



Survival of the Richest Report: The India Story

For Prelims: Oxfam International, World Economic Forum, Informal sector, National Health Policy, Windfall Tax.

For Mains: Inclusive Growth, Issues of Inequality and its Solution.

Why in News?

According to the **Oxfam's Report "Survival of the Richest: The India story"**, the **richest 1%** in India now own more than **40%** of the **country's total wealth**, while the **bottom half of the population** together share just **3% of wealth** between 2012 and 2021.

- [Oxfam International](#) released the India supplement of its annual inequality report on the first day of the [World Economic Forum Annual Meeting](#) at **Davos**.
- The report states that **taxing India's ten-richest individuals at 5%** could generate enough money to bring children back to school.



What are the Findings of the Report?

- **Gender Inequality:**
 - The report also highlighted gender inequality in India, stating that female workers earned only **63 paise** for every **1 rupee** earned by **male workers**.
 - The situation is even worse for [Scheduled Castes](#) and **rural workers**, as they earned **55%** and half of what the **advantaged social groups** earned respectively, between **2018** and **2019**.

- **Social Inequality:**
 - **Oxfam India** stated that the **country's marginalized communities such as Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, Women,** and [informal sector workers](#) are continuing to suffer in a system that **prioritizes the survival of the richest.**
 - The poor in India are paying **disproportionately higher taxes**, and spending more on essential items and services when compared to the rich.
- **Suggested Measures to Combat Inequality:**
 - To implement **inheritance, property and land taxes**, as well as **net wealth taxes**, in order to reduce **inequality** and **generate revenue** for social programs.
 - To enhance the budgetary allocation of the **health sector to 2.5% of GDP** by **2025**, as envisaged in the [National Health Policy](#).
 - To enhance the **budgetary allocation** for [education](#) to the **global benchmark** of **6% of GDP.**
 - To combat these problems, Oxfam urged **higher taxes on the rich**, through a combination of measures including **one-time “solidarity” taxes** and **raising** minimum rates for the wealthiest.
 - **Oxfam International** has called for food companies that are making large profits as inflation has surged to face [windfall taxes](#).
 - The idea behind this is that these companies have benefited from the rising prices of **food and other essentials** and should contribute a **fair share** to help address [poverty](#) and [inequality](#).
 - This measure could generate revenue for governments to support social programs that help **reduce poverty and inequality.**
 - **Portugal** introduced a **windfall tax** on both **energy companies** and major **food retailers**, including **supermarket** and **hypermarket chains.**
- **Sources for Data:**
 - The report is based on data from multiple sources, including **Forbes** and **Credit Suisse** for information on wealth inequality and billionaire wealth in the country.
 - Additionally, government sources like the [National Sample Survey \(NSS\)](#), [Union budget documents](#), and parliamentary questions have been used to corroborate the arguments made throughout the report.

What is the Windfall Tax?

- **Windfall taxes** are taxes imposed on **unexpected** or **extraordinary profits**, such as those made during times of **economic crisis, war,** or [natural disasters](#).
- Governments typically levy **a one-off tax retrospectively** over and above the **normal rates of tax** on such profits, called **windfall tax.**
- One area where such taxes have routinely been discussed is **oil markets**, where price fluctuation leads to **volatile or erratic profits** for the industry.

What is Oxfam International?

- **Oxfam International** is a **confederation of 21 independent charitable organizations** working together with **partners** and local communities in more than **90 countries.**
- Its mission is to **end the injustices** that **cause poverty.**
- Oxfam works to find **practical, innovative ways** for people to **lift themselves out of poverty and thrive.**
- They **save lives** and help rebuild **livelihoods** when **crisis strikes.**
- They campaign so that the **voices of the poor influence** the **local and global decisions** that affect them.

Rare Earth Elements Discovered in Sweden

For Prelims: Rare Earth Elements, Green Transition, Clean Energy, NASA's Space Shuttle Programme, Electric Vehicles, QUAD, Thorium.

For Mains: Significance of Rare Earth Elements, Monopoly of China over Rare-Earth, Rare-Earth Elements in India.

Why in News?

Recently, Sweden's **state-owned mining company LKAB** has **discovered Europe's largest deposit of [rare earth metals](#)**.

What is the Significance of the Discovery?

- The store, **situated in Kiruna** located in the **northern region of Sweden**, holds a stockpile of over **1 million metric tons of rare earth oxides**.
- This discovery bolsters **Europe's ambition to rely less on imported raw materials** needed for the [green transition](#).
- Currently, **no rare earths are mined in Europe** and it mostly **imports** them from other regions.
 - According to a report in the BBC, **98% of rare earths** used by the [European Union](#) (EU) were sent by China.
- The discovery can also **prove to be a significant turning point not just for the EU but also for other western countries** as they have been trying to reduce their reliance on China for the import of these **rare earth elements**.

What are Rare Earth Elements?

- **About:**
 - They are a set of **17 metallic elements**. These include the **15 lanthanides on the periodic table** in addition to **scandium and yttrium** that show similar physical and chemical properties to the lanthanides.
- **Significance:**
 - They are important in technologies of [consumer electronics](#), **computers and networks, communications, [clean energy](#)**, advanced transportation, healthcare, environmental mitigation, and **national defence**, among others.
 - **Scandium** is used in **televisions** and fluorescent lamps
 - **Yttrium** is used in drugs to **treat [rheumatoid arthritis](#) and [cancer](#)**.
 - Rare earth elements are also used in **space shuttle components**, jet engine turbines, and drones.
 - **Cerium**, the most abundant rare earth element, is essential to [NASA's Space Shuttle Programme](#).
 - Moreover, the push for switching from **internal combustion cars to [electric vehicles](#)** has also led to a rise in demand for rare earth.
- **Monopoly of China:**
 - China has over time **acquired global domination of rare earths**, even at one point, it produced **90% of the rare earths the world needs**.
 - Today, however, it has **come down to 60%** and the remaining is produced by other countries, including the [Quad](#) (**Australia, India, Japan and United States**).
 - Since **2010**, when China **curbed shipments of Rare Earths to Japan**, the US, and Europe, production units have come up in **Australia**.

- Even so, the **dominant share** of processed Rare Earths **lies with China**.
- **Rare Earth Elements in India:**
 - India has **6% of the world's rare earth reserves**, it only produces **1% of global output**, and meets most of its requirements of such minerals from China.
 - **Indian Rare Earths Limited (IREL)** is majorly responsible for **mining and extraction of primary mineral** that contains **Rare Earth Elements: monazite** beach sand, found in many coastal states.
 - IREL's prime focus is to provide [thorium](#) — extracted from monazite — to the **Department of Atomic Energy**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. Recently, there has been a concern over the short supply of a group of elements called 'rare earth metals. Why? (2012)

1. China, which is the largest producer of these elements, has imposed some restrictions on their export.
2. Other than China, Australia, Canada and Chile, these elements are not found in any country.
3. Rare earth metals are essential for the manufacture of various kinds of electronic items and there is a growing demand for these elements.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (c)

[Source: IE](#)

Exoplanet

Prelims: Exoplanet, NASA, James Webb Space Telescope, LHS 475 b, Exoplanets, Red Dwarf Star.

Mains: Exoplanet, its discovery and significance of its study.

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA)** [James Webb Space Telescope](#) has discovered its first new exoplanet named- LHS 475 b.

- Owing to the Webb telescope's advanced capabilities, researchers may detect more Earth-sized planets in future.

What are the Key points of LHS 475 b?

Findings:

- It is roughly the **same size as Earth**, its diameter is 99% the same as Earth.
- It is a terrestrial, rocky planet about **41 light-years away** from Earth in the **constellation Octans**.
- It differs from Earth in **that it completes an orbit in just two days and is hundreds of degrees hotter than Earth**.
- It is also closer to its star than **any planet in our solar system is to the sun**, although its star is less than half the temperature of the sun.
 - It orbits very close to a **red dwarf star** and completes a full orbit in just two days.
 - So far, most of the discovered exoplanets are similar to Jupiter as Earth-sized planets are much smaller in size and harder to discover with older telescopes.

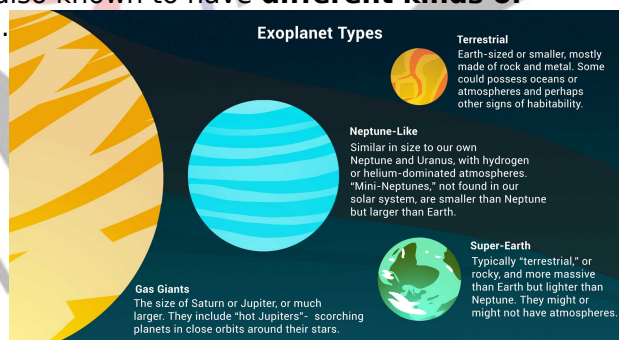
Significance:

- These first observational results from an Earth-size rocky planet **open the door to many future possibilities for studying rocky planet atmospheres**.
- Its red dwarf star is less than half the temperature of the Sun, so the researchers are expecting that it still could have an atmosphere.

What are Exoplanets?

About:

- Exoplanets are planets **that orbit other stars and are beyond our solar system**. The first confirmation of detection of **exoplanets occurred in 1992**.
 - According to NASA, to date, **more than 5,000 exoplanets have been discovered**.
 - Scientists believe that there are more planets than stars as each star have at least one planet orbiting it.
- Exoplanets come in a host of different sizes. They can be **gas giants bigger than Jupiter or as small and rocky as Earth**. They are also known to have **different kinds of temperatures** — boiling hot to freezing cold.



Discovery:

- Exoplanets are very hard to see directly with telescopes. They are hidden by the **bright glare of the stars they orbit**.
- So, astronomers use other **ways to detect and study exoplanets such as looking at the effects these planets have on the stars they orbit**.
- Scientists rely on **indirect methods, such as the transit method**, which is measuring the dimming of a star that happens to have a planet pass in front of it.
- Other detection methods include **gravitational microlensing**— Light from a distant star is bent and **focused by gravity as a planet passes between the star and Earth**. The same method could hypothetically use our Sun to see exoplanets.

Significance:

- Studying exoplanets not only broadens our understanding of other solar systems but **also helps us piece together information about our own planetary system and origin**.
- However, the most compelling reason to learn about them is to **find the answer to one of the most profound and thought-provoking questions of humankind** — are we alone in this universe?
- Another important element of the study is finding out the distance between an exoplanet

and its host star.

- This helps **scientists determine if a discovered world is habitable or not**. If an exoplanet is too close to the star, it might be too hot to sustain liquid water. If it's too far, it might only have frozen water.
- When a planet is at a distance that enables it to have liquid water, it is said to be in the "Goldilocks zone" or the habitable zone.

What are Red Dwarf Stars?

- Red dwarf stars are small, low-mass, dim, and cool stars, they are the most common and **smallest in the universe**.
- As they don't radiate much light, **it's very tough to detect them with the naked eye from Earth**.
- **However, as red dwarfs are dimmer** than other stars, it is easier to find exoplanets that surround them. Therefore, **red dwarfs are a popular target for planet hunting**.
- The habitable zone of red dwarf stars is closer to the star than stars like our sun, making it easier to observe potentially habitable planets.



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. The term 'Goldilocks Zone' is often seen in the news in the context of (2015)

- (a) the limits of habitable zone above the surface of the Earth
- (b) regions inside the Earth where shale gas is available
- (c) search for the Earth-like planets in outer space
- (d) search for meteorites containing precious metals

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- The 'Goldilocks Zone' refers to the habitable zone around a star where the temperature is just right – not too hot and not too cold – for liquid water to exist on a planet.
- Since liquid water is essential for life as it has potential to accommodate biotic organism, thereby, it is called 'habitable zone'.
- **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

Shukrayaan I

Prelims: Robotic missions (DaVinci Plus and Veritas) to Venus, Previous Missions Sent on Venus, Important Highlights of Venus.

Mains: ISRO Space Mission to Venus, Space Technology.

Why in News?

[Indian Space Research Organisation's \(ISRO\)](#) Venus mission, Shukrayaan I may be postponed to 2031. ISRO's Venus mission was expected to be launched in December 2024.

- Both the U.S. and the European space agencies have **Venus missions planned for 2031 — VERITAS and EnVision, respectively** — while China may launch around 2026 or 2027.

What Causes the Delay?

- ISRO had originally planned to launch Shukrayaan I in mid-2023 but the pandemic pushed the date to December 2024.
 - Other ISRO missions, **including Aditya L1 and Chandrayaan III**, have also been affected by manufacturing delays and commercial launch commitments.
- Optimal launch windows from Earth to Venus occur once around every 19 months. This is why ISRO has 'backup' launch dates in 2026 and 2028 **should it miss the 2024 opportunity**.
- But even more optimal windows, which further **reduce the amount of fuel required at liftoff, come around every eight years**.
- Right now **the 2031 window is considered very good** by the experts.
- The mission is also **"waiting for formal approval and money"**, which are required before spacecraft assembly and testing.

What is Shukrayaan I Mission?

- **About:**
 - Shukrayaan I will be **an Orbiter Mission**. Its scientific payloads **currently include a high-resolution [Synthetic Aperture Radar](#) (SAR)** and a ground-penetrating radar.
 - **SAR** would examine Venus' surface, despite the clouds around the planet, which lowers visibility.
 - It refers to **a technique for producing high-resolution images**. Because of the precision, the radar can penetrate clouds and darkness, which means that it can collect data day and night in any weather.
 - The mission is expected to **study Venus's geological and volcanic activity**, emissions on the ground, wind speed, cloud cover, and other planetary characteristics from an elliptical orbit.
 - Shukrayaan-I will be launched on either GSLV Mk II or [GSLV Mk III](#), the latter allows more instruments or fuel to be carried, according to ISRO.
- **Objectives:**
 - Investigation of surface process and **shallow subsurface stratigraphy**. Until now, no prior observation of the sub-surface of Venus has been done.
 - Stratigraphy is a branch of geology in which rock layers and layering are studied.

- Study of the structure, composition and dynamics of the atmosphere.
- Investigation of [Solar wind interaction with Venusian ionosphere](#).

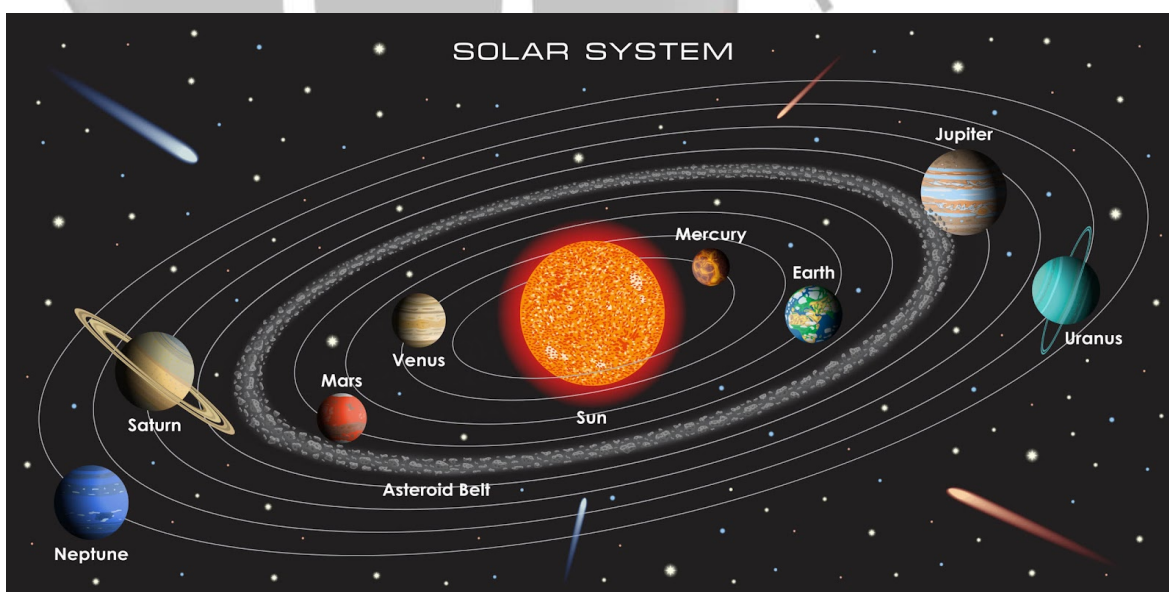
▪ **Significance:**

- It will help to learn how Earth-like planets evolve and what conditions exist on **Earth-sized exoplanets** (Planets that orbit a star other than our sun).
- It will help in modelling Earth's climate and serves as a cautionary tale on how dramatically a planet's climate can change.

Previous Missions Sent on Venus			
US	Russia	Japan	Europe
▪ Mariner series 1962-1974, ▪ Pioneer Venus 1 and Pioneer Venus 2 in 1978, ▪ Magellan in 1989.	▪ Venera series of space crafts 1967-1983, ▪ Vegas 1 and 2 in 1985.	▪ Akatsuki in 2015.	▪ Venus Express in 2005.

What is Venus?

- It is named after the **Roman goddess of love and beauty**. It is the second planet from the Sun and sixth in the solar system in size and mass.
- It is the **second brightest natural object in the night sky after the Moon**.
- Unlike the other planets in our solar system, **Venus and Uranus spin clockwise on their axis**.
- It is the hottest planet in the solar system because of the high concentration of carbon dioxide which works to produce **an intense greenhouse effect**.
- A day on Venus is longer than a year. It takes Venus longer to rotate once on its axis than to complete one orbit of the Sun.
 - That's 243 Earth days to rotate once - the longest rotation of any planet in the Solar System - and only 224.7 Earth days to complete one orbit of the Sun.
- Venus has been called **Earth's twin because of the similarities in their masses**, sizes, and densities and their similar relative locations in the solar system.
 - No planet approaches closer to Earth than Venus; at its nearest it is the closest large body to Earth other than the Moon.
 - Venus has 90 times the atmospheric pressure of Earth.



UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q1. Which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched? (2014)

Spacecraft Purpose

1. Cassini-Huygens: Orbiting the Venus and transmitting data to the Earth
2. Messenger: Mapping and investigating the Mercury
3. Voyager 1 and 2: Exploring the outer solar system

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: (b)

Exp:

- Cassini-Huygens was sent to study Saturn and its moons. It was a joint collaboration between NASA and European Space Agency. It was launched in 1997 and entered Saturn's orbit in 2004. The mission ended in 2017. Hence, pair 1 is not correctly matched.
- Messenger, a spacecraft by NASA was sent to map and investigate Mercury. It was launched in 2004 and entered Mercury's orbit in 2011. The mission ended in 2015. Hence, pair 2 is correctly matched.
- Voyager 1 and 2 were launched by NASA in 1977 to explore the outer solar system. Both the spacecrafts are still operational. Hence, pair 3 is correctly matched.
- **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

Q2. Consider the following statements: (2016)

The Mangalyaan launched by ISRO

1. is also called the Mars Orbiter Mission
2. made India the second country to have a spacecraft orbit the Mars after USA
3. made India the only country to be successful in making its spacecraft orbit the Mars in its very first attempt

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (c)

Source: TH

Antimicrobial-Resistant Gonorrhea

For Prelims: Gonorrhea, Antimicrobial resistance

For Mains: Causes and Impacts of Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR)

Why in News?

Recently, a strand of [antimicrobial-resistant gonorrhea](#) outbreak has hit Kenya.

- Researchers have raised alarm, warning this **infection is asymptomatic in some cases** and can cause significant health challenges, including **permanent damage to their reproductive systems**.

What is Gonorrhea?

- **Gonorrhea** is a [sexually transmitted infection \(STI\)](#) caused by the bacterium **Neisseria gonorrhoeae**.
 - It can infect both men and women and can occur in the **genitals, rectum, and throat**.
 - If left untreated, gonorrhea can cause serious health problems, including infertility and an **increased risk of [Human Immunodeficiency Virus \(HIV\) infection](#)**.
- According to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), it is the **second-most common disease to be sexually transmitted** across the world after **chlamydia**.
- Gonorrhea is typically treated with [antibiotics](#), but the bacteria have become **increasingly resistant** to many of the drugs that were once effective.

What is Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR)?

- **About:**
 - **Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** is the ability of microorganisms (such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites) to resist the **effects of antimicrobial drugs** (such as antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals, and antiparasitics).
 - Also, Microorganisms that develop antimicrobial resistance are sometimes referred to as **“superbugs”**.
- **Causes:**
 - Poor infection control and **inadequate sanitation and hygiene**.
 - **Overuse of antibiotics** and repeated use of poor-quality drugs.
 - Genetic mutations of the bacteria.
 - Lack of investment in research and development of new antimicrobial drugs.
- **Impacts:**
 - AMR **increases the risk of infections** spreading and becoming harder to treat, leading to **prolonged illness, disability and death**.
 - It also **increases healthcare costs** and threatens the sustainability of healthcare systems.
- **Recognition in India:**
 - The [National Health Policy 2017](#) highlights the problem of **antimicrobial resistance and calls** for effective action to address it.
 - The **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW)** identified AMR as one of the top 10 priorities for the ministry’s collaborative work with the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.

- India has instituted **surveillance of the emergence of drug resistance** in disease causing microbes in programmes on [Tuberculosis](#), **Vector Borne diseases**, [Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome \(AIDS\)](#), etc.
- **Government Initiatives :**
 - **National Programme on AMR containment:** Launched in 2012. Under this programme, **AMR Surveillance Network** has been strengthened by establishing labs in State Medical College.
 - **National Action Plan on AMR:** It focuses on [One Health approach](#) and was launched in April 2017 with the aim of involving various stakeholder ministries/departments.
 - **AMR Surveillance and Research Network (AMRSN):** It was launched in 2013, to generate evidence and capture trends and patterns of drug resistant infections in the country.
 - **Antibiotic Stewardship Program:** [Indian Council of Medical Research \(ICMR\)](#) Has initiated Antibiotic Stewardship Program (AMSP) on a pilot project across India to control misuse and overuse of antibiotics in hospital wards and ICUs.

Conclusion

- **Controlling antimicrobial resistance is crucial for maintaining public health** and preventing the spread of drug-resistant infections. To achieve this, it is important to implement measures such as **limiting the use of antimicrobial drugs** to only reasonable cases, improving infection control, investing in research and development, and promoting international cooperation.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following are the reasons for the occurrence of multi-drug resistance in microbial pathogens in India? (2019)

1. Genetic predisposition of some people
2. Taking incorrect doses of antibiotics to cure diseases
3. Using antibiotics in livestock farming
4. Multiple chronic diseases in some people

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. Can overuse and free availability of antibiotics without Doctor's prescription, be contributors to the emergence of drug-resistant diseases in India? What are the available mechanisms for monitoring and control? Critically discuss the various issues involved. (2014)

[Source: DTE](#)

Startup India Innovation Week

For Prelims: National Startup Day, National Start up Awards 2022, SISFS, NIDHI, Ranking of States on Support to Startup Ecosystems (RSSSE).

For Mains: Growth Drivers of Startup Ecosystem in India, Problems Associated with Startup Ecosystem, Recent Government Initiatives to Promote Startup Culture.

Why in News?

Recently, on the occasion of [National Startup Day](#) (16th January), **Startup India Innovation week** culminated along with **National Start up Awards 2022**.

- National Startup Awards 2022 given by **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** acknowledges **startups and enablers** who have been instrumental in revolutionizing the development story of India.
- Startup India organized industry-focused webinars on the topic "**Championing the billion-dollar dream**".

What is the Status of Startups in India?

- **About:**
 - The **Start-up ecosystem in India** ranks **third** after that of the United States (US) and China.
 - According to the **India Venture Capital Report 2021** published by Bain and Company, the number of cumulative start-ups has grown at a **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 17% since 2012**.
- **Growth Drivers:**
 - **Large Domestic Market:** India has a large domestic market for **technology-based products** and services, providing a ready market for startups to sell their products and services.
 - **Government Support:** The government of India has been actively promoting entrepreneurship through initiatives such as ["Atma Nirbhar Bharat"](#) and ["Digital India."](#) providing support to young companies.
 - **Access to Technology:** Advancements in **technology** and [internet penetration](#) have enabled startups to scale up quickly, leading to the rise of several unicorns in the ecosystem.
 - **Rising Start-up Hubs:** The major startup hubs in India are **Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR**, providing a conducive environment for startups to grow and thrive.
 - **Bengaluru**, in particular, has been dubbed the "**Silicon Valley of India**" due to the large number of technology companies based in the city.
- **Problems Associated with Startup Ecosystem:**
 - **Stringent Regulatory Environment:** The **market laws and regulations are not always tailored to the needs of startups**, which can make it difficult for them to comply. This can be a significant **burden for early-stage companies**.
 - **Limited Infrastructure and Logistics:** The lack of proper infrastructure and logistics can be a major challenge for startups, especially those operating in the [e-commerce space](#).
 - The **inadequate transportation, warehousing and logistics** infrastructure can make it difficult for startups to reach customers and deliver their products on time.
 - **Lack of Mentorship and Guidance:** Startups often lack access to experienced **mentors and guidance**, which can make it difficult for them to navigate the **business landscape** and make informed decisions.
- **Recent Government Initiatives to Support Startup Ecosystem:**

- [Start-up India Seed Fund Scheme \(SISFS\)](#): This scheme provides **financial assistance to start-ups** to help them prove their concept, develop prototypes, test products, and enter the market.
- [National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations \(NIDHI\)](#): It is an **end-to-end plan for start-ups** to double the number of incubators and start-ups in the duration of five years.
- [Ranking of States on Support to Startup Ecosystems \(RSSSE\)](#): The Department for **Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has been conducting the States' Start-up Ranking Exercise since 2018.

Way Forward

- **Encouraging Innovation:** The government and private sector should encourage innovation by providing funding and support for research and development.
 - This can include setting up **R&D centres**, providing tax incentives for companies that invest in R&D, and **connecting startups with universities and research institutions**.
- **School-Entrepreneurship Corridor:** The [National Education Policy, 2020](#) promotes **student entrepreneurs by providing vocational education in partnership with industry** and thriving innovation at school level.
 - This can have a favourable impact on the start-up ecosystem in India, if **entrepreneurial skills are integrated with the education curriculum**.
- **Towards Social Acceptability of Start-ups:** By collaborating with various [unicorns](#) of India, **the government needs to work towards social acceptance** of entrepreneurial careers and channelize the youth in the right direction to choose a career with ease.
- **Vocal for Local, Local to Global:** Indian start-ups have the potential to not only look at Indian traditional problems, but also offer customised solutions for markets abroad.
 - **Exclusive Startup Zones** can be initiated at **state levels linked with Atma Nirbhar Bharat Initiative** making India an entrepreneurship and export hub.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q1. What does venture capital mean? (2014)

- (a) A short-term capital provided to industries
- (b) A long-term start-up capital provided to new entrepreneurs
- (c) Funds provided to industries at times of incurring losses
- (d) Funds provided for replacement and renovation of industries

Ans: (b)

[Source: PIB](#)

PARAKH

Why in News?

Recently, the [National Council for Education Research and Training \(NCERT\)](#) has notified India's first national assessment regulator, **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)**, which aims to set up assessment guidelines for all boards.

What is PARAKH?

▪ About:

- PARAKH has been launched as part of the implementation of the [National Education Policy \(NEP\)-2020](#) that envisaged a standard-setting body to advise school boards regarding new assessment patterns and latest research, and promote collaborations between them.
- It will act as a **constituent unit of the NCERT**.
- It will also be tasked with **holding periodic learning outcome tests like the National Achievement Survey (NAS)** and State Achievement Surveys.
- It will work on **three major assessment areas**: large-scale assessments, school-based assessment, and examination reforms.

▪ Objective:

- **Uniform Norms & Guidelines:** Setting norms, standards and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation for all recognized school boards of India.
- **Enhance Assessment Pattern:** It will encourage and help school boards to shift their assessment patterns towards meeting the skill requirements of the 21st century.
- **Reduce Disparity in Evaluation:** It will bring uniformity across the state and central boards which currently follow different standards of evaluation, leading to wide disparities in scores.
- **Benchmark Assessment:** The benchmark assessment framework will seek to put an end to the emphasis on rote learning, as envisaged by the [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#).

▪ Significance:

- **Removes Disparity in College Admission:**
 - It will help tackle the problem of students of some state boards being at a disadvantage during college admissions as compared to their peers in CBSE schools.
- **Innovative Evaluation:**
 - It will develop and implement the technical standards for the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of tests at all levels of school education.
- **Holistic Approach:**
 - PARAKH further aims to facilitate an inclusive, participatory and holistic approach to education, which takes into consideration field experiences, empirical research, stakeholder feedback, as well as lessons learned from best practices.
- **Progressive Shift:**
 - It is a progressive shift towards a more scientific approach to education.
 - The prescribed structure will help to cater to the ability of the child – stages of cognitive development as well as social and physical awareness.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Education is not an injunction, it is an effective and pervasive tool for all-round development of an individual and social transformation". Examine the New Education Policy, 2020 (NEP, 2020) in light of the above statement. **(2020)**

[Source: HT](#)

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

SPIC MACAY

Recently, SPIC MACAY organised its very popular 'Music in the Park' series under the name "Shruti Amrut" in collaboration with the [Ministry of Culture](#) and the New Delhi Municipal Council. In this series, **the first event of 2023 was held in New Delhi.**

SPIC MACAY: It is a **movement started in 1977** and **has chapters in over 850 towns across the world.** The Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music And Culture Amongst Youth **is a voluntary youth movement that promotes the tangible & intangible aspects of Indian & world heritage** by organising programs and workshops of Indian Classical, Folk Music and dance, **Yoga**, meditation, crafts, and other aspects of Indian culture.

Read More: [Hindustani Music](#)

VARUNA



Recently, **the 21st edition of the bilateral naval exercise between India and France began** on the western seaboard. While the bilateral exercise between the two navies **was initiated in 1993, it was adopted as 'VARUNA' in 2001** and has become a **hallmark of the India - France strategic bilateral relationship.** The exercise will be conducted over five days from January 16-20, 2023.

Other Indo-French Joint Exercises: [Exercise Shakti](#) (Army), [Exercise Garuda](#) (Air Force)

Read More: [India - France strategic Bilateral Relationship](#)

Thiruvalluvar Day

Union Home and Cooperation Minister wished people on the **occasion of Thiruvalluvar Day.** In the present time, the **day is usually observed either on the 15th or 16th January in Tamil Nadu and is a part of Pongal celebrations.**

Thiruvalluvar, also called Valluvar, **was a Tamil poet-saint.** The period when he lived is debated, as is his religious identity. He is **thought to be linked to Jainism.** However, Hindus have **also claimed that Thiruvalluvar belonged to Hinduism.** He had **contributed the Tirukkural or 'Kural' to the Sangam literature.**

Tirukkural is **comprised of 133 sections of 10 couplets each is divided into three books:**

- Aram (virtue),
- Porul (government and society), and
- Kamam (love).

The Tirukkural has been **compared to the great books of the world's major religions.**

Read More: [Thiruvalluvar Day](#)

The Population of Saltwater Crocodiles

According to the **annual reptile census**, the population of saltwater crocodiles in the water bodies of **Bhitarkanika National Park and its nearby areas in Odisha's Kendrapara district has marginally increased.** In 2023, forest officials **counted 1,793 crocodiles.** In 2022 officials **sighted 1,784 reptiles.**

Protection Status of Saltwater Crocodiles:

- [IUCN List of Threatened Species](#): Least Concern
- [CITES: Appendix I](#) (except the populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, which are included in Appendix II).
- [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I](#)

In 2006, the **Guinness Book of World Records recorded a 23-foot long salt-water crocodile in Bhitarkanika as the largest crocodile in the world.** The breeding and [rearing programme](#) for three species of crocodilians — saltwater crocodile, mugger and gharial — had been **started in 1975 in 34 places in India and Nepal.** However, the **saltwater crocodile conservation programme in Bhitarkanika is the most successful one.**

Read More: [World Crocodile Day](#), [Bhitarkanika National Park](#)

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