the National Broadband Mission?

- **About:** It was set up by the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) in 2019.
- **Objective:** To facilitate **universal and equitable access to broadband services** across the country, especially in rural and remote areas.
  - To fulfill this vision, it is imperative that a backbone of infrastructure is created by facilitating the smooth and efficient deployment of Digital Communications Infrastructure across the country.
  - The “GatiShakti Sanchar” portal will provide a robust mechanism to achieve the goal of “Broadband for All” as envisaged in the National Digital Communication Policy-2.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Potential of Cruise Tourism in India

**For Prelims:** FICCI, Lighthouse, PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, Swadesh Darshan scheme, Namami Gange Project

**For Mains:** Potential of Cruise Tourism in India and related Initiatives

### Why in News?



Recently, the first Incredible India International Cruise Conference 2022 was held.

- India is working on a **national tourism policy** to give an impetus to the Tourism industry.

## What is the India International Cruise Conference 2022?

- The conference has been jointly organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and [Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry \(FICCI\)](#).
- Some of the key issues being deliberated at the two day event:
  - Strategies for developing India as a cruise hub, policy initiatives and port infrastructure, potential of river cruise tourism, role of technology in the post-pandemic world.

## What is the Potential of Cruise Tourism in India?

- **About:**
  - The Indian cruise market has the **potential to grow 10 folds over the next decade**, driven by rising demand and disposable incomes.
  - India is a **magnificent cruise destination**, several attractions of India along its 7,500 km long coastline and vast river systems are yet to be unveiled to the world.
  - The government of India **realizes the potential and is determined to position India as a global cruise hub** with state-of-art infrastructure for both ocean and river cruises.
  - In India, **global players have shown a keen interest** in promoting cruise tourism, and with the right infrastructure, this could happen with the adoption of modern technology, India will certainly become one of the top tourism destinations in the world.
- **Aim:**
  - India **aims to increase cruise passenger traffic** from 0.4 million at present to 4 million.
  - Economic potential of Cruise tourism is **expected to go up from USD 110 mn to USD 5.5 bn** in the years to come.

## What are the Related Initiatives?

- **Task Force:**
  - The Government has **set up a Task Force** for development of cruise tourism.
  - The setting up of a **high level Advisory Committee**, comprising national and international experts was announced to help the Task Force in creating an enabling ecosystem for development of cruise tourism in the country.
- **Coastal Destination Circuits:**
  - 'Four theme **based coastal destination circuits** have been developed to activate cruise demand.
    - **Four theme based coastal destination circuits are:**
      - Gujarat Pilgrimage tours
      - West Coast - Cultural and scenic tours
      - South Coast - Ayurvedic wellness tours and
      - East Coast - Heritage tourism
- **Lighthouse:**
  - [Lighthouse](#) and **Island development** is also being undertaken to attract Coastal tourists.
    - **River cruise or Inland cruise** is another potential component of cruise tourism that could be explored.
- **Maritime Vision Document 2030:**
  - The **Maritime Vision Document 2030** has also been prepared with focus on heritage tourism, Ayurveda tourism, coastal tourism, river cruise tourism etc.
    - Post [pandemic](#) the tourism sector in India is growing with resurgence and cruise tourism has **registered a 35% year-on-year growth**.
- **Upgradation and Modernisation of Ports:**
  - Upgradation and modernisation of Ports are being carried out at **seven major ports in the country** including the flagship **New International Cruise terminal** coming up in Mumbai with a total cost about Rs 495 crores.
  - The terminal will have a capacity of handling 200 ships and 1 million passengers per

annum.

- Similar infrastructure upgradation is **taking place in Goa, New Mangalore, Kochi, Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Kolkata.**
- **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan:**
  - Under the ambitious [PM GatiShakti National Master Plan](#), **tourism related infrastructure is also being developed** with a focus on shipping, river tourism, forest and wildlife tourism.
- **Swadesh Darshan scheme:**
  - Through the [Swadesh Darshan scheme](#), 10 projects under coastal thematic circuits worth Rs 648.80 crore across various states/Union Territories have been sanctioned.
- **Through Namami Gange Project:**
  - Government has **made significant efforts to clean and rejuvenate rivers**, including through the [mammoth Namami Gange Project](#), which can provide a major boost to river-based tourist activities.
- **Others:**
  - Several initiatives including **infrastructure upgradation, rationalisation of port fees**, removing ousting charges, granting priority berthing to cruise ships, providing e-visa facilities etc have also been taken.

## What is the Status of Cruise Market around the world?

- Globally the **river cruise market has grown at around 5%** over the last few years and is expected to constitute around 37% of the cruise market by 2027.
- **Europe has been driving growth with around 60% share** of river cruise vessels in the world with rivers Danube in Europe and Yangtze in China dominating the river cruise market globally.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## HS200 Solid Rocket Booster for Gaganyaan Mission

### Why in News?

Recently, the [Indian Space Research Organization \(ISRO\)](#) has completed the static test of the **human-rated solid rocket booster (HS200)** for Gaganyaan programme.

### What is the HS200 Solid Rocket Booster?

- The booster engine is **part of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle MkIII (GSLV Mk III) rocket** that will carry Indian astronauts to space.
  - The GSLV Mk-III rocket which will be used for the Gaganyaan mission will have **two HS200 boosters** which will supply the thrust for lift-off.
  - The HS200 is a 20-metre-long booster with a diameter of 3.2 metres and is the **world's second largest operational booster using solid propellants.**
- The HS200 is the **human-rated version of the S200 rocket booster of satellite launch vehicle [GSLV Mk III](#)**, popularly known as LVM3.
  - Since Gaganyaan is a crewed mission, the GSLV Mk-III will have improvements to increase reliability and safety to meet the requirements of 'human rating.'
- The S200 motor - the first stage of the LVM3 launch vehicle **designed to deliver 4,000 kg satellites to geosynchronous transfer orbit** - was configured as a strap-on rocket booster.
- This full-duration test of the first stage of the launch vehicle marks a major milestone for the Gaganyaan programme.
- Design and development of the HS200 booster was completed at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram, and propellant casting was completed at

Sriharikota.

- Out of the three propulsion stages of LVM3, the human-rated versions of the second-stage known as L110-G loaded with liquid propellant and the third stage C25-G with cryogenic propellant are in the final phase of qualification, including tests with static firing.

## What is GSLV?

- GSLV is a much more powerful rocket, meant to carry heavier satellites much deeper into space. Till date, GSLV rockets have carried out 18 missions, of which four ended in failure.
- It can take 10,000-kg satellites to lower earth orbits.
- The indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS), forms the third stage of GSLV Mk II.
- Mk-III versions have made ISRO entirely self-sufficient for launching its satellites.
  - Before this, it used to depend on the European Ariane launch vehicle to take its heavier satellites into space.
  - GSLV-Mk III is a fourth generation, three stage launch vehicle with four liquid strap-ons. The indigenously developed CUS, which is flight proven, forms the third stage of GSLV Mk III.
  - The rocket has three-stages with two solid motor strap-ons (S200), a liquid propellant core stage (L110) and a cryogenic stage (C-25).

## What is Gaganyaan Mission?

- **About:**
  - Gaganyaan is a mission by the [Indian Space Research Organisation \(ISRO\)](#).
  - Under the Gaganyaan schedule (to be launched in 2023):
    - Three flights will be sent into orbit.
    - There will be two unmanned flights and one human spaceflight.
  - The Gaganyaan system module, called the Orbital Module will have three Indian astronauts, including a woman.
  - It will circle Earth at a [low-earth-orbit](#) at an altitude of 300-400 km from earth for 5-7 days.
- **Payloads:**
  - **The payload will consist of:**
    - Crew module - spacecraft carrying human beings.
    - Service module - powered by two liquid propellant engines.
    - It will be equipped with emergency escape and emergency mission abort.
- **Launch:**
  - [GSLV Mk III](#), also called the LVM-3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3,) the three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle, will be used to launch Gaganyaan as it has the necessary payload capability.
- **Training in Russia:**
  - In June 2019, the Human Space Flight Centre of the ISRO and the Russian government-owned Glavkosmos signed a contract for the training, which includes Russian support in the selection of candidates, their medical examination, and space training.
    - The candidates will study in detail the systems of the Soyuz manned spaceship, as well as be trained in short-term weightlessness mode aboard the Il-76MDK aircraft.
    - The Soyuz is a Russian spacecraft. The Soyuz carries people and supplies to and from the space station.
    - The Il-76MDK is a military transport plane specially designed for parabolic flights of trainee astronauts and space tourists.
- **Significance:**
  - It will help **in enhancement of science and technology levels** in the country and help inspire youth.
    - Gaganyaan will involve numerous agencies, laboratories, disciplines, industries and departments.
  - It will help **in the improvement of industrial growth**.
    - Recently, the Government has announced a new organisation, IN-SPACe, part of reforms to increase [private participation in the space sector](#).

- It will **help in the development of technology** for social benefits.
- It will help in improving international collaboration.
  - One [International Space Station \(ISS\)](#) put up by multiple countries may not be enough. Regional ecosystems will be needed and Gaganyaan will focus on regional needs: food, water and energy security.
- **India's Other Upcoming Projects:**
  - **Chandrayaan-3 Mission:** India has planned a new moon mission named [Chandrayaan-3](#). It is likely to be launched in 2022.
  - **Shukrayaan Mission:** The ISRO is also planning a mission to Venus, tentatively called Shukrayaan.

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

**Q. With reference to India's satellite launch vehicles, consider the following statements: (2018)**

1. PSLVs launch the satellites useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
3. GSLV Mk III is a four-staged launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors; and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Ans: (a)**

- PSLV is the third generation launch vehicle of India. It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages. It is used mainly for delivering various satellites in Low Earth Orbits, particularly the Indian Remote Sensing series of satellites. It can take up to 1,750 kg of payload to Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbits of 600 km altitude.
- GSLV is designed mainly to deliver Indian National Satellite System, or INSAT, which is a series of multipurpose geo-stationary satellites launched by ISRO to fulfil the needs of telecommunications, broadcasting, meteorology, and search and rescue operations. It places satellites to the highly elliptical Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The satellites in the geosynchronous orbits appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

**Q. What is 'Greased Lightning-10 (GL-10)', recently in the news? (2016)**

- (a) Electric plane tested by NASA
- (b) Solar-powered two-seater aircraft designed by Japan
- (c) Space observatory launched by China
- (d) Reusable rocket designed by ISRO

**Ans: (a)**

## Buddha Purnima

### Why in News?

The Prime Minister has recalled the **principles of Lord Buddha** and reiterated his commitment to fulfill them on the occasion of Buddha Purnima.

- He also visited Nepal during this special occasion.

### What do we know about Buddha Purnima?

- It is celebrated to **mark the birth of Gautam Buddha**, the founder of Buddhism.
  - It is also known as [Vesak](#). In 1999, it became an **UN-designated day**, to acknowledge the contribution of Buddhism to society.
- It is considered a '**triple-blessed day**' - as Tathagata Gautam Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and Maha Parnirvana.
- Buddha Purnima falls on a full moon night, usually between April and May, and it is a **gazetted holiday in India**.
- Many devotees visit Mahabodhi Temple, a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#), located in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, on this occasion.
  - [Bodhi Temple](#) is the location where Lord Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment.

### Who was Gautam Buddha?

- He was born as **Siddhartha Gautama** in circa 563 BCE, in Lumbini and belonged to the Sakya clan.
- Gautam attained Bodhi (enlightenment) under a pipal tree at Bodhgaya, Bihar.
- Buddha gave his **first sermon in the village of Sarnath**, near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. This event is known as **Dharma Chakra Pravartana** (turning of the wheel of law).
- He **died at the age of 80** in 483 BCE at Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh. The event is known as **Mahaparinibban** or Mahaparinirvana.
- He is believed to be the **eighth of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu** (Dashavatar).

### What is Buddhism?

- **About:**
  - [Buddhism](#) started in India over 2,600 years ago.
  - The main teachings of Buddhism are encapsulated in the basic concept of four noble truths or **ariya-sachchani and eight-fold path or ashtangika marg**.
    - Dukkha (Sufferings) and its extinction are central to the [Buddha's doctrine](#).
  - The essence of Buddhism is the attainment of **enlightenment or nirvana** which was not a place but an experience that could be attained in this life.
  - There is **no supreme god or deity in Buddhism**.
- **Buddhist Councils:**

Buddhist Council	Patron	Venue	Chairman	Year
First	Ajatashatru	Rajgriha	Mahakashyapa	483 BC
Second	Kalashoka	Vaishali	Sabbakami	383 BC
Third	Ashoka	Patliputra	Mogaliputra	250 BC
Fourth	Kanishka	Kundalban (Kashmir)	Vasumitra	72 AD

▪ **Schools of Buddhism:**

- Mahayana (Idol Worship), Hinayana, Theravada, Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism), Zen.

▪ **Buddhism Texts (Tipitaka):**

- **Vinaya Pitaka** (rules applicable to monastic life), **Sutta Pitaka** (main teaching or Dhamma of Buddha), **Abhidhamma Pitaka** (a philosophical analysis and systematization of the teaching).

▪ **Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Culture:**

- The concept of **ahimsa** was its chief contribution. Later, it became one of the cherished values of our nation.
- Its contribution to the art and architecture of India was notable. The stupas at Sanchi, Bharhut, and Gaya are wonderful pieces of architecture.
- It **promoted education through residential universities** like those at Taxila, Nalanda, and Vikramasila.
- The language of **Pali** and other local languages developed through the teachings of Buddhism.
- It had also promoted the spread of Indian culture to other parts of Asia.

▪ **UNESCO's Heritage Sites Related to Buddhism:**

- Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda, Bihar
- Buddhist Monuments at [Sanchi](#), MP
- Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya, Bihar
- [Ajanta Caves](#) Aurangabad, Maharashtra.

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

**Q. With reference to the cultural history of India, which one of the following is the correct description of the term 'paramitas'? (2020)**

- The earliest Dharmashastra texts written in aphoristic (sutra) style
- Philosophical schools that did not accept the authority of Vedas
- Perfections whose attainment led to the Bodhisattva path
- Powerful merchant guilds of early medieval South India

**Ans: (c)**

**Q. Consider the following: (2019)**

1. Deification of the Buddha
2. Treading the path of Bodhisattvas
3. Image worship and rituals

**Which of the above is/are the feature/features of Mahayana Buddhism?**

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

**Ans: (d)**

- The fourth Buddhist Council held at Kundalvana, Kashmir in 72 AD, presided by Vasumitra saw Buddhism divide into two branches, Hinyana and Mahayana.
- Mahayana, literally translates to 'The Great Vehicle', whereas supporters of Mahayana Buddhism termed the older tradition of Buddhism as Hinyana (the lesser vehicle).
- Mahayana Buddhists professed the path of the Bodhisattva to attain enlightenment and to help all sentient beings from all sufferings and pain. **Hence, 2 is correct.**
- This school started believing that the Buddha was the saviour and he was the one who could ensure salvation. Thus, the process of deification of Buddha started. **Hence, 1 is correct.**
- Besides, the worship of images of the Buddha and rituals became an important part of Buddhist school. Hence, 3 is correct.
  - Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## **Devasahayam Pillai**

### **Why in News?**

Recently, [Devasahayam Pillai](#) was declared **Saint by Pope Francis (Catholic Church) at The Vatican.**

- He had converted to Christianity in the 18th century in the then Kingdom of Travancore. Devasahayam had become the **first Indian layman to get sainthood for what The Vatican calls 'enduring increasing hardships'**.



## Who was Devasahayam Pillai?

- Devasahayam was born on 23th April 23, 1712 in Nattalam village in Kanyakumari district.
- He was baptized in 1745, and **assumed the name 'Lazarus', meaning 'God is my help'**.
  - Baptism is a Christian sacrament marked by ritual use of water and admitting the recipient to the Christian community.
- His conversion **did not go well with the heads of his native religion**. False charges of treason and espionage were brought against him and he was divested of his post in the royal administration.
- He went on **to fight against Caste discrimination prevalent in the country** and was persecuted and then killed.
- On 14th January, 1752, Devasahayam was shot dead in the Aralvaimozhy forest. He is widely considered a martyr, and his mortal remains were interred inside what is now Saint Francis Xavier's Cathedral in Kottar, Nagercoil.
- The Vatican in **2012 recognised his martyrdom after a rigorous process**.

## Why Devasahayam Pillai has been declared sainthood?

- Saint Devasahayam Pillai **stood for equality and fought against the evils of society** such as Casteism and Communalism.
- His sainthood also comes at a time in India when the country is facing a surge in communalism.
- Devasahayam Pillai **being declared a saint is also a great opportunity for the Church to stand against the prevailing communal poison**.
  - **Communalism** is blind allegiance to one's own religious community in our culture. It is defined as a tool for or against mobilising people by appealing for communal services. Communalism is related to dogmatism and religious fundamentalism.

[Source: IE](#)