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INDIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION

Context

- A report by McKinsey & Company highlights that India is on the **verge of a significant demographic shift**. By the 2050s, India is projected to have a support ratio comparable to advanced economies, indicating rapid ageing of its population.

Major Highlights

- Impact on Economic Growth:** India's **demographic dividend** contributed **0.7 percentage points** annually to GDP per capita growth from 1997 to 2023.
 - By 2050, this contribution is expected to decline to just **0.2 percentage points** per year, reflecting the diminishing advantage of a young population.
- Rising Dependency Ratio:** In 1997, India had **14 working-age people** (15-64 years) for every senior aged 65 or older.
 - By 2050, this will drop to **4.6 workers per senior**, and by 2100, to **1.9 workers per senior**, similar to Japan today.
- Female Labor Force Participation:** Female labor force participation in the 20-49 age group is just **29%** in India, compared to **50-70% in other emerging economies** and **74% in high-income countries**.
 - Increasing female workforce participation is a key recommendation to mitigate economic consequences.
- Fertility Rate and Population Trends:** India's fertility rate is **1.98 children per woman**, below the replacement rate of **2.1**.
 - According to UN projections, India's population will peak at **1.7 billion in 2061** before declining.
 - By the end of the century, India will have more than twice the population of China.
- Recommendation:** One way India can delay the negative economic consequences of demographic shift is by increasing female labor force participation.

Data on India's Ageing Population

- As per the India Ageing Report 2023**, the share of population over the age of 60 years is projected to **increase from 10.5% in 2022 to 20.8% in 2050**.
 - By the end of the century, the elderly will constitute over **36% of the total population of the country**.

- 80+Years Population:** The population of people aged 80+ years will grow at a rate of around **279% between 2022 and 2050**, with a predominance of widowed and highly dependent very old women.

India's Demographic Dividend

- Demographic Dividend:** It refers to the **economic growth potential** that **results from shifts in a population's age structure**, mainly when the share of the **working-age population (15 to 64 years old)** is larger than the **non-working-age population (14 or younger and 65 or older)**.
 - The change in age structure is typically brought on by a **decline in fertility and mortality rates**.
- India's Demographic Dividend:** India, with its large and young population, is currently experiencing a demographic dividend.
 - India is expected to add another 183 million people to the working-age group between 2020 and 2050.
 - The dividend would peak around 2041 (when the working age population would be 59 per cent of India's population) and is expected to last until 2055.

Challenges India Face

- Unemployment:** For the demographic dividend to work, the country must provide **productive employment to the 7-8 million youths** that join the labourforce every year.
 - Youth unemployment was 5.7% in 2000 and jumped to 17.5% in 2019, showing an increase of more than 300 per cent.
 - In 2022, the unemployment rate among graduates was around 29%, while for those who cannot read and write, it was just 3.4%.
- Education and Skill Gap:** Over two-fifths of the country's youths are educated below the secondary level and just 4% have access to vocational training.
- Gender Inequality:** Women's participation in the workforce remains relatively low, limiting the overall potential of the economy.

Measures

- Skill Development:** Programs like the Skill India Mission aim to provide training and certification to millions of youth, enhancing their employability in various sectors.
- Education Reforms:** Efforts to improve primary and secondary education quality, by introducing new Education Policy 2020.

- **Make in India & Atmanirbhar Bharat:** These initiatives focus on boosting domestic manufacturing, creating jobs, and enhancing industrial capacity to absorb the growing workforce.
- **Start-up Ecosystem:** The Startup India campaign encourages entrepreneurship, providing support to young innovators and creating new employment opportunities.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** Expanding internet access and digital literacy through programs like Digital India to create opportunities for youth in the technology and digital sectors.
- **Healthcare Improvements:** Programs like Ayushman Bharat aim to improve healthcare access and outcomes.

Way Ahead

- **Developed countries** have long crossed this zone that ensured their economic growth.
 - ♦ Currently, they are in the “**population ageing**” phase and increasingly depend on migrants.
- **The developing and poor countries**, including India, account for more than **90%** of the world's young population.
- But if they cannot generate employment, it is not **just a loss of this dividend but also a larger issue of economic stagnancy**.
- Besides, such a large population of young people without productive vocations or engagements **will trigger social unrest**.

Source: ET

SC ON CONJUGAL RIGHTS

In News

- The Supreme Court has clarified that proceedings related to restitution of **conjugal rights (Section 9, Hindu Marriage Act)** and **maintenance (Section 125, CrPC)** are independent and not interlinked.
 - ♦ A husband is obligated to pay maintenance to his wife even if she refuses to comply with a court's decree for restitution of conjugal rights.

What are Conjugal Rights?

- Conjugal rights are legal rights that arise from marriage, entitling spouses to live together and enjoy the companionship and society of each other.
- These rights are recognized and enforced by both personal laws and criminal law provisions related to maintenance and alimony.

Restitution of Conjugal Rights

- A legal remedy allowing an aggrieved spouse to seek a court decree directing the other spouse to resume cohabitation.
- The objective is to prevent the breakdown of marriages by encouraging reconciliation.

Legal Recognition of Conjugal Rights

- Conjugal rights are codified in personal laws that govern marriage and family relations:
 - ♦ **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955:** Section 9 allows a spouse to petition the court for restitution of conjugal rights if the other spouse withdraws from their society without reasonable excuse.
 - ♦ **Muslim Personal Law:** Recognizes conjugal rights and allows petitions for restitution.
 - ♦ **Christian Law (Divorce Act, 1869):** Provides similar provisions for Christian marriages.
- **Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973:** Requires payment of maintenance to a spouse who is unable to support themselves, ensuring financial security even when conjugal rights are not being fulfilled.

Judicial Interpretations

- **T. Sareetha v. T. Venkata Subbaiah (1983):** The Andhra Pradesh High Court struck down Section 9 of the Hindu Marriage Act, terming it unconstitutional and violative of individual freedom.
- **Saroj Rani v. Sudarshan Kumar Chadha (1984):** The Supreme Court overturned the Andhra Pradesh HC decision, holding that the provision serves a social purpose by helping prevent marital discord.

Criticism and Challenges

- **Violation of Privacy:** Critics argue that compelling cohabitation infringes upon the right to privacy and bodily autonomy.
- **Potential for Misuse:** The provision may be used to coerce estranged spouses, particularly women, into returning to potentially abusive relationships.
- **Patriarchal Roots:** Some view it as a remnant of patriarchal norms that treat spouses (especially women) as the property of their partners.

Source: TH

NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL KNOWLEDGE-BASED LAND SURVEY OF URBAN HABITATIONS (NAKSHA)

Context

- Recently, the Government launched a pilot project, the **National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey of Urban Habitations (NAKSHA)**.

About

- **Announced in 2024-25 Budget.**
- **Aim:** To standardise record-keeping, simplify processes and bring transparency in land transactions.
- **Budget:** Rs 5,000 crore for the first phase.
- **Features:**
 - ♦ Creating updated digitised land records in 150 cities across the country in the next year.
 - ♦ To link each land parcel with details about the owner of the land and the type of development on it.
 - ♦ Cover the entire urban area in the country within a period of 5 years.
- **Background:** As per the 2023-24 Economic Survey, nearly 40% of India's population is expected to be living in urban areas by 2030.
 - ♦ Streamlining land and property record systems is essential for the planned development of cities.
 - ♦ Only a few states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat have a system of urban land record management in place.
 - ♦ Most cities are having outdated land records due to the involvement of multiple agencies.
- **Other Initiatives:** There has been the successful implementation of two crucial Central government schemes — the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) and the Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA) scheme.
 - ♦ These schemes aimed to modernise land records in rural areas for agricultural land parcels and residential areas.

Need for Digitization of Land Records

- It will **transform land management** by addressing **traditional challenges** like disputes, fraud, and inefficient manual processes.
- **Ownership information** will be **easily accessible** online, enhancing transparency and reducing illegal encroachments.
- It **simplifies dispute resolution**, easing court burdens, and empowering marginalized communities by improving access to land rights.
- Integration with geospatial mapping **enhances land management**, enabling accurate surveys and planning.
- **During land acquisitions or disasters**, digital records ensure fair and timely **compensation**.

Achievements under DILRMP

- It was restructured as a **Central Sector Scheme in 2016 to establish a modern and transparent land records management system.**
- **Achievements:**
 - ♦ **Around 95%** of land records have been computerized.
 - ♦ Digitization of cadastral maps has reached 68.02% at national level.
 - ♦ 87% of Sub-Registrar Offices (SROs) have been integrated with land records.

Conclusion

- India is witnessing a **transformative shift in land governance**, focusing on enhancing transparency and accessibility of land information.
- This change is especially important for **marginalized communities**, as it empowers them with secure and accessible proof of ownership.
- As land records become clearer and more accessible, they pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

Source: TP

INDIA, WTO, AND THE FARMERS' CONCERNS**Context**

- Farmers protesting at the Punjab and Haryana borders have demanded India's withdrawal from the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** and suspension of all **free trade agreements under the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA)**, citing adverse impacts on Indian agriculture.

About the World Trade Organization (WTO)

- **What is WTO?**
 - ♦ WTO governs global trade rules and is the successor to the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** established after WWII.
 - ♦ **Established:** 1994 through the Marrakesh Agreement, with 123 founding countries.
 - ♦ **India's Membership:** Since **January 1, 1995**.
- **Current Membership:**
 - ♦ **164 members** (including the EU) and **23 observer governments** (e.g., Iraq, Iran, Bhutan, and Libya).
- **Significance of WTO:**
 - ♦ Facilitates **global trade** through agreements.
 - ♦ Mediates **trade disputes**.

- ♦ Supports **developing countries** in integrating with global trade.

Agreement on Agriculture (AoA)

- **Objective:**
 - ♦ Reform agricultural trade for a **fair, market-oriented system**.
 - ♦ Enhance stability and predictability for **importing and exporting nations**.
- **Scope:**
 - ♦ Covers basic agricultural products, processed products, wines, spirits, tobacco, and fibers like cotton.
- **Pillars of AoA:**
 - ♦ **Market Access:** Removal of trade restrictions like tariffs.
 - ♦ **Domestic Support:** Subsidies that distort trade, categorized into **Amber Box**, **Blue Box**, and **Green Box**.
 - ♦ **Export Competition:** Regulation of export subsidies.
- **WTO Subsidy Categories:**
 - ♦ **Amber Box:** Trade-distorting subsidies, subject to reduction.
 - ♦ **Blue Box:** Minimally trade-distorting subsidies tied to production limits.
 - ♦ **Green Box:** Non-trade-distorting subsidies permitted without limits.
 - ♦ **De Minimis Clause:** Developing countries can maintain **Amber Box subsidies** up to **10%** of agricultural output value.

Concerns Raised by Indian Farmers

- **Impact on Indian Agriculture:** AoA disproportionately favors developed nations, undermining the competitiveness of small-scale Indian farmers.
- **Subsidy Reduction and Rising Input Costs:** WTO caps India's subsidies at 10% of agricultural output, restricting support for farmers amid rising costs for inputs like fertilizers and seeds.
- **Dumping of Cheap Imports:** Developed countries' subsidized agricultural exports flood Indian markets, driving down domestic prices and hurting local farmers.
- **Food Security Concerns:** AoA rules limit subsidies critical for ensuring food self-sufficiency, risking greater dependency on imports.
- **Role of Minimum Support Prices (MSP):** WTO views MSP-linked subsidies as **trade-distorting**,

posing a potential challenge to India's MSP system for farmer welfare and food security.

Other Key Challenges with WTO

- **Dispute Settlement Mechanism:** India frequently faces trade disputes as both complainant and respondent.
- **Unilateral Protectionist Measures:** Developed countries often resort to such measures, undermining multilateral agreements.
- **Definition of 'Developing Country':** WTO includes major economies like India and China as developing countries, creating additional pressures.
- **Subsidies and Fisheries:** WTO pressure to reduce subsidies in agriculture and fisheries conflicts with India's focus on self-reliance.
- **Peace Clause:** Protected subsidy programs started before 2013 but are insufficient for India's evolving needs.

India's Vision for WTO Reform

- **Reviving Multilateralism:**
 - ♦ Ensuring that all member countries, not just dominant trading blocs, have a voice in decision-making.
- **Addressing New Trade Issues:**
 - ♦ Developing frameworks for **digital trade**, **data governance**, and **sustainability**.
- **Strengthening Dispute Settlement Mechanism:**
 - ♦ Advocating for a functional **Appellate Body** to ensure fair and predictable trade resolutions.
- **Agriculture-Specific Reforms:**
 - ♦ Special Safeguard Mechanisms.
 - ♦ Public stockholding for food security.
 - ♦ Fair treatment of subsidies.

Conclusion

- India's relationship with the WTO reflects a delicate balance between protecting its developmental priorities and participating in global trade. While WTO agreements like AoA present significant challenges, India's proactive stance and call for equitable reforms demonstrate its commitment to shaping a more inclusive global trade framework.
- Addressing farmers' concerns, safeguarding food security, and ensuring fair trade practices will be pivotal as India continues to champion its interests in the global arena.

Source: IE

GREAT ANNIVERSARIES OF PEACE INITIATIVES

Context

- The year **2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the world's first nuclear weapon test**, highlighting the significance of historical peace initiatives and their enduring influence on global disarmament and cooperation.

Dangers of nuclear weapons

- The **catastrophic consequences** of **nuclear weapons** were first witnessed during the bombings of **Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945**.
 - It resulted in over **200,000 deaths** and long-term health issues due to radiation exposure.
- The arms race during the Cold War highlighted how nuclear proliferation can escalate global conflicts, with the threat of **mutually assured destruction (MAD)** preventing open warfare but perpetuating fear.
- A nuclear war could trigger a **"nuclear winter,"** where soot and debris block sunlight, disrupting global agriculture and threatening mass starvation.
- Human error**, technical malfunctions, or cyberattacks could trigger unintended nuclear detonations.
- Historical incidents, such as the **Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)**, demonstrate how close humanity has come to catastrophic outcomes due to misunderstandings and miscalculations.

Nuclear Powers in the World

- There are **nine countries** recognized as possessing nuclear weapons.
- These countries are often referred to as **"nuclear-armed states"** or **"nuclear powers."**
- United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel.

What is Nuclear Disarmament?

- Disarmament refers to the **act of eliminating or abolishing weapons** (particularly offensive arms) either unilaterally or reciprocally.
- It may refer either to **reducing the number of arms**, or to **eliminating entire categories of weapons**.

The Russell-Einstein Manifesto

- A significant milestone in global peace advocacy, the Russell-Einstein Manifesto was issued in **1955**.

- Led by philosopher **Bertrand Russell** and physicist **Albert Einstein**, the manifesto highlighted the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons.
- The document urged world leaders to seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts and emphasized the moral responsibility of the scientific community in preventing nuclear catastrophe.

Avadi Resolution

- In **1955**, the **Indian National Congress** passed the Avadi Resolution, emphasizing the urgent need for nuclear disarmament.
- India, under the leadership of **Jawaharlal Nehru**, called for the **United Nations Disarmament Commission** to take up the matter, urging a global consensus for total prohibition of nuclear weapons.

India's Role in Promoting Peace and Disarmament

- The Avadi Resolution was echoed in the **Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan for a Nuclear Weapons Free and Non-Violent World Order (1988)**, which proposed a step-by-step approach towards global disarmament.
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), 1968:** India opposed it, citing its unequal nature as it allowed existing nuclear powers to retain their arsenals while restricting others from acquiring them.
- Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), 1996:** India refused to sign, arguing that it was discriminatory as it didn't ensure disarmament for nuclear-armed states.
- India adopted a **No First Use (NFU) policy in 1998** after its nuclear tests.

Way Ahead

- Strengthening Multilateralism:** India's advocacy for **UN reforms** could help make disarmament efforts more effective and equitable.
- AI and Cybersecurity:** India should lead global discussions on preventing the use of **cyber technology** for accessing or controlling nuclear weapons.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

JALLIKATTU FESTIVAL

In News

- Six people were killed during Jallikattu and other bull-related sports such as Eruthattam and Manjuvirattu in Tamil Nadu.

About Jallikattu Festival

- **Brief:** Jallikattu is a traditional bull-taming sport held during the Tamil harvest festival of Pongal.
 - ♦ It is most prominent in districts like Madurai, Pudukottai, Tiruchirapalli, and Thanjavur.
- **Name and Meaning:** The term "Jallikattu" combines two Tamil words:
 - ♦ Jalli: Refers to silver or gold coins.
 - ♦ Kattu: Means tied.
 - ♦ Coins are tied to the bull's horn, and participants who tame the bull win the prize.
- **Historical Origins:** The sport dates back nearly 2000 years, with evidence from 400-100 BCE.
 - ♦ It was originally played by the Ayars, an ethnic group in South India.
- **Sport Details:** Participants try to hold onto the bull's hump or run alongside to stop it.
 - ♦ Bulls used for Jallikattu include the Pulikulam or Kangayam breeds, which are also valued for breeding.
 - ♦ Successful bulls are highly prized in the market.
- **Judiciary View:** In 2023, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court upheld Jallikattu as a part of the cultural heritage and tradition of Tamil Nadu, acknowledging its historical and cultural importance.

Source: TH

MUSI RIVER**In News**

- The **Musi River Historic Buildings** in Hyderabad, Telangana, have been included in the prestigious **2025 World Monuments Watch** by the **World Monuments Fund (WMF)**.

About

- **2025 World Monuments Watch:** It is a biennial program by the **World Monuments Fund (WMF) (New York based non-profit organization)** that seeks to raise awareness and mobilize action for the preservation of cultural heritage under threat due to challenges like climate change, urbanization, and natural disasters.
- **Musi River:** The River originates in the Ananthagiri Hills in Rangareddy district, Telangana. It is one of the major tributaries of the Krishna River.
 - ♦ The river flows into the Osmansagar and Himayatsagar reservoirs, which were constructed to control flooding and serve as drinking water sources for Hyderabad.

Source: TH

HYDROCLIMATE WHIPLASH**In News**

- The **devastating wildfires in Los Angeles** were driven by rare meteorological conditions known as '**hydroclimate whiplash**.'

Hydroclimate Whiplash and Global Climatic Patterns

- **Disruption of Weather Cycles:** Hydroclimate whiplash leads to erratic precipitation patterns, causing unseasonal and unpredictable weather.
 - ♦ Wet periods promote excessive vegetation growth. Sudden droughts dry out the vegetation, creating fuel for wildfires.
- **Climate Amplification:** Warmer global temperatures enhance evaporation rates, intensifying both precipitation and aridity phases.

Factors Behind Hydroclimate Whiplash

- Hydroclimate whiplash is driven by both natural and human-induced factors.
 - ♦ Variations in atmospheric circulation, such as changes in jet streams and ocean currents like ENSO, and topography that traps moisture can lead to extreme precipitation and dry spells.
 - ♦ Human activities, including global warming from greenhouse gas emissions and land-use changes like urbanization and deforestation, exacerbate these fluctuations by disrupting local hydrological cycles.

Source: DTE

EIGHTH PAY COMMISSION**In News**

- The Union government has approved the establishment of the **Eighth Pay Commission**.

About the Pay Commission

- **Purpose:** The Pay Commission determines the salary, compensation, and allowances for central government employees and pensioners.
 - ♦ Proposing formulas for dearness allowance (DA) and dearness relief (DR) adjustments to mitigate inflation's impact.
 - ♦ Recommendation of Pay commission is **non binding** in nature.
- **Timeline:** Pay Commissions are generally constituted every 10 years. The **8th Pay Commission** is being set up well before the term of the 7th Pay Commission ends in 2025, allowing sufficient time for review and implementation.

- ♦ The 7th pay commission headed by **Justice A.K. Mathur** was implemented in 2016 and introduced Pay Matrix; Min: Rs 18,000/month, Max: Rs 2,50,000/month.
- **Composition:** Usually headed by a retired Supreme Court judge.

Source: TH

FAST TRACK IMMIGRATION – TRUSTED TRAVELLER PROGRAMME (FTI-TTP)

Context

- The Union Home Minister will inaugurate the Fast Track Immigration – Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP).

About

- **First Launched:** At the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport in New Delhi in 2024.
- **Nodal Agency:** The Bureau of Immigration under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Features:**
 - ♦ Registered travellers will be able to scan their boarding pass and passport at airport e-gates.
- After biometric authentication, the gates will automatically open, granting immigration clearance.
 - ♦ It will be implemented in **two phases**. The first will cover Indian citizens and OCI cardholders and in the second phase, foreign travellers will be covered.
 - ♦ In total, it will be implemented at **21 major airports in the country**.
 - ♦ **In the first phase**, this facility is being introduced at **seven major airports**—Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi, and Ahmedabad.

Source: IE

NEW DEFINITION FOR OBESITY

Context

- A new definition and **method for diagnosing obesity** has been proposed by a commission of the medical journal The Lancet.
 - ♦ Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology Commission is a group of **58 leading experts from various medical specialities and countries**.

About New Definition

- It replaces the **overweight category with a category** called **Preclinical Obesity**.
 - ♦ It is where a person has excess body fat but **no associated ongoing illness**.
 - ♦ Preclinical obesity is defined as a **physical attribute but not an illness**.
 - ♦ For Preclinical Obesity the focus has to be on **risk reduction and prevention of progression to clinical obesity**.
- **Diagnosis:** It would require **confirming the levels of excess fat and clinical assessments of organ function** instead of just meeting a BMI cut-off.
- **Clinical obesity:** It has been defined as a **chronic illness** that results in alteration in organ functions regardless of other conditions a person might have.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

- It is a person's **weight in kilograms (or pounds) divided by the square of height in meters (or feet)**.
- **A high BMI can indicate high body fatness.**
 - ♦ BMI screens for **weight categories** that may lead to health problems, but it **does not diagnose the body fatness or health** of an individual.
- It rose to prominence for clinicians in the **1990s** following the World Health Organisation's adoption of the metric as the official screening index for obesity.
 - ♦ For most adults, an ideal BMI is in the **18.5 to 24.9 range**.

Source: IE

DATA EMBASSIES

In News

- India is in discussions with multiple nations to establish **data embassies**, creating a new dimension in **international relations and data sovereignty**.

What are Data Embassies?

- Data embassies are secure facilities where countries can **store sovereign data** in another nation's territory while maintaining **complete control over it**. They provide:
 - ♦ **Backup and Contingency Storage:** Ensuring data availability during natural disasters or geopolitical crises.

- ♦ **Independence in Operations:** Each data embassy independently handles data management, and access controls, while the host country ensures data security.
- ♦ **Regulatory Flexibility:** Nations can store data abroad without being subject to local data regulations.
- India plans to set up special strategic zones to house these embassies, hosting data centers dedicated to **storing sovereign data for multiple nations**.
- ♦ Andhra Pradesh, with its advanced data center infrastructure, is expected to host the first data embassy.

Do you Know?

- Estonia was the first country to establish a data embassy in Luxembourg after a 2007 cyberattack.

Source: LM

QS WORLD FUTURE SKILLS INDEX 2025

Context

- India's position as a leading job market for in-demand future skills, including AI, digital, and green technologies, was highlighted in the inaugural QS World Future Skills Index.

About

- **The inaugural Future Skills Index**, released by London-based **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**, evaluates countries on their readiness to meet evolving job market demands.
- **The index assesses four main areas:** skills fit, academic readiness, future of work, and economic transformation.
- India's outstanding GDP growth, youthful population, and burgeoning start-up culture position the country as a global leader in future-ready skills.

India's performance in Skill Index

Indicator	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future of Work	Economic Transformation	Overall
Score	59.1	89.9	99.1	58.3	76.6
Global Position	37th	26th	2nd	40th	25th

Opportunities for Improvement

- **Enhancing Industry Collaboration:** Bridging the gap between higher education institutions and industry needs.

- **Equipping Graduates with In-Demand Skills:** Expanding focus on digital, and AI to align with employer demands.
- **Future-Oriented Innovation and Sustainability:** India scores low on this metric, indicating a need to prioritize sustainable practices and forward-looking solutions.

Source: AIR

INTEREST EQUALISATION SCHEME

Context

- The commerce Ministry in India is expected to seek an extension of the interest equalisation scheme for five more years in the upcoming Budget.

About

- **The Interest Equalisation Scheme (IES)** was introduced in **2015** to provide financial support to exporters through **subsidised export credit**.
- **Initially valid for five years**, the scheme has since been extended multiple times, including a one-year extension during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Coverage:** Initially, it covered non-MSME exporters of about 410 identified tariff lines and all exporters from the MSME sector.
- **Subsidy Rate:** The scheme provides;
 - ♦ **2%** interest equalisation benefit for merchant and manufacturer exporters of 410 identified tariff lines.
 - ♦ **3%** interest equalisation benefit for all MSME manufacturer exporters.
- **Mechanism:** Export credit is provided by banks at a subsidised interest rate. The government compensates banks for the reduced interest charged to beneficiaries.

Source: BL

SPACEX LAUNCHES TWO LUNAR LANDERS TOWARD MOON

Context

- SpaceX has launched two private lunar landers, Blue Ghost by Firefly Aerospace and Resilience by Japan's ispace, aboard a Falcon 9 rocket from NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

About Blue Ghost

- **Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lander** is part of NASA's Commercial **Lunar Payload Services (CLPS)** program.

- This initiative supports NASA's Artemis program, which aims to return humans to the Moon. Blue Ghost will carry 10 scientific payloads, including:
 - ♦ **A vacuum device** for lunar soil collection.
 - ♦ A drill to measure subsurface temperatures.
 - ♦ A device to prevent lunar dust from damaging equipment.

About Resilience

- The second payload, Resilience, is developed by **Japan's ispace**.
- **Resilience will carry six scientific payloads** and a small rover capable of collecting lunar soil samples.
- It targets a landing at **Mare Frigoris**, further north on the Moon's near side.

Source: TH

SPACE DOCKING TECHNOLOGY

Context

- ISRO launched the **PSLV-C60 mission**, carrying a pair of satellites for the **Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX)** to demonstrate orbital rendezvous and docking.

Space Docking Technology

- Docking technology allows the assembly of larger space modules by **launching components separately and assembling them in orbit**.
- It is crucial for interplanetary missions where the spacecraft may exceed the payload capacity of current launch vehicles.

Significance

- The **Chandrayaan-4 lunar sample return mission** exemplifies the potential application of docking capabilities for advanced exploration missions.
- ISRO plans to launch the '**Bharatiya Antariksh Station**' (**BAS**) later this decade, which would benefit significantly from advancements in docking technology.

Source: TH

SVAMITVA SCHEME

Context

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, will preside over the e-Distribution of SVAMITVA Property Cards on 18th January 2025.

SVAMITVA Scheme

- The SVAMITVA Scheme (**Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas**) was launched on 24th April, 2020 (National Panchayati Raj Day).
- It is a Central Sector Scheme under the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**.
- **The scheme aims** to provide legal ownership records to rural property owners by issuing Property Cards, thereby enhancing rural governance and financial inclusion.

Implementation of the scheme

- **Accurate Land Demarcation:** The scheme ensures precise demarcation of land parcels in rural areas using **drone technology and Geographic Information System (GIS) tools**, reducing disputes over land boundaries.
- **Property Ownership Rights:** It provides **Record of Rights (RoR)** through SVAMITVA Property Cards, granting legal recognition to property owners in inhabited rural areas (Abadi).

Source: PIB

NEW GLENN ROCKET

In News

- **Blue Origin** successfully launched its **New Glenn rocket** on its inaugural mission (NG-1).
 - ♦ Blue Origin is a private space exploration company founded by **Jeff Bezos in 2000**.

About NG-1 Mission

- The mission would successfully deploy the "**Blue Ring Pathfinder**" test satellite into its intended orbit.
 - ♦ Also, it will demonstrate the reusability of the rocket's booster stage by landing it on a drone ship in the Atlantic Ocean. Reusability is crucial for reducing launch costs and making space exploration more affordable and sustainable.
- It would strengthen Blue Origin's position against competitors like SpaceX and ULA in the commercial spaceflight sector.

Source: IE

