



**UPSC  
Mentorship**  
A Unit of Mentorship India

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

23 September 2024



SOURCES



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## GS I

# 1. How Earth May Once Have Had a Saturn-like Ring and Its Likely Impact

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Prelims:** Earth's History, Solar System, Impact Events

**Mains:** Planetary Science, Asteroids, Earth's Climate History

**Context:** Earth might have had a Saturn-like ring around 466 million years ago, formed from the debris of a destroyed asteroid and could be observed during the **Ordovician period**.

### Formation of Earth's Ring:

- Earth's ring would have been similar to those seen around Saturn, Jupiter, Neptune, and Uranus.
- It formed when an asteroid, pulled apart by Earth's gravity, broke into small and large pieces. The debris gradually coalesced into a ring around Earth's equator.

### Evidence from Craters:

- Scientists from Monash University discovered this ring by analysing 21 impact craters formed between 488 and 443 million years ago.
- Unusually, all these craters are located near the equator.
- Normally, asteroid impacts occur at random latitudes, suggesting these impacts were related to the debris from the ring.

### Impact of the Ring on Earth's Climate:

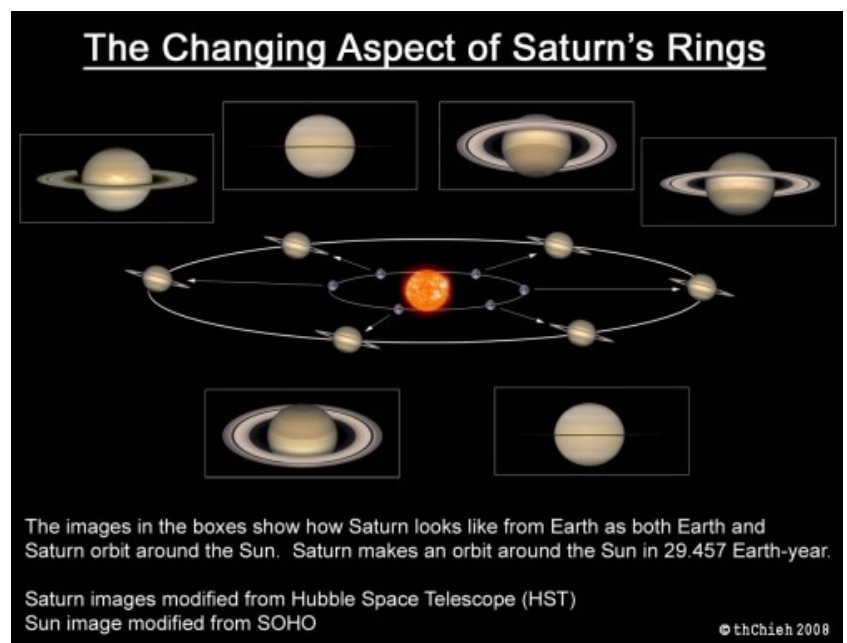
- The ring would have altered Earth's climate by shading parts of the planet. During winter, the ring would have blocked sunlight, contributing to cooling.
- Conversely, it may have increased solar energy reaching the summer hemisphere, enhancing seasonal differences.
- Overall, the ring could have acted as a "giant parasol," contributing to global cooling.

### Ordovician Climate Change:

- Around 460-465 million years ago, Earth's temperatures plummeted, culminating in the Hirnantian Ice Age, the coldest period in the last 500 million years.
- Scientists speculate that Earth's ring may have played a role in this dramatic cooling, but further research and climate modelling are needed to confirm its exact impact.

### Conclusion:

- While the discovery of Earth's ancient ring provides fascinating insights into planetary science and Earth's climatic history, its exact role in cooling the planet remains a subject of ongoing research.
- Scientists aim to create models that explore the ring's evolution and potential impact on global temperatures.



## GS II

### 2. In signal to China, Modi says Quad ‘not against anyone but we are here to stay’

Source: The Indian Express

Prelims: QUAD, Indo-Pacific, South China Sea, Geopolitical Alliances

Mains: Indo-Pacific Strategy, China’s Expansionism, International Relations, Maritime Security

Context: At the sixth Quad Summit in Delaware (Wilmington), Indian Prime Minister alongside leaders from the US, Japan, and Australia, emphasised that the Quad is not directed against any specific country but is committed to maintaining a rules-based international order.

#### Quad Declaration Highlights:

- Strong opposition to militarization and coercive actions in the South China Sea.
- Emphasis on maritime security and the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific.
- Condemnation of recent missile launches and aggressive actions by maritime militias in the region.

#### Initiatives Announced:

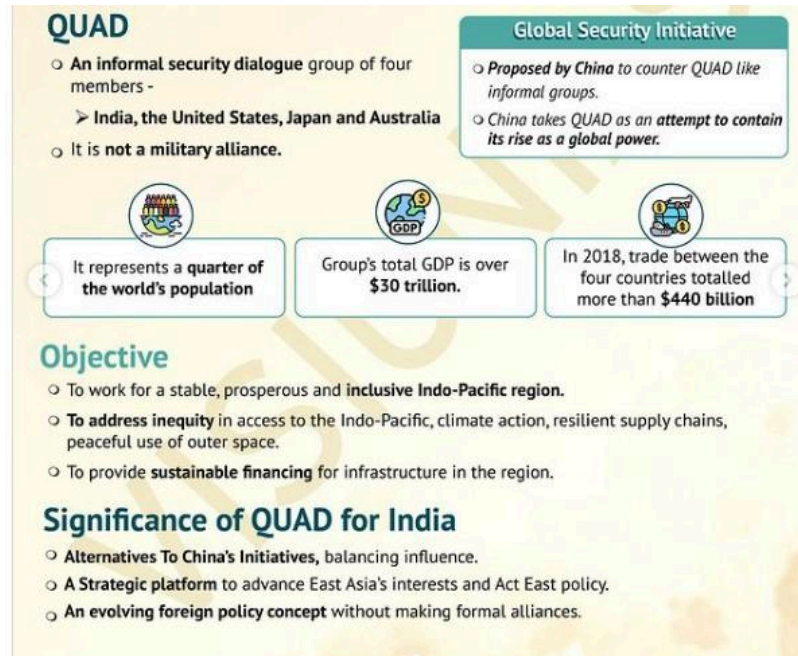
- **Quad Cancer Moonshot:** Initial focus on cervical cancer in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Maritime Cooperation:** New technologies for maritime monitoring and Coast Guard collaboration.
- **Quad Fellowship Expansion:** Now includes students from Southeast Asia.

#### Strategic Concerns:

- China remains the focal point, with leaders expressing concern over Beijing’s aggressive actions in maritime domains.
- The Quad also addressed global issues like the Ukraine conflict and Gaza, calling for humanitarian assistance and peaceful resolutions.

#### Conclusion:

- The Quad leaders underscored their long-term commitment to the Indo-Pacific region, advocating for a free, open, and inclusive environment free from coercion, setting the tone for future diplomatic and strategic engagement.



**QUAD**

- An informal security dialogue group of four members -
  - India, the United States, Japan and Australia
- It is not a military alliance.

**Global Security Initiative**

- Proposed by China to counter QUAD like informal groups.
- China takes QUAD as an attempt to contain its rise as a global power.

It represents a quarter of the world's population

Group's total GDP is over \$30 trillion.

In 2018, trade between the four countries totalled more than \$440 billion

**Objective**

- To work for a stable, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.
- To address inequity in access to the Indo-Pacific, climate action, resilient supply chains, peaceful use of outer space.
- To provide sustainable financing for infrastructure in the region.

**Significance of QUAD for India**

- Alternatives To China's Initiatives, balancing influence.
- A Strategic platform to advance East Asia's interests and Act East policy.
- An evolving foreign policy concept without making formal alliances.

### 3. Joe Biden hosts PM Narendra Modi at home: ‘Ties closer, more dynamic than ever’

Source: The Indian Express



**Prelims:** India-US Relations, Indo-US Strategic Partnership, Critical Technologies

**Mains:** Bilateral Relations, International Cooperation, Defence & Technology Collaboration

**Context:** US President hosted Indian Prime Minister in **Delaware (Wilmington)** during the Quad summit, their eighth meeting in four years. Biden called the US-India relationship “stronger, closer, and more dynamic than ever.”

**Key Highlights:**

- **Semiconductor Plant & Technology Partnerships:**
  - Both nations announced the creation of a semiconductor fabrication plant focused on advanced electronics for national security, telecommunications, and green energy.
  - This effort is supported by the India Semiconductor Mission and involves collaboration with US-based 3rdiTech and the US Space Force.
- **NASA-ISRO Joint Research on ISS:**
  - Progress was made on the NASA-ISRO collaboration, which will conduct scientific research aboard the International Space Station (ISS) in 2025.
- **Defence Collaboration:**
  - India is advancing its procurement of 31 remotely piloted aircraft (General Atomics MQ-9B) to enhance intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities for its armed forces.
- **Critical Minerals Supply Chain:**
  - The two nations are working on a pact to secure resilient supply chains for critical minerals, particularly for emerging digital technologies in Asia and Africa.
- **Other Agreements:**
  - A range of new initiatives were introduced, including cooperation in drug policy to curb synthetic drug production, collaboration in renewable energy, and cultural property repatriation agreements.

**Background:**

- The meeting in Delaware, held alongside the Quad Summit, was seen as a symbolic farewell
- There is a contribution to strengthening US-India relations and recalled previous diplomatic engagements, including the G20 Leaders’ Summit in 2023.

**Regional and Global Issues:**

- The leaders discussed global concerns, including the ongoing conflict in Ukraine for peace efforts and humanitarian support.
- There were further discussions about minority rights in Bangladesh and freedom of navigation in the Middle East, with India set to co-lead a maritime task force in 2025.

**Challenges:**

- While the talks focused on convergences, underlying tensions related to the pro-Khalistan movement surfaced.
- Notably, the absence of India’s National Security Advisor was attributed to domestic priorities, amidst controversy over assassination allegations involving Khalistani separatist leader Gurupatwant Singh Pannun.

**Conclusion:**

- This meeting marked significant milestones in bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors, affirming the growing dynamism of the US-India relationship as they prepare to address future challenges collaboratively.



## GS III

### 4. India, US to Enhance Cooperation in Threat Information Sharing and Telecommunications Security

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Prelims:** India-US Relations, Cybersecurity, Energy Networks, Defence Cooperation

**Mains:** Bilateral Cooperation, National Security, Defence & Technology Collaboration, Cybersecurity Threats

**Context :** During PM Modi's US visit for the Quad summit, India and the US agreed to enhance cooperation in threat sharing, cybersecurity, and energy and telecom vulnerability mitigation, underscoring their commitment to critical sectors.

**Cybersecurity Cooperation:**

- Both leaders agreed to advance joint efforts in cybersecurity training and vulnerability mitigation, particularly in critical infrastructure sectors.

**Defence Cooperation:**

- President Joe Biden lauded India's progress towards procuring 31 General Atomics MQ-9B drones to boost India's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities.

**Key Takeaways from the Meeting:**

- **Cyber Engagement:** India and the US anticipate further collaboration in cybersecurity during the November 2024 bilateral cyber engagement to enhance the existing cooperation framework.
- **Defence Space Dialogue:** The leaders recognized the significance of the May 2024 Advanced Domains Defense Dialogue, which featured the first bilateral defence space tabletop exercise.
- **Defence Procurement Roadmap:** Progress was made in co-production agreements for jet engines, munitions, and mobility systems under the US-India Defense Industrial Cooperation Roadmap.
- **MRO Sector Expansion:** Biden welcomed India's decision to streamline GST for the MRO sector, simplifying taxation on aircraft and engine parts, thus supporting India's goal to become an aviation hub.
- **C-130J Super Hercules:** A new teaming agreement between Lockheed Martin and Tata Advanced Systems to establish a Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility in India for the C-130J fleet was celebrated.

**Strategic Concerns:**

- The leaders discussed the mutual benefits of enhancing maritime domain awareness and improving defence industrial partnerships.
- The ongoing challenges of cybersecurity, energy, and telecommunications security also featured prominently in the dialogue, underscoring the evolving nature of the India-US partnership in critical sectors.

**Conclusion:**

- The Modi-Biden meeting underscored India and the US's commitment to advancing collaboration across defence, technology, and cybersecurity domains, ensuring a stronger and more resilient bilateral relationship.



## 5. Taking stock of India's military preparedness

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Prelims:** Joint Commanders' Conference (JCC), Defence Modernisation, Civil-Military Relations

**Mains:** India's Military Preparedness, Defence Budget, Modernisation of Armed Forces, Strategic Autonomy

**Context:** Defence Minister chaired the inaugural Joint Commanders' Conference (JCC) in Lucknow on September 5, 2024, to discuss national security and armed forces' readiness, complementing the existing Combined Commanders' Conference (CCC).

**Key Takeaways from the JCC:**

- **Defence Modernisation:** The JCC provided an opportunity to review the military's transformation, including the establishment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), a significant policy change.
- **Indigenisation Push:** It is emphasis on "aatmanirbharata" (self-reliance) in defence through the restructuring of Defence PSUs and encouraging private sector participation was acknowledged, though challenges like long gestation periods and slow progress were noted.
- **One Rank, One Pension (OROP):** To implement the long-pending OROP scheme was commended, though unresolved aspects remain.

**Strategic Concerns:**

- **Military Inventory Shortfalls:**
  - The conference highlighted the need for modernisation, with significant gaps in equipment across the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
  - The Army's inventory, for example, is still heavily reliant on vintage equipment (68%).
- **Capital Expenditure Issues:**
  - The depreciating value of the rupee has reduced India's defense procurement capacity, limiting the ability to acquire modern platforms from foreign suppliers.
- **Manpower Shortages:**
  - The armed forces are dealing with a personnel deficit, with the Army short of 1.36 lakh soldiers.
  - The Agnipath scheme's implementation has complicated recruitment patterns, requiring a comprehensive review.

**Conclusion:**

- The JCC provides a platform for a candid review of India's military preparedness, with a focus on modernisation and strategic autonomy.
- However, significant challenges remain in terms of equipment shortages, manpower, and budgetary constraints.
- Addressing these gaps is critical for India's national security, especially in the face of evolving threats from China and cross-border terrorism.

## 6. Why Azerbaijan's New Climate Fund May Not Be Enough to Plug the Finance Gap

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Prelims:** Climate Change, COP, Climate Finance Mechanisms

**Mains:** Climate Finance, International Climate Agreements, Role of Developed Countries in Climate Mitigation

**Context:** Azerbaijan, host of COP29, has proposed a new climate fund for developing countries, to be financed through voluntary contributions from fossil fuel producers. However, this initiative faces challenges in addressing the substantial climate finance gap.



**Azerbaijan’s Proposal:**

- Aims to generate voluntary contributions from fossil-fuel-producing nations and companies.
- This comes at a time when the negotiations for a comprehensive climate finance agreement post-2025 are stalled, despite the Paris Agreement’s mandate to increase the current \$100 billion in annual climate finance after 2025.

**Challenges with the Proposal:**

- While well-intentioned, Azerbaijan’s fund is unlikely to significantly boost climate finance.
- The main concern is that even mandatory funds, like the **Loss and Damage Fund established at COP27**, have struggled to attract contributions.
- Azerbaijan’s fund, being voluntary, may face even greater difficulties.

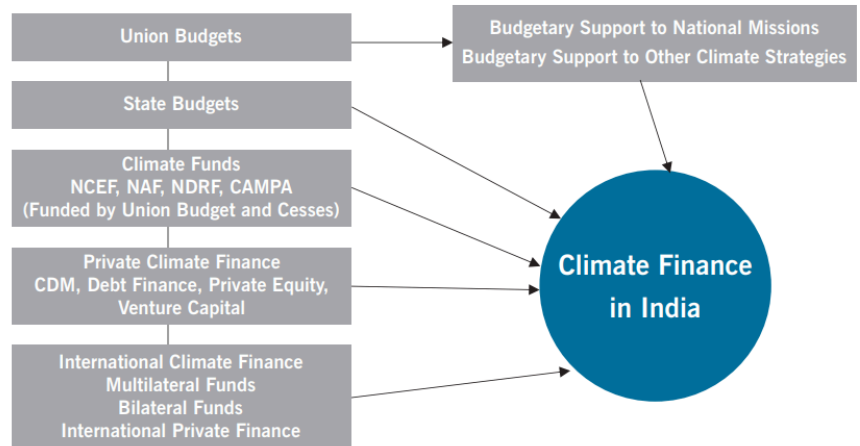
**Key Takeaways:**

- **Current State of Climate Finance:**
  - Developed countries have failed to meet the \$100 billion climate finance target set by the Paris Agreement, with issues like double-counting and imbalanced distribution of funds between mitigation and adaptation.
  - Mitigation projects, which reduce emissions globally, receive more funding than adaptation, which benefits only the recipient countries.
  - Adaptation finance has decreased significantly in recent years, as highlighted by a 2023 UN report.
- **Quantum of Climate Finance Post-2025:**
  - Developing countries, including India, have proposed that the **New Cumulative Quantitative Goal (NCQG)** for climate finance should be between \$1 trillion and \$1.5 trillion annually.
  - However, given that developed countries have failed to meet the \$100 billion target, these proposals face strong resistance, leaving the negotiations at an impasse.
- **Expanding the Donor Base:**
  - Some developed countries argue that emerging economies like China and oil-rich nations like Saudi Arabia and Qatar should also contribute to climate finance.
  - However, this demand often serves to deflect from the fact that developed countries have not met their own obligations under the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.

**Conclusion:**

- Azerbaijan’s proposed climate fund may help generate some additional resources, but its voluntary nature and the existing failures in meeting mandatory finance commitments raise doubts about its effectiveness.
- The real challenge lies in finalizing a more comprehensive and transparent climate finance agreement at COP29, one that reflects the trillions of dollars now required for meaningful climate action.

Climate Finance Architecture in India



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## 7. India's data centre ambitions will have to go through Malaysia, Japan

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Prelims:** Data Centres, AI Infrastructure, Investment Trends

**Mains:** Digital Economy, Government Policy, Competition in Tech

**Context:** To capitalise on the artificial intelligence (AI) boom, the Indian government is exploring subsidies for data centre establishment, positioning India as a competitive market amidst challenges from Malaysia and Japan.

### Investment Outlook:

- A research note from S&P Global forecasts over \$100 billion in investments for data centres across Asia-Pacific over the next five years, driven by rising data demand and the proliferation of AI and cloud computing technologies.

### Current Capacity:

- India leads in leased data centre capacity among emerging markets, with 1-3 GW.
- However, Malaysia is projected to experience faster growth in its data centre sector from 2023-2028, despite its stricter data sovereignty regulations.

### Government Support:

- The Indian government is planning to subsidize data centre setups to enhance computing access for startups and research institutions, critical for developing large AI systems.
- This initiative aligns with the broader IndiaAI Mission, which aims to establish substantial computing resources across the country.

### Key Takeaways:

#### Emerging Market Advantages:

- Emerging markets like India and Malaysia are becoming attractive for data centre development due to lower operational costs, increasing data demands from digitalization, and supportive governmental policies.
- Malaysia's Johor Bahru region, for instance, is emerging as a key location for data centres, offering more affordable land and energy compared to Singapore.

#### Competitive Landscape:

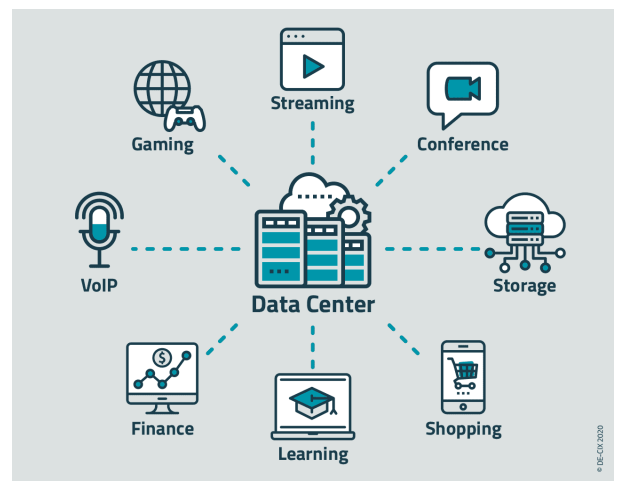
- India faces competition from both emerging and developed markets for data centre investment.
- For example, Japan is incentivizing the decentralization of data centres away from major cities, which reduces costs associated with land and construction.

### Strategic Initiatives:

- The Indian government has initiated the **IndiaAI Mission**, which includes a significant investment of ₹10,370 crore to build a computing infrastructure comprising over 10,000 GPUs.
- This infrastructure aims to support various sectors such as healthcare and agriculture by providing essential computing power to startups and researchers.

### Conclusion:

- India's data centre ambitions are shaped by a strategic focus on leveraging AI growth, supported by government initiatives to enhance computing capacity.
- While positioned as a leader in the emerging market, India must navigate competition from countries like Malaysia and Japan to attract investments and meet increasing data demands effectively.



## 8. India Signs Clean and Fair Economy Agreements under IPEF

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Prelims:** IPEF Agreements, Clean Energy Initiatives, Economic Cooperation

**Mains:** International Relations, Environmental Policy, Trade Agreements

**Context:** On September 21, 2024, during the Indian Prime Minister visit to the U.S. for the Quad Summit, India signed agreements under the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) aimed at promoting a clean and fair economy among member countries.

### Agreement Objectives:

- Clean energy development, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, and fostering cooperation on climate-friendly technologies.
- Additionally, they aim to bolster anti-corruption measures and promote tax transparency among member nations.

### Economic Impact:

- To accelerate energy security efforts and reduce dependence on fossil fuels among IPEF partners.
- It encourages technical cooperation and innovative solutions for sustainable energy development.

### Investment Catalysts:

- The IPEF includes Catalytic Capital Fund, which aims to stimulate private investments totaling \$3.3 billion, supported by initial grants from Australia, Japan, Korea, and the U.S.

### Key Takeaways:

#### Fair Economy Focus:

- To create a transparent business environment that can boost trade and investment among member countries.
- It emphasises improving information sharing, facilitating asset recovery, and strengthening cross-border investigations.

#### Concerns Over Compliance:

- Experts expressed concerns regarding the potential constraints imposed by IPEF agreements, particularly regarding non-derogation clauses that might restrict India's ability to modify domestic regulations for national projects.

#### Strategic Importance of IPEF:

The IPEF, encompassing 14 member countries, is crucial for enhancing economic cooperation across its four pillars:

1. trade
2. supply chain resilience
3. clean economy
4. fair economy

India's participation underscores its commitment to a regional partnership that accounts for 40% of the global economy and 28% of world trade.

#### Conclusion:

- India's signing of the clean and fair economy agreements under IPEF marks a significant step towards enhancing its role in global economic cooperation and commitment to sustainability.
- However, the agreements raise important considerations regarding domestic regulatory flexibility and the potential implications for future trade negotiations.



## Editorial, Ideas and Opinions

### 9. The Perception of Justice Is as Important as Justice Itself

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Prelims:** Constitutional Institutions, Separation of Powers, Transparency in Governance

**Mains:** Role of Unelected Constitutional Bodies, Media's Role in Public Discourse, Institutional Independence

**Context :** The key role of unelected constitutional institutions in upholding justice and independence. making these institutions transparency and higher standards of conduct.

#### Key Remarks:

- **Public Discourse & Media's Role:**
  - The rise of social and electronic media has diluted the quality of public discourse, with a shift from issue-based to personality-driven narratives.
  - This has resulted in mass cynicism and a decline in meaningful debate on critical issues like climate change.
- **Restoring Institutional Boundaries:**
  - Solutions to the global "information pandemic" lie in reinforcing respect for constitutional mandates.
  - Unelected institutions, free from political interference, must act as guardians of constitutional democracy.



#### Key Takeaways:

- **Constitutional Institutions as Watchdogs:**
  - Unelected bodies like the judiciary and Election Commission were designed to act independently and rise above political influences.
  - This independence is essential to maintaining public trust and ensuring impartiality in their functions.
- **Transparency & Reticence:**
  - Transparency in actions and restraint in public engagement, especially with political powers, are vital for preserving the integrity of these institutions.
  - This ensures the perception of justice, which is equally important as delivering justice itself.
- **Institutional Responsibility:**
  - Drawing from the example of former Chief Election Commissioner T N Seshan, when constitutional organs exhibit high levels of probity, they command respect and moral authority, inspiring greater public confidence.

#### Conclusion:

- The perception of justice and integrity is crucial in maintaining public trust in constitutional institutions. Unelected bodies must remain transparent, independent, and hold themselves to higher standards to reinforce their role as protectors of the Constitution.
- This, in turn, will help restore faith in democracy and counter the rising tide of personality-driven public discourse.



## In Brief

### 10. Centre's Pro-Farmer Shift in Edible Oils Policy

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Prelims:** Indian Agriculture, Import Duties, Minimum Support Price (MSP)

**Mains:** Agricultural Policy, Oilseeds Sector, Inflation Management

**Context:** In response to easing inflation and upcoming elections in Maharashtra, the Modi government has implemented two major decisions to support oilseed farmers: hiking import duties on edible oils and expediting MSP procurement of soybeans.

#### Increase in Import Duties:

- The Centre raised the **Basic Customs Duty (BCD)** on imported crude palm, soybean, and sunflower oil from 0% to 20%, while the duty on refined oils was hiked from 12.5% to 32.5%.
- The effective import duty on crude oils is now 27.5%, and on refined oils, it is 35.75%, restoring protection levels similar to those in 2021.
- This move aims to shield domestic farmers from cheap imports.

#### MSP Procurement for Soybean:

- The Centre also allowed states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana to procure soybeans at the Centre's MSP of ₹4,892 per quintal.
- This decision, coupled with the import duty hike, has helped soybean prices recover in key mandis, rising from ₹4,200-4,300 to ₹4,600-4,700 per quintal, closer to the MSP.

#### Key Takeaways:

- **Economic and Political Considerations:**
  - Economically, the decline in global edible oil prices and low inflation provided space for higher import duties.
  - Maharashtra, India's second-largest soybean-growing state.
- **Surge in Sunflower Oil Imports:**
  - India's edible oil imports hit a record 16.5 million tonnes by October 2023. Sunflower oil imports surged to 3.1 million tonnes, surpassing soybean oil as the second-most imported after palm oil.

#### INDIA'S EDIBLE OIL IMPORTS IN (lakh tonnes)

Oil Year (Nov-Oct)	Palm*	Soyabean	Sunflower	Total**
2017-18	87.01	30.47	25.25	145.17
2018-19	94.09	30.94	23.51	149.13
2019-20	72.17	33.84	25.19	131.75
2020-21	83.21	28.66	18.94	131.32
2021-22	79.15	41.71	19.44	140.3
2022-23	97.89	36.76	30.01	164.66
2022-23 (Nov-Aug)	82.46	31.82	25.46	139.75
2023-24 (Nov-Aug)	76.43	27.15	31.14	134.71

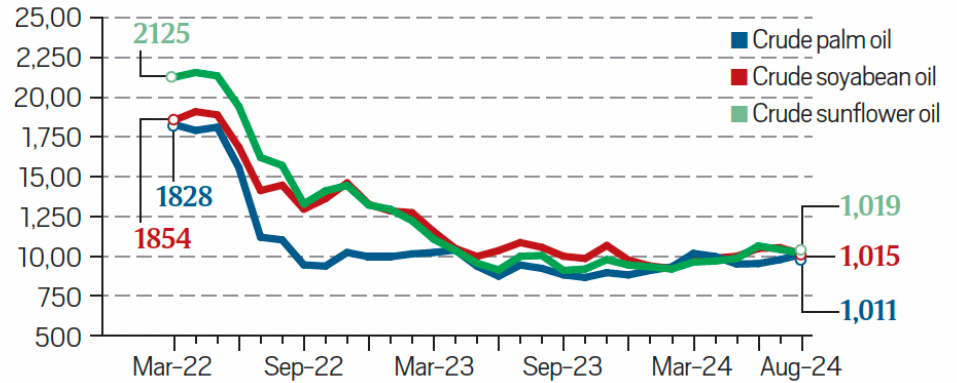


- This surge is largely due to price drops following the UN-brokered Black Sea Grain Initiative, which lowered sunflower oil prices below those of soybean and palm oil.

**Conclusion:**

- The Centre's dual move of increasing import duties and expanding MSP procurement reflects a shift towards supporting domestic oilseed farmers, balancing economic pressures and political considerations.
- This policy change is expected to reduce edible oil imports and strengthen domestic production, benefitting India's oilseeds sector while addressing upcoming electoral dynamics.

**GLOBAL VEGETABLE OIL PRICES (Average \$/tonne, CIF Indian ports)**



## Daily Quiz

**Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Earth's ancient Saturn-like ring:**

1. Earth's ring is believed to have formed around 466 million years ago from debris of a destroyed asteroid.
2. The discovery of the ring was based on 21 impact craters located near Earth's polar regions.
3. The presence of the ring might have contributed to global cooling by blocking sunlight.
4. Earth's ring was identical to Saturn's current ring system in terms of composition and structure.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2, and 3 only
- D. 1, 3, and 4 only

**Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Quad Summit and Prime Minister Modi's remarks:**

1. **Statement 1:** Prime Minister Modi stated that the Quad is not directed against any specific country, but is committed to staying active in the Indo-Pacific region.
2. **Statement 2:** The Quad leaders strongly condemned militarization and coercive actions in the South China Sea, highlighting concerns about China's expansionist behavior in the region.

**Which of the following is correct?**

- A. Both statements are correct, and Statement 2 explains Statement 1.
- B. Both statements are correct, but Statement 2 is independent of Statement 1.
- C. Statement 1 is correct, and Statement 2 is incorrect.
- D. Statement 2 is correct, and Statement 1 is incorrect.

**Q3. Consider the following Assertion & Reason statement regarding recent technological collaboration**

**between US and India:**

1. **Assertion (A):** The recent meeting between Joe Biden and Narendra Modi, which highlighted advancements in semiconductor plants, defense collaboration, and critical mineral supply chains, strengthens the US-India strategic partnership.
2. **Reason (R):** The partnership is vital as it focuses on addressing global supply chain vulnerabilities, promoting peace, and enhancing security in critical regions like the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East.

**Which of the following is correct?**

- A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- B. Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- C. A is true, but R is false.
- D. A is false, but R is true.

**Q4. What is the key objective of India and the US enhancing cooperation in threat information sharing and telecommunications security?**

- A. To ensure better defence against cybersecurity threats by sharing classified information between intelligence agencies.
- B. To develop a joint cybersecurity strategy focused on protecting global financial systems from hacking attempts.
- C. To build a collaborative defence mechanism for monitoring space-based threats and telecommunications disruptions.
- D. To safeguard critical infrastructure sectors like energy and telecommunications from potential cyberattacks and vulnerabilities.



**Q5. Consider the following pairs regarding India's military preparedness as discussed in the Joint Commanders' Conference (JCC):**

Key Issue	Objective
1. Defence Modernisation	Comprehensive progress made, but equipment shortfalls remain
2. Indigenisation Push (Aatmanirbhara)	Significant success with private sector involvement
3. One Rank, One Pension (OROP)	Fully implemented with no remaining challenges
4. Manpower Shortages	Fully addressed with Agnipath scheme

**How many pairs are correct?**

- Only one
- Only two
- Only three
- All are correct

**Q6. The demand for emerging economies to contribute to climate finance is primarily viewed as:**

- A fair approach to global climate responsibility.
- A deflection from the failure of developed countries to meet their obligations.
- A necessary step to ensure balanced contributions from all countries.
- A strategy to increase the total amount of climate finance available.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 4 only
- 1, 2, and 4 only
- 2 and 3 only

**Q7. Consider the following statements regarding India's data centre ambitions:**

- Statement 1:** India is positioning itself as a leader in the data centre market, with plans to establish significant computing infrastructure supported by government subsidies.
- Statement 2:** Malaysia is projected to have a slower growth rate in its data centre sector compared to India, despite having stricter data sovereignty regulations.

**Which of the following is correct?**

- Both statements are correct.
- Statement 1 is correct, and Statement 2 is incorrect.
- Statement 1 is incorrect, and Statement 2 is correct.
- Both statements are incorrect.

**Q8. Consider the following Assertion & Reason statement regarding India's signing of clean and fair economy agreements under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF):**

- Assertion (A):** India's participation in the IPEF agreements signifies its commitment to a clean and fair economy, promoting cooperation on clean energy and anti-corruption measures among member nations.
- Reason (R):** The IPEF agreements include non-derogation clauses that may restrict India's ability to modify its domestic regulations, which could limit its flexibility in implementing national projects.

**Which of the following is correct?**

- Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- A is true, but R is false.
- A is false, but R is true.



**Q9. What is the key importance of the perception of justice in relation to constitutional institutions?**

- A. To promote transparency in governance, reinforcing the integrity of constitutional institutions and their role in democracy.
- B. To shift public discourse from personality-driven narratives to issue-based discussions, enhancing the quality of democratic engagement.
- C. To ensure public trust in unelected bodies by demonstrating their independence from political influences.
- D. To maintain high standards of conduct in constitutional bodies, thereby inspiring greater public confidence in justice delivery.

**Q10. Consider the following pairs regarding the Centre's recent pro-farmer shift in edible oils policy:**

1. Increase in Import Duties	Protection of domestic farmers from cheap imports
2. MSP Procurement for Soybean	Stabilization of soybean prices in mandis
3. Decline in Edible Oil Imports	Result of increased duties and policy changes
4. Sunflower Oil Prices Surging	Price drop due to global market changes

**How many pairs are correct?**

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. Only three
- D. All are correct

Key Decision	Objective
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## Solutions

### 1. Correct Answer is A

#### Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Earth's ring is thought to have formed 466 million years ago from debris of a destroyed asteroid.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** The discovery was based on craters located near the equator, not the polar regions.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The ring could have contributed to global cooling by blocking sunlight during certain seasons.
- **Statement 4 is incorrect:** While Earth's ring would have been similar to Saturn's, it wasn't identical in composition or structure.

### 2. Correct Answer is B

#### Explanation:

- **Statement 1** reflects Prime Minister Modi's diplomatic stance that the Quad is not aimed at targeting any specific nation, including China, while underscoring the group's long-term presence in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Statement 2** is also correct as the Quad's declaration strongly condemned coercive actions in the South China Sea, specifically addressing concerns about China's militarization and assertive actions.
- **But it does not directly explain Statement 1** i.e. the Quad's criticism of China's actions and the broader message of not targeting any single country are separate aspects of its strategy.

### 3. Correct Answer is A

#### Explanation:

- **Assertion (A) is true** because the recent meeting between Joe Biden and Narendra Modi emphasized critical developments such as semiconductor plants, defense procurement, and critical mineral supply chains, which are key elements in strengthening the US-India strategic partnership. These collaborations enhance mutual security, technology sharing, and economic resilience.
- **Reason (R) is also true and provides the correct explanation for the Assertion.** The Indo-US partnership is essential in addressing vulnerabilities in global supply chains, particularly in sectors like semiconductors and critical minerals. Moreover, the defense and regional security cooperation, especially in the Indo-Pacific, underscores the significance of this partnership in maintaining global peace and stability, making the relationship stronger and more dynamic.

### 4. Correct Answer is D

#### Explanation:

- **India and the US have agreed to** advance their cooperation in key sectors such as cybersecurity, telecommunications, and energy networks.
- The primary goal is to protect critical infrastructure, enhance threat-sharing mechanisms, and secure telecommunications networks from potential threats.
- This cooperation also strengthens bilateral relations in defence and technology, preparing both



nations to handle evolving security challenges in the digital age.

**5. Correct Answer is B**

**Explanation:**

- **Pair 1 : Correct:** The JCC reviewed progress in military modernisation, but also acknowledged significant gaps in equipment, especially in the Army, which is reliant on vintage equipment (68% of its inventory). Therefore, while some progress has been made, shortfalls persist.
- **Pair 2 : Correct:** There is emphasis on self-reliance in defence, including restructuring Defence PSUs and encouraging private sector participation. However, challenges like long gestation periods and slow progress were noted.
- **Pair 3 : Incorrect:** While the implementation of OROP was commended, unresolved aspects still remain. The pair does not fully reflect the ongoing challenges.
- **Pair 4 : Incorrect:** The armed forces face a significant personnel deficit, with the Army short by 1.36 lakh soldiers. The Agnipath scheme's implementation has also complicated recruitment patterns, requiring a comprehensive review.

**6. Correct Answer is D**

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** The demand is often criticised as a way to deflect responsibility.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** It serves to deflect attention from the failures of developed countries.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** It is seen as a necessary step for a balanced approach.

- **Statement 4 is incorrect:** While it may increase the total, the focus is primarily on holding developed countries accountable.

**7. Correct Answer is B**

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 is accurate** as India is indeed focusing on enhancing its data centre capabilities, supported by government initiatives and subsidies, to leverage the AI boom and meet rising data demands.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect** because Malaysia is projected to experience faster growth in its data centre sector from 2023-2028, despite its stricter data sovereignty regulations, indicating that India faces stiff competition from Malaysia in this regard.

**8. Correct Answer is A**

**Explanation:**

- **Assertion (A) is true** because India's signing of the clean and fair economy agreements under the IPEF highlights its commitment to promoting clean energy development and fostering economic cooperation among member nations. This partnership aims to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and improve anti-corruption measures, aligning with global sustainability goals.
- **Reason (R) is also true and provides the correct explanation for the Assertion.** The inclusion of non-derogation clauses in the IPEF agreements raises concerns about India's regulatory flexibility. These clauses may limit India's ability to adjust its domestic regulations for national projects, potentially impacting its sovereignty and strategic



initiatives. Therefore, the concerns regarding compliance highlight the complexities of balancing international commitments with domestic priorities.

**9. Correct Answer is C**

**Explanation:**

- The perception of justice is crucial because it shapes public confidence in constitutional institutions, such as the judiciary and the Election Commission.
- These unelected bodies must operate independently, free from political interference, to maintain their legitimacy and effectiveness.
- When they uphold high standards of conduct and demonstrate transparency, it reinforces their role as guardians of constitutional democracy.
- This perception is essential for fostering trust in the justice system and countering the declining quality of public discourse, ultimately helping to restore faith in democratic processes.

**10. Correct Answer is C**

**Explanation:**

- **Pair 1 : Correct** : The Centre raised import duties on various edible oils to protect domestic farmers, restoring protection levels similar to those in 2021.
- **Pair 2 : Correct** : The Centre allowed states to procure soybeans at the MSP of ₹4,892 per quintal, which helped stabilize prices in key mandis.
- **Pair 3 : Incorrect** : While the policy aims to reduce reliance on imports, the record imports of 16.5 million tonnes indicate that this goal has not yet been achieved.
- **Pair 4 : Correct** : Sunflower oil imports surged due to price drops resulting from global market changes, particularly after the Black Sea Grain Initiative.





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