

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**Context: Former Navy Personnel Sentenced to Death in Qatar, Legal options with India, and its Implications on India-Qatar Relations.**

**WHY IN NEWS?**

Eight former Indian Navy personnel have been sentenced to death on espionage charges by a Qatari court. The defendants were charged with violating confidential information after their arrest in August 2022.



**What is the case's background?**

➤ **Accusations:**

- At the time of their arrest in Qatar in 2022, the accused individuals were allegedly accused of violating sensitive secrets while working for Al Dahra in Doha.
- Their employer, Dahra Global Technologies and Consultant Services, was also associated with the building of sophisticated Italian-built submarines that were renowned for their stealthiness.
- However, Qatari authorities have not released the exact charges against the eight Indian nationals.

➤ **Previous Trials:**

- In March and June of 2023, there were two trials for this case. Despite the fact that the detainees have been granted multiple opportunities for consular access, the case has remained under wraps for both Indian and Qatari authorities, who have cited its sensitivity.

➤ **India's Reaction:**

- India is investigating all available legal avenues to secure the release of its citizens who have been given death sentences, expressing profound shock and concern over the decision.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has expressed how seriously this case is taken and reaffirmed its commitment to offering the detained people consular and legal support.

➤ **What Effects Does This Case Have on Diplomacy?**

- The ruling may put pressure on ties between Qatar and India, where a large influx of Indian migrants supports diplomatic and economic exchanges.
- The Indian government is under pressure to take immediate action to save the lives of the detainees because there are more than seven lakh Indians living in Qatar.
- Their contributions are being made in various sectors. In Qatar, Indians are held in great regard for their integrity, diligence, technical know-how, and adherence to the law.
- It is estimated that the Indian expat community in Qatar sends 750 million dollars in remittances to India annually.
- Though generally stable, the relationship between Qatar and India is experiencing its first major crisis in this case.
- High-level meetings have taken place between the two countries; in 2016, the Indian Prime Minister visited Doha and met with the Emir of Qatar.

- Liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar is a major supplier to India, making up a sizeable amount of their imports.
- **What Alternatives Does India Have to Stop These Navy Personnel?**
- Diplomatic Options: To try to resolve the issue, India could hold direct diplomatic talks with the government of Qatar. Diplomatic leverage can be very useful given the strategic and economic significance of the relationship between the two nations.
- In order to stop the death penalty from being applied, the government may also employ diplomatic pressure.
- Among the options being considered are appealing the decision or utilizing the 2015 agreement between Qatar and India for the transfer of convicted criminals to serve out the remainder of their sentences in their native countries.
- The issue can be brought up globally by NGOs and civil society, and the UN can put pressure on United Nations
- **Legal Choices:**
- The first step is to file an appeal with the Qatari legal system. The death penalty recipients are able to appeal their sentences through the Qatari legal system.
- India is able to give the prisoners legal counsel and make sure that their right to appeal is vigorously upheld.
- India may claim jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) if proper procedures are not followed or if there is no appeals process.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) functions as a global court with dual jurisdiction, meaning that it can hear cases involving contentious disputes between states and requests for advisory opinions on legal matters referred to it by specialized agencies and United Nations bodies.
- Which cases did India participate in at the ICJ?
- Right of Passage over Indian Territory (Portugal v. India, finalized in 1960): Kulbhushan Jadhav Case (India vs. Pakistan).
- Appeal Concerning the ICAO Council's Jurisdiction (India v. Pakistan, finalized in 1972).
- Pakistan v. India: Pakistani Prisoners of War Trial (finalized in 1973).
- The August 10, 1999, aerial incident (Pakistan v. India, culminated 2000).
- Liabilities regarding the Nuclear Arms Race Cessation and Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations (Marshall Islands v. India, finalized 2016).
- **Way Forward**
- The road ahead is probably going to be difficult and might take patience and perseverance. While negotiating the difficulties of international diplomacy and the legal system in Qatar, India must never waver in its commitment to the welfare and legal rights of its citizens.
- A combination of international cooperation, legal action, and diplomatic efforts may be necessary for a successful resolution.

## ECONOMY

**Context: World must fight Inequality to Safeguard Ideals of Democracy**

**Why in News?**

- Our political and economic systems have changed due to the quick development of digital technology, unrestrained globalization, and growing inequality, which has stoked socio political unrest.

**Evidence of growing inequality**

**Global scenario:**

- Between 1820 and 1910, there was a steady increase in economic inequality worldwide.
- It has changed since then, and any estimate is contingent upon the particular techniques and metrics employed by the researchers.
- With the richest 1% of the world's population gaining 38% of the increase in global wealth between 1995 and 2021, compared to just 2% for the bottom 50%, the data unequivocally demonstrate that economic disparities have reached intolerable levels.

- There is no denying that wealth is becoming more concentrated.
  - Global wealth increased by 3.2% per year between 1995 and 2021.
- The wealthiest 0.000001% saw a 9.3% increase per year in wealth over the same time period.

➤ **The Indian situation**

- In the context of a stark income disparity made worse by the Covid pandemic, the number of Indian billionaires increased from 102 to 142, according to the Oxfam Report.
- An increase of 39% in India's billionaire population by 2021.
- According to the report, India has more billionaires than the combined numbers of France, Sweden, and Switzerland, and ranks third in the world, just behind China and the United States.
- The combined wealth of the top 100 richest individuals in India reached a record-breaking Rs 57.3 lakh crore (roughly USD 775 billion) in 2021.
- Just 6% of the nation's wealth went to the poorest 50% of the population in the same year.

➤ **Economic disparity poses a threat to democracy**

**About:**

- It's common to overlook the political ramifications of the current economic inequality.
- Excessive wealth concentrations threaten democracy in the modern era of globalized commerce and digital connectivity in two main ways:
- The erosion of global democracy by globalization
- Rich and powerful nations can now influence the welfare of people far beyond their borders thanks to the globalization of supply chains and finance.
- Although Burkina Faso's citizens are not allowed to vote in US presidential elections, the decisions made by US presidents have an equal impact on their daily lives as those made by their own leaders.
- Developing nations, however, are limited in their ability to oppose this hegemony because the United States will not allow the entire world participate in its presidential elections.

➤ **Wealth concentration:**

- The concentration of wealth in a small number of hands is opposed to democracy since extreme wealth is frequently linked to political power.
- This is especially true in the Big Tech era, where billionaires can control major media outlets or sway search engine results to exert an excessive amount of influence over public opinion.
- It is hoped that developments in generative AI will help reduce inequality by leveling the playing field in the technology industry.

➤ **Observations**

- Appropriate measures to lessen inequality: Inadequately planned initiatives to promote economic parity may have unfavorable effects.
- There are many examples in history of well-intentioned but poorly designed policies that attempted to lower inequality, only to backfire and unintentionally support the myth that government intervention is always bad.
- If policies aimed at decreasing economic inequality are defined by fusing good intentions with careful planning, they can produce substantial results.

➤ **Adding the concept of "relative" wealth:**

- We also need to acknowledge that, once a certain point is reached, relative rather than absolute inequality becomes more important to everyone, even the wealthiest.
- Thus, as long as the wealthy preserve their relative status, we can impose large taxes on them without diminishing their incentives.
- Put another way, billionaires will continue to be driven to raise their incomes as long as they comprehend that such taxes will not affect their standing among the world's wealthiest people, and the rest of us will benefit from their labours.

➤ **Imagining a universal basic income:**

- A basic income is a sum of money that is given to every citizen on an individual basis, without conditions attached to work or means testing.

- It is a type of guaranteed minimum income that is paid regardless of any additional income.
- A universal basic income (UBI) is policy redistribution taken to its most extreme; it places everyone on the state payroll.
- **Multiple-pronged approach:**
- To close the economic divide among its population, the government must decide on policy measures.
- This entails expanding employment prospects, boosting incomes, and granting access to improved healthcare and educational opportunities.
- Encouraging women to participate in the workforce and improving farm prospects can also have a big impact.
- Another useful financial tool in the fight against inequality is gender budgeting.
- **Way forward**
- India is no longer a nation primarily mired in extreme poverty. This nation has vulnerable populations, areas of extreme poverty, and widespread inequality.
- India is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 on behalf of the entire world.
- In order to accomplish the SDGs, we must acknowledge the inequality that already exists and work tirelessly to remove the structural causes of it.
- The Nordic model, which prioritizes social safety, healthcare, and education to reduce inequality, is one that is worthwhile to adopt.
- It is possible to establish an economy wherein no one experiences poverty or unimaginable wealth—one where inequality ceases to be a deadly threat.

### PRELIM FACTS

#### 1. ART AND CULTURE

**Context:** During his visit to Gujarat, the prime minister will pray at the well-known Ambaji temple in Banaskantha.

**Concerning Ambaji Temple:**

**Location:** Gujarat, India's Ambaji.

**Time frame:** the eighth century A.D.

**Administration:** A temple trust is in charge of the temple's administrative operations.

- One of the main Shakti Peethas in Hinduism is the Shri Ambaji Mata Temple. (Temple Kalika Mata)
- Ambaji, an incarnation of Amba Mataji, is honored in this temple.
- Out of the fifty-two Shakti Peeths, It is most renowned for its joyful ceremonies and poojas held in honor of festivals like Navratri and Diwali.
- Many consider the revered Shree Visa Yantra, which is housed in the main temple complex, to be a symbol of divine grace and power.
- The whole of Ambaji town is surrounded by many temples near Ambaji temple and pilgrim spots, attracting thousands of tourists from around the country and even overseas annually.

#### 2. SPORTS

➤ **Context:** Indian para-athletes have received praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for their remarkable performances at the Asian Para Games in 2023.

✓ **Regarding the 2023 Asian Para Games:**

✓ **Date:** October 22–28, 2023.

✓ **Location:** Hangzhou in China.

- The 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, Indonesia, were the most recent event.
- India sent the biggest delegation it has ever sent to the Asian Para Games in their fourth edition.
- There were 303 competitors total—112 women and 191 men.
- Compared to the 190 athletes India sent to the 2018 Asian Para Games, where they had their best-ever performance and won 72 medals; including 15 gold, this is a significant increase. (Association of Indian Olympiad)
- India won 111 medals in total during the Asian Para Games: There are 29 gold, 31 silver, and 51 bronze.



- The Asian Para rich haul is also a hat-tip to the parents, coaches and administrators who spotted and nurtured the sporting passion in the hearts and minds of children with physical disabilities.

**3. ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

- **Context: The air quality in Delhi continued to be hazardous as the overall Air Quality Index (AQI) in the city stood at 322 recently.**

**About Air Quality Index (AQI): -**

AQI LEVEL	HEALTH ISSUES	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
0-50	Good	The air quality is safe and poses no health risks to anyone.
51-100	Unhealthy	The air quality is fine. However, sensitive people are still prone to health risks due to minor pollutants present in the air.
101-150	Poor	People who are sensitive to the air pollution are at health risk. The air quality is safe for healthy fit people.
151-200	Severe	Fit and healthy people will catch hold of infections and viral due to many harmful air pollutants present in the air. Highly sensitive people are exposed to severe health risk.
201-300	Dangerous	The contaminated air threatens everyone with various health issues.
301-500	Hazardous	High Alert Emergency: This level of air quality is a serious threat to life both for sensitive and healthy people. It can severely affect the health or even lead to death.

- Government organizations use the Air Quality Index (AQI) to calculate air pollution levels and notify the public of them. (Pollution of air)
- The AQI is divided into six categories: Very Poor, Severe, Good, Satisfactory, and Moderately Polluted.
- Health breakpoints, or ambient concentration values of air pollutants, are used to determine the likely health effects of each of these categories.
- Eight pollutants (PM10, PM2.5, NO2, SO2, CO, O3, NH3, and Pb) for which short-term (up to 24 hours) National Ambient Air Quality Standards are prescribed have evolved AQ sub-indices and health breakpoints.
  - A significant portion of the populace will suffer from serious adverse health effects as the AQI rises.
  - For the purpose of measuring the AQI, an air monitor and an air concentration of pollutants over a given period of time averaged.
  - Ranges are used to group the results.
  - A standardized public health advisory, a color code, and a descriptor are assigned to each range.
  - In India, as in most Asian countries, there are many different and poorly understood sources of pollution.
  - For instance, the main sources of pollution in Delhi are the traffic of light and heavy-duty vehicles, road dust, the burning of solid fuels for cooking and heating, biomass, waste burning, thermal power plants, diesel generators, construction, and small-scale local industries. Delhi's Air Pollution Problem
  - Pollutant concentration averaged over a specified time period.
  - The results are grouped using ranges.
  - Each range is given a colour code, a descriptor, and a standard public health advisory.
  - Like the majority of Asian nations, pollution in India comes from a wide variety of poorly understood sources.

- For example, the traffic of light and heavy-duty vehicles, road dust, burning of solid fuels for cooking and heating, burning of biomass, thermal power plants, diesel generators, construction, and small-scale local industries are the main sources of pollution in Delhi. The Air Pollution Issue in Delhi

#### 4. Governance

**Context: The Amrit Kalash Yatra, which is the culmination of the Meri Maati Mera Desh campaign, will be marked by a programme at Kartavya Path where Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take part.**

**Regarding the campaign Meri Maati Mera Desh:**

- From September 1 to October 31, 2023, is Amrit Kalash Yatra.
- In celebration of 75 years of Indian independence, the Union government has launched the "Meri Maati Mera Desh" campaign as the grand finale of the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav."
- As part of this campaign, soil gathered in August from various locations across the nation will be utilized to create a garden alongside Delhi's Kartavya Path.
- The "Mitti Kalash" are to be transported to the Kartavya Path ceremoniously brought to the larger municipalities/corporations.
- The purpose of this project is to honor and remember the martyrs' sacrifices.
- It comprises those who gave their lives while performing their duties, such as freedom fighters, defense workers, and members of the State Police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF). (Defense through self-reliance)
- **Five-Point Schedule:**
- **Shilaphalakam Installation:** Names of those who gave their lives in defense of the country will be inscribed on memorials that will be built.
- Pledge of Commitment: At the memorial sites, individuals will make a serious pledge.
- **Vasudha Vandhan:** Each village or gram panchayat will take part in this initiative by planting 75 native species saplings.
- **Veeron Ka Vandan:** Families of fallen freedom fighters will receive honors and congratulations.
- **Hoisting of the Flag:** The National Anthem will be played in unison as the Flag is proudly raised.

#### 5. Science and technology:

**CONTEXT: Airlines' Dark Pattern Sales deemed "Cybercrime"**

- Concerns about cybercrime may arise from the Ministry of Civil Aviation's focus on controversial practices that were found to be "dark patterns" in online travel agencies and airlines.
- This has resulted in a substantial surge of customer grievances, prompting government intervention. The government has specifically demanded that big airline Indigo address misleading online policies about seat selection and extra costs.
- Websites and apps that employ manipulative design techniques are known as dark patterns. They are designed to deceive or coerce users into actions they may not want to take.
- These can take the form of unstated costs, deceptive buttons, or perplexing designs, all designed to persuade users to take actions that are in the best interests of the business rather than themselves.

#### ➤ ECONOMY

**CONTEXT: The Penny-Drop Verification Requirement for NPS by PFRDA**

- In order to guarantee timely fund transfers during withdrawals, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has mandated "penny drop" verification for National Pension System (NPS) subscribers.
- In order to verify that a savings bank account is active, Central Recordkeeping Agencies (CRA) cross-reference the account's name with the subscriber's Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN) or provided documentation.
- Successful verification—including name matching—is essential for handling withdrawal and exit requests as well as changing subscriber bank account information.
- Any such requests are prohibited by the penny drop verification failure, which leads the CRA to work with nodal offices to correct.

**ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. In recent times, there has been a growing trend towards the use of electric vehicles. What obstacles are currently present in the Indian market, and what measures have the Indian government implemented to address them?**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Environmental concerns and technological advancements are the driving forces behind the global phenomenon of the surge in the adoption of electric vehicles, or EVs. This is a common trend in India. By 2030, the Indian government wants to see thirty percent of the nation's automobiles electrified. Nonetheless, a number of challenges confronting the Indian EV market prevent it from expanding quickly, necessitating deliberate government actions.

**The Indian EV Market's Barriers**

- **High Initial Costs:** Because batteries are more expensive than regular cars, electric vehicles (EVs) typically have higher upfront costs. This dissuades Indian customers who are price conscious.
- **Insufficient Infrastructure:** Insufficient infrastructure for charging presents a noteworthy obstacle. People who worry about running out of power without a nearby charging point experience range anxiety.
- **Battery Technology:** There is room for improvement in the longevity, charging speed, and range of EV batteries.
- **Supply Chain:** Specialized minerals and rare earth elements are needed for the production of lithium-ion batteries, which are an essential part of electric vehicles. India currently faces supply chain difficulties as a result of its heavy reliance on Chinese imports for the production of batteries.

**Governmental Actions:**

- **FAME Scheme:** In an effort to lower the initial cost for consumers, the government has put in place the FAME scheme to offer incentives for the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles.
- **Infrastructure for Charging:**
  - ❖ Initiatives such as 'Go Electric' and 'Charging Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles' have been introduced to support and encourage states to build public charging stations.
  - ❖ The 'Switch Delhi' campaign of the Delhi government intends to install 100 charging stations throughout the city; however, more such initiatives are required.
- **GST Reduction:**
  - ❖ EVs are now more affordable thanks to the 5% Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate reduction from 12% to 5%.
  - ❖ The production of electric vehicles and their components is encouraged by the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) program.

**Conclusion**

Realizing how crucial sustainable transportation is to the future of the country, the Indian government is moving to remove barriers in the EV market. India is moving toward a cleaner, more sustainable transportation sector by addressing cost issues, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering research and development. These actions will help India meet its "Nationally Determined Contributions" for climate action.

**MCQs**

1. The region 'Rafah crossing' often seen in news is in:
  - a) Egypt
  - b) Palestine**
  - c) Israel
  - d) Lebanon
2. With reference to 'Jagannath Temple', consider the following statements:
  1. It is built in the Kalinga style of architecture on an elevated platform.
  2. It was built during the reign of Eastern Ganga dynasty
 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
3. Consider the following statements regarding
  1. Santiniketan, founded by Debendranath Tagore is located in West Bengal.
  2. It is not a UNESCO World Heritage Site .

3. The architecture and design of Santiniketan's buildings are inspired by local tribal structures, reflecting an environmentally conscious approach.  
How many of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) **Only one**      b) Only two      c) All three      d) None
4. The concept of 'fall-back liability' sometimes seen in news is related to  
a) Merger of Public Sector Banks      b) Central Government grants to states  
c) **E-commerce Rules**      d) Recapitalisation of Banks
5. Consider the following nations:  
1. Turkmenistan      2. Uzbekistan  
3. India      4. Kazakhstan  
How many of the above nations are participants of Exercise KAZIND-2023?  
a) Only one      b) **Only two**      c) Only three      d) All four
6. Consider the following statements about International court of Justice (ICJ)  
1. Settles disputes between member states only  
2. It gives binding decision on legal issues  
Choose the correct answer given below  
a) **Only 1**      b) Only 2      c) Both 1 and 2      d) None of these
7. Consider the following statements about Van Allen belts.  
1. The belt lies between mesosphere and stratosphere  
2. Particles coming from Solar winds and cosmic rays contribute in the formation of these belts.  
3. It is a layer of energetic charged particles held around earth due to earth's gravitational field.  
Select the correct answer using the codes below  
a) 1 and 2 only      b) 3 only      c) **2 only**      d) 1 and 3 only
8. Which of the following countries are covered by the Congo Basin?  
a) Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia  
b) Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Chad  
c) **Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon**  
d) Mozambique Namibia Niger sao tome and principe
9. Consider the following:  
1. Monitoring Nuclear Proliferation  
2. Astrophysics Research  
3. Direct Imaging  
4. Geological Studies.  
In how many of the area(s) mentioned above does Neutrinos find application?  
a) Only one      b) Only two      c) **Only three**      d) All four
10. In the context of Immigration, the term 'Visa Shopping' refers to –  
a) Exploring different avenues for immigration based on visa availability  
b) Assessing the suitability of a visa for a specific situation.  
c) Evaluating and comparing the benefits and requirements of different visas.  
d) **Obtaining visas for countries that an individual may or may not visit during the granted visa period.**
11. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) consider the following statements:  
1. It aims to provide full compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentive, so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first child.  
2. Ministry of Women and Child Development is the nodal ministry for implementing the scheme.  
3. The benefit under PMMVY is to be provided to a woman for the first two children provided the second child is a girl.  
Which of the statements given above are correct?  
a) 1 and 2 only      b) **2 and 3 only**      c) 1 and 3 only      d) 1, 2 and 3