



Core Sector Output

Why in News?

India's eight core sector industries **showed a robust growth of 8.4% in April** compared to 4.9% in March 2022.

- The [eight core sector industries](#) comprise **40.27%** of the weight of items included in the [Index of Industrial Production \(IIP\)](#).
- **The eight core sector industries in decreasing order of their weightage are:** Refinery Products> Electricity> Steel> Coal> Crude Oil> Natural Gas> Cement> Fertilizers.

What is the Index of Eight Core Industries?

- **About:**
 - [Index of Eight Core Industries \(ICI\)](#) refers to the **production volume index**.
 - It evaluates the **combined as well as individual performance of production** in selected eight core industries.
 - **The current weightage (April 2021), of eight core industries is given below:**
 - Petroleum Refinery production (**28.04%**), Electricity (**19.85%**), Steel (**17.92%**), Coal production (**10.33%**), Crude Oil (**8.98%**), Natural Gas production (**6.88%**), Cement production (**5.37%**), Fertilizer production (**2.63%**).
 - ICI is compiled and released by the **Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), [Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade \(DPIIT\)](#), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- **Significance:**
 - ICI provides **advance indication on production performance** of industries of 'core' nature prior to the IIP release by the [National Statistical Office, NSO](#).
 - **General economic activities and industrial activities** are likely to get impacted by the eight core industries.

What is the Index of Industrial Production?

- **About:**
 - **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** is an indicator that measures the **changes in the volume of production** of industrial products during a given period.
 - It is compiled and published monthly by the [National Statistical Office \(NSO\)](#), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
 - **It is a composite indicator that measures** the growth rate of industry groups classified under:
 - **Broad sectors**, namely, Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity.
 - **Use-based sectors**, namely Basic Goods, Capital Goods, and Intermediate Goods.
 - **Base Year** for IIP is **2011-2012**.
- **Significance of IIP:**
 - It is used by government agencies including the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, etc, for **policy-making purposes**.
 - IIP remains extremely relevant for the calculation of the **quarterly and advance [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#) estimates**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. In the 'Index of Eight Core Industries', which one of the following is given the highest weight? (2015)

- (a) Coal production
- (b) Electricity generation
- (c) Fertilizer production
- (d) Steel production

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- **In 2015, Electricity was having the highest weightage in the index of 8 core industries. Therefore, option (b) is correct.**
- The Eight Core Industries comprise **40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).**
- **The current weightage (April 2021), of eight core industries is given below:**
 - Petroleum Refinery production (**28.04%**), Electricity (**19.85%**), Steel (**17.92%**), Coal production (**10.33%**), Crude Oil (**8.98%**), Natural Gas production (**6.88%**), Cement production (**5.37%**), Fertilizer production (**2.63%**).
- **Index of Industrial Production:**
 - The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an **index which provides details regarding the growth of various sectors in an economy** such as mineral mining, electricity, manufacturing, etc.

Source: PIB

Stockholm+50

For Prelims: Stockholm Declaration, Climate Change, Paris Agreement, Sustainable Development, United Nations, UNEP, UNFCCC, UNCCD, CBD

For Mains: Stockholm Declaration & its Aftermath, Challenges and the Way Forward

Why in News?

Stockholm+50 is being held in **Stockholm, Sweden**. It will **commemorate the 50 years since the 1972 [United Nations \(UN\)](#) Conference on the Human Environment** (also known as the Stockholm Conference).

- The **UN General Assembly** will be convening this international meeting.
- This is being held at a time **when the world is facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and waste, nature and biodiversity loss**, as well as other planetary issues

even after 50 years of the Stockholm Declaration. This is threatening the **achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#)**.

- A **sustainable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic** will also remain as one of agenda points.

What is Stockholm Conference, 1972?

- **Background:**
 - Climate change was **first discussed** using emerging scientific evidence in the **UN General Assembly in 1968**.
 - In **1967**, a research study provided the **actual estimates of global temperature based on CO₂ levels**. Also, it was predicted that the **doubling of CO₂ from the current level would result in nearly 2°C rise in global temperature**.
 - The **idea of the Stockholm Conference was first proposed by Sweden**. That's why it's also termed the **"Swedish Initiative"**.
- **About:**
 - The **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm** was held from **5th -16th June, 1972**.
 - This was the **first global convergence on the planetary environment**.
 - The theme was **'Only One Earth'**.
 - **122 countries participated** in the conference.
- **Aim:**
 - Creating a common governance framework for the planetary environment and natural resources.
- **Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment**
 - **Stockholm Declaration:**
 - **70 out of 122 participant countries** which were developing and poor countries adopted the Stockholm Declaration.
 - The Stockholm Declaration **contained 26 principles** that marked the beginning of a dialogue between developed and developing countries.
 - This built the **"interconnections between development, poverty and the environment"**.
 - **Action Plan:**
 - The Action Plan contained **three main categories** that were further broken down into **109 recommendations**:
 - Global Environmental Assessment Programme (watch plan)
 - Environmental management activities
 - International measures to support assessment and management activities carried out at the national and international levels.
- **Three Dimension of the Conference:**
 - Countries agreed to **not "harm each other's environment** or the areas beyond national jurisdiction".
 - An **action plan to study the threat to Earth's environment**.
 - **Establishment** of an international body called the **[UN Environment programme \(UNEP\)](#)** to bring in cooperation among countries.

What were the key agreements of the Stockholm Declaration?

- **Natural resources such as air, water, land, flora and fauna must be safeguarded** through careful planning for the benefit of the present and future generations.
- The release of **toxic substances and heat emissions should not be allowed to exceed** the capacity of the environment.
- The **poor and developing nations must be supported** in their struggle against pollution.
- The environmental policies of the states **should support the present or future development potential of developing countries**.
- Appropriate steps should be taken by States and international organisations to **reach an agreement on meeting the possible national and international economic consequences resulting from the application of environmental measures**.
- According to the UN charter and principles of international law, **the States have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources as per their own environmental policies**.

- However, the states have this **responsibility of making sure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause any harm to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.**

What is the importance of Stockholm, 1972?

- The first global conference on the environment **happened when the environment was not a global concern** or a subject of importance for any nation.
- Previously, the **UN charter never contained the domain of environment to deal with.**
- **No country had an environment ministry until 1972.**
 - Afterwards, countries like **Norway and Sweden set up their ministries for the environment.**
 - **In 1985, India set up its ministry of environment and forest.**
- After 1972, **environmental issues** like species extinction and mercury poisoning started making headlines and public consciousness increased.
- The Stockholm conference **started the contemporary “environmental era”.**
- **Many of today's conventions** on the environmental crises **trace their origin to the Stockholm Declaration.**
 - [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#)
 - [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#)
 - [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#)

What are the Challenges?

- Since the very beginning, **global politics impacted the conference adversely.**
- Some nations expressed their concerns regarding the **dominance of rich countries and said that the policies are more in the interests of wealthier, industrialised countries.**
- An **uncoordinated response from the nations** has contributed to the fact that the **world is on track to warm at least 3°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100.** This is **twice the 1.5°C warming** as mandated in the [Paris Agreement](#).
- Within the next **50 years, 1-3 billion people** are projected to be **left outside the climate conditions.**
- **Poverty is the biggest hurdle** in the way of adopting sustainable measures for a healthy environment, as poverty can't be eradicated without the use of science and technology.
- Unless the poor or developing countries are in a position to provide employment and meet daily necessities of the people, the policies towards sustainable environment can't be implemented appropriately.

Way Forward

- Majority of the world needs to understand that **ecology and conservation will not work against their interests. Instead, this will bring an improvement in their lives.**
- The **industrialised nations** are basically **worried about air and water pollution**, whereas **developing nations are hoping for assistance** to eradicate poverty without causing ecosystem damage.
- Therefore, measures for environment protection must be adopted ensuring the upliftment of developing countries' economies.
- As the time is already running out, it is **a high time for Stockholm+50 for setting specific deadlines for realizing the goals driven towards a sustainable environment.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. With reference to 'Global Environment Facility', which of the following statements is/are correct? (2014)

- (a) It serves as financial mechanism for 'Convention on Biological Diversity' and 'United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change'.
- (b) It undertakes scientific research on environmental issues at global level.

(c) It is an agency under OECD to facilitate the transfer of technology and funds to underdeveloped countries with specific aim to protect their environment.
(d) Both (a) and (b)

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The [Global Environment Facility \(GEF\)](#) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to serve as a financial mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Apart from the above two conventions, it also serves as a financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
- It does not conduct any scientific research.
- It is not an agency of the OECD. It has its own independent, organized structure of governance, including Assembly (comprising 184 countries), the Council (main governing body), the Secretariat, 18 Agencies, Evaluation Office and a Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP).
- Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

Source: DTE

Israel Signs Free Trade Deal with UAE

For Prelims: Middle East countries, Gulf countries, Abraham Accord, FTA

For Mains: Trade Agreements, Bilateral Agreements, India- Israel relationships, Issues and Challenges in West Asia, Middle East

Why in News?

Recently, **Israel signed a free trade deal with the United Arab Emirates, its first with an Arab country**, building on their US-brokered normalization of relations in 2020.

- The UAE was the first Gulf country to normalize ties with Israel and only the third Arab nation to do so after Egypt and Jordan.

//



What are the Key Highlights?

- **Trade between the Two Countries:** In comparison to 2020, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics recorded more than a 30% increase in import and export of goods, excluding diamonds, to and from the United Arab Emirates.
 - Two-way trade in 2021 totaled some USD 900 million.
 - Non-oil trade surpassed reached USD 1.06 billion in the first three months of 2022 - a fivefold increase from the same period last year.
- **Significance of the Free Trade Deal:**
 - **Builds on the US-brokered Normalisation of Relations:** The deal shows the durability of a series of diplomatic deals in 2020 known as the [Abraham Accords](#), which normalized relations between **Israel** and four Muslim countries—the **U.A.E., Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan**.
 - **Great Economic Potential:**
 - Israel's relationship with the UAE has **great economic potential** due to the geographic and cultural proximity between the peoples, as well as the UAE's unique characteristics.
 - The **UAE** is the **second largest economy** in the **Arab world (after Saudi Arabia)**, with significant weight placed on technology products and advanced solutions, where Israel holds a relative advantage.
 - **Faster Access to Markets and Lower Tariffs:**
 - Businesses in both countries will benefit from faster access to markets and lower tariffs as these nations work together to increase trade, create jobs, promote new skills and deepen cooperation.
 - The deal abolishes customs duties on 96% of the products exchanged between the two sides.
 - The agreement also relates to regulatory and standardisation issues, customs, collaboration, government procurement, e-commerce and intellectual property rights.
 - **Boost up Trade:**
 - This deal will push **the value of non-oil bilateral** trade between Israel and the UAE beyond \$10 billion.
 - UAE-Israel trade will exceed \$2 billion in 2022, rising to around \$5 billion in five years, bolstered by collaboration in renewables, consumer goods, tourism and the

life sciences sectors.

- **Israel can Gain foothold in International Market:**

- A long-term hope for both countries is that Israeli companies will set up manufacturing in the U.A.E., which serves as a hub for the Middle East, Asia and Africa—markets where Israel has struggled to gain a foothold.

What is the Significance for India?

- This agreement, jointly with the [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(CEPA\)](#) signed between India and the UAE, has the potential for **extensive trilateral cooperation and business partnerships**.
- It has also further created opportunities for collaborations in different fields with the US.
 - These were made possible by the Abraham Accords, which have been a significant turning point in promoting peace and prosperity for all.
- Israel, India, the UAE, and the US are also part of a new grouping, [West Asian Quad](#) which was established as a forum for economic cooperation.
 - They are pursuing a constructive agenda focused on the economy, especially **infrastructure projects**.

What is a Free Trade Agreement?

- FTAs are arrangements between two or more countries or trading blocs that primarily agree to reduce or eliminate customs tariff and non-tariff barriers on substantial trade between them.
- FTAs normally cover trade in goods (such as agricultural or industrial products) or trade in services (such as banking, construction, trading etc.).
- FTAs can also cover other areas such as intellectual property rights (IPRs), investment, government procurement and competition policy etc.
 - **Example:** India has negotiated FTA with many countries e.g. Sri Lanka and various trading blocs as well e.g. **ASEAN**.
- FTAs can be categorised as Preferential Trade Agreement, [Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement](#), [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(CEPA\)](#).

Way Forward

- This trade agreement with Israel will create a new paradigm for the West Asian region, and represents the importance of building significant partnerships.
- This will offer significant diplomatic ties in the near future and help in overcoming the long conflicts in the Middle East region between Israel and many countries of West Asia.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. Consider the following countries: (2018)

1. Australia
2. Canada
3. China
4. India
5. Japan
6. USA

Which of the above are among the 'free-trade partners' of ASEAN?

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (b) 3, 4, 5 and 6
- (c) 1, 3, 4 and 5

(d) 2, 3, 4 and 6

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- **[Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\)](#)** has free trade agreements with six partners, namely the People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Japan, India as well as Australia and New Zealand. Hence, 1, 3, 4 and 5 are correct.
- ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined on 7 January 1984, Vietnam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten member states of ASEAN. Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.

[Source: TH](#)

UN Report on the Taliban Regime

For Prelims: Afghanistan, Taliban, Islamic State, Location of Afghanistan

For Mains: India and its Neighbourhood, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, Crisis in Afghanistan and its Implications

Why in News?

According to the **[United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#)**'s **Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team**, foreign terrorist organisations continue to enjoy safe haven under the new Taliban regime.



What is the Mission of the UNSC's Monitoring Team?

- The monitoring team **assists the UNSC sanctions committee** and its report, circulated among committee members, informs the **formulation of UN strategy in Afghanistan**.
- **India is currently the chair of the sanctions committee**, which comprises all the 15 UNSC members.
- This report is the **first since the Taliban returned to power** in August 2021.
 - This is the **first of its reports not informed** by official Afghan briefings.
- The **team collected data by consulting with UN member states**, international and regional organisations, private sector financial institutions, and the work of bodies such as the **United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)**.
 - UNAMA is a **UN Special Political Mission established to assist the state and the people of Afghanistan** in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

How has India approached Afghanistan since the Taliban Regime?

- **Ways of Engagement:**
 - After the Taliban takeover, India is caught in the middle of this dilemma divided between restoring Afghanistan as a strategic priority in its policy and the practical hurdles on the ground.
 - Currently, **India is assessing three broad ways of potential engagement with Afghanistan:**
 - providing humanitarian assistance, exploring a joint counterterrorism effort with other partners, and engaging in talks with Taliban.
 - The end goal of all these is to **restore people-to-people links and prevent backsliding** of the gains Delhi's developmental aid has made in Afghanistan in the past two decades.
 - India has undertaken more than **400 key infrastructure projects** in all 34 Afghan provinces and has signed strategic agreements to enhance trade and bilateral relations.

How has Terrorism affected the Relations between the two?

- India's policies toward Afghanistan have been underpinned by the terrorism threat that emanates from Pakistan.

- India is cautious about a terror corridor that might be facilitated from eastern Afghanistan leading up to Kashmir, should a land-based link be established.
- India has **consistently reaffirmed its support for UNSC Resolution 2593** and staunchly maintains that Afghan soil should not be used for anti-India terrorist activities.
- Counterterrorism is likely to play an increasingly pertinent role in shaping India's policies vis-à-vis Afghanistan, even as India seeks an alignment in its broader Indo-Pacific obligations and its immediate South Asian goals.
- India has demonstrated a growing interest in developing more robust counter-terror approaches across various multilateral fora, including the UNSC and the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](#).

Why is Afghanistan Significant for India?

- **Economic and Strategic Interest:** Afghanistan is a gateway to the oil and mineral-rich Central Asian republics.
 - Afghanistan's main advantage is its geography, as anyone who is in power in Afghanistan controls the land routes connecting India with Central Asia (via Afghanistan).
 - **Located at the heart of the historic Silk Road**, Afghanistan was long the crossroads of commerce between Asian countries connecting them to Europe, and enhancing religious, cultural, and commercial contacts.
- **Developmental Projects:** The massive reconstruction plans for the country to offer a lot of opportunities for Indian companies.
 - **Three major projects:** the Afghan Parliament, the Zaranj-Delaram Highway, and the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam ([Salma Dam](#)), along with India's assistance of more than USD3 billion in projects, hundreds of small development projects (of schools, hospitals and water projects) have cemented India's position in Afghanistan.
- **Security Interest:** India has been the **victim of state-sponsored terrorism emanating from Pakistan supported terrorist group** operating in the region (e.g. Haqqani network). Thus, India has two priorities in Afghanistan:
 - to prevent Pakistan from setting up a friendly government in Afghanistan, and
 - to avoid the return of jihadi groups, like al Qaeda, which could strike in India.

Way Forward

- In its wait and watch policy, India's stance on the official recognition of Afghanistan under the Taliban and engaging Kabul finds resonance with most international and regional countries.
- India is reluctant to draw sharp conclusions on the nature of the Taliban rule.
 - However, there is a realisation that **India should stay relevant and preserve its influence in the region.**
- While Delhi sought to convene critical stakeholders and pave a new political roadmap for a unified regional response to the Taliban, it experienced multiple hurdles in convincing the South Asian neighbourhood to align with its leadership.
 - For instance, Pakistan and China chose to attend the [Troika-plus deliberations](#), instead of joining India.
- These competing approaches to Afghanistan will be a reality going forward. A realistic assessment of its goals, both long-term and short-term, together with readjustments, is the need of the hour in framing a strategically sustainable Afghanistan policy.

[Source: TH](#)

India to Oppose Moratorium on E-Transmission at WTO

For Prelims: E-Transmission Moratorium, WTO

Why in News?

India will **oppose the continuation of a moratorium on [Customs Duties](#) on electronic transmission (E-Transmission) at the [World Trade Organization's \(WTO\)](#) 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12)** starting in June 2022 as it favors developed nations only.

- The moratorium was extended at the 11th MC in Argentina in 2017 for two years. In the General Council meeting in December 2019, members agreed to maintain the current practice till the 12th MC.

What is the E-transmission Moratorium?

- The WTO members **had agreed not to impose customs duties on electronic transmissions since 1998** and the moratorium has been periodically extended at successive Ministerial Conferences (MC), which is the highest decision making body of the 164-member organisation (WTO).
 - The **moratorium is on digitisable products like** photographic films, cinematographic films, printed matter, music, media, software, and video games.
- In 1998, ministers at the Second Ministerial Conference adopted the **Declaration on Global Electronic Commerce**, calling for the **establishment of a work programme on e-commerce**, which was adopted later that year.
 - Since **most countries didn't have concrete policies on e-commerce**, which was an emerging area of trade in even developed countries in 1998, they had decided to establish a work programme on it to hold intensive talks and impose a moratorium on customs duties on electronics transmission.
- In 1998, the General Council of the WTO established the work programme on e-commerce to **comprehensively examine all trade-related issues pertaining to global e-commerce** by considering the economic, financial and development needs of emerging economies.
 - The WTO Work Programme on electronic commerce defines **electronic commerce” as the “production, distribution, marketing, sale or delivery of goods and services by electronic means.”**

What does India Seek at the Meeting?

- At the 12th MC in June 2022, many WTO members are seeking temporary extension of the moratorium till 13th MC but **India does not want this time to continue this further.**
- India and South Africa on several occasions have asked the organization to revisit the issue and have **highlighted the adverse impact of the moratorium on developing countries.**
- India wants the **WTO to intensify the work programme on the e-commerce sector.**
- India has also stated that the Council for Trade in Goods, Council for Trade in Services, Council for **[TRIPS \(Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights\)](#)** and the Committee for Trade and Development **should take up discussions on e-commerce as per their respective mandates** originally set.
- India believed that formal negotiations in the WTO on rules and disciplines in e-commerce would be premature given the highly asymmetrical nature of the existing global e-commerce space and lack of understanding on the implications of the multi-faceted dimensions of issues related to the sector.

What are the Issues with the Moratorium?

- India is **witnessing an exponential rise in imports of electronic transmissions**, mainly of items like movies, music, video games and printed matter, some of **which could fall within the scope of the moratorium.**

- Allowing the moratorium to lapse is important **for developing nations to preserve policy space for their digital advancement**, to regulate imports and generate revenue through customs duties.
- The potential tariff revenue loss to developing countries is estimated at USD 10 billion annually.
- While the profits and revenues of digital players are rising steadily, the ability of governments to check these imports and generate additional **tariff revenues is being 'severely' limited** because of the moratorium on e-commerce.
- It will have impact on industrialization, on the use of digital technologies like 3D printing in manufacturing and losses of other duties and charges.

Way Forward

- Developing countries need to preserve flexibility to implement policies to catch up with the developed countries in the digital arena. We first need to focus on improving domestic physical and digital infrastructure.
- It's extremely important for developing countries to regulate their luxury imports of movies, music, and video games. Removal of the moratorium will provide this policy space to governments.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. India enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 in order to comply with the obligations to (2018)

- (a) ILO
- (b) IMF
- (c) UNCTAD
- (d) WTO

Ans: (d)

Q. The terms 'Agreement on Agriculture', 'Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures' and 'Peace Clause' appear in the news frequently in the context of the affairs of the (2015)

- (a) Food and Agriculture Organization
- (b) United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change
- (c) World Trade Organization
- (d) United Nations Environment Programme

Ans: (c)

[Source: TH](#)

Caste based Census

For Prelims: Census, SECC, OBC

For Mains: Caste-based Census and related issue, Population and Associated Issues

Why in News?

Recently, **Bihar government** has announced that it will **undertake a socio-economic survey of all castes and communities (SECC)**.

What is the Difference between Census and SECC?

- **Census:**
 - The origin of the Census in India **goes back to the colonial exercise of 1881**.
 - Census has evolved and been used by the government, policymakers, academics, and others to capture the Indian population, access resources, map social change, [delimitation exercise](#), etc.
 - However, as early as the 1940s, W.W.M. Yeatts, Census Commissioner for India for the 1941 Census, had pointed out that “the census is a large, immensely powerful, but blunt instrument unsuited for specialized inquiry.”
- **SECC:**
 - The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) **was conducted in 2011** for the first time since 1931.
 - SECC is meant to **canvass every Indian family, both in rural and urban India**, and ask about their:
 - **Economic status**, so as to allow Central and State authorities to come up with a range of indicators of deprivation, permutations, and combinations of which could be used by each authority to define a poor or deprived person.
 - It is also **meant to ask every person their specific caste name** to allow the government to re-evaluate which caste groups were economically worse off and which were better off.
 - SECC has the **potential to allow for a mapping of inequalities at a broader level**.
- **Difference Between Census & SECC:**
 - The Census provides a **portrait of the Indian population**, while the SECC is a tool to identify beneficiaries of state support.
 - Since the **Census falls under the Census Act of 1948**, all data are considered confidential, whereas according to the SECC website, “all the personal information given in the SECC is open for use by Government departments to grant and/or restrict benefits to households.”

What are the Pros and Cons of Conducting Caste based Census?

- **Pros:**
 - **Helpful in Managing Social Equity Programmes:**
 - **India's social equality programmes** cannot be a success without the data and a caste census would help fix that.
 - Due to the lack of data, there is **no proper estimate for the population of OBCs, groups within the OBCs and more**.
 - The [Mandal Commission](#) estimated the OBC population at 5% while some others have pinned the OBC population from 36 to 65%.
 - The census would **'besides resolving the needless mystery'** about the size of the OBC population, census enumeration would yield a **wealth of demographic information** (sex ratio, mortality rate, life expectancy), educational data (male and female literacy, ratio of school-going population, number of graduates) and policy relevant information about economic conditions (house-type, assets, occupation) of the OBCs'.
 - **Bring a Measure of Objectivity on Reservation:**
 - A caste-based census **could go a long way in bringing a measure of objectivity** to the debate on reservations.
 - According to the [Rohini Commission](#), which was formed to look into equitable redistribution of the 27% quota for OBCs, noted that there are around 2,633 castes covered under the OBC reservation.

- However, the Centre's reservation policy from 1992 doesn't take into account that there exists within the OBCs, a separate category of Extremely Backward Castes, who are much more marginalised.

▪ **Cons:**

◦ **Repercussions of a Caste Census:**

- Caste has an **emotive element and thus there exist the political and social repercussions** of a caste census.
 - There have been concerns that counting caste may help solidify or harden identities.
 - Due to these repercussions, nearly a decade after the SECC 2011, a sizable amount of its data remains unreleased or released only in parts.

◦ **Caste Is Context-specific:**

- Caste has **never been a proxy for class or deprivation in India**, it constitutes a distinct kind of embedded discrimination that often transcends class. For example:
 - People with Dalit last names are less likely to be called for job interviews even when their qualifications are better than that of an upper-caste candidate.
 - They are also less likely to be accepted as tenants by landlords. Thus, difficult to measure.
 - Marriage to a well- educated, well-off Dalit man still sparks violent reprisals among the families of upper-caste women every day across the country.

Way Forward

- A caste census may not sit well with the goal of a casteless society, but it **may serve as a means of addressing inequities in society**.
- Caste data will enable independent research **not only into the question of who does and does not need affirmative action** but also into the effectiveness of this measure.
 - Impartial data and subsequent research might save the bona fide attempts of the uplift of the most backward classes from the shadow of caste and class politics and be informative to people on both sides of the spectrum – for and against reservation.
 - It is **not reservation that creates the current divide in our society** but the misuse or the perceived misuse of reservation.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. Consider the following statements: (2009)

1. Between Census 1951 and Census 2001, the density of the population of India has increased more than three times.
2. Between Census 1951 and Census 2001, the annual growth rate (exponential) of the population of India has doubled.

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

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- One of the important indices of population concentration is the density of population. It is defined as the number of persons per square kilometre.
- The population density of India in 2001 was 324 persons per square kilometre and in 1951 it was 117. Thus, the density increased **more than twice, but not thrice**. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.

- At the beginning of the twentieth century, i.e., in 1901 the density of India was as low as 77 and this steadily increased from one decade to another to reach 324 in 2001.
- The average **Annual Growth Rate in 2001 was 1.93 whereas in 1951 it was 1.25**. Thus, it increased, but not doubled. Hence, statement 2 is not correct. Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

[Source: TH](#)

Kosi River Avulsions

For Prelims: Kosi River System, Avulsions, Climate Change, Brahmaputra River

For Mains: Causes & Consequences of River Avulsions and the Way Forward

Why in News?

Recently a research study reported that **instability in Kosi River has been observed after the construction of embankments on either side of it.**

What are Avulsions?

- **About:**
 - Avulsion refers to the **phenomenon of change in the course of river flow** causing the **abandonment of the old established river channel and formation of a new channel.**
- **Occurrence:**
 - Rivers lining **tropical and desert regions are more prone** to avulsions.
 - Avulsions **occur less frequently**, only once a decade or century, or even less.
 - The rare occurrence of avulsions makes them **less discussed despite their catastrophic effects as compared to more frequent extreme weather events** and the continuous effect of sea-level rise.

What are the Key Findings of the Research Study?

- **Global Scenario:**
 - **113 avulsions** have been documented worldwide as per the satellite imagery from **1973-2020** and historical maps.
 - Rivers **altered routes in the mountain bases while descending onto unconfined valleys or open oceans in 33 instances.**
 - **Kosi river falls** under this category.
 - The change **can also occur in the delta regions.** One is along backwater zones, part of the river that flows differently because of the effects of the downstream sea.
 - Along some of the world's largest waterways, such as the Orinoco, Yellow, Nile and Mississippi Rivers, **50 instances occurred on low sloping deltas.**
 - In 30 instances, **avulsions occurred in rivers with extreme sediment load.** River beds are filled-up with the sediments causing the rivers to seek new channels during floods.
- **Case-study of Kosi River:**

- **Kosi-like systems** bring a lot of sediments from the Himalayas. After **embankments were made on either side of the river in the 1950s**, it became much more **unstable**.
- **In 2008**, a large flood **forced the Kosi River to leave its established channel** for an older one. As a result, **3 million people were displaced and more than 250 human lives were claimed**.
- Kosi river avulsions are **not at all natural**. The **200 km stretch** where the river used to distribute sediments before the embankment-construction has now been **reduced to 10 km**.
- Though the course of sediment-flow has not altered, **the area available for its movement has contracted**.
- Only **a false perception of protection** is created due to temporary solutions like embankments. Instead, these **aggravate system-scale degradation by limiting natural sediment dispersal**.

What is the Kosi River System?

- The **Kosi** is a **trans-boundary river** which flows through **Tibet, Nepal and India**.
- It has its **source in Tibet** that includes the **world's highest upland**, it then **drains a large part of Nepal before emerging onto the Gangetic plains**.
- Its **three major tributaries, the Sun Kosi, Arun and Tamur** meet at one point just upstream of a 10 km gorge cut through the **Himalayan foothills**.
- The river crosses into **northern Bihar, India** where it branches into distributaries before joining the **Ganges near Kursela in Katihar district**.
- The Kosi carries **the maximum amount of silt and sand after the Brahmaputra in India**.
- It is also known as the **"Sorrow of Bihar"** as the annual floods affect about 21,000 sq. km. of fertile agricultural lands thereby disturbing the rural economy.



Way Forward

- Approximately **330 million people reside on river deltas worldwide**, and even more live along river corridors. Hence, it is **high time to understand how climate change and anthropogenic interference is affecting river mobility**.
- **A complete global picture must be captured** to understand the correlation between climate change and river avulsions. The course of river jump in delta regions can be altered by climate change, such as, avulsions can be pushed farther inland in the backwater zone on account of rising sea levels.
- The **role of embankments/barriers** that are created along rivers for protection against floods must be understood **with regards to avulsion-trigger**.
- **Various engineering interventions can be employed** to create additional channels for rivers. This will prevent floods and avulsions by **distributing the flow of the water and sediments across channels**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. Which of the following is/are tributary/tributaries of Brahmaputra? (2016)

1. Dibang
2. Kameng
3. Lohit

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

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- Brahmaputra basin spreads over the countries of Tibet (China), Bhutan, India and Bangladesh. In India, it spreads over the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim.
- The Brahmaputra River originates in the north from Kailash ranges of the Himalayas at an elevation of 5,150 m just south of the lake Konggyu Tsho and flows for about a total length of 2,900 km. It enters India at Namcha Barwa (Arunachal Pradesh) and flows for 916 km.
- The principal tributaries of the river joining from the right are Kameng, Subansiri, Manas, Sankosh and Teesta, whereas Lohit, Dibang, Burhi Dihing, Desang, Dikhow, Dhansiri join it from the left. **Hence, 1, 2 and 3 are correct.**
- Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

[Source: DTE](#)

Liquid Nano Urea

For Prelims: Liquid Nano Urea, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited

For Mains: Significance of Liquid Nano Urea over Conventional Urea

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister inaugurated the **first [Liquid Nano Urea \(LNU\)](#) plant at Kalol, Gujarat.**

- It is **Indigenous Urea**, introduced firstly by the **[Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited \(IFFCO\)](#)** for farmers across the world.

What is Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited?

- **About:**
 - It is one of India's biggest cooperative societies which is wholly owned by **Indian Cooperatives**.
 - Founded in 1967 with just 57 cooperatives, today it is an amalgamation of over 36,000 Indian Cooperatives with diversified business interests ranging from General Insurance to Rural Telecom apart from its core business of manufacturing and selling fertilizers.
- **Objective:**
 - To enable Indian farmers to prosper through timely supply of reliable, high quality agricultural inputs and services in an environmentally sustainable manner and to undertake other activities to improve their welfare.

What is Liquid Nano Urea?

- **About:**
 - It is urea in the form of a nanoparticle. It is a nutrient (liquid) to **provide nitrogen to plants as an alternative to the conventional urea.**
 - Urea is a **chemical nitrogen fertiliser, white in colour, which artificially provides nitrogen**, a major nutrient required by plants.
 - It is developed to replace conventional urea and it can curtail the requirement of the same by at least 50%.
 - It contains 40,000 mg/L of nitrogen in a 500 ml bottle which is equivalent to the impact of nitrogen nutrient provided by one bag of conventional urea.
- **Developed At:**
 - It has been indigenously developed at Nano **[Biotechnology Research Centre, Kalol, Gujarat](#)** in line with **[Atmanirbhar Bharat](#)** and Atmanirbhar Krishi.
 - India is dependent on imports to meet its **[urea requirements](#)**.
- **Objective:**
 - It is aimed at reducing the unbalanced and indiscriminate use of conventional urea, increase crop productivity, and reduce soil, water, and air pollution.
- **Significance:**
 - **Improves Plant Nutrition:**
 - It has been **found effective and efficient for plant nutrition** which increases production with improved nutritional quality.
 - It will boost a balanced nutrition program by reducing the excess use of Urea application in the soil and will make the crops stronger, healthier and protect them from the lodging effect.
 - Lodging is the bending over of the stems near ground level of grain crops, which makes them very difficult to harvest, and can dramatically reduce yield.
 - **Improves Environment:**

- It will also have a huge positive impact on the quality of underground water, a very significant reduction in global warming with an impact on climate change and sustainable development.
- **Increase Farmers' Income:**
 - It is easy on the pocket of farmers and will be effective in increasing farmers' income. It will also significantly bring down the cost of logistics and warehousing.

How is the LNU better than the Conventional Urea?

- **Higher Efficiency:**
 - While conventional urea has an efficiency of about 25 %, the efficiency of liquid nano urea can be as high as 85-90 %.
 - Conventional urea **fails to have the desired impact on crops** as it is often applied incorrectly, and the nitrogen in it is vaporised or lost as gas. A lot of nitrogen is also washed away during irrigation.
- **Targeted Supply of Nutrients to Crops:**
 - Liquid nano urea is sprayed directly on the leaves and gets absorbed by the plant.
 - Fertilisers in nano form provide a targeted supply of nutrients to crops, as they are absorbed by the stomata, pores found on the epidermis of leaves.
- **Economical:**
 - A bottle of the nano urea can effectively replace at least one bag of urea.
 - The liquid nano urea comes in a half-litre bottle priced at Rs 240, and carries no burden of subsidy currently.
 - By contrast, a farmer pays around Rs 300 for a 50-kg bag of heavily subsidized urea.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. With reference to chemical fertilizers in India, consider the following statements: (2020)

1. At present, the retail price of chemical fertilizers is market-driven and not administered by the Government.
2. Ammonia, which is an input of urea, is produced from natural gas.
3. Sulphur, which is a raw material for phosphoric acid fertilizer, is a by-product of oil refineries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- The Government of India subsidizes fertilizers to ensure that fertilizers are easily available to farmers and the country remains self-sufficient in agriculture production. The same has been achieved largely by controlling the price of fertilizer and the amount of production. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- Ammonia (NH₃) has been synthesized from natural gas. In this process, natural gas molecules are reduced to carbon and hydrogen. The hydrogen is then purified and reacted with nitrogen to produce ammonia. This synthetic ammonia is used as fertilizer, either directly as ammonia or indirectly after synthesis as urea, ammonium nitrate, and monoammonium or diammonium phosphates. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Sulfur is a major by-product of oil refining and gas processing. Most crude oil grades contain some sulfur, most of which must be removed during the refining process to meet strict sulfur content limits in refined products. This is done through hydrotreating and results in production of H₂S gas, which is converted into elemental sulfur. Sulfur can also be mined from underground, naturally-occurring deposits, but this is more costly than sourcing from oil and gas and has largely been

discontinued. Sulfuric acid is used in the production of both Mono ammonium Phosphate (MAP) and Diammonium Phosphate (DAP). **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

- Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

[Source: IE](#)

The International Day of UN Peacekeepers

Why in News?

International Day of [UN \(United Nations\) Peacekeepers](#) is observed globally on **29th May**.

- **Theme for 2022:** People. Peace. Progress. The Power of Partnerships.

What is UN Peacekeeping?

- **About:**
 - UN Peacekeeping began in 1948 when the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of UN military observers to the Middle East.
 - UN Peacekeeping helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace.
 - It deploys troops and police from around the world, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to address a range of mandates set by the [UN Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) and the [General Assembly](#).
- **Composition:**
 - UN peacekeepers (often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets) can include **soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel**.
 - Peacekeeping forces are **contributed by member states on a voluntary basis**.
 - Civilian staff of peace operations are international civil servants, recruited and deployed by the UN Secretariat.
- **UN Peacekeeping and India:**
 - India has been among the **largest troop-contributing countries to the UN peacekeeping missions**. As of November 2021, India is the second-highest military (1,888) and fifth-highest (139) police-contributing country to the United Nations Organisation Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).
 - More than 200,000 Indians have served in 49 of the 71 UN peacekeeping missions established around the world since 1948.
 - India has a long tradition of sending women on UN peacekeeping missions.
 - In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an all-women contingent to a UN peacekeeping mission.
 - Despite its presence in several countries as part of the Peacekeeping missions, India has routinely **expressed its displeasure at a similar mission headquartered in Srinagar and Islamabad**.
 - The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) was established in January, 1949 to supervise the ceasefire between India and Pakistan.
 - India has reiterated that the mission has “outlived its relevance” after the Simla Agreement was signed by India and Pakistan in July 1972 and the establishment of the LoC (Line of Control).

[Source: HT](#)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/02-06-2022/print>