



World Bank to Lend USD 1 Billion to India's Health Sector

For Prelims: Pradhan Mantri-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission, National Health Profile, WHO recommendation, National Health Mission, Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), National Medical Commission.

For Mains: Status of India's Health Sector, Recent Government Initiatives Related to Healthcare.

Why in News?

The [World Bank](#) has approved a loan of **USD 1 billion** to India to help the country **prepare for future pandemics** and **strengthen its [healthcare](#) infrastructure**.

- The loan will be split into two loans of **USD 500 million each**.

What Are the Areas Where World Bank Loan will be Channelised?

- The loan will be used to support India's flagship [Pradhan Mantri-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission \(PM-ABHIM\)](#), which was launched in **October 2021**, and will improve the public healthcare infrastructure across the country.
- Both loans utilize the **Program-for-Results financing instrument**, which focuses on achieving results rather than inputs. The loans have a **final maturity of 18.5 years**, including a **grace period of five years**.
- The **Public Health Systems for Pandemic Preparedness Program (PHSPP)** will provide **USD 500 million** to support the government's efforts to prepare India's surveillance system to detect and report potential international [epidemics](#).
- The **Enhanced Health Service Delivery Program (EHSDP)** will provide another **USD 500 million** to support the government's efforts to strengthen service delivery through a redesigned primary healthcare model.
- One of the loans will also prioritize **health service delivery in seven states:** Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh.

What is the Status of India's Health Sector?

- **About:**
 - According to **World Bank estimates**, India's performance in health has improved over time. **India's [life expectancy](#) has increased from 58 in 1990 to 70.19 in 2022**.
 - The **under-five [mortality rate](#), infant mortality rate, and maternal mortality ratio** are all **close to the average for India's income level**.
- **Major Issues:**
 - **Inadequate Medical Infrastructure:** India has a shortage of hospitals, particularly in rural areas, and many existing healthcare facilities lack basic equipment and resources.
 - According to the [National Health Profile](#), India has only **0.9 beds per 1000 population** and out of which only **30% are in rural areas**.
 - **Gap in Doctor-Patient Ratio:** One of the most critical concerns is the gap in the **doctor-patient ratio**. According to the **Indian Journal of Public Health**, **India needs 20 lakh**

doctors by 2030.

- However, currently a doctor in the government hospital attends to ~**11000 patients**, which is more than the [WHO recommendation of 1:1000](#).
- **Lack of Adequate Mental Healthcare:** India has one of the **lowest numbers of mental health care professionals** per capita.
 - **Government's spending on mental health** is also very low. This has resulted in poor mental health outcomes and inadequate care for people suffering from mental illness.
- **Recent Government Initiatives Related to Healthcare:**
 - [National Health Mission](#)
 - [Ayushman Bharat](#)
 - [Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana \(AB-PMJAY\)](#)
 - [National Medical Commission](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following are the objectives of 'National Nutrition Mission'? (2017)

1. To create awareness relating to malnutrition among pregnant women and lactating mothers.
2. To reduce the incidence of anaemia among young children, adolescent girls and women.
3. To promote the consumption of millets, coarse cereals and unpolished rice.
4. To promote the consumption of poultry eggs.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. "Besides being a moral imperative of a Welfare State, primary health structure is a necessary precondition for sustainable development." Analyse. (2021)

[Source: TH](#)

Japan's Asia Energy Transition Initiative

For Prelims: Japan's Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI), Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN), India-Japan Energy Dialogue, Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), Green hydrogen, Dharma Guardian, Malabar, MILAN, India's Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC).

For Mains: Clean Energy Transition, Status of India Japan Bilateral Relations.

Why in News?

Japan looks forward to supporting **India's clean energy transition** by including India in the **Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI)**.

- **Japan's AETI**, launched in 2021, **initially supported the [Association of South East Asian Nations \(ASEAN\) countries](#)** towards achieving **[net zero emissions](#)**, including financial assistance of USD 10 billion for **[renewable energy](#)**.

What is Asia Energy Transition Initiative?

// The Government of Japan announced the "Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI)", which includes a variety of support for realising energy transitions in Asia.

The infographic is a light green box with a dark green border. It contains five numbered items, each with a sub-point and an icon. Item 1: 'Support drawing roadmaps for energy transitions' with a lightbulb icon. Item 2: 'Asian version of transition finance' with a lightbulb icon. Item 3: 'US\$10 billion finance support (e.g.) renewable energy, energy efficiency, LNG etc.' with a bank icon. Item 4: 'Technology development and deployment, utilizing the achievement of 2 trillion yen fund (e.g.) Offshore wind power generation, Fuel-ammonia, Hydrogen etc.' with a money bag icon. Item 5: 'Capacity building of decarbonisation technologies, and knowledge sharing through Asia CCUS network' with a person icon. Sub-points for item 5 include 'Capacity building of decarbonisation technologies for 1,000 people in Asian countries' and 'Workshops and Seminars on energy transitions'.

1. **Support drawing roadmaps for energy transitions**
2. **Asian version of transition finance**
3. **US\$10 billion finance support**
(e.g.) renewable energy, energy efficiency, LNG etc.
4. **Technology development and deployment, utilizing the achievement of 2 trillion yen fund**
(e.g.) Offshore wind power generation, Fuel-ammonia, Hydrogen etc.
5. **Capacity building of decarbonisation technologies, and knowledge sharing through Asia CCUS network**
 - Capacity building of decarbonisation technologies for 1,000 people in Asian countries
 - Workshops and Seminars on energy transitions

What are the Major Highlights of India Japan Clean Energy Cooperation?

- The **Clean Energy Partnership** between India and Japan was published in **March 2022**.
 - It would work on the agenda covered in the [India-Japan Energy Dialogue 2007](#) and will subsequently expand into areas of mutual benefit.
- **India and Japan** have taken over the presidency of [G20](#) and [G7](#), respectively.
 - In the context of **environmental sustainability**, **India's [Lifestyle for Environment \(LiFE\)](#)** is one of the most important priorities during the **G20 presidency**.
 - Also, the **Feed-in Premium (FiP) scheme** by the government of Japan was implemented in **April 2022** and is expected to **improve the country's energy transition**.
- Japan has set a goal of **becoming net-zero by 2050**, and the government issued an interim report on **Clean Energy Strategy in May 2022**.
 - India has also set an ambitious target of achieving **[net-zero emissions by 2070](#)**.
- The Indian subcontinent's massive **renewable energy potential** can **boost [green hydrogen \(GH2\) production](#)** and immense potential for a **GH2 economy**.
 - **Nepal and Bhutan** also have **surplus [hydropower potential](#)**, and **green hydrogen electrolyzers** can tap this in countries like **India and Bangladesh**.
- Events like the **India-Japan Environment week** would help create a roadmap to integrate variable renewable energy into the system through **technological, institutional, and personnel cooperation**.

What is Clean Energy Transition?

- **About:**
 - Clean energy transition refers to the **shift from traditional, [fossil fuel-based energy](#)**

[sources](#) (such as coal, oil, and natural gas) to cleaner, more **sustainable sources of energy** that have a lower impact on the environment.

- This transition is driven by the **need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**, mitigate the **effects of [climate change](#)**, and address other environmental and **public health concerns** associated with the use of fossil fuels.

▪ **Clean Energy Sources:**

- Clean energy sources include **renewable energy sources like solar, wind, hydro, [geothermal](#), and [biomass energy](#)**, as well as energy storage technologies like batteries and hydrogen fuel cells.

What is the Status of India -Japan Bilateral Relations?



- **Defense Ties: India-Japan Defence and Security partnership** has evolved over the years from bilateral and multilateral exercises including [Dharma Guardian](#) and [Malabar](#) respectively. And welcoming the participation of Japan for the first time in the [MILAN](#) exercise.
- **Health-Care:** In view of the similarities and synergies between the goals and objectives of **India's [AYUSHMAN Bharat Programme](#) and Japan's AHWIN**, both sides had been consulting with each other to identify projects to build the narrative of **AHWIN for AYUSHMAN Bharat**.
- **Investment and ODA:** India has been the largest recipient of the [Japanese Official Development Assistance\(ODA\)](#) Loan for the past decades. [Delhi Metro](#) is one of the most successful examples of Japanese cooperation through the utilization of ODA.
 - [India's Western Dedicated Freight Corridor \(DFC\)](#) project is funded by a soft loan provided by [Japan International Cooperation Agency](#) under **Special terms for economic partnership (STEP)**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. A present group of nations known as G-8 started first as G-7. Which one among the following was not one of them? (2009)

- (a) Canada
- (b) Italy
- (c) Japan
- (d) Russia

Ans: (d)

[Source: DTE](#)

Women, Business and the Law 2023 Report

For Prelims: World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2023 (WBL 2023) report, World Bank Group.

For Mains: Issues Related to Women in India and world and its effect on development of Human Resource, Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests, Important International Institutions.

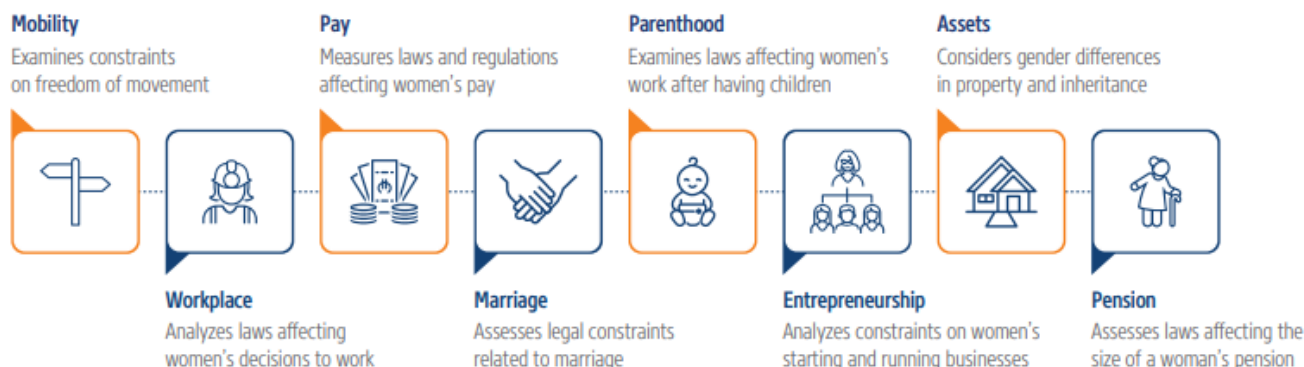
Why in News?

India scored above the regional average in the **World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2023 report**. For India, report used data on laws and regulations in Mumbai, India's main business city.

- India received a **perfect score for laws related to freedom of movement, women's work decisions**, and marriage constraints.

What is Women, Business and the Law 2023 Report?

- About:** Women, Business and the Law 2023 is the 9th in a series of annual reports that analyze laws and regulations affecting women's economic opportunity in **190 economies**.
 - Women, Business and the Law data is available for the period from 1971 to 2023 (calendar years 1970 to 2022)
- Indicators: It has eight indicators-** Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, Assets, and Pension.



Source: Women, Business and the Law team.

- Uses:** Data and indicators in Women, Business and the Law 2023, used **to build evidence of the relationship between legal gender equality and women's entrepreneurship and employment**.
 - Since 2009, Women, Business and the Law has been enhancing the study of gender

equality and informing discussions on **improving women's economic opportunities and empowerment.**

What are Findings of the Report?

India:

- India as Lower middle Income group country with WBL index score is 74.4 out of 100.
 - 100 representing the highest possible score.
- The **overall score for India is higher than the regional average** observed across South Asia (63.7). Within the South Asia region, **the maximum score observed is 80.6 (Nepal).**
- In India, a thriving civil society also contributed to identifying gaps, drafting legislation, and organizing public opinion through campaigns, discussions, and protests, leading to enactment of the [2005 Domestic Violence Act.](#)

India - Scores for Women, Business and the Law 2023



Globally:

- Only 14 scored a perfect 100:** Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.
- In 2022, the **global average score is 76.5 out of 100.**
- Nearly **2.4 billion women of working age around the world live in economies** that do not grant them the same rights as men.
- At the current pace of reform, it would take at least 50 years to approach legal gender equality everywhere.
- Progress toward equal treatment for women has fallen to its weakest pace in 20 years.
 - Most reforms focused on increasing paid leave for parents and fathers, removing restrictions on women's work, and mandating equal pay.
 - Progress across the areas measured has also been uneven, with most reforms in Workplace and Parenthood.

What are the Areas India needs to Focus on?

- Laws affecting pay, pension, inheritance and property rights.** The laws affecting the Indian working woman's pay and pension do not provide for equality with Indian men.
 - To improve on the Pay indicator, **India should mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value**, allowing women to work at night, and allowing women to work in an industrial job in the same way as men.
- In India laws affecting women's pay, laws affecting women's work after having children, constraints on women starting and running a business, gender differences in property and inheritance, and laws affecting the size of a woman's pension, India could consider reforms to improve legal equality for women.
 - For example, **one of the lowest scores for India is on the indicator measuring laws affecting women's pay** (the WBL2023 Pay indicator).
 - Globally, on average, women enjoy only 77 percent of the legal rights that men do.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q.1 India's ranking in the 'Ease of Doing Business Index' is sometimes seen in the news. Which of the following has declared that ranking? (2016)

- (a) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- (b) World Economic Forum
- (c) World Bank
- (d) World Trade Organization (WTO)

Ans: (c)

Q.2 Which one of the following issues the 'Global Economic Prospects' report periodically? (2015)

- (a) The Asian Development Bank
- (b) The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- (c) The US Federal Reserve Bank
- (d) The World Bank

Ans: (d)

Q.3 Which of the following organizations brings out the publication known as 'World Economic Outlook'? (2014)

- (a) The International Monetary Fund
- (b) The United Nations Development Programme
- (c) The World Economic Forum
- (d) The World Bank

Ans: (a)

Q.4 'BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes' is managed by the (2015)

- (a) Asian Development Bank
- (b) International Monetary Fund
- (c) United Nations Environment Program
- (d) World Bank

Ans: (d)

[Source: TH](#)

Myanmar Teak Trade: Dodgy and Conflict Wood

For Prelims: Myanmar Teak, Junta, CITES, IUCN Red List, African teak, India and Myanmar, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

For Mains: Issues Associated with illegal timber trade and other wildlife species and conservation of Biodiversity.

Why in News?

Recent investigation by International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) revealed that **India has become the second largest importer of "conflict wood" from Myanmar**, after China. India hasn't banned the import of teak from Myanmar, which is being exported to the US & **EU**.

- These supplies of teak not only chip away at the Myanmar's forest cover but also **provide sustenance to the military regime of Myanmar**.

Why is Teak Imported from Myanmar Described as "Conflict Wood"?

- Following the [military coup in Myanmar](#) in February 2021, **the military junta** took over Myanma Timber Enterprises (MTE), **with exclusive control over the country's valuable timber and teak trade**. The sales of this "conflict" wood **are a crucial source of income for the military regime**.
- After Western sanctions on timber trade, **India has become a popular stop for illegal timber trade**.
- As per Forest Watch, between February 2021 and April 2022, **Indian companies imported over USD 10 millions of teak**.
 - India is both the **largest importer of teak, and the largest exporter of processed teak wood products** in the world.

What's so Special about Myanmar Teak?

- **About:**
 - Teak wood from Myanmar's deciduous and evergreen forests is **highly valued for its durability, resistance to water and termites**, and is commonly used for high-end furniture, veneers, and ship-decking, especially in the luxury yacht industry. However, the forest cover and teak reserves in Myanmar are shrinking, which ironically increases the wood's value.
 - According to Global Forest Watch, **Myanmar has lost forest cover equivalent to Switzerland's size** over the last twenty years.
- **Status of Myanmar Teak:**
 - Teak (*Tectona grandis*) also known as sagon, sagwan, Indian oak, and teca. Its production covers **1% of global annual timber demand**.
 - Teak, is a large **deciduous tree native to India, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand**. Teak is highly tolerant of a range of climate conditions and can be found from very dry to very moist regions. It is high resistance to decay and insect damage, and the heartwood changes from olive green to golden brown after exposure.
 - This wood species is **listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as endangered, but not listed in the CITES**.
 - **African teak** (*Pericopsis elata*), also known as Afrormosia, Kokrodua and Assamela, has brown, green or yellow-brown bark. **The African teak is classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red List 2004, and** is listed on Appendix II of CITES.

What are the Steps taken to Check Illegal Harvesting of Teak from Myanmar?

- **Steps Taken:**
 - In 2013, the **EU brought regulations, to prevent illegal timber from entering their markets** (over 70% of the logs exported from Myanmar between 2000-2013 were illegally harvested).
 - After the military coup in February 2021, **the EU and US imposed sanctions on all timber trade with Myanmar**.
- **Impact of these Sanctions:**
 - Teak from Myanmar continues to flow into the US and some EU countries, while imports into countries like Italy, Croatia, and Greece have increased.
 - Traders in Myanmar and India face two challenges: **the conflict on the ground and frequent changes in regulations by Myanmar authorities**.
 - After the ban on export of whole logs, a new regulation allowed only teak in "sizes" to be exported.

- **Loopholes needs to be Plugged:**

- Timber traders suggest that buyers could conduct DNA testing to trace the origin of teak from Myanmar, despite sanctions in place. However, **DNA testing is a relatively new concept and not yet commonly used in India.**
- Loopholes have been found in the regulations for exporting teak to EU countries, with **some Indian companies not specifying the origin of the wood or using vague language in transit passes.** These loopholes could be addressed to improve regulation.

What Steps can be Taken to Tackle Illegal Trade for Teak ?

- Use of science to tackle illegal timber trade, like:
 - **Digital Microscopes:** In Brazil, for, the law enforcement staff has been trained to take macroscopic anatomical photographs of timber shipments they stop. Reporting Logging: The logging detection system can track activity in real time and report the data to local authorities or to anyone else in the world.
 - **DNA Profiling:** All trees have a unique genetic fingerprint, allowing us to match sawn wood to its parent tree through DNA profiling.
 - **Isotope analysis:** To identify wood's geographic origin (climate, geology and biology), making them unique to an area.
 - **Near Infrared Spectroscopy:** By exposing wood to near infrared electromagnetic energy, scientists can use spectroscopy to detect its traits and properties.
- **Bridging** international and national **regulatory gap** by effective and objective collaboration, like **list this species in the CITES.**
- Bring scientific solution to the wood's replacement by other artificial materials.
- Develop genetically modified teak for bridging the demand and supply gap and lower cost in the illegal market.

[Source: IE](#)

Academic Freedom Index Report

Prelims: Academic Freedom Index Report, Global Public Policy Institute, Academic Freedom.

Mains: Academic Freedom Index Report, State of higher Education in India.

Why in News?

According to the **Academic Freedom Index report**, India's academic freedom index is in the bottom 30% among 179 countries in 2022.

- Academic freedom refers to the **principle that scholars and researchers should have the freedom to pursue their research and express** their findings without interference, censorship, or retaliation from the government, private institutions, or other external entities.

What is the Academic Freedom Index?

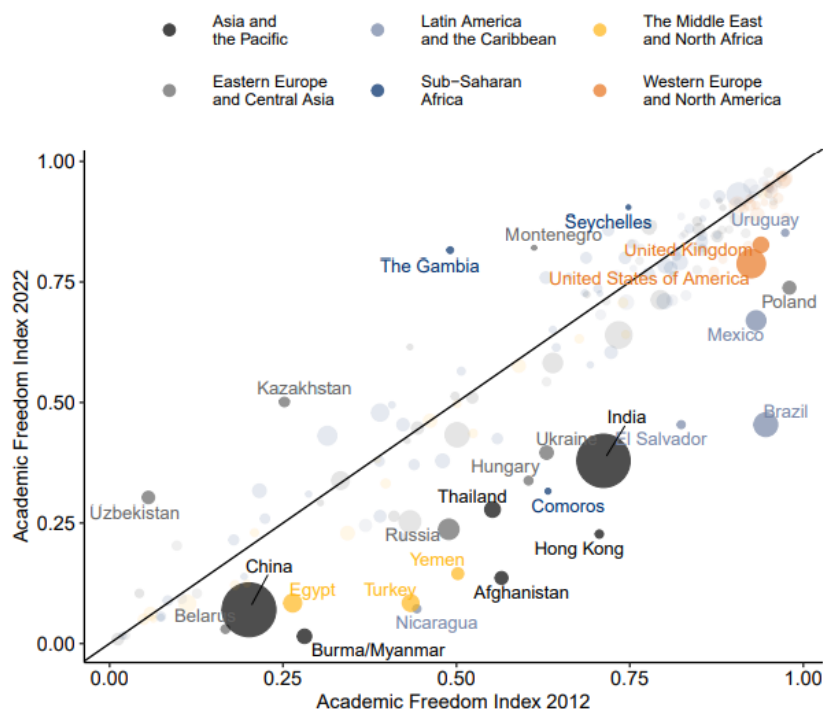
- It has been published by **Global Public Policy Institute** as a part of a global time-series dataset (1900-2019) in close cooperation with **Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg**, Scholars at Risk and the V-Dem Institute.
- The report provides **an overview of academic freedom in 179 countries** by assessing five

indicators. It is based on **assessments by more than 2,197 country experts from around the world.**

- The **indicators include,**
 - Freedom to research and teach
 - Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination,
 - Institutional autonomy of universities
 - Campus integrity
 - The freedom of academic and cultural expression.
- The scores **are scaled from 0 (low) to 1 (high).**

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

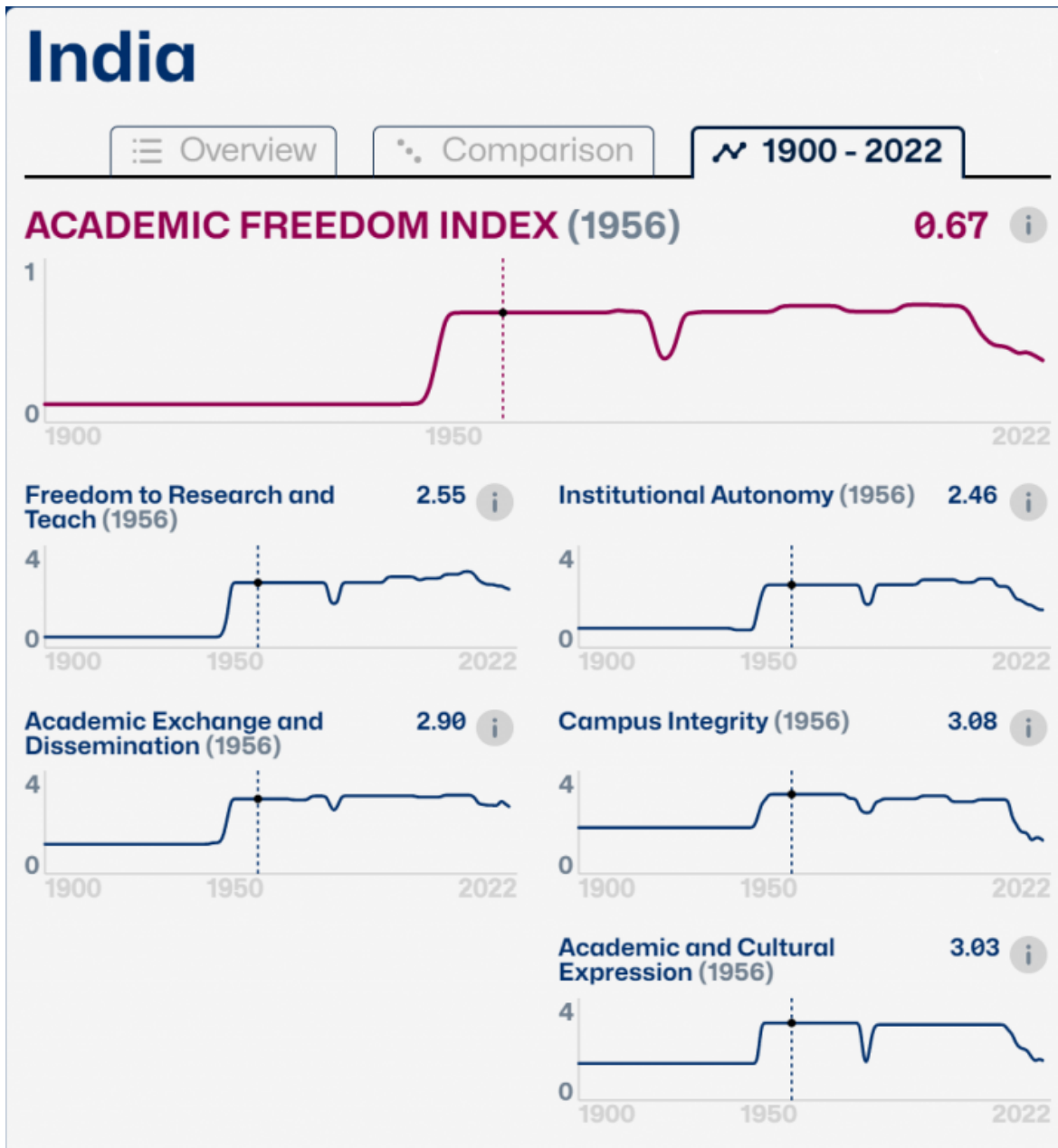
- **Global:**
 - It **identified 22 countries**, including India, China, the United States and Mexico – where it said universities and scholars experience significantly less academic freedom today than they did ten years ago.
 - Only **five small countries** (Gambia, Uzbekistan, Seychelles, Montenegro, and Kazakhstan) representing 0.7 % of the global population, improved their rankings.
 - In the remaining 152 countries, **academic freedom has stayed stagnant**, For the average global citizen, academic freedom has gone back to levels last registered four decades ago.
 - Like China and India, populous countries like the United States of America and Mexico have recorded a decline in academic freedom over the past decade.



▪ Indian Overview:

- India scored 0.38, lower than Pakistan's 0.43 and the United States' 0.79.
 - India's freedom index score was high in the past, ranging from **0.60-0.70 between 1950 and 2012**, except from 1974-1978.
 - China's academic freedom index stood at 0.07 in 2022, occupying the bottom 10 %.
- India scored **low in campus integrity**, which measures the extent to which campuses are free from politically motivated surveillance or security infringements.
- India also fared **poorly in institutional autonomy** and academic and cultural expression related to political issues.

- As for **freedom to research and teach and freedom of academic exchange** and dissemination, India did slightly better than the three indicators above.



▪ **Factors for Declining India’s Score:**

- Around 2013, all aspects of academic freedom began to decline strongly, reinforced with the election in 2014.
- A lack of a legal framework to protect academic freedom has enabled attacks on academic freedom under the ruling government.
- There has been notable pressure on the **institutional dimensions of academic freedom** — institutional autonomy and campus integrity — combined with constraints on the academic freedom of expression.

▪ **Suggestions:**

- The declines in India and China could bear more consequences as they are home to 2.8 billion people.
- Call on higher education policymakers, university leaders, and research funders to promote academic freedom in their own academic institutions as well as abroad.

[Source: DTE](#)

Peak Plastics: Bending the Consumption Curve

For Prelims: G20, Microplastics, National Dashboard on Elimination of Single Use Plastic and Plastic Waste Management, Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022, Project REPLAN, Circular economy.

For Mains: Issues Associated with Plastic, Recent Government Initiatives Related to Plastic Waste Management.

Why in News?

A new report suggests that [plastic consumption](#) in [G20 countries](#) will almost double by 2050, with the volume of plastic consumption rising to **451 million tonnes from 261 million tonnes in 2019**.

- The report, "**Peak Plastics: Bending the Consumption Curve**," explores the potential impact of policies being considered by the [United Nations'](#) plastic treaty negotiators.

What does the Report on Plastic Consumption Suggest?

- The report examined the potential impact of three key policies that cover the entire lifecycle of plastic, from **production to disposal**.
 - These policies include **a ban on problematic [single-use plastic](#)**, a polluter pays **extended producer responsibility scheme** for full end-of-life costs, and a **tax on virgin plastic production**.
- The study found that a combination of these policies and bolder action, including **possible restrictions on virgin plastic production**, will bring about peak plastic and see consumption slow in the future.
 - The researchers described **peak plastic consumption as the point and volume at which global plastic consumption stops growing** and begins to recede.
- The analysis is focused on the **19 countries of the G20** — Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- The report warned that **[extended producer responsibility](#) schemes will have a minimal effect** on the consumption of single-use plastic products.
 - A global **ban on unnecessary single-use plastic items** will be the most effective policy. **South Korea was the first to do so nationally for selected products in 2019**, later expanding the ban to other items. **India, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and China** have also imposed nationwide bans.

What is the Significance of Plastic?

- **Resistant, inert, and lightweight**, plastic offers many benefits to companies, consumers, and other links in society. This is all because of its low-cost and versatile nature.
 - In the **medical industry**, plastics are used to **keep things sterile**. Syringes and surgical implements are all plastic and single use.
 - In the **[automotive industry](#)**, it has allowed a significant reduction in vehicle weight, **reducing fuel consumption** and, consequently, the environmental impact of automobiles.

What are the Issues Associated with Plastic?

- **Single Use Plastic:**

- Plastics are **primarily produced from crude oil, gas, or coal, and 40% of total plastic** is discarded after a single use.
 - Our relationship with plastic is short-term focused. Many of these products, such as **plastic bags and food wrappers**, have a lifespan of mere minutes to hours, yet they may persist in the environment for hundreds of years.
- **Microplastics:**
 - Sea, sunlight, wind, and wave action break down plastic waste into small particles, often **less than one-fifth of an inch** across called [microplastics](#). Spread throughout the water column and have been found in every corner of the globe.
 - **Microplastics** are breaking down further into smaller and smaller pieces- **Plastic microfibers**. They have been found in **municipal drinking water systems** and drifting through the air.
- **Other Issues:**
 - **Upsets the Food Chain:**
 - **Polluting plastics** can affect the **world's tiniest organisms**, such as **plankton**. When these organisms become **poisoned due to plastic ingestion**, this causes problems for the larger animals that depend on them for food.
 - Larger items, such as plastic bags and straws, **can choke and starve marine life**.
 - **Impact on Human Health:**
 - The [World Health Organisation](#) published shocking research in 2018 that exposed the presence of microplastics in **90% of bottled water**.
 - We absorb plastic through our clothes, **70% of which are synthetic** and the worst fabric for the skin.

What are the Initiatives Related to Plastic Waste Management?

- **Indian Initiatives:**
 - [National Dashboard on Elimination of Single Use Plastic and Plastic Waste Management](#)
 - [Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022](#)
 - [Project REPLAN](#)
- **Global:**
 - **The Plastic Waste Partnership is established by the Conference of the Parties to the [Basel Convention](#) in May 2019** to mobilise business, government, academic and civil society resources, interests and expertise to improve and **promote the environmentally sound management (ESM) of plastic waste at the global, regional and national levels** and to prevent and minimize its generation.

Way Forward

- **Identifying Hotspots:**
 - **Identifying key hotspots of Plastic leakage** associated with production, consumption, and disposal of Plastic can assist governments in developing effective policies that address the plastic problem directly.
- **Breaking Down Plastic Waste:**
 - Plastic has become so enmeshed in our ecosystem that bacteria have evolved to digest it.
 - **Plastic-eating bacteria, discovered in Japan**, have been cultivated and modified to digest polyester plastics (food packaging and plastic bottles)
- **Circular Economy for Plastic Management:**
 - [Circular economy](#) can **reduce material use, redesigns materials to be less resource intensive, and recaptures “waste” as a resource** to manufacture new materials and products.
 - Circular economy is **not just applicable to the global currents of plastic and clothes**, but can also contribute significantly to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q1. Why is there a great concern about the 'microbeads' that are released into environment? (2019)

- (a) They are considered harmful to marine ecosystems.
- (b) They are considered to cause skin cancer in children.
- (c) They are small enough to be absorbed by crop plants in irrigated fields.
- (d) They are often found to be used as food adulterants.

Ans: (a)

Q2. In India, 'extend producer responsibility' was introduced as an important feature in which of the following? (2019)

- (a) The Bio-medical Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 1998
- (b) The Recycled Plastic (Manufacturing and Usage) Rules, 1999
- (c) The E-Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011
- (d) The Food Safety and Standard Regulations, 2011

Ans: (c)

[Source: DTE](#)

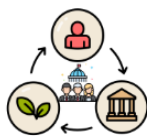
Rapid Fire Current Affairs

World Hearing Day

With this theme, the communication objectives are to:



Draw attention of decision makers in governments and civil society groups towards the WHO's recommendations regarding integration of ear and hearing care into PHC.



Encourage governments to integrate primary ear and hearing care into training programmes for health care providers at primary level.



Call attention of primary level health care providers (health workers and physicians) towards the needs of people with hearing loss and ear disease.



Inform people about the importance of ear and hearing care and encourage them to seek services.

World Hearing Day is **celebrated on the 3rd of March each year to raise awareness on how to prevent deafness and hearing loss and promote ear and hearing care** across the world.

Each year, **the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) determines the theme. The theme of this year is "Ear and hearing care for all"**.

Normal hearing range is from 0 dBHL (Decibel Hearing Level), which is the audiometric zero, to 20 dBHL. A person who is not able to hear as well as someone with normal hearing - hearing thresholds of 20 dB or better in both ears is said to have hearing loss. Hard of hearing refers to people with hearing loss ranging from mild to severe. Deaf' people mostly have profound hearing loss, which- implies very little or no hearing.

Read More: [First World Report on Hearing: WHO](#)

Quad Meeting



During the **recent meeting of Quad members in New Delhi**, the Foreign Ministers of the Quad countries **called for lasting peace in Ukraine** and, in an indirect reference to the Russian invasion, underlined respect for territorial sovereignty and integrity. **They also addressed China's aggressive behavior in the Indo-Pacific** and its attempts to block the UN designation of terrorists.

It was **decided to form a Quad Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and to engage more closely with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**, a grouping of 23 members that include India and Australia.

Quad is the grouping of four democracies -India, Australia, the US, and Japan. All four nations find a common ground of being democratic nations and also support the common interest of unhindered maritime trade and security. It **aims to ensure and support a “free, open and prosperous” Indo-Pacific region.** The idea of **Quad was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. In 2017, India, Australia, the US and Japan, came together and formed this “quadrilateral” coalition.**

The next Quad Leaders’ Summit will be hosted by Australia in 2023.

Read More: [Issues and Opportunities related to Quad](#), [Russia-Ukraine Conflict](#)

Humayun & Other Great Mughals

Humayun (1530-1540, 1555-1556), the son of Babur and the second Mughal emperor, is **best known for the tomb dedicated to him in Delhi (Humayun’s Tomb).** He is **one of the six great Mughals** (Babur, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb).

Humayun is **chiefly remembered as a political and military failure because he lost back to his rival, the Afghan Sher Shah**, whom Babur had conquered in India, and **had to seek refuge in Iran and fight in Afghanistan to regain his throne in Delhi.**

Babur was the **founder of the dynasty, Akbar the inclusive king, and Jahangir, although overshadowed by both his father and his son, is remembered as an emperor in whose reign**

peace, prosperity, and the arts flourished.

Shah Jahan **was the master builder who gave India its most recognised monument, the Taj Mahal. Under Aurangzeb, the empire expanded to its farthest boundaries.**

Read More: [Indo-Islamic Architecture](#)

Dhara Initiative

The unique and flagship **initiative “Dhara: Ode to Indian Knowledge Systems”**, taken up **under the aegis of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav by the Ministry of Culture** has completed one year in February 2023. The Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Division of the Ministry of Education located at AICTE, **New Delhi is the key execution partner for Dhara events.**

During its yearlong activities, **it has been successful in creating public awareness and stakeholder participation and helped to devise a framework for the promotion and revival of multiple domains of IKS.** The programme was conceptualized as a series of lectures and discussions dedicated to specific areas of inquiry highlighting India’s civilizational achievements.

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav **is an initiative of the Government of India to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India** and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements. After a prolonged struggle spread over more than 100 years on the back of several movements spearheaded by individuals and communities across the country, **India successfully ousted the foreign rulers from the Indian subcontinent in 1947.**

Read More: [Initiatives on 75th Independence Day](#)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/04-03-2023/print>