

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Three Years of Abraham Accords:

In Context: September 2023 marks an important milestone for West Asia and North Africa - 3 years since the signing of the Abraham Accords.

What is Abraham Accord?

- Signed in - 2020
- Agreement between - United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Israel.
- Mediated by – The US
- Objective- To normalise ties between these Arab Gulf states and Israel.
- Following the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, 5 Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, UAE, Morocco and Sudan) have established diplomatic ties with Israel.

Arab countries with diplomatic ties to Israel



Background of Israel- Arab relation

- Arab governments refused to extend diplomatic recognition to Israel after its independence in 1948.
- A series of Arab-Israeli wars took place in the decades that followed which includes the Six-Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973).
- In 1979, Egypt became the first Arab country to conclude a peace treaty with Israel (Camp David Accords).
- Israel later agreed to a two-state solution with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993, and, as a result, Jordan concluded a peace agreement with Israel in 1994.
- However, the two-state solution failed to materialize within the intended time frame.
- In 2002, the Arab League endorsed a Saudi proposal (known as the Arab Peace Initiative) for its member states to establish normal relations with Israel in exchange for an independent Palestinian state.
- Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority soon dissipated, the proliferation of Israeli settlements compounded the challenges of creating a viable state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

How Abraham Accords promote regional ties among the parties?

- Diplomatic ties - It had led to normalising diplomatic ties of Israel with the UAE and two other countries in the region, marking an important shift in the stance of West Asian countries on Israel.
- Security - Normalization has opened new opportunities for defense and security cooperation, especially among Israel, Bahrain, and the UAE, which share a common perspective on the security threat posed by Iran.
- People to people connect - – It not only connects governments but also brings people together, despite the differences in their language, religious beliefs, cultures and more.
- Trade - The scope of trade between Israel and other West Asian countries increased 74% between 2021 and 2022.
- Tourism –Number of visits from Israel to the UAE & Bahrain has increased largely.

- Collaborative projects –The Prosperity Green & Blue agreement was signed between Israel, the UAE, and Jordan.
- A solar field in Jordan to supply 600 megawatts of electricity to Israel in return for water from Israel.
- Programmes for Youth – Youth delegations between two nations have been initiated, encouraging bonds between tomorrow's leaders.
- Educational collaboration – Shared educational activities and advance student and professor exchange programme were started.
- Foster coexistence and religious tolerance – UAE has incorporated Holocaust education into its school curriculum as a mandatory subject.

How the Abraham Accords benefits India?

- India holds a significant position among Abraham Accord partners.
- Improved connectivity – Greater convenience of direct flights between the UAE and Israel, as well as between Israel and Bahrain.
- Indian students – They are enjoying increased ease of travel, gaining improved access to Israeli universities and the opportunity to explore international study programmes.
- Trade – The normalisation has increased the flow of economic opportunities reaching India.
- Companies from the UAE, Israel, Bahrain, and the U.S., are partnering with the Indian private sector.
- New joint ventures were set in Bahrain, Israel, UAE and India in critical sectors such as clean energy, health, innovation, technology, agriculture, water, trade, tourism, etc.
- Promoted the I2U2 Group – I2U2 group, which has been called the “West Asian Quad”, comprises of India, Israel, the U.S., and the UAE.
- Its primary focus will be on joint investments in critical areas such as water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.

What are the shortcomings of the Accord?

- Engaging other countries - Despite some softening in its position on bilateral relations, Saudi Arabia has held firm in its commitment to the pre-existing Arab Peace Initiative (API).
- For Palestinians – The stalemate between Israel and the Palestinians is still a hindrance to expanding the circle of normalization.
- None of these deals changed the situation on the ground in the Middle East's hotspots, particularly in Palestine.
- Israel continues to be engaged in systematic ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.
- Public opinion - Despite the normalisation efforts, surveys indicate that Arab publics continue to view Israel in a negative light.

REPORT AND INDEX

'State of Working India 2023' report.

In Context: Azim Premji University's Centre for Sustainable Employment released the 'State of Working India 2023' report.

ABOUT:

- ✓ The paper examines the impact of India's economic slowdown from 2018 to 2020, as well as the accompanying Covid-19 outbreak, on the labor market.
- ✓ It makes use of data from the National Statistical Office, such as Employment-Unemployment Surveys and Periodic Labour Force Surveys.

The 'State of Working India 2023' Report's Key Findings

- ✓ More rapid structural change: Between 2004 and 2017, around 3 million regular wage employment were generated each year. This increased to 5 million every year between 2017 and 2019. Due to the slowing of growth and the pandemic, the rate of regular wage job creation has slowed since 2019.
- ✓ There has been an upsurge in upward mobility: in 2004, more than 80% of the sons of casual wage employees were themselves in casual employment. This was true for both SC/ST and other caste workers. This declined from 83% to 53% for non-SC/ST castes by 2018, and the prevalence of better quality work, such as regular paying jobs, grew. It also declined for the SC/ST castes, but to a lesser level (86% to 76%).
- ✓ Caste segregation has decreased: Between 1983 and 2021, the proportion of regular wage workers classified as SC rose. In 2021, 32% of general caste workers were employed on a regular pay, compared to 22% of SC workers. The paper also examines firm ownership statistics and concludes that general castes are over-represented to a large extent.
- ✓ Earnings differences between men and women have narrowed: in 2004, salaried women workers received 70% of what men earned. By 2017, the wage disparity had narrowed, with women earning 76% of what men did. Since then, the difference has stayed steady until 2021-22.

- ✓ Women in the workforce: Between 1983 and 2021, the percentage of women in businesses such as tobacco, education, health and social work, and textiles climbed, while it fell in waste management and sewage. Nonetheless, women outnumber men in all of these fields.
- ✓ Unemployment is decreasing but still high: For all education levels, the post-Covid unemployment rate is lower than the pre-Covid rate. However, it continues above 15% for graduates and, more concerning, it reaches a staggering 42% for graduates under the age of 25.
- ✓ The link between growth and excellent jobs remains shaky: Since the 1990s, year-on-year nonfarm GDP growth and nonfarm employment growth have been uncorrelated, implying that measures favoring faster growth do not necessarily promote faster job creation. However, moderate growth turned into decent employment between 2004 and 2019.
- ✓ Man Breadwinner Norm: Because of the "male breadwinner" norm, as the husband's salary rises, so does the likelihood of the wife working. In rural places, the chance decreases as the husband's income rises.

PRELIM FACTS

1. Pamban Railway Sea Bridge

IN CONTEXT: The new Pamban railway sea bridge in Tamil Nadu, which was supposed to be finished by November, may fall behind schedule.



About

- ✓ The New Pamban Bridge is a railway sea bridge that connects Mandapam on the Indian mainland with Rameswaram on Pamban Island.
- ✓ The new bridge's construction began in 2019. Rail Vikas Nigam Limited is building it.
- ✓ The 2.05-kilometer-long bridge is India's first vertical lift sea bridge.
- ✓ The bridge is being built across geographically difficult terrain since it is in a corrosive coastal environment that is also cyclone-prone and has significant wind velocity.
- ✓ It is being built parallel to and will eventually replace the aging Pamban bridge.

Pamban Bridge (Old)

- ✓ The new Pamban railway sea bridge in Tamil Nadu, which was supposed to be finished by November, may fall behind schedule.
- ✓ It was built in 1914 to connect Mandapam in mainland India to the Rameswaram island situated in the Gulf of Mannar.
- ✓ It was the only link connecting the two locations until a new road bridge was built parallel to the sea link in 1988.
- ✓ Historically, the railway line bifurcated after reaching Pamban Island – one 10.06 km line leading towards Rameswaram and another branch line of 24 km terminating at Dhanushkodi. However, the Dhanushkodi line was destroyed by a cyclone in 1964

Vertical Lift Sea Bridge

- A vertical-lift bridge is a type of movable bridge in which a span rises vertically while remaining parallel with the deck.
- It uses a system of counterweights and cables to move an interior lift span section that remains horizontal as it is raised up and down like an elevator, allowing river traffic to pass beneath the structure.

2. Pramila Mallik

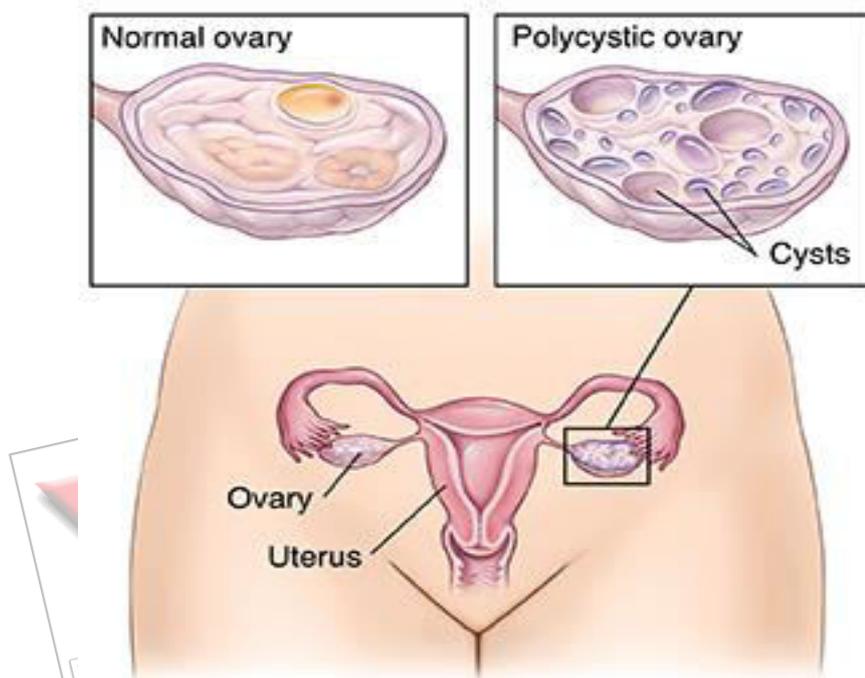
IN CONTEXT: Pramila Mallik has been nominated as the first woman Speaker of the Odisha Legislative Assembly.

About

- ✓ She is a six-time MLA from Binjharpur Assembly Constituency, Jajpur district, first elected in the year 1990.
- ✓ She has also held different portfolios as Cabinet Minister and is Odisha Revenue and Disaster Management Minister.
- ✓ The post of speaker has been lying vacant after former speaker Bikram Keshari Arukha was appointed Finance Minister during the last reshuffle of the cabinet by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

3. Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

In Context: Various studies and reports reveal Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) as an increasingly common health issue among modern Indian women. One in five women in India grapples with PCOS, with 60% of those seeking infertility treatments doing so due to PCOS-related problems.



VANIK- IAS
for UPSC/OPSC

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

- ✓ **About:** Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a common hormonal condition that affects women of reproductive age. It usually starts during adolescence.
 - It is a condition in which the **female's ovaries** are affected.
 - Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a **multifactorial endocrine disorder** which is characterized by chronic anovulation.
 - ✓ **Symptoms:** Irregular periods, hirsutism, weight gain are the common symptoms of PCOS.
 - The woman who is suffering from PCOD, will have a condition in which her ovaries will start to produce underdeveloped eggs.
 - ✓ These eggs in future take the form of cysts inside the ovaries, but the increment of the male hormones (androgen) produces the follicular cysts in the ovary every month.
 - ✓ **Causes:** Genetic predisposition, often marked by a family history of diabetes or obesity, exposed to environments that encourage neither a healthy diet nor regular exercise and are stress-laden.
 - ✓ **Prevention:** Encouraging exercise, stress management, better lifestyle and diet.
- 4. Swati Nayak From Odisha, To Receive The 2023 Norman Borlaug Field Award**
- ✓ Odia scientist Swati Nayak wins Norman Borlaug Award, for field research and application for her work in the field of food and nutrition.
 - ✓ She is the third Indian and first Odia to receive the award.
 - ✓ In Odisha, Nayak and her team formulated a strategy for introducing the drought-tolerant rice variety 'Shahabhagi Dhan' which remains an integral part of every farm family's diet and crop rotation. For this, she is referred to by the local communities as 'Bihana Didi'.

5. Bharatkosh Portal:

In context: The Union Minister of Civil Aviation launched an e-wallet payment option on Bharatkosh portal.

- ✓ Bharatkosh portal is the initiative of the Controller General of Accounts, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- ✓ It provides one-stop services to deposit any fees/fine/other money into the government's account. It converges all the Civil Ministries/Departments of the Government of India.
- ✓ It aims to provide 24X7 year-round electronic services to deposit money into Government account using internet-based payment technologies to the users at the door step through the web-based portal.
 - It thus leverages the e-Governance commitment of the Government to provide e-efficient, e-effective, e-excellent government anywhere anytime.
 - Initially, only NEFT/RTGS mode will be allowed for adding funds. The users would also be able to generate receipt and challan instantly

ANSWER WRITING

Q. India's proximity to two of the world's biggest illicit opium-growing states has enhanced her internal security concerns. Explain the linkages between drug trafficking and other illicit activities such as gunrunning, money laundering and human trafficking. What counter-measures should be taken to prevent the same? (250 words) 15

Introduction: The trade in opium is an attractive opportunity for it is highly addictive. Even through the government has made several steps to keep a check on its distribution, its underground trade has been mushrooming. India's location, to a large extent, is responsible for the large illicit trade in opium in the country. There are primarily 3 routes for trafficking opium into the country-the eastern border (Golden Triangle), the western border (Golden Crescent), and the sea route. Difficult terrain, absence of proper fencing, presence of a large coastline are some of the factors exploited by the drug traffickers. India's proximity to the world's biggest opium producers on its eastern and western flanks has traditionally been viewed as a source of vulnerability, since it has made India both a destination and a transit route for opium produced in the region. This proximity has also enhanced India's concern of internal security as once the route for trafficking drugs are created they can be exploited to also acts as the route for gunrunning, money laundering and human trafficking.

Linkages between drug trafficking and other illicit activities :

- ✓ An increasing interoperability has been witnessed between drug cartels and other criminal groups. In Afghanistan around 85% of the opium growing area falls under Taliban which inturn is used to fund its other heinous undertakings.
- ✓ Drug trafficking groups are often involved in human trafficking activities as there is some overlap between the routes used and there are advantages to be gained by sharing established logistical infrastructure, which includes transportation and storage facilities.
- ✓ Similarly, gunrunning and money laundering require logistics supports which are shared by these organizations. Hawala transactions are an important element of cross borders movement of this drug trafficking money.
- ✓ The revenue generated from drug trade is laundered to create assets such as casinos, bars, hotels etc. which again becomes breeding grounds for other crimes.
- ✓ Nexus between drug lords and armed groups gives rise to thriving weapons business.

Required counter-measures:

- ✓ Coordination among various agencies needs to be improved. Information/intelligence gathering regarding trafficking, its analysis and dissemination capabilities need to be strengthened.
- ✓ Various domestic laws enacted for the control of trafficking should be implemented stringently and severe punishments should be accorded to those involved.
- ✓ Above all greater cooperation with neighbours on matters of trafficking needs to be forged. For this, regional platforms need to be strengthened to deal with the issue in a holistic manner.
- ✓ Borders need to be sealed properly as the issue has been raised time and again. The recommendations of Madhukar Gupta Committee on border protection should be brought forward by the Government for a more robust and strengthened border management.
- ✓ Sensitizing the public against negative fallouts of drugs and starting rehabilitation programmes can be helpful.

Therefore an integrated strategy to weed out the menace of these organised crime to ensure safety and security of country is the need of the hour.

MCQs

- | | |
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| <p>1. Considered the following statement regarding World Rhino Day</p> <p>1. It celebrates every year of 22 September.</p> | <p>2. India have five species of rhino: Black, white, greater one-horned, Sumatran and Javan rhinos</p> |
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Which of the above statement is/are correct?

- a) **Only 1**
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 and 2

2. Considered the following statement:

1. Odia scientist Swati Nayak wins Norman Borlaug Award.
2. For field research and application for her work in the field of food and nutrition.
3. Introducing the drought-tolerant rice variety 'Shahabhagi Dhan'.

How many of the above statement is/are correct?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) **Only 3**
- d) None

3. Consider the following statements about Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023

1. The Data Principal has to give written consent to generate and process the data indicating the specific purpose of its use.
2. Data Protection Board of India (DPBI) will function as an impartial adjudicatory body responsible for resolving privacy-related grievances and disputes between relevant parties.
3. An appeal against any order of the DPBI shall lie only with the Supreme Court.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) **Only two**
- c) All three
- d) None of the above

4. With reference to the Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), consider the following statements:

1. It is a multifactorial endocrine disorder which is characterized by chronic anovulation.
2. It usually starts after a woman attains 40 years of age.
3. It can be cured by early diagnosis and medication.

How many statements given above are correct?

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

5. With reference to the new Pamban bridge, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The bridge is India's first ever vertical lift sea bridge.
2. The bridge will connect the town of Mandapam in mainland India with Rameswaram .

Choose the correct answer using the code given below:

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

6. With reference to White Label ATMs (WLAs), consider the following statements

1. These ATMs are set up, owned and operated by RBI.
2. These ATM operators are authorised under the Payment & Settlement Systems Act, 2007 by the RBI.
3. They can source cash from any scheduled bank, including Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

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

7. Consider the following statements

1. India aims to achieve the target of 20% ethanol blending by 2025-26
2. India has achieved the target of supplying 10 per cent ethanol-blended petrol ahead of schedule

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

8. With reference to Mohalla clinics, consider the following statements

1. It is the Delhi government's flagship project.
2. Each Mohalla Clinic is headed by a doctor.
3. District nodal officials supervise the operations of the Mohalla Clinics in their respective areas.
4. The Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Welfare is at the apex of the supervisory structure.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Two only
- b) Three only
- c) **All four**
- d) None

9. Oldest yet fossils of a plant-eating dinosaur, *Tharosaurus indicus* has been recently discovered in?

- a) **Rajasthan**
- b) Madhya Pradesh
- c) Chhattisgarh
- d) Haryana

10. With reference to the Gold Exchange-Traded Funds (ETF), consider the following statements:

1. These are units representing physical gold present only in paper form.
2. One Gold ETF unit is equal to 10 grams of gold.
3. RBI regulates the gold exchange-traded funds.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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