

20<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

## 1. India's MSP Programme

### GS 3 (Agriculture)

- **Why in News:** The Union Cabinet recently announced MSP for 14 Kharif season crops. This includes important crops like **paddy, ragi, bajra, jowar, maize, and cotton.**
- **What is MSP?**
  - MSP stands for Minimum Support Price. It is the price at which the government buys crops from farmers, ensuring them a stable income and protecting them from market fluctuations.
  - MSP was introduced in 1965 to safeguard farmers' interests.
  - **Role of CACP:** The **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** recommends MSP based on factors like production costs, demand-supply dynamics, and market prices.
  - **Government Decision:** The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs**, chaired by the Prime Minister, makes the final decision on MSP after considering CACP's recommendations.
  - **Purpose of MSP**
    - ◆ **Income Security:** MSP guarantees farmers a minimum price for their produce, ensuring stable income.
    - ◆ **Price Stability:** It stabilizes prices in the market by setting a floor price below which market prices are not allowed to fall.
- **Issues and challenges pertaining to MSP**
  - While it remains crucial for food security and supports small farmers, debates persist over its impact on crop choices, market distortions, and its compatibility with WTO regulations.
    - ◆ **Market Distortions:** MSP influences farmers' crop choices and can lead to overproduction of certain crops, affecting market dynamics and agricultural sustainability.
    - ◆ **Government Expenditure:** Significant expenditure, exceeding Rs 1.7 trillion for paddy and wheat alone in recent years, raises concerns about fiscal sustainability and market distortions.
    - ◆ **WTO Dispute:** India's MSP system has faced criticism at the WTO for potential market distortion. Despite this, it remains integral to addressing farmer welfare, especially in light of farmer suicides and agricultural crises exacerbated by climate change
  - There is a need for urgent reform to make MSP more effective and sustainable. This includes revisiting subsidy structures, enhancing productivity, and possibly limiting MSP to prevent market distortions.
- **About CACP**
  - **Established in:** 1965
  - Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) is an attached office of the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India**
  - CACP recommends MSPs of 23 commodities, which comprise
    - ◆ **7 cereals** (paddy, wheat, maize, sorghum, pearl millet, barley and ragi)
    - ◆ **5 pulses** (gram, tur, moong, urad, lentil)
    - ◆ **7 oilseeds** (groundnut, rapeseed-mustard, soyabean, seasmum, sunflower, safflower, nigerseed)
    - ◆ **4 commercial crops** (copra, sugarcane, cotton and raw jute)
  - **Types of Crops** India's agriculture is broadly divided into two seasons: Kharif and Rabi.
  - **Kharif Crops:** These are sown in the monsoon season (June to September) and harvested in autumn. Examples include paddy, ragi, bajra, jowar, maize, and cotton.
  - **Rabi Crops:** These are sown in winter (October to March) and harvested in spring. Examples include wheat, barley, gram, and mustard.

## Union Cabinet gives go-ahead to increase MSP of 14 kharif crops

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday gave its nod to raise the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy by 5.35% to ₹2,300 a quintal for the 2024-25 kharif marketing season, a decision that comes ahead of the Assembly elections in Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi.

In the first major decision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term in office, the Cabinet approved MSP hike for all 14 kharif season crops, in alignment with the government's "clear policy" of keeping MSPs at least 1.5 times above the cost of production as calculated by the government, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. However, only four of these crops have MSPs that will provide farmers with a margin of more than 50% above production costs.

They are bajra (77%), followed by arhar dal (59%), maize (54%), and black gram (52%).

Paddy, the season's key crop, will see an MSP increase of ₹117 per quintal, which will allow farmers a margin of 50%. The hike comes despite the government holding a record stockpile of rice, over four times the required buffer, but is significant ahead of the upcoming elections in key States. Kharif sowing usually begins in June with the onset of the southwest monsoon, while the crop marketing season will run from October 2024 to September 2025.

The MSP hike is likely to result in a total financial implication of ₹2 lakh crore, about ₹35,000 crore higher than the previous season, Mr. Vaishnaw said, adding that this would boost farmers' incomes.

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## 2. Blueprints beyond borders, for solace and shelter

### GS 2 (Social Issues)

- **Why in News:** India has been historical committed to providing asylum to refugees. Despite this legacy, India is neither a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol, and lacks a domestic asylum framework.

- **The Plight of Refugees:**

- **Global Refugee Crisis:** There are over 43.4 million refugees globally, with conflicts continuously increasing this number. These individuals are not mere statistics but human beings with dreams, fears, and needs.

- **India's Historical Asylum Record:** India has a long history of granting asylum, from ancient times with the Jews and Zoroastrians to modern times with East Bengalis, Tibetans, and Rohingyas.

- **World Refugee Day:** This day serves as a reminder of the lives uprooted by conflicts and the need for safe havens and solutions for refugees.

- **Policy Implications and Legislative Needs:**

- **Lack of Formal Framework:** Despite its history, India is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, and lacks a domestic asylum framework.
- **Private Member's Bill:** A bill introduced in 2022 aimed to establish a comprehensive refugee and asylum law, recognizing the rights and duties of asylum seekers and refugees, and addressing the principle of non-refoulement.
- **Government Actions:** The expulsion of Rohingya refugees in violation of international law reveals gaps in India's asylum policy and highlights the need for legislative reforms to uphold humanitarian traditions.

- **Implementation Challenges and Judicial Interventions:**

- **Ad hoc Management:** Without a consistent law, refugees are often treated as aliens under various acts, leading to arbitrary handling and potential deportation.
- **Access to Services:** There is a need for mechanisms to ensure refugees can access public services, including healthcare and education, and legally seek employment.
- **Judicial Support:** The Supreme Court of India has affirmed the rights of all individuals in India, including refugees, to fundamental rights, urging the state to process asylum applications properly and protect asylum seekers from forcible eviction.

## 3. 2024 Hindu Kush Himalayas Snow Update

### GS 3 (Environment)

- **Why in News:** The **Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region**, spanning eight countries including India, is renowned as the "water towers of Asia" due to its crucial role in providing water to millions through major river systems like the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus. However, recent report (**2024 ICIMOD Report**) indicate alarming trends in **snow persistence**, impacting water availability and ecosystems across the region.

- **What is Snow Persistence?**

- Snow persistence refers to the duration snow remains on the ground. In the HKH region, snowmelt from these mountains constitutes a significant source of water, contributing up to 23% of the annual runoff to the region's major river basins.

- This meltwater is crucial for sustaining agriculture, ecosystems, and human settlements downstream.

- **Key Findings from the 2024 ICIMOD Report**

- The 2024 update from the **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** highlighted record-low snow persistence in the **Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus river basins**.
- Specifically, the Ganga basin saw its lowest snow persistence in 22 years, significantly below historical averages.

### Blueprints beyond borders, for solace and shelter

**T**oday, the world has over 43.4 million refugees, and with conflicts raging in different parts of the world, this number is only increasing. But as it rises, we also run the risk of treating these people as figures in a statistical compilation, and not human beings with needs, fears, hopes and dreams. Yet this, precisely, is what they are. And World Refugee Day (June 20) is a solemn occasion to think of all those human beings – a countless succession of families with dreams and desires, laughter and joy – whose lives have been uprooted, all those homes that have been destroyed, and all those futures that have been jeopardised. But this is also an occasion to think of safe havens granted, asylum granted, refugees protected, and solutions found.



Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament (Congress), who spoke at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, including three and a half years as head of the Indian mission in Geneva.

India is well poised to commemorate this poignant day. History, after all, is on our side. Our record of granting asylum goes back millennia, from the Jews who fled to India centuries before Christ after the destruction of their Jerusalem Temple by the Babylonians and then the Romans, to the Zoroastrians fleeing Islamic persecution in Persia, to the East Bengalis – for the cause of whose independence we waged war with Pakistan in 1971, liberating what became Bangladesh – Thailand and Sri Lanka's Tamils in more recent years, alongside streams of Nepalis, Afghans and Rohingyas. As a nation that attained independence against the backdrop of one of the most horrific refugee crises in history, when 12 million to 15 million people crossed the freshly created borders between India and Pakistan, we are all too aware of the perils that befall refugees, and of the consequent need to help them rebuild their lives.

**The pitch for suitable legislation**  
Despite our glorious history of offering asylum and shelter to refugees from the world over, it is ironic that India is neither a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention (which outlines the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, alongside the obligations of host nations) nor to its 1967 Protocol. Nor does our country have a domestic asylum framework. Whereas, with our history, we ought to lead the global march on the question of refugee rights, our present actions and lack of a legal framework for our heritage no credit, shame us in the eyes of the world, and fall to much up to our earlier post track record.

It was to address these glaring lacunae that I introduced, in February 2022, a Private Member's Bill in the Lok Sabha, seeking the enactment of a Refugee and Asylum Law. My Bill laid down comprehensive criteria for recognising asylum seekers and refugees, and prescribed specific rights and duties accruing from such status. This legislation was proposed because of our

government's failure to honour the international legal principle of non-refoulement – the cornerstone of refugee law, which states that no country should send a person to a place where they may suffer persecution – and even more, its betrayal of India's impeccable tradition of granting asylum to strangers.

Titled the Asylum Bill, 2022, it followed close on the heels of our government expelling to Myanmar two batches of Rohingya refugees despite the grave risk of persecution in the country they had fled. In conducting this act of "refoulement" in violation of international law, our government revealed both religious bigotry (the refugees were Muslim) and intolerance. In fact, in 2017, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular directing Rohingyas as "illegal immigrants" – leading to their being collectively thrust into detention centres across India, where they languish in deplorable conditions – unable to communicate with their families and without any access to medical facilities, food, sanitation and water supply – until they are deported. As of August 2023, over 700 Rohingyas were in detention throughout India.

The government has also been inhospitable to the Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizo-people in Mizoram. My Bill sought to put an end to such arbitrary conduct by the authorities. It afforded to all foreigners – regardless of their nationality, race, or religion – the right to seek asylum in India. It also called for the creation of a National Commission for Asylum to review and decide all such applications. Having staunchly affirmed, with no exceptions, the principle of non-refoulement, I specified reasons for exclusion, expulsion and revocation of refugee status, thus respecting the government's sovereign authority while limiting its discretion.

**In a state of suspense**  
In the absence of a consistent and comprehensive law to deal with asylum seekers, we lack a clear perspective on refugee management. We have a flurry of such laws as the Foreigners Act, 1946; the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; the Passports Act 1967; the Immigrants Act, 1962; the Citizenship Act, 1955 (including its omnibus 2003 amendment) and the Foreigners (Order, 1948), all of which chip at foreign individuals subjected to international conventions on the topic now set up a domestic legislative framework to deal with refugees, their problems are dealt with in an ad hoc manner, and like other foreigners, they always face the possibility of being deported. While speaking of refugee protection, we must not forget ourselves just to

providing asylum. We need a rigorous mechanism to ensure that refugees can access basic public services – chief among them medical facilities and educational institutions – and legally seek jobs to get back on their feet. We can, and must, do better. India should enact a National Asylum Law, such as the one I have presented to Parliament. We currently host more than two lakh refugees, but the Bharatiya Janata Party government's chauvinist attitude to the Rohingyas and other "non-citizen" refugees risks putting us in the global dharmashastra. Had it been enacted, my Bill would have placed India at the forefront of asylum management in the world. It would have vindicated our steadfast and humanitarian commitment to humanitarian and democratic values while dealing with refugees.

**'Taking up the judiciary's baton'**  
In 1996, the Supreme Court of India held that not just Indians but everybody living in India, irrespective of nationality, enjoy the inalienable rights guaranteed by Articles 14, 20 and 21 of the Constitution of India. On these grounds, the apex court, in the landmark case of *National Human Rights Commission v. State of Arunachal Pradesh* in 1996, stepped the forcible eviction of Chakmas refugees who had entered Arunachal Pradesh in 1956. The Court held that an application for asylum must be properly processed, and till a decision is made whether to grant or refuse asylum, the state cannot forcibly evict an asylum seeker. Our judiciary, therefore, has already pointed us towards the golden path: now we must acceptably tread it. Yet, at times, different judges have taken radically different approaches, which we see aptly in the Rohingya case. The enactment and implementation of refugee rights will reduce our reliance on judge-centric approaches – or, even worse, the whims of Home Ministry bureaucrats, police officers and politicians.

The problems of refugees worldwide are a common thread in the history of our civilisation, as a pillar of the world community and a significant pole in the emerging multipolar world, must play its own part – on its own soil as well as on the global stage – in this noble task, devising solutions for refugees that offer blueprints beyond borders. In so doing, we would uphold our own finest traditions and the highest standards of our democracy, alongside demonstrating that we truly are what we have forever claimed to be: a civilisational, striving sensibility to serve, in the words of Ambedkar, "the still larger cause of humanity". This is a worthwhile aspiration for all of us who care about what India stands for, both at home and in the world.



## ■ Causes of Lower Snow Persistence

- ◆ **Weak western disturbances**, which bring precipitation to the HKH region during winter
- ◆ **Climate change-induced alterations in global weather patterns**, including fluctuating **La Niña–El Niño** conditions, exacerbated this trend
- ◆ **High sea-surface temperatures** disrupted the typical patterns of western disturbances, leading to decreased winter precipitation and snowfall in the mountains.

## ■ Impact on Water Security

- ◆ The decline in snow persistence threatens water availability in the region. For instance, snowmelt contributes a substantial portion of water to the **Ganga (10.3%)**, **Brahmaputra (13.2%)**, and **Indus (up to 40%)** river basins.
- ◆ Reduced snowmelt could potentially lead to water stress, affecting agriculture, hydropower generation, and overall socio-economic stability in downstream areas.

## ● India's Vulnerability

- India, with its vast territories encompassing parts of the **Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus basins**, faces significant implications from declining snow persistence.
- The meltwater from these basins supports agriculture and sustains livelihoods for millions of people.
- Lower snowmelt volumes could amplify water scarcity issues, particularly during dry seasons and periods of reduced rainfall.

## ● Long-term Solutions

- Strategies include reforestation with native species to enhance snow retention, improving weather forecasting and early warning systems, and strengthening water infrastructure.
- International cooperation among HKH countries is crucial for developing comprehensive policies and adapting to climate change challenges effectively.

## ● Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) Region

- Stretches over 3500 kilometres and across eight countries – **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, Myanmar and Pakistan**
- The region is the world's most important 'water tower', being the source of ten of Asia's largest rivers as well as the largest volume of ice and snow outside of the Arctic and Antarctica.
- **Major rivers:** It is the source of ten large Asian river systems – the **Amu Darya**, **Indus**, **Ganges**, **Brahmaputra (Yarlungtsanpo)**, **Irrawaddy**, **Salween (Nu)**, **Mekong (Lancang)**, **Yangtse (Jinsha)**, **Yellow River (Huanghe)**, and **Tarim (Dayan)**
- **India's area:** Entire territory of 11 mountain states (Assam, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Jammu & Kashmir (Indian administered area), Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh), & Darjeeling district of West Bengal state

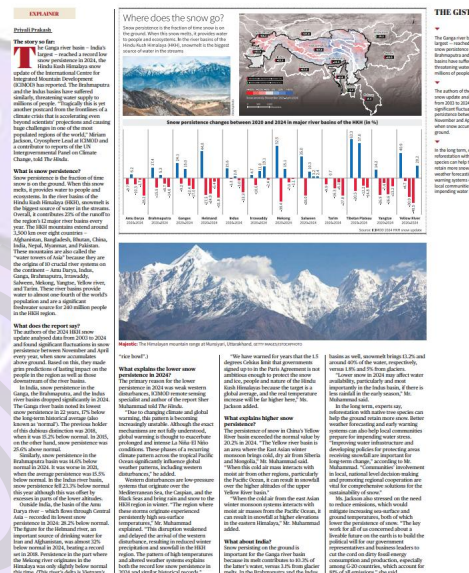
## 4. Nalanda University

### Recent events of importance

- **Why in News:** The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the new campus of Nalanda University at Rajgir, Bihar. The University is conceived as a collaboration between India and **East Asia Summit (EAS) countries**. The University has a deep connection with history. The original Nalanda University, established around 1600 years ago, is considered to be amongst the first residential universities in the world. The ruins of Nalanda were declared as a UN Heritage Site in 2016.
- **Key-facts regarding Nalanda University:**
  - Nalanda University holds a significant place in the history of education, serving as one of the oldest residential universities globally.

## On the Hindu Kush Himalayas snow update

What does the report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development highlight? How important is snow persistence? How much of a role does climate change play in river basins receiving less snow this year?





- **Establishment:** It was established around 427 CE by **Gupta Emperor Kumaragupta I**. Later, it also received patronage from **Harshavardhana and the Pala rulers**.
- Founded 1600 years ago, Nalanda is recognized as the **world's first residential university**, pre-dating Oxford and Bologna by over 500 years.
- **Curriculum:** The university offered a diverse range of subjects including Buddhist scriptures, philosophy, mathematics, logic, astronomy, and medicine.
- Regarded as the **second-oldest university** in the world after **Takshashila**, it served as a residential campus and existed for **800 years**.
- **Decline:** Nalanda began its decline during the late Pala period but faced devastation during **Bakhtiyar Khilji's** invasion around 1200 CE. The library, housing millions of manuscripts, was famously burned for three months.
- **Historical Travellers:** Accounts from Chinese travelers like **Huiyen-Tsang** and **I-Tsing** provide detailed insights into the university's academic and cultural richness.
- **UN Heritage Site:** The ruins of Nalanda were recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016, underscoring its global historical significance.

## PM inaugurates Nalanda University campus in Bihar

The Hindu Bureau  
PATNA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the new campus of Nalanda University, an international university, close to the site of the ancient ruins of Nalanda at Rajgir in Bihar.

Asserting that Nalanda is a symbol of India's academic heritage and vibrant cultural exchange, Mr. Modi said, "Nalanda is the proclamation of this truth that books may burn in the flames of fire, but the flames of fire cannot destroy knowledge. Nalanda is an identity, respect, and pride."

**Wide representation**  
He expressed his happiness over the presence of representatives of many countries for the inauguration. He said the new campus proved that Bihar was on the path of development.

Parliament established Nalanda University through the Nalanda University Act, 2010.

The Act formed the basis for implementing the decisions arrived at the second East Asia Summit in the Philippines in 2007 for the establishment of the university as an "international institution for pur-



**Glorious campus:** The campus of Nalanda University has an amphitheatre that can seat 2,000 people. (ICPHR/PTI/ANNA)

suit of intellectual, philosophical, historical and spiritual studies" and at the fourth summit in Thailand in 2009.

It started functioning in 2014 from a makeshift location with 14 students and the construction work started in 2017.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and 17 Ambassadors from participating countries attended the event. Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Sinha were present.

Before inaugurating the campus, the PM visited the ancient ruins of Nalanda and planted a sapling of the Bodhi tree brought from Bodhi Gaya.

Nalanda University

Chancellor Arvind Panagariya and Interim Vice-Chancellor Abhay Kumar Singh were present.

In his address, Mr. Modi said, "The renaissance of Nalanda University near its ancient ruins will introduce India's potential to the world. Nalanda is not just a renaissance of India's past, the heritage of many countries and Asia is linked to it. In days to come, Nalanda University will once again become a major centre for our cultural exchange."

The ancient Nalanda University was established in the 5th century and attracted students from all over the world. The ancient university flourished for 800 years before it was burnt down by invaders in the 12th century.

### ● Takshila

- **Founded in:** 5th-6th century BCE.
- The world's first University was established in Takshila or Taxila or Takshashila (now in Pakistan).
- This centre of learning was an important Vedic/Hindu and Buddhist center of learning.
- Chinese travellers like **Fa Hian (Faxian)** and **Huiyen Tsang (XuanZang)** also speak of Takshila in their writings.
- Takshashila is perhaps best known because of its association with Chanakya (Chanakya's famous treatise **ArthaShastra** is said to have been written in Takshashila).

## 5. Cost of Inequality

### GS 2 (Social Issues)

#### ● Why in News:

- The **2024 edition of the Global Gender Gap Index reveals a concerning picture for India**, placing the country at 129th out of 146 surveyed countries.
- This **position, near the bottom of the rankings, reflects a persistent gender disparity** that has seen little improvement over recent years.
- Comparatively, in **2021, India was ranked 140th out of 156 countries**, indicating that the country has remained entrenched in the bottom 20 percentile of this index.

#### ● Understanding the Global Gender Gap Index

- The **Global Gender Gap Index**, introduced in 2006 (by World Economic Forum), serves as a **comprehensive measure of gender equality** across various dimensions.
- It comprises **four sub-indices: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment**.
- Each sub-index aggregates multiple indicators to provide a summarised score and the **overall index ranges from 0 to 1, where 1 signifies complete gender parity**.
- It is **crucial to note that this index focuses on the relative position of women to men rather than their absolute status**, thereby highlighting gender gaps.
- While the index does not encompass every aspect of gender equality, it offers **valuable insights into key areas that can be reliably measured and tracked over time**.

## Costs of inequality

Persisting gender gaps in India across several sectors are a drag on society and economy



ASHWINI DESHPANDE

THE 2024 EDITION of the Global Gender Gap Index places India at 129th out of the 146 countries surveyed. This puts India at the 88th position from the bottom. For comparison, of the 156 countries included in 2021, India was at the 140th position from the bottom. Thus, overall, India's ranking has remained in the bottom 20 over years.

Like all indices, the Global Gender Gap Index, first introduced in 2006, is a perfect measure. It is a combination of four different sub-indices – economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment – each measuring multiple indicators. The index lies between 0 and 1, with 1 denoting complete parity. It is important to note that this index focuses on gender gaps, that is, the focus is on the position of women relative to men (gender equality), rather than in their absolute position. The idea is to track changes in gender gaps both over time and across countries.

Like all indices, it does not include everything that matters for gender equality but focuses only on a few key measures. It should not be seen as a comprehensive measure on gender equality, but as a useful pointer or a highlighter of key summary statistics that can be reliably measured and tracked. The value of the overall index as well as sub-indices shows how much of the gap has been closed.

At the Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA), we have developed an interactive tracker which allows readers to see the change in India's position over time, year by year for each of the sub-indices, as well as for the overall index. (<https://tinyurl.com/yw3p3p3p>)

The 2024 report shows that on "health

and Survival Score", India's value is 0.951 which means that 95.1 per cent of the male-female gap has been closed. Similarly, the educational attainment score of 0.84 per cent indicates that since several other countries have done better, India is at 112th position in the educational ranking and at 142nd position in the health ranking among 146 countries.

The Economic Participation sub-index is based on gender gaps in labour force participation, share in managerial positions, wage gaps, and wage parity (equal pay for equal work). On this, India's score is 0.64 per cent, placing it at the 142nd position among 146 countries. While this is an improvement since 2021 (when it was 0.2 per cent), it is very low in absolute terms, and lower than the 2012 score of 0.46 per cent.

Reported scores on respective countries with the lowest levels of economic parity are Bangladesh (0.11 per cent), Sudan (0.12 per cent), Iran (0.13 per cent), Pakistan (0.16 per cent), India (0.18 per cent), and Morocco (0.40 per cent). These economies all register less than 20 per cent gender parity in labour force participation.

In political participation, even though India has closed only 25.1 per cent of the gap, its global rank is 45. This reflects the fact that while the rest of the world has made significant progress in closing the gender equality gap in the economic, educational and health spheres, the global progress on gender equality in political participation remains low. With India's score, India's position was at 51 in 2021 with a score of 27.9 per cent in 2012. India's score has worsened over the last two years. This is lower than the 2012 score of 2014 (43.3 per cent). Thus, over the last

decade, the progress on this sub-index has worsened.

The report shows that India and its immediate neighbours – South Asia as a region ranks 17th out of the eight regions in the world, above Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Within the seven countries that comprise South Asia, India's rank is at 4th, with Bangladesh leading the region at the 99th position globally. Thus, India belongs to a region that ranks lower gender parity and does poorly compared to several of its immediate neighbours.

While there has been an improvement in several dimensions for Indian women, this report points to the persistence of gender gaps in selected indicators. It also reminds us that just a decade back, India's gender gaps were lower. Should we be up and taking notice or should the measures?

There is ample evidence concerning the staggering economic costs of wide lasting women-led discrimination in social institutions could cost up to \$12.1 trillion for the global economy, and that a reduction in gender discrimination can increase the rate of growth of GDP. Internalisation of this understanding would mean that gender equality has to be mainstreamed into economic policy making rather than viewed as a residual concern to be tackled later, as an afterthought.

However, equality in the economic sphere can materialise only when society treats women as independent, intelligent, individual choices in all matters concerning their lives, and not as an equal at all levels of decision-making.

The writer is professor of economics and founder director, CEDA, Ashoka University.

Views are personal

- It functions as a highlighter of significant statistics rather than a comprehensive analysis.
- The Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA) has developed an interactive tracker to monitor India's position over time and relative to other countries across these sub-indices, further enhancing our understanding of gender parity dynamics.
- India's Performance in Sub-indices
  - Health and Survival
    - ◆ In the Health and Survival sub-index, India's score is 0.951, indicating that 95.1% of the gender gap in this area has been closed.
    - ◆ Despite this high score, India ranks 142nd out of 146 countries.
    - ◆ This paradox suggests that while India has made significant progress, other countries have advanced further, pushing India lower in the relative rankings.
  - Educational Attainment
    - ◆ Similarly, in the Educational Attainment sub-index, India has closed 96.4% of the gender gap. However, the country stands at 112th position globally.
    - ◆ This indicates that despite substantial achievements in education for women, other nations have outperformed India, highlighting a relative lag in progress.
  - Economic Participation and Opportunity
    - ◆ The Economic Participation and Opportunity sub-index reveals a more troubling scenario.
    - ◆ India's score here is 39.8%, placing it at 142nd among 146 countries.
    - ◆ Although this represents an improvement from 32.6% in 2021, it is still significantly lower than the 2012 score of 46%.
    - ◆ This sub-index is based on labour force participation, share in managerial positions, wage gaps, and wage parity.
    - ◆ India's low score underscores the persistent economic barriers women face, including lower labour force participation and significant wage disparities.
    - ◆ In comparison, countries with the lowest economic parity levels, such as Bangladesh (31.1%), Sudan (33.7%), Iran (34.3%), Pakistan (36%), and Morocco (40.6%), share similar challenges.
    - ◆ These nations exhibit less than 30% gender parity in estimated earned income and less than 50% in labour force participation.
  - Political Empowerment
    - ◆ On the Political Empowerment sub-index, India has closed only 25.1% of the gender gap, ranking 65th globally.
    - ◆ This is a significant drop from the 51st position in 2021, with a score of 27.6%. The decline is even more pronounced when compared to the 43.3% score around 2014.
    - ◆ This indicates a regression in political participation for women over the past decade.
    - ◆ Despite the global advances in gender equality in economic, educational, and health spheres, progress in political participation remains sluggish, both globally and within India.
- Regional Comparison and Broader Economic Implications
  - Regional Comparison
    - ◆ India's position is also concerning within the regional context of South Asia, which ranks seventh out of eight global regions, only ahead of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).
    - ◆ Among the seven South Asian countries, India ranks fifth, with Bangladesh leading at the 99th position globally.
    - ◆ This regional comparison underscores India's struggle with gender parity, as it lags several of its immediate neighbours.
    - ◆ The persistence of gender gaps in key indicators, despite some improvements, signals a broader issue.
    - ◆ A decade ago, India's gender gaps were narrower, indicating that progress has stalled or reversed in several areas.
    - ◆ This raises a critical question whether India should acknowledge these findings and take corrective action, or dismiss the metrics and blame the messengers.
  - Economic Implications of Gender Inequality
    - ◆ There is substantial research highlighting the economic costs of sidelining women.
    - ◆ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that gender-based discrimination in social institutions could cost the global economy up to \$12 trillion.
    - ◆ Reducing gender discrimination can significantly boost GDP growth rates.



- ◆ This understanding necessitates the mainstreaming of gender equality into economic policy-making, rather than treating it as a secondary issue to be addressed later.
- **Social Implications and Long-term Benefits of Gender Equality**
  - Achieving gender equality is not only an economic imperative but also a social one and empowering women leads to better outcomes in health, education, and social stability.
  - For instance, **women who are economically empowered are more likely to invest in their children's education and health**, creating a positive intergenerational impact.
  - Furthermore, **when women are included in decision-making processes, both in corporate and political spheres, policies tend to be more inclusive** and address a broader range of social issues.
  - This inclusiveness leads to **more equitable societies** where everyone can thrive.
- **Key Strategies to Address the Gender Inequality**
  - **Educational Investments**
    - ◆ Ensuring equal access to education for girls and women is fundamental.
    - ◆ **Education empowers women with the skills and knowledge needed to participate fully in the economy.**
    - ◆ Policies that promote STEM education for girls can help bridge gender gaps in high-paying and in-demand fields.
  - **Supportive Work Environments:** Implementing policies that support work-life balance, such as **maternity and paternity leave, affordable childcare, and flexible working hours, can encourage more women** to enter and remain in the workforce.
  - **Equal Pay Legislation**
    - ◆ Enforcing laws that mandate equal pay for equal work can help reduce wage disparities.
    - ◆ **Transparent pay structures and regular pay audits can ensure compliance** and highlight areas needing improvement.
  - **Entrepreneurship Support**
    - ◆ **Providing access to capital, training, and mentorship** for women entrepreneurs **can stimulate economic growth.**
    - ◆ Women-owned businesses contribute significantly to job creation and economic diversification.
- **Conclusion**
  - **India's position in the 2024 Global Gender Gap Index highlights significant challenges** and areas requiring urgent attention.
  - Despite progress in health and education, **economic participation and political empowerment remain areas of concern.**
  - Recognising the economic benefits of gender equality, **it is imperative that India integrates gender considerations into its core economic strategies and creates a societal environment that treats women as equal stakeholders in all aspects of life.**

## 6. Energy Transition Index

### Recent events of importance

- **Why in News:** India has been ranked 63rd on a global Energy Transition Index released by the World Economic Forum.
- **About Energy Transition Index:**
  - It is published by the **World Economic Forum.**
  - It was developed with the ambitious aim to comprehensively **monitor the global energy transition.**
  - The heart of the Index is an analytic framework that measures transition as a shift towards an energy system that supports **sustainability, security and access**, and towards institutions that enable this performance.
  - **Key points about Energy Transition Index 2024 (ETI-2024)**
    - ◆ European countries lead the World Economic Forum Energy Transition Index 2024 rankings; **Sweden** came top, followed by Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and France.
    - ◆ Emerging economies such as **Brazil and China made notable progress**, although 83% of countries moved backwards from last year in at least one of the three energy system performance dimensions – security, equity and sustainability.
    - ◆ India has been ranked 63rd in ETI -2024.

- ◆ The gap in energy transition performance between advanced and developing economies **continues to narrow**, although disparities in investments and regulation remain.
- ◆ While 107 of the 120 countries benchmarked in the report demonstrated progress on their **energy transition journeys** in the past decade, the overall pace of the transition has slowed and balancing its different facets remains a key challenge.
- ◆ The WEF also lauded the strides made by India in its clean energy infrastructure, with renewable energy and biomass comprising 42 per cent of its power generation capacity, making it the fourth-largest renewables market globally.

## 7. World Refugee Day

### Recent events of importance

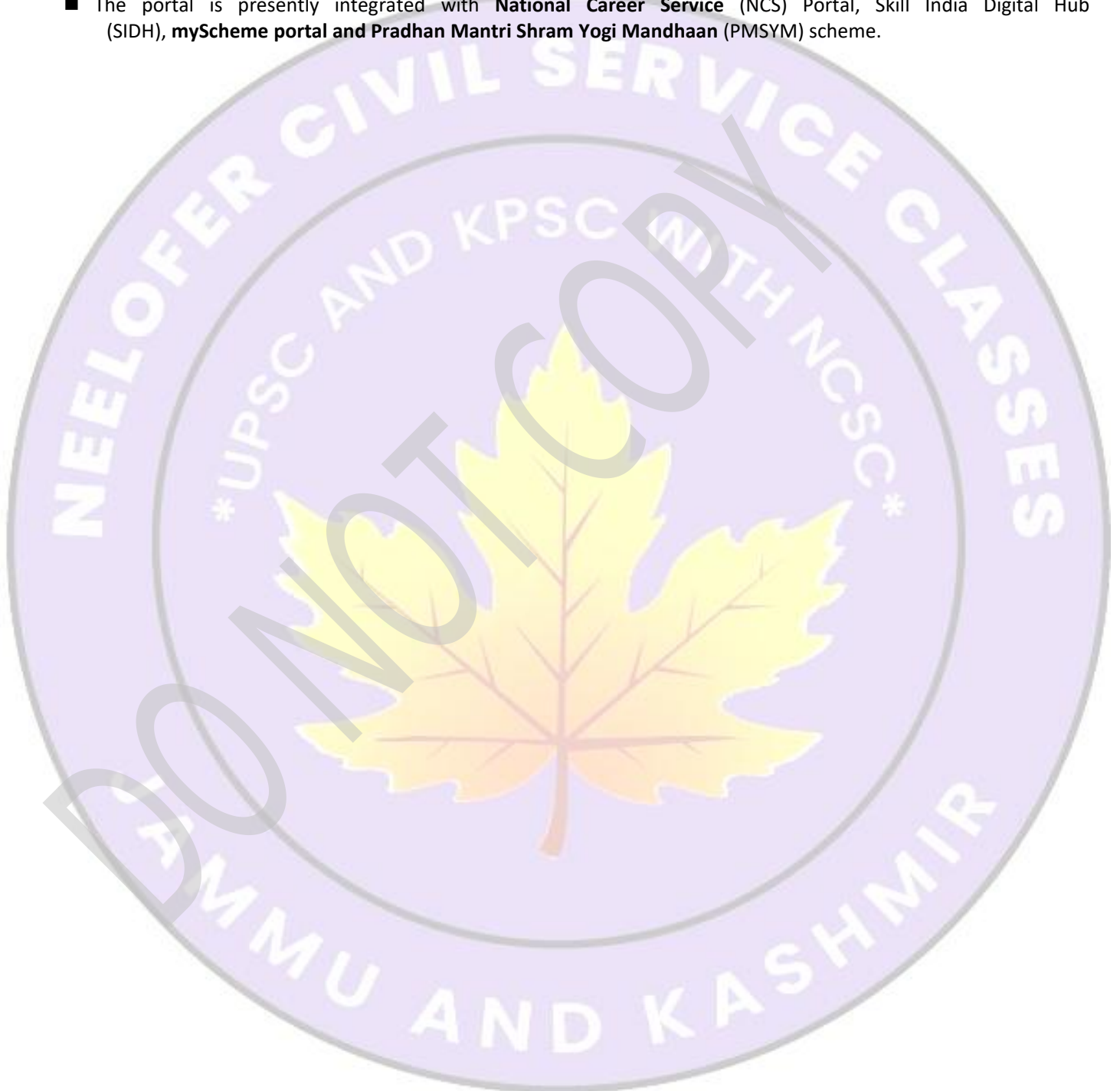
- **Why in News:** World Refugee Day is annually celebrated globally on June 20th.
- **About World Refugee Day:**
  - This day is dedicated to the millions of people who have been forced to escape their homes due to war, persecution, or natural catastrophes.
- **History of World Refugee Day:**
  - The first ever World Refugee Day was celebrated on June 20, 2001, to commemorate the **50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention** relating to the Status of Refugees.
  - The day was earlier recognized as Africa Refugee Day, and later in December 2000, the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** officially declared it an International Day for Refugees.
  - The theme of World Refugee Day 2024 is '**For a World Where Refugees Are Welcomed.**'
- **Who is a refugee?**
  - According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a person is considered a refugee if they are **unable to return to their homeland** because they have a legitimate fear of being harmed because of their race, religion, involvement in a social group, or differing political opinions.
  - Refugees are **forced to flee** their homes due to conflict, persecution, violence, or other forms of human rights violations. They often arrive in host countries with nothing but the clothes on their backs.
  - Although relocating to a foreign country is the stereotypical picture of a refugee, these international refugees represent a relatively small percentage of all displaced individuals worldwide.
  - Other non-typical refugee categories include **stateless individuals**, who have no country of citizenship claimed against them, and **asylum seekers**, who travel in search of international protection.
  - In 2024, 130.8 million individuals were estimated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to have been forcibly displaced, or stateless globally, with over 32 million of them being refugees.
  - **75% of refugees** worldwide **reside in low- and middle-income countries**, according to UNHCR figures.
- **About United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):**
  - It **protects refugees worldwide** and **facilitates their return** home or resettlement.
  - History: It was established by the UNGA in 1950 in the aftermath of the Second World War to help the millions of people who had lost their homes.
  - It is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.
  - It was awarded **Nobel Peace Prizes** in 1954 and 1981.
  - It **started the Nansen Refugee Award in 1954** for recognition of outstanding service to the cause of refugees, displaced or stateless people.
  - **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.

## 8. e-Shram Portal

### GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** The Indian delegation to the 112th International Labour Conference (ILC) led by Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment showcased the e-Shram portal and its present integrations and achievements during the sidelines of the ILC at Geneva, Switzerland.
- **About e-Shram Portal:**
  - It was launched by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** in 2021 for registration and creation of a comprehensive **National Database of Unorganized Workers**.

- It allows an unorganised worker to register himself or herself on the portal on self-declaration basis, under 400 occupations in 30 broad occupation sectors.
- It is a **“One-Stop-Solution”** for **Unorganised Workers of the country**.
- The registration in the portal is fully Aadhaar verified and Aadhaar seeded. Any unorganised worker can register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis.
- The Ministry aims to facilitate access to various **social security schemes** being implemented by various Ministries/ Departments for the benefit of the unorganised workers through the e-Shram portal.
- The portal is presently integrated with **National Career Service (NCS)** Portal, Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), **myScheme portal** and **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhaan (PMSYM)** scheme.





**MCQ Current Affairs**  
**20<sup>th</sup> June, 2024**

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**1. Consider the following statements with reference to the Refugees:**

A. International refugees represent the majority of all displaced individuals worldwide.

B. The majority of refugees worldwide reside in low- and middle-income countries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

**2. Energy Transition Index, recently in news, is published by:**

- a) New Development Bank
- b) United Nations Environment Programme
- c) World Bank
- d) World Economic Forum

**3. Consider the following statements with reference to the e-Shram Portal:**

A. It provides access to various social security schemes being implemented by various Ministries/ Departments to unorganized sector workers.

B. It is launched by the union Ministry of Heavy Industries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

**4. INS Sunayna, an Offshore Patrol Vessel recently in the news belongs to:**

- a) Delhi class
- b) Saryu class
- c) Kalaveri class
- d) None of the above

**5. "Delos Island", recently seen in the news, is located in?**

- a) Aegean Sea
- b) Caspian Sea
- c) Red Sea
- d) Black Sea

**Answers Current Affairs**  
**20<sup>th</sup> June, 2024**

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1. b
2. d
3. a
4. b
5. a

