



## India's Commitment to UN Peacekeeping

**For Prelims:** [UN peacekeeping mission](#), India-ASEAN Initiative for women in UNPK operations, [International Day of UN Peacekeepers](#)

**For Mains:** [Role of UN Peacekeeping in resolving conflicts and promoting peace](#), India's contributions, India-ASEAN Initiative for women in UNPK operations

### Why in News?

Recently, the [Indian Army](#) commemorated the **75<sup>th</sup> International Day of United Nations (UN) Peacekeepers** on 29th May (which was designated by the UN General Assembly) at the [National War Memorial](#) in New Delhi.

- **Theme 2023: 'Peace begins with me'**.
- This day holds significance as it marks the anniversary of the first [UN peacekeeping \(UNPK\) mission in 1948](#).
- Additionally, India unveiled plans to conduct two initiatives later in 2023, specifically designed to train **women personnel from South East Asia, as part of their collaboration with ASEAN in the defence sector**.

### What is India-ASEAN Initiative for Women in UNPK operations?

- The 'India-ASEAN Initiative for women in UNPK operations' refers to a collaborative effort between **India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** to promote the **participation of women in UNPK operations**.
- This initiative focuses on **providing training and support to women personnel** from ASEAN member-states who are interested in serving as peacekeepers.
- Under this initiative, India has announced two specific initiatives:
  - **Specialized courses at the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK)** in New Delhi. These courses will offer targeted training in peacekeeping operations to women peacekeepers from ASEAN countries.
    - The aim is to **equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge** to effectively contribute to UNPK missions.
  - **Table Top Exercise for women officers from ASEAN**. This exercise will **simulate various scenarios and challenges faced by UN peacekeepers**, allowing participants to enhance their understanding and preparedness for UNPK operations.

### What is UN Peacekeeping?

- **About:**
  - UN Peacekeeping is a vital tool employed by the [United Nations](#) to help **countries navigate the path from conflict to peace**.
  - It involves the **deployment of military, police, and civilian personnel** to regions affected by conflicts or political instability.
  - The primary objective of UN Peacekeeping is to **facilitate peace and security, protect**

**civilians**, and support the **restoration of stable governance structures**.

- It brings together **the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council, the Secretariat, troop and police contributors** and the host governments in a combined effort to maintain international peace and security.

▪ **First Mission:**

- The first UN peacekeeping mission was established in May 1948, when the **UN Security Council** authorized the deployment of **UN military observers to the Middle East** to form the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) to monitor the **Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours**.

▪ **Mandates:**

- The mandates **vary from operation to operation**, but they generally include some or all of the following elements:
  - Monitoring ceasefires, peace agreements, and security arrangements.
  - Protecting civilians, especially those at risk of physical harm.
  - Facilitating political dialogue, reconciliation, and supporting elections.
  - Building rule of law, security institutions, and promoting human rights.
  - Delivering humanitarian aid, supporting refugee reintegration, and promoting environmental sustainability.

▪ **Principles:**

- **Consent of the Parties:**
  - Peacekeeping operations require the **consent of the main parties involved in the conflict**.
    - Without consent, a peacekeeping operation risks becoming a **party to the conflict** and deviating from its peacekeeping role.
- **Impartiality:**
  - Peacekeepers should maintain **impartiality in their dealings** with the parties to the conflict.
  - **Impartiality does not mean neutrality**; peacekeepers should **actively execute their mandate and uphold international norms**.
- **Non-use of Force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate:**
  - Peacekeeping operations should refrain from using force, except when necessary for **self-defence** and **protection of their mandate**.
  - "Robust" peacekeeping allows the use of force with Security Council authorization and consent from the host nation and parties involved.

▪ **Achievements:**

- Since its inception in 1948, UN Peacekeeping has played a crucial role in ending conflicts and promoting reconciliation in numerous countries.
  - Successful peacekeeping missions have been carried out in places like **Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and Namibia**.
  - These operations have **made a positive impact on restoring stability**, enabling the **transition to democratic governance**, and fostering economic development.

## What are India's Contributions in UN Peacekeeping?

▪ **Troop Contribution:**

- India has a rich legacy of contributing to UN Peacekeeping operations. It is one of the **largest troop-contributing countries**, with a history of deploying soldiers, medical personnel, and engineers to various peacekeeping missions worldwide.
  - India has contributed approximately 2,75,000 troops to peacekeeping missions so far.

▪ **Casualties:**

- Indian Army soldiers have made significant sacrifices while serving in UN Peacekeeping Missions, with 179 soldiers losing their lives in the line of duty.

▪ **Training and infrastructure:**

- The Indian Army has established the **Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK)** in New Delhi.
  - This center provides specialized training for more than 12,000 troops every year in peacekeeping operations, hosting national and international courses for potential peacekeepers and trainers.

- CUNPK plays a crucial role in sharing best practices and enhancing the capacity of peacekeepers.
- **Women in Peacekeeping:**
  - India has taken proactive measures to promote gender equality in peacekeeping operations.
    - India has deployed **Female Engagement Teams** in **United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission** in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and **United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei**, which is the **second largest women contingent after Liberia**.
    - India has also deployed **Women Military Police in United Nations Disengagement Observer Force** and women staff officers and military observers in various missions.

[Source: TH](#)

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## Foucault Pendulum

### Why in News?

[India's newly inaugurated Parliament](#) building showcases a remarkable piece of scientific artistry suspended from its ceiling - a **Foucault pendulum**.

- Foucault's pendulum in the New Parliament building also represents the **spirit of scientific inquiry and scientific temper** which is enshrined in the **Article 51A of the Indian Constitution**.



### What is a Foucault Pendulum?

- A **Foucault pendulum**, named after the **19<sup>th</sup> century** French physicist **Leon Foucault**, is a simple **experiment to demonstrate the Earth's rotation**.
  - It consists of a **heavy object hung from a long wire, free to swing in any direction**. When set in to-and-fro motion, the **pendulum appears to change its orientation slowly over time**, due to the relative motion between the pendulum and the rotating Earth.

- Foucault first performed this experiment publicly in **1851 at the Pantheon in Paris**, where he suspended a **28-kg iron ball from a 67-m wire**. It was the first direct visual evidence of the Earth's rotation.
  - The experiment concluded that **“pendulum does not change its plane of motion, but the ground beneath it does.”**
  - When **aligned along the Earth's axis at the north and south poles**, the pendulum's back-and-forth motion comes **back to its original plane in exactly 24 hours**.
  - At other latitudes, it takes **longer for the pendulum to return to its original orientation of swinging**. That is because **the pendulum is not aligned with the axis of rotation of the earth**.
- The rate and direction of the pendulum's apparent rotation depend on its latitude.
  - At the North Pole, it would **complete one clockwise rotation in 24 hours**.
  - At the equator, it would **not rotate at all**.
  - At other latitudes, it would rotate at **intermediate rates and directions**.

## What is Special about the Pendulum in the New Parliament Building?

- The pendulum in the new Parliament building was created by the [National Council of Science Museum \(NCSM\) in Kolkata](#).
  - It is **said to be the largest such piece in India**, with a height of 22m and a weight of 36 kg.
- The pendulum hangs from a skylight at the top of the Constitution Hall, and signifies the **“integration of the idea of India with the idea of the cosmos”**.
- At the **latitude** of Parliament, New Delhi (28.6° N), it takes about **49 hours and 59 minutes** for the pendulum to **complete one clockwise rotation**.

[Source: IE](#)

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## Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP

**For Prelims:** Hunger Hotspots, [FAO](#), [WFP](#), [Weather Extremes](#), [Food Insecurity](#), [Climate Change](#), [El Nino](#).

**For Mains:** Hunger Hotspots – FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity.

## Why in News?

According to a recent Report by [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) and [World Food Program \(WFP\)](#) **Hunger Hotspots – FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity**, India's neighbors, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Myanmar, are among the hunger hotspots in the world.

## What are the Highlights of the Report?

- **Hot Spots with Very High Concern:**
  - There are **18 areas in 22 countries** where acute [Food Insecurity](#) may increase in magnitude and severity.
  - Pakistan, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Syrian Arab Republic are **hotspots with very high concern**.
  - All these hotspots have a **high number of people facing critical acute food**

**insecurity, coupled with worsening drivers that are expected to further intensify life-threatening conditions** in the coming months.

▪ **Countries at Highest Concern Level:**

- Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen remain at the highest concern level.
- Haiti, the Sahel (Burkina Faso and Mali) and the Sudan have been elevated to the highest concern levels; this is due to **severe movement restrictions of people and goods** in Haiti, as well as in Burkina Faso and Mali, and the recent eruption of [Conflict in Sudan](#).

▪ **Expected to Face Starvation:**

- All the hotspots at the **highest level have populations** facing or projected to face starvation, or are at **risk of deterioration towards catastrophic conditions**, given they already have critical food insecurity and are facing severe aggravating factors.

▪ **New Emerging Conflicts:**

- New emerging conflicts, in particular the eruption of conflict in the Sudan, will likely **drive global conflict trends** and impact several neighbouring countries.
- The use of explosive ordnance and siege tactics in several hunger hotspots continues to push **people into catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity**.

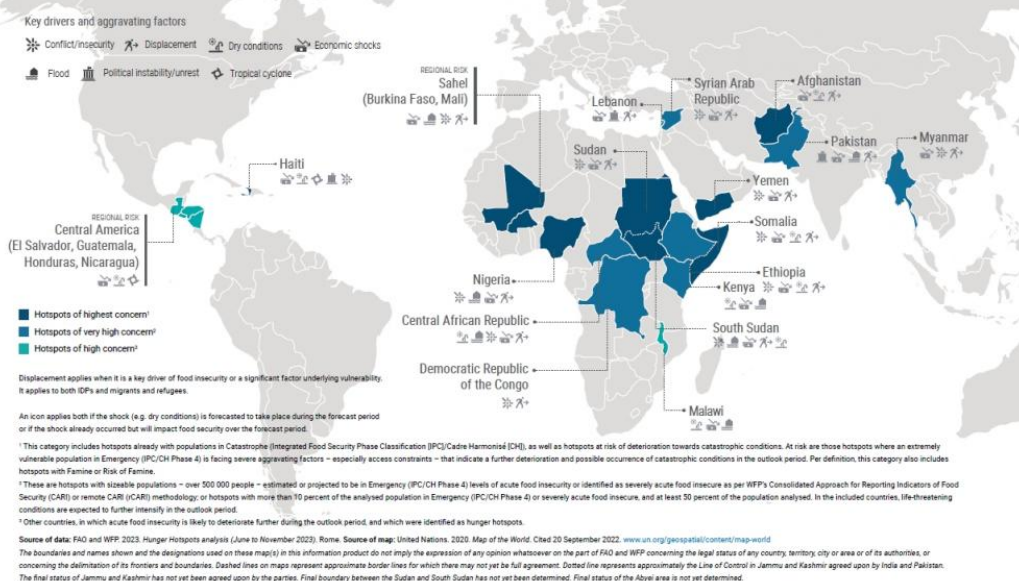
▪ **Weather Extremes:**

- [Weather extremes](#), such as heavy rains, tropical storms, [Cyclones](#), [Flooding](#), [Drought](#) and increased climate variability, remain significant drivers in some countries and regions.
- The May 2023 forecast suggests an 82 % likelihood of [El Niño](#) conditions starting in the May–July 2023 period, with significant implications for several hunger hotspots.

▪ **Economic Shocks:**

- Deepening economic **shocks continue to drive low- and middle-income nations** deeper into crisis.

**Early warning hunger hotspots  
June to November 2023**



**What are the Recommendations?**

- Urgent humanitarian action is needed to **save lives and livelihoods and prevent starvation and death** in hotspots where acute hunger is at a high risk of worsening from June to November 2023.
- Continuous monitoring of forecasts and their impact on production remains critical.
- Urgent and scaled-up **assistance is required in all 18 hunger hotspots** to protect livelihoods and increase access to food.
- This is essential to **avert a further deterioration of acute food insecurity** and malnutrition.

- In the hotspots of highest concerns, humanitarian actions are critical in preventing further starvation and death.

## What is the Food and Agriculture Organization?

### ▪ About:

- FAO is a specialised agency of the [United Nations](#) that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- [World Food Day](#) is celebrated every year around the world on 16th October. The day is celebrated to mark the anniversary of the founding of the FAO in 1945.
- It is one of the UN food aid organisations based in Rome (Italy). Its sister bodies are the [World Food Programme](#) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

### ▪ Initiatives Taken:

- [Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems \(GIAHS\)](#).
- Monitors the [Desert Locust](#) situation throughout the world.
- The [Codex Alimentarius Commission or CAC](#) is the body responsible for all matters regarding the implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.
- The [International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture](#) was adopted by the Thirty-First Session of the Conference of the FAO in 2001.

### ▪ Flagship Publications:

- The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA).
- The State of the World's Forests (SOFO).
- [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World \(SOFI\)](#).
- The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA).
- The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO).

## What is the World Food Programme?

- The WFP is the **leading humanitarian organization** saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.
- It was founded in 1961 by the **FAO and United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** with its headquarters in Rome, Italy.
- It is also a member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), a coalition of UN agencies and organizations aimed at fulfilling the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).
- The international community has committed to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition by 2030.
- WFP works in over 120 countries and territories to bring life-saving food to people displaced by conflict and made destitute by disasters.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q. The FAO accords the status of 'Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS)' to traditional agricultural systems. What is the overall goal of this initiative? (2016)**

1. To provide modern technology, training in modern farming methods and financial support to local communities of identified GIAHS so as to greatly enhance their agricultural productivity.
2. To identify and safeguard eco-friendly traditional farm practices and their associated landscapes, agricultural biodiversity and knowledge systems of the local communities.
3. To provide Geographical Indication status to all the varieties of agricultural produce in such identified GIAHS.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

**(a)** 1 and 3 only

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

Ans: (b)

[Source: DTE](#)

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## Evergreening of Loans

**For Prelims:** [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#), [Stressed loans](#), [ESG \(Environmental, Social, and Governance\) norms](#), [Asset reconstruction company \(ARC\)](#)

**For Mains:** Evergreening of Loans, Approaches Utilized for Evergreening Loans.

### Why in News?

The Governor of the [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#), recently addressed bank boards and expressed concerns about **banks adopting over-aggressive growth strategies and engaging in the evergreening of loans.**

- The governor emphasized the need for robust [corporate governance](#) and highlighted instances of concealing the true status of [stressed loans](#).

### What is the Evergreening of Loans?

- **About:**
  - Evergreening loans, a **form of zombie lending**, is a practice of **extending new or additional loans to a borrower who is unable to repay the existing loans**, thereby **concealing the true status of the non-performing assets (NPAs)** or bad loans.
- **Approaches Utilised for Evergreening Loans:**
  - **Selling and buying back loans or debt instruments** between two lenders to avoid classifying them as NPAs.
  - **Persuading good borrowers to enter into structured deals** with stressed borrowers to hide their default.
  - **Using internal or office accounts to adjust the repayment obligations** of borrowers.
  - **Renewing or disbursing new loans to stressed borrowers** or related entities closer to the repayment date of earlier loans.
- **Impact:**
  - Evergreening loans can create a **false impression of the asset quality and profitability of banks and** delay the recognition and resolution of stressed assets.
  - It can also **undermine the credit discipline and moral hazard among borrowers**, and erode the trust and confidence of depositors, investors and regulators.

### What is a Non-Performing Asset?

- NPA refers to a **classification for loans or advances that are in default or are in arrears on scheduled payments of principal or interest.**

- Banks are required to classify non-performing assets further into the following three categories based on the period for which the asset has remained non-performing and the realizability of the dues:
  - **Sub-standard Assets:** A substandard asset is an asset classified as an NPA for a **period less than or equal to 12 months**
  - **Doubtful Assets:** A doubtful asset is an asset that has been nonperforming for a **period exceeding 12 months.**
  - **Loss Assets:** Assets that are **uncollectible and where there is little, or no hope of recovery and that needs to be fully written off.**
  
- **Loan write-off Vs. Evergreening:**
  - **Loan write-offs** are a **process of removing bad loans** from the books of banks after making adequate provisions for them. **Loan write-offs do not mean that the borrowers are relieved of their repayment obligations** or that the banks stop pursuing recovery from them. Loan write-offs are done to **clean up the balance sheet of banks and reflect their true financial position.**
    - Write-off exercise has **enabled banks to reduce their non-performing assets, or defaulted loans, by Rs 10,09,510 crore (\$123.86 billion) in the last five years.**
    - Evergreening of loans, on the other hand, is a practice of extending new or additional loans to a borrower who is unable to repay the existing loans, thereby **concealing the true status of the non-performing assets (NPAs) or bad loans.**
  
- **Initiatives by RBI:**
  - The RBI has cautioned banks against adopting **over-aggressive growth strategies, underpricing or over-pricing of products**, concentration or lack of diversification in deposit or credit profile, which can expose them to higher risks and vulnerabilities.
  - The RBI has also implemented various measures to support the banking sector, including **providing liquidity support, regulatory forbearance, the establishment of an [asset reconstruction company \(ARC\)](#)**, and the resolution framework.
    - However, the RBI has highlighted that these measures alone are insufficient if banks do not improve their risk management and governance practices.
  - Several banks have faced penalties imposed by the **RBI for violating various norms related to [KYC \(Know Your Customer\)](#)**, customer grievance redressal, fraud reporting, etc.
    - Supervisory action has also been initiated by the RBI against some large private sector banks for governance lapses.

**Note:** An **Asset Reconstruction Company** is a specialised financial institution that specialises in **acquiring and resolving [non-performing assets \(NPAs\)](#)** of banks and other financial institutions. ARCs were introduced in India in the late 1990s as a response to the **increasing problem of NPAs in the banking sector.**

## How can Evergreening of Loans be Controlled?

- **Enhanced Risk Assessment:** Financial institutions should adopt **robust risk assessment practices** to evaluate the creditworthiness of borrowers accurately.
  - This involves conducting thorough due **diligence, analyzing repayment capacity, and assessing the viability of the borrower's business model.** By accurately identifying potential risks, lenders can avoid the need for evergreening loans.
- **Transparent Reporting and Disclosure:** **Transparency** is crucial in preventing evergreening of loans. **Lenders should provide accurate and timely information on their loan portfolios**, including non-performing loans (NPLs) and loan restructuring.
  - Clear and transparent disclosure requirements enable regulators, investors, and other stakeholders to assess the financial health of banks and identify any potential evergreening practices.



- **Asset-liability Management:** There is a need to lay emphasis on the **importance of [asset-liability management \(ALM\)](#)**.
  - ALM involves **assessing and monitoring the potential risks arising from the maturity mismatch between assets and liabilities**, interest rate fluctuations, and other market risks.
  - Banks have been advised to promptly **interact with the media in order to dispel any misinformation or rumours on social media** that can trigger panic among depositors.
- **ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) Norms:** There is a **need for banks to comply with [ESG \(Environmental, Social, and Governance\) norms](#)** as they are becoming increasingly relevant for investors and stakeholders.
  - Banks should **adopt sustainable business practices, disclose their ESG performance**, and align their lending policies with national and international goals on climate change and social welfare.
  - ESG goals are a set of standards for a company's operations that force companies to follow **better governance, ethical practices, environment-friendly measures and social responsibility**.
- **Recommendations of P J Nayak Committee:**
  - According to the **Committee to Review Governance of Boards of Banks in India**, wherever significant **evergreening in a bank is detected by the RBI, penalties should be levied through cancellations of unvested stock options** and claw-back of monetary bonuses on officers concerned and on all whole-time directors, and the Chairman of the audit committee be asked to step down from the board.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q. With reference to the governance of public sector banking in India, consider the following statements: (2018)**

1. Capital infusion into public sector banks by the Government of India has steadily increased in the last decade.
2. To put the public sector banks in order, the merger of associate banks with the parent State Bank of India has been affected.

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: (b)**

**Source: IE**