



CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPERS' WITHDRAWAL FROM NAGORNO-KARABAKH -

- Russian peacekeepers have initiated their withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh following Azerbaijan's recapture of the disputed territory from Armenian separatists in September 2023. The decision for the withdrawal was agreed between Baku (Azerbaijan) and Moscow at the "highest levels."
- Nagorno-Karabakh, is a mountainous region in the Caucasus (the transcontinental region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea), internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but predominantly inhabited by ethnic Armenians.
- The conflict began in the late 1980s when the region declared independence from Azerbaijan, leading to a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. A ceasefire in 1994 left Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas under Armenian control, but frequent violations and failed negotiations followed.
- In 2020, Azerbaijan won the Second Karabakh War, regaining control of seven surrounding districts and a third of Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia brokered a peace deal and deployed peacekeepers in the region.
- The conflict has strained relations between Russia and Armenia, as Moscow maintains warm ties with Baku.
- Armenia announced that it has effectively suspended its participation in the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), a defense alliance.



2. RECENTLY, THE DEPARTMENT OF POSTS OPENED A SECOND BRANCH OF THE POST OFFICE AT THE BHARATI RESEARCH STATION IN ANTARCTICA AFTER ALMOST FOUR DECADES -

- Letters intended for Antarctica will now be addressed with a new experimental PIN code, MH-1718, typical for a new branch. Currently, Maitri and Bharati are the two active research stations that India operates in Antarctica.

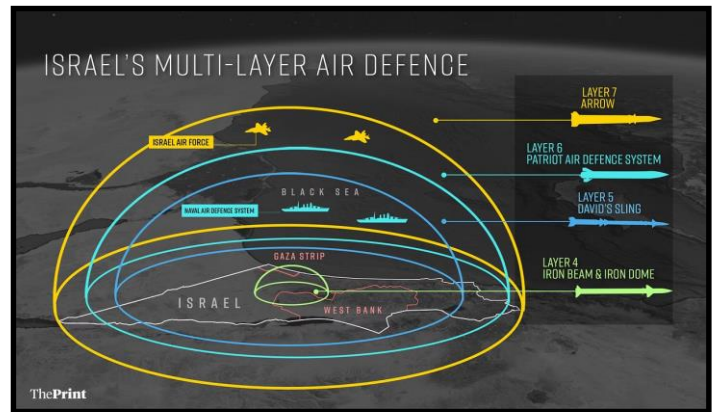


- In 1984, India set up its first post office in Antarctica at Dakshin Gangotri (India's first research stations).
 - Unfortunately, in 1988-89, Dakshin Gangotri was submerged in ice and was subsequently decommissioned.
 - India established another post office at the Maitri research station in Antarctica on 26th January 1990.
 - India's two Antarctic research bases, Maitri and Bharati, though are 3,000 km apart but both come under the Goa postal division.
 - Letters meant for the post office in Antarctica are sent to the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) in Goa.
 - The existence of an Indian post office in Antarctica serves a strategic purpose. Typically, an Indian post office operates within Indian territory. Antarctica, being foreign and neutral under the Antarctic Treaty, provides a unique opportunity to assert India's presence on the continent.
 - The Antarctic Treaty neutralises territorial claims, prohibits military operations and nuclear tests, and emphasises scientific discovery.
 - India's Antarctic Programme is a scientific research and exploration program under the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCPOR). It started in 1981 when the first Indian expedition to Antarctica was made. NCPOR was established in 1998.
- 3. RECENTLY, ISRAEL'S MULTI-LAYERED AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM DEFENDED THE COUNTRY FROM A MAJOR ATTACK, AS IRAN LAUNCHED OVER 300 ARMED DRONES AND LONG-RANGE MISSILES -**
- Air defence systems are basically shields against threats from the sky. They are a combination of different technologies that work together to spot, track, and destroy incoming aircraft, missiles, or drones.



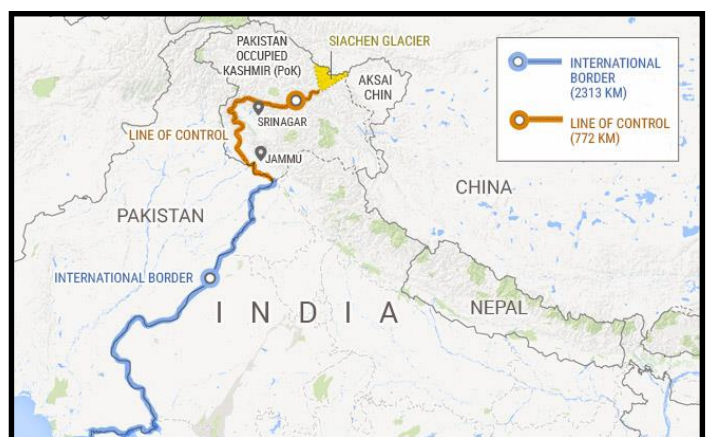


- Israel's air defense system consists of Iron Dome and C-Dome. Iron Dome is a short-range, ground-to-air, air defence system of Israel. The Iron Dome has three main systems that work together to provide a shield over the area where it is deployed.
- Radar: It has a detection and tracking radar to spot any incoming threats.
- Weapon Control: It has a battle management and weapon control system (BMC).
- Missile Fire: It also has a missile firing unit. The BMC basically liaises between the radar and the interceptor missile.
- It is used for countering rockets, artillery & mortars as well as aircraft, helicopters and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). It is capable of being used in all weather conditions, including during the day and night. It claims a success rate of over 90%.
- C-Dome is a naval version of Israel's Iron Dome air defence system, used to shield against rocket and missile attacks.
- It was first unveiled in 2014 and declared operational in November 2022. It works similarly to the Iron Dome, except that it is mounted on ships.
- Unlike the Iron Dome, which has its dedicated radar, the C-Dome is integrated into the ship's radar to detect incoming targets.
- It ensures full-circular vessel protection and high kill probability against a full spectrum of modern threats—maritime and coastal.



4. OPERATION MEGHDOOT -

- Recently, Operation Meghdoot has completed its 40th anniversary which resurfaces the achievements of the Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF), in the Siachen glacier to secure the heights dominating the Northern Ladakh region. The operation involved the airlifting of Indian Army soldiers and supplies by the





IAF and dropping them on the Siachen glacier.

- The Siachen Glacier has been a bone of contention since the Karachi Agreement in July 1949. Later, during the 1980s, Pakistan started attempts to legitimise its claim on Siachen Glacier leading to Operation Meghdoot by India.
- Operation Meghdoot was launched on 13th April 1984, when the Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF) advanced to the Siachen glacier to secure the heights dominating the Northern Ladakh region.
- The operation resulted in India gaining 70 kilometres long Siachen Glacier and all of its tributary glaciers, as well as three main passes of the Salto Ridge namely Sia La, Bilafond La, and Gyong La.

5. FOR THE FIRST TIME, MEMBERS OF THE SHOMPEN TRIBE, ONE OF THE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTGS) IN INDIA TOOK PART IN THE ELECTION PROCESS -

- According to the provisional figures made available, the voter turnout was 63.99%. However, in 2019, the voter turnout was 65.09%
- Shompen Tribe are the indigenous people of the interior of Great Nicobar Island. They are designated as a PVTG within the list of Scheduled Tribes.
- Shompen Tribe are one of the most isolated tribes. They are semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers. Their main sources of livelihood are hunting, gathering, fishing, and a little bit of horticultural activities in a rudimentary form.
- The estimated population of Shompen Tribe was 229 as per the 2011 Census data. They speak their own language, which has many dialects. Members of one band do not understand the dialect of the other.
- The family is controlled by the eldest male member, who controls all activities of the women and kids. Monogamy is the general rule, although polygamy is allowed too.





6. RECENTLY, SLOVENIA & SWEDEN BECAME THE 39TH & 38TH COUNTRIES TO SIGN ARTEMIS ACCORDS RESPECTIVELY -

- Artemis Accords is a US-led alliance seeking to facilitate international collaboration in planetary exploration and research. It relates to activities in orbit, on the surface, and in the subsurface of the moon, Mars, comets, and asteroids.



- It also covers the stable orbital points known as the Lagrangian points for the Earth-moon system).
- Artemis Accords Established by: It was launched on October 13, 2020 with Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- The Accords have been signed by 39 countries till now. On June 21, 2023 India became the 27th country to sign the Artemis Accords. China and Russia are not part of this initiative.

7. NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY OBSERVED ON APRIL 24TH EVERY YEAR -

- National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated annually on April 24th to commemorate the establishment of the Panchayati Raj system in India. This decentralized form of governance, introduced by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993, aimed to empower local self-



- governing bodies, known as Gram Panchayats, at the village level.
- The concept of Panchayati Raj has its roots in ancient Indian tradition, where village councils, or Panchayats, played a crucial role in local administration. However, it was not until the late 20th century that the system was revived and granted constitutional status.
- In 1957, the Balwantrai Mehta Committee was formed to study the process of democratic decentralization and recommend measures to revive the Panchayati Raj system. The committee's recommendations led to the establishment of a three-tier system of Panchayats at the village, block, and district levels.



8. INDIA RANKS FOURTH IN GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING IN 2023 -

- India has emerged as the fourth largest military spender globally in 2023, allocating \$83.6 billion for defense, following the United States, China, and Russia. This significant investment underscores India's commitment to enhancing its defense capabilities, particularly along the China border post the Ladakh standoff in 2020.
- India has intensified its efforts to modernize its military infrastructure and capabilities, encompassing fighter jets, helicopters, warships, tanks, artillery guns, rockets, missiles, unmanned systems, and other combat technologies. This focus on modernization reflects India's strategic response to evolving regional security challenges and geopolitical dynamics.
- In 2022, India also secured the fourth position in global military spending, with an expenditure of \$81.4 billion. This consistent upward trend signifies a 6% increase from the previous year and a substantial 47% surge since 2013. Such sustained investment underscores India's long-term commitment to bolstering its defense capabilities and maintaining regional stability.



9. RECORD DIRECT TAX COLLECTIONS EXCEED BUDGET ESTIMATES IN FY 2023-24 -

- In a significant development, provisional figures released by the Ministry of Finance reveal that net direct tax collections for the Financial Year (FY) 2023-24 have surpassed Union Budget Estimates by a substantial margin of Rs. 1.35 lakh crore, marking a remarkable increase of 7.40%. The provisional direct tax collections stand at Rs. 19.58 lakh crore, showcasing a robust growth of 17.70% compared to the preceding FY 2022-23.
- The Budget Estimates (BE) for Direct Tax revenue in FY 2023-24 were initially set at Rs. 18.23 lakh crore and were later revised to Rs. 19.45 lakh crore. However, the actual net collections have





surpassed both the BE and the Revised Estimates (RE) by 7.40% and 0.67% respectively, underlining the robust performance of direct tax revenue in the fiscal year.

- The provisional gross collection of direct taxes (before adjusting for refunds) for FY 2023-24 stands at an impressive Rs. 23.37 lakh crore, indicating a substantial growth of 18.48% over the previous fiscal year.
- The Gross Corporate Tax collection for FY 2023-24 amounts to Rs. 11.32 lakh crore, demonstrating a commendable growth of 13.06% over the preceding year. Meanwhile, the Net Corporate Tax collection for the same period stands at Rs. 9.11 lakh crore, reflecting a growth of 10.26%.

10. INDIA'S COMMITMENT TO DEBRIS-FREE SPACE MISSIONS BY 2030 -

- At the 42nd Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) annual meet, ISRO Chairman S. Somanath announced India's pledge to achieve debris-free space missions by 2030. This commitment aligns with global efforts to ensure the sustainability of space exploration.
- Chairman Somanath highlighted ISRO's comprehensive plan for space exploration and utilization, emphasizing the importance of sustainability in future missions.
- India aims to achieve debris-free space missions by involving all space actors, both governmental and non-governmental, by 2030. This initiative underscores the nation's commitment to long-term space sustainability.
- With 54 spacecraft in orbit and numerous non-functional objects, ISRO has been actively taking measures to dispose of or remove space debris. Efforts include deorbiting spacecraft once their mission is complete and designing systems to minimize debris creation.
- ISRO emphasizes the importance of developing skills for future explorations beyond Earth's orbit, including lunar and planetary missions. Additionally, plans for India's own space station, 'Bharatiya Antriksh Station,' by 2035 are underway, with a focus on





ensuring the sustainability of space in collaboration with other space actors.

11. TAKSHVI VAGHANI SETS NEW WORLD RECORD FOR THE LOWEST LIMBO SKATING OVER 25 METRES -

- In a remarkable display of skill, flexibility, and unwavering determination, India's young skating sensation, Takshvi Vaghani, has etched her name in the record books by setting a new world record for the lowest limbo skating over 25 metres. On April 18, 2024, the 6-year-old prodigy from Ahmedabad, Gujarat, defied the boundaries of human agility, gliding across the 25-meter distance at a mere 16 cm (6.29 in) above the ground.
- Takshvi Vaghani's achievement is a testament to her exceptional talent and rigorous training. With her lithe movements and impeccable balance, she surpassed the previous world record held by Manasvi Vishal from Pune, who had skated the same distance at a height of 16.5 centimeters.
- The young skater's remarkable performance not only showcased her extraordinary flexibility but also her unwavering determination to push the boundaries of what is possible in the world of roller skating.



12. INDIA'S INDIGENOUS BULLET TRAIN: VANDE BHARAT SETS TO REDEFINE HIGH-SPEED RAIL TRAVEL -

- In a significant stride towards advancing India's rail infrastructure, the country is gearing up to launch an indigenous bullet train capable of reaching speeds exceeding 250 kilometres per hour (km/h). This groundbreaking initiative is set to revolutionize high-speed rail travel in India, showcasing the nation's engineering prowess and commitment to cutting-edge technology.
- The Vande Bharat trains, manufactured by the Indian Railways' Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai, are at the forefront of this





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12 to 19 April 2024

ambitious project. These state-of-the-art trains are designed to operate on the recently announced north, south, and east corridors, reaching a top speed of 220 kmph – faster than any existing train on the Indian Railways network.

- The National High-Speed Rail Corporation Ltd (NHSRCL), responsible for executing India's first bullet train project, has made remarkable progress. It has already completed 300 kilometres of pier work, laying the foundation for the country's journey into high-speed rail excellence. Additionally, the extensive land acquisition process for the entire 508-kilometre route was successfully completed in January, paving the way for seamless implementation.



Quiz

Q1. Consider the following statements in respect of BrahMos missile :

1. It is a long-range supersonic cruise missile system.
2. It can be launched from land, sea and air platforms.
3. It is a joint venture between India and Russia.
4. BrahMos-II is the hypersonic version with Mach 7 speed.

How many of the statements given above are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) Only three
- d) All four

Q2. Consider the following statements about DURGA-2 :

1. It is a laser weapon developed by DRDO that can be used on land, sea and air.
2. It uses sound waves to destroy targets.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. With reference to the Aryabhata Satellite, consider the following statements :

1. It was India's first artificial satellite and built by the Indian Space Research Organisation.
2. It was launched from the Volgograd Launch Station by a Soviet Kosmos-3M rocket.

3. The area where Aryabhata was built was Peenya, on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

How many of the statements given above are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) Only three
- d) All four

Q4. Gudi Padwa or 'Chaitra Shukla Pratipada' is mainly celebrated in which state ?

- a) Maharashtra
- b) Uttar Pradesh
- c) Madhya Pradesh
- d) Gujarat

Q5. Which organization is set to launch ESA's Solar Study Mission Proba-3 ?

- a) NASA
- b) ISRO
- c) CNSA
- d) Roscosmos

Q6. Which stadium is the first BCCI-accredited venue to install a state-of-the-art 'hybrid pitch' in India ?

- a) Mumbai
- b) Kolkata
- c) Dharamshala
- d) Chennai

Q7. Recently, Ooragutta region of Telangana has been in news for :

- a) Images of the mesolithic period
- b) Discovery of Iron Age megalithic evidences



c) Oldest and the largest crater impacted zone

d) A sanctuary for the conservation of spix macaw

Q8. Considers the following statement with reference to Municipal Corporations :

1. They are established in the states by the acts of the concerned state legislatures, and in the union territories by the acts of the Parliament of India.

2. The term for every municipality provided under the Constitution is for a maximum six years from the date scheduled for its first meeting.

3. If the remainder period of the dissolved municipality is less than six months then it is not necessary to hold elections within that time frame (six months).

How many of the above statements are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

Q9. Consider the following statements :

1. The Artemis Accords are a treaty signed by several countries to establish a framework for international cooperation in lunar exploration.

2. The Artemis Accords focus solely on the protection of

historical lunar landing sites and artifacts.

3. The Artemis Accords were established by the United Nations to govern all space exploration activities.

How many of the statements are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

Q10. Recently, ISRO has decided to achieve debris-free space by which year ?

- a) 2025
- b) 2027
- c) 2030
- d) 2035

Q11. The minor planets revolving between the orbits of Jupiter and Mars are called

- a) Comets
- b) Meteors
- c) Asteroids
- d) Noyas

Q12. A narrow passage of water connecting two large bodies of water known as a/an

- a) Oasis
- b) Strait
- c) Isthmus
- d) Bay

Q13. What substance, alleged to cause cancer in the long term, led to the banning of certain spice powders in Hong Kong and Singapore?

- a) Ethylene oxide



- b) Sodium chloride
- c) Calcium carbonate
- d) Potassium sorbate

Q14. Where have archaeologists recently uncovered significant megalithic monuments, an Iron Age megalithic site, and rock art sites?

- a) Karnataka
- b) Tamil Nadu
- c) Maharashtra
- d) Telangana

Q15. Who recently made history as the youngest-ever challenger in the World Chess Championship?

- a) Gukesh
- b) Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa
- c) Harikrishna
- d) Aravindh Chithambaram

Q16. What was the name of the mega exercise conducted by the Indian Navy along the East Coast to test maritime preparedness?

- a) Pralay Abhyas
- b) Varuna
- c) Poorvi Leher
- d) TROPEX

Q17. Which country tested the Pyolji-1-2 anti-aircraft missile and the Hwasal-1 Ra-3 strategic cruise missile, escalating tensions in the region?

- a) South Korea
- b) United States
- c) North Korea
- d) Iran

Q18. Which volcano has recently been producing smoke rings, a rare phenomenon known as volcanic vortex rings?

- a) Mount Fuji
- b) Mount Vesuvius
- c) Mount Etna
- d) Mount Kilimanjaro

Q19. Seng Khihlang Festival is celebrated in which of the following state ?

- a) Tripura
- b) West Bengal
- c) Assam
- d) Meghalaya

Q20. Which company has signed an MoU with the Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi for co-operation in research and technology, product development, in the areas of semiconductors, quantum technologies, and drones ?

- a) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
- b) Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited
- c) Hindustan Unilever Limited
- d) Bharat Electronics Limited

Q21. French carmaker Citroen has appointed whom as its brand ambassador in India ?

- a) Virat Kohli
- b) Rohit Sharma
- c) KL Rahul
- d) Mahendra Singh Dhoni

Q22. World Earth Day, also known as International Mother Earth Day, is observed every year on 22



April. What is the theme of International Mother Earth Day 2024 ?

- a) Invest in our Planet
- b) Restore our Earth
- c) Protect Our Species
- d) Planet vs. Plastics

Q23. Which of the following Tribes in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Cast their First Votes ?

- a) Shompen
- b) Bhil
- c) Kokna

d) Munda

Q24. Which state's Integrated Test Range (ITR) hosted a successful Indigenous Technology Cruise Missile (ITCM) flight test by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) ?

- a) Punjab
- b) West Bengal
- c) Jharkhand
- d) Odisha

Answer Key

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
d	a	c	a	b	c	b	b	a	c	c	b
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
a	d	a	c	c	c	d	d	d	d	a	d