



## CURRENT AFFAIRS: MAY 2025

### CASTE CENSUS

Centre issued notification for census which begin from October 2026 in Ladakh and March 2027 across rest of India which includes caste census.

- **First since Independence:** This marks the first time since independence that caste data (beyond Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) will be officially collected as part of the decennial census.
- **Discrepancies in State-Level Caste Surveys:** Several states have conducted their own caste surveys (e.g., Bihar, Karnataka, etc.) in recent years, but these have often lacked uniformity, transparency, and credibility, leading to doubts about their reliability and comparability.
  - o A caste survey is different from a caste census, as census is a constitutionally mandated unlike surveys.
- **Digital Mode:** The upcoming census will incorporate a mobile application to digitally record the census data alongside the traditional pen and paper mode.

### **Census in India**

- **About:** It is a decennial exercise that provides comprehensive demographic, social, and economic data relating to all persons in the country, at a particular time.
  - o Censuses have been conducted regularly every ten years since 1881 in India. However, the latest census, scheduled to take place in 2021, was indefinitely put on hold due to COVID-19.
- **Legal Framework**
  - o Constitutional Provision: Census is a Union subject under Entry 69 of the Union List of the Seventh Schedule as per Article 246 of the Constitution.



o Statutory Provisions: For conduct of census, the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990 provide the legal framework along with the duties and responsibilities of census officers.

> The Registrar General and Census Commissioner (RG&CC) is authorized to design the census proforma, including the addition of caste-related questions without the need for amending the Act.

## Need for Caste Census

- **Constitutional mandate:** Article 340 mandates appointing a commission to investigate socially and educationally backward classes.

- **Policy Making:** Accurate caste data is crucial for evidence-based policymaking, targeted welfare schemes, and equitable resource allocation.

- o OBC groups argue that their claims on national resources are often neglected due to lack of updated data on their numbers and backwardness.

- **Affirmative Action:** It enables better identification of disadvantaged groups for reservations in education and public employment and also the better monitoring of the effectiveness such policies for necessary adjustments.

- o Various rulings of the Supreme Court have held caste as a 'relevant criterion', 'sole criterion' or 'dominant criterion' for defining a backward class, and have demanded detailed caste-wise data for upholding reservation policies.

- o Demands of OBC reservation by various groups across India (such as Marathas in Maharashtra, Jats in Haryana, etc.) can be better ascertained.

- **Sub-categorization:** Helps in the sub-categorization of OBCs and other groups to ensure equitable distribution of benefits and address intra-group disparities.

- o Justice Rohini Commission on sub-categorization of OBCs, formed in 2017, is yet to present its report.

- **Comprehensive National Database:** A central database of all castes, enumerated with full transparency in an objective manner is necessary amidst various state level discrepancies in

caste surveys for a data driven good governance process.

## **50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SIKKIM'S STATEHOOD**

- Sikkim was made a full-fledged State of the Union of India under the Constitution (36th Amendment) Act, 1975.

- o Earlier, Constitution (35th Amendment) Act, 1974 granted Sikkim the status of an "Associate State" of the Union of India under Article 2A.

- > Article 2A was repealed by the Constitution (36th Amendment) Act, 1975.

- It became 22nd State of India.
- Article 371F grants certain special provisions to the state of Sikkim.

## **INCLUSIVE DIGITAL ACCESS PART OF ARTICLE 21: SUPREME COURT**

Recently, Supreme Court in *Amar Jain V Union of India and Ors.* judgment held that inclusive and meaningful digital access to e-governance and welfare delivery systems is a part of the fundamental right to life and liberty.

### **Key Highlights of Judgment**

- **Directed to revise the digital Know-YourCustomer (KYC) norms:** To enable persons with facial disfigurement due to acid attacks or visual impairment to access banking and e-governance services.

- o Under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, the Court issued twenty directions to make the eKYC process accessible to them.



- **Invoking the 'principle of substantive equality':** Digital transformation must be both inclusive and equitable.

- **Part of Article 21:** Right to digital access emerges as an instinctive component of the right to life and liberty.

- **State's obligation:** Under Articles 21 [Right to a dignified life], 14 [Right to Equality], 15 [Right against discrimination], and 38 [directs the State to promote Social Justice] of the

Constitution, state is obliged to ensure digital infrastructure to all vulnerable marginalized populations.

## Other Supreme Court Judgments on Right to Internet Access

 <b>Sabu Mathew George v. Union of India (2017)</b>	 <b>Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020)</b>
Ordered blocking of prenatal sex determination ads without restricting information access or free speech.	Recognized Internet access as a Fundamental Right under Articles 19(1)(a) (free speech) and 19(1)(g) (trade).

### POWER OF COURTS TO MODIFY ARBITRAL AWARDS

Supreme Court recently held that courts have limited powers to modify arbitral awards. SC in the **Gayatri Balasamy v. ISG Novasoft Technologies Limited**, held that the power to modify awards can be exercised under Section 34 or 37 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 under the following circumstances:

- When the award is severable by separating the invalid portion from the valid portion.
  - o SC cited the doctrine of *omne majus continet in se minus* (the greater power includes the lesser), i.e. the power to set aside an arbitral award necessarily includes the power to set it aside in part.
- Correct any clerical, computation or typographical errors.
- Modify post-award interest in some circumstances.
- Under Article 142 (enabling Courts to do complete justice) of the Constitution provided this power should be in consonance with the fundamental principles of the 1996 Act.



## Arbitration in India

- **Meaning:** It is a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms (others being conciliation and mediation) involving consensual method of resolving disputes outside of a national judicial system through a private system of adjudication.
- **Significance:** Less adversarial, Flexible, Quicker, etc.
- **Legal Framework:** The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 modelled as per the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration, 1985.
  - o Section 34(1) of the Act stipulates 'recourse' to a court only by an application for setting aside the award.
  - o Section 37 states instances where an appeal may lie against orders.

## ROHINGYAS AND PROVISIONS RELATED TO REFUGEES AND DEPORTATION

The Supreme Court (SC), while hearing petitions related to deportation and living conditions of Rohingya refugees, highlighted that they cannot claim reliefs based on the UNHCR cards.

- UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) is a global organization to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people.
  - o India is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

## **Statutory Provisions in India related to Refugees and Deportation**

- India does not have a separate law to deal with 'refugees'. Thus, case for refugee 'status' are considered on a case-by-case basis based on the policy of bilateralism.
  - o Refugees come under the definition of 'alien' and 'foreigners'.
- **Foreigners Act, 1946:** Section 3 of the Foreigners Act vest the Central Government with powers to detain and deport foreign nationals staying illegally in the country.



- Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920: Centre may direct the removal of any foreigner from India who enters India without passport & visa.

- o According to Articles 258(1) and 239(1) of the Constitution, States/UTs are also entrusted with these powers.

## CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)

The foreign ministers of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to extend the China Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan.

### **What is China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)?**

- CPEC is the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched in 2015.
- It is the link between the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road.
- The projects under the CPEC mainly relate to energy and infrastructure.
- The 3000 kilometres of roads, railways and pipelines are intended to transport oil and gas from Pakistan's Gwadar Port to Kashgar City in northwestern China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).



## **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**

- BRI proposed by China in 2013 to improve connectivity and cooperation on a transcontinental scale.
- BRI also known as One Belt One Road (OBOR):
  - o Silk Road Economic Belt (the “Belt”): The overland “Belt” links China to Central and South Asia and onward to Europe.
  - o New Maritime Silk Road (the “Road”): The maritime “Road” links China to the nations of South East Asia, the Gulf countries, East and North Africa, and on to Europe.

## **CONCERNS RAISED BY INDIA OVER IMF’S LENDING TO PAKISTAN**

International Monetary Fund’s (IMF’s) Executive Board completed the first review of Pakistan’s economic reform program supported by the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Arrangement.

- IMF allowed the disbursement of around \$1 billion (Special Drawing Rights (SDR) 760 million) under EFF.
  - o EFF: It assists countries experiencing serious payment imbalances because of structural impediments or slow growth and an inherently weak balance-of-payments position.
- It also approved lending of US\$1.4 billion (SDR 1 billion) under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) lending program.
- India criticized the approval of the lending and abstained from the voting process.



## International Monetary Fund (IMF)



Washington, D.C. (USA)



**Genesis:** Established in the **United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference**, 1944 (also known as **Bretton Woods Conference**) along with the World Bank.

⇒ IMF and World Bank are referred to as **Bretton Woods Institutions**.



### Mandate:

- ⇒ Promoting **global macroeconomic and financial stability**.
- ⇒ Providing **short-and medium-term loans** to help countries that are experiencing balance of payments problems.
- ⇒ Providing **technical assistance and training** to help governments to implement better economic policies.



**Membership:** 191 Countries (**India is a member**)

⇒ To become a member of the World Bank, a country must first join the IMF.



### Organizational Structure:

- ⇒ **Board of Governors:** Highest decision-making body of IMF composed of 1 governor and 1 alternate governor from each member country.
- ⇒ **Executive Board:** 25-member board oversees day-to-day work.
  - **Normally makes decisions based on consensus**, but sometimes takes formal votes.
  - The votes of each member are equal to the sum of its basic votes (equally distributed among all members) and quota-based votes, so that a member's quota determines its voting power.
  - **India's quota is 2.75%** (8th largest) while the US's Quota is about 17%.
- ⇒ **International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC):** A 25-member advisory body represents member countries or groups of countries.



**Key Reports:** World Economic Outlook, Global Financial Stability Report etc.

## NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK

Algeria became 9th member of NDB.

### About NDB (Hq: Shanghai, China)

- Genesis: 2015 by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) countries.
- Purpose: It is a Multilateral development bank for mobilising resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs).
- Members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Bangladesh, UAE, Egypt, Algeria.
  - o The membership is open to members of the United Nations, including both borrowing and non-borrowing members (Article 2 of the NDB).



o Uruguay is listed as the prospective member (admitted by NDB's Board of Governors but will officially become a member after depositing its instrument of accession).

- Capital and Shareholding: Out of the initial authorized capital of \$100 Billion, all 5 founding members have an equal share totaling \$50 Billion.
- Voting Power: Combined voting power of founding members to be atleast 55%

## **INDIA OVERTAKES JAPAN TO BECOME 4TH LARGEST ECONOMY**

As per the recent World Economic Outlook of the IMF, India has surpassed Japan to become 4th largest economy worldwide.

### **Key drivers for India's Economic Leap**

- Structural: Urbanization and rising aspirations leading to rise in per capita income and lifestyle consumption, demographic dividend (India's current median age is ~29 years), strong domestic demand (private consumption contributes nearly 70% to GDP), etc.
- Policy: Taxation and business reforms (implementation of GST, IBC, Corporate Tax cuts, etc.), push for infrastructure (National Infrastructure Pipeline, PM Gati Shakti, etc.), Atmanirbhar Bharat and Production-linked incentive, etc.
- Technological: Digital Public Infrastructure (UPI, JAM Trinity, etc.), strong global demand for Indian IT, software exports, and consulting services, etc.
- External and global factors: Increased FDI inflows, Global supply chain rebalancing with strategies like 'China Plus One' and Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, etc.

### **Future prospects for the Indian Economy**

India is well positioned to become 3rd largest economy in the coming 2.5 to 3 years due to factors like:

- Energy transition: Rapid growth in renewable energy capacity (targeting 500 GW by 2030) and leadership in global platforms like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) positions India as a green growth leader.

- Regulatory stability: Reforms in banking sector (e.g., bank recapitalization) and strong regulatory institutions like RBI ensure macroeconomic stability.

## Ten Largest Economies (Based on GDP)



### PREDATORY PRICING

Recently, Competition Commission of India has notified the Cost Regulations, 2025 providing new definitions to curb predatory pricing.

#### About Predatory Pricing

- Definition: The sale of goods or provision of services at a price below the cost with a view to reduce competition or eliminate competitors.
- Section 4(2) of the Competition Act, 2002 identifies predatory pricing by a dominant enterprise as an abusive practice.
- Impact of predatory pricing:
  - o On customers: Beneficial in the short term with lower prices but they suffer in the long term due to lesser options and higher prices.



o On Companies: Harms all companies in the short term but once competitors are driven out, the monopolised companies raise prices and recover lost profits.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS' AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

A YouTube vlogger/influencer from Haryana, has been arrested on charges of espionage.

- The Social Media influencer was booked under Sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act and Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)
- Section 152 of the BNS deals with 'Act endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.'

## **OPERATION HAWK**

CBI launched Operation Hawk to crack down on global cybercrime networks involved in online child sexual exploitation.

- The operation follows Operation CARBON (2021) and Operation Megh Chakra (2022) to track suspects and dismantle such networks with international links.

## **SUPREME COURT STRIKES DOWN RETROSPECTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCES**

In *Vanashakti v. Union of India* (2025), the SC restrained the Centre from granting ex-post facto environmental clearance (EC) to mining projects or regularising actions that contravene the 2006 EIA notification.

- The EIA Notification, 2006, clearly requires 'prior environmental clearance' before a project can start.
- The court also held that such notification issued by the Centre (MoEFCC) were illegal, arbitrary, and violative of Articles 14 (equality before law) and 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution.

- Previously, in *Common Cause v. UOI & Ors.* (2017), Supreme Court held that the concept of ex post facto or retrospective environmental clearance is completely alien to environmental jurisprudence.

## **ASIATIC LION POPULATION INCREASES IN GUJARAT**

Asiatic Lion population increases from 674 to 891 in 5 years according to the Lion Census (2025)

- There has been an increase in the number and distribution area of Asiatic Lions (also outside Gir National Park), exemplifying the success of 'Project Lion.'
- The census conducted (every 5 years) by the Gujarat Forest Department.

## **SATELLITE INTERNET SERVICES**

Indian telecom companies Airtel and Jio signed a deal with SpaceX to bring Starlink's satellite internet services to India.

### **About Satellite Internet**

- Definition: Satellite internet or satellite broadband, is a wireless internet connection provided through communication satellites orbiting the Earth.
- Difference: Unlike land-based internet services such as fiber, cable, or DSL, it doesn't rely on wires to transmit data.
- Infrastructure: Satellite internet system architecture generally includes three segments:
  - o Space Segment: It is mainly a constellation system composed of several communication satellites, which is responsible for receiving and forwarding satellite signals and providing satellite signal coverage to users.
    - > Satellites can be positioned in various types of orbits based on the demand.
  - o Ground segment: Includes satellite measurement and control networks, gateway stations, etc., and mainly plays the role of connecting the satellite Internet and ground communication networks.



- o User segment: Includes various communication terminals used by users

## **DEEPPFAKES**

Recently, the US enacted Take It Down Act” to tackle harmful deepfakes online.

### **What are Deepfakes?**

- About: Deepfake is a video, photo, or audio recording that seems real but has been manipulated with AI blurring the line between reality and manipulation.
- Technology: deep learning techniques are used for making such videos
  - o Deep learning represents a subset of machine learning which are themselves a subset of artificial intelligence.
  - o It involves replacing faces, manipulating facial expressions, synthesising speech, appearing to say or do things not actually done.

## **ISRO'S 101ST MISSION FAILS AS PSLV ROCKET SUFFERS MALFUNCTION**

ISRO's 63rd PSLV mission (PSLV-C61/EOS-09) failed due to a technical malfunction during the third stage of the PSLV rocket.

- Since its first flight, Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) has failed only twice - inaugural flight in 1993 and again in 2017.

### **About PSLV-C61/EOS-09 Mission**

- PSLV-C61 was meant to carry the EOS-09 (Earth Observation Satellite-09) into a Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbit (SSPO).
  - o It was launched from the First Launch Pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- EOS-09 is an advanced Earth observation satellite, equipped with C-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) technology.





- Objective: To provide continuous and reliable remote sensing data for operational applications across various sectors.

- o This satellite can capture high-resolution images of the Earth's surface in any weather, day or night.

## About PSLV

- It is India's third-generation launch vehicle, developed by ISRO.
- It is a four-stage vehicle and first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages.
- Achieved first successful launch in October 1994 and earned the title "the workhorse of ISRO" for its consistent performance.
- Capable of launching satellites into LEO, Geosynchronous, and Geostationary orbits, like satellites from the IRNSS Constellation.
  - o Successfully launched major missions like Chandrayaan-1 (2008) and Mars Orbiter Spacecraft (2013).

## SUSHRUTA AND CHARAKA

The Vice-President unveiled the statues of Sushruta and Charaka in Goa, highlighting the importance of drawing inspiration and motivation from their lives and contributions.

### About Sushruta:

- Believed to have flourished around 600 BCE in the ancient city of Kashi.
- Believed to be a disciple of Divodasa from the Gurukul of Dhanwantri.

### Significant Contributions:

- Author of Sushruta Samhita:
  - o It can be divided into two parts, the original tantra is pūrvārdha having five sections, and the later half uttaratantra, is added afterwards.
  - o One of the Great Trilogy of Ayurvedic Medicine (Others being Charaka Samhita by Maharishi Charak and Astanga Hridaya by Vagabhata).

- Known as “The Father of Surgery”:
  - o Mentions Eight types of Surgical procedures in Sushruta Samhita: chedya (excision), lekhyā (scarification), vedhya (puncturing), esya (exploration), ahrya (extraction), vsraya (evacuation), and sivya (suturing).
- One of the first to study human anatomy: He described the study of anatomy in detail in the Sushruta Samhita, utilising a dead body as an aid.
- “The Father of Plastic Surgery”: Pioneered nose reconstruction using cheek flaps, repair of cut earlobes, piercing of earlobes, repair of cut lips, and the utilisation of skin grafting techniques.
- Medical Ethics: Established the original code of medical ethics as a teacher of medicine at Benares University.

## About Charaka:

- He is believed to have lived between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE in North West India.
- He was the royal physician in the Kushan Kingdom and is known as the “father of Indian medicine”.

## Significant Contributions:

- Author of Charaka Samhita
  - o The source of Charak samhita is identified as the Agnivesha Tantra composed by Agnivesha.
  - o It is divided into eight portions, known as ashtanga sthanas.
  - o It is a comprehensive treatise that remains one of the foundational texts of Ayurvedic medicine:
  - o It catalogued medicinal plants and documented their therapeutic properties.
- Direct impact of Acharya Charak's knowledge in modern medical science

o Tridosha theory: Three doshas, or principles, are responsible for a body's functionality, i.e. movement (Vata), transformation (Pitta), and lubrication and stability (Kapha).

> This theory dictates that disease originates from the imbalance of the Tridosh.

o Ayurvedic medicines: Discussed various medicines in Charak Samhita which are used in the treatment of diseases.

> Even in modern medical sciences, many ayurvedic medications are being used appropriately, like Ashwagandha, Tulsi, Triphala, etc.

o Yog: Acharya Charak considered yog, useful for health and soul and described it in detail in Charak Samhita.

## **GALLANTRY AWARDS**

President conferred Kirti Chakras and Shaurya Chakras to the personnel of the

- Armed Forces,
- Central Armed Police Forces and
- State/Union Territory Police.

## **About Gallantry Awards**

- Wartime awards: Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra, and Vir Chakra which were established in 1950.
- Peacetime awards: Established in 1952, Ashoka Chakra Class-I, Class-II, and Class-III, but renamed as Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra, and Shaurya Chakra (respectively) in 1967.
- Announcement is made Twice a year: On Republic Day and Independence Day.
- Order of Precedence: Param Vir Chakra, Ashok Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra, Kirti Chakra, Vir Chakra and Shaurya Chakra.
- They could be awarded posthumously also.

## **MAJOR DHYAN CHAND KHEL RATNA AWARD**

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty received the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award.

- The badminton pair reached the No. 1 rank in Badminton World Federation rankings in 2023 & clinched Asian Games gold medal in Hangzhou.

### **About Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award**

- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- Genesis: Established in 1991–92 as the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, it was renamed the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award in 2021.
  - It is considered India's highest sporting honour.
- Objective: To recognize the most outstanding performance by a sportsperson over the preceding 4 years.
- Eligibility: Only performances in recognized international events are considered.
- Award: ₹25 lakh cash prize, Medal and a certificate of honour.

## **PULITZER PRIZE**

The New York Times won four Pulitzer Prizes and The New Yorker three for journalism in 2024.

### **About Pulitzer Prize**

- The Annual Pulitzer Prize is an esteemed set of awards presented annually by Columbia University in New York City.
- Pulitzer Prizes were established by Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian-American journalist and newspaper publisher, who left money to Columbia University upon his death in 1911.
- It recognizes outstanding achievements in journalism, letters, and music.
- It was first awarded in 1917.