

2024

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS





Daily Current Affairs from *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* & *The Assam Tribune*

11th Dec 2024

CONTENT LIST

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

	Topics	Syllabus	Page No:
1	PM POSHAN: Centre to bear additional cost of ₹425.62 cr. due to food inflation	Governance (TH)	6
2	India against China-led investment facilitation proposal at WTO	International relations (AT)	11

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

	Topics	Syllabus	Page No:
3	Saurashtra fossils say early humans didn't stick to coast as they migrated	Science & technology (TH)	6
4	What is the extent of the global share of solar energy?	Growth & development (TH)	10
5	Female Labor force participation rate rose during 2017-18 to 2022-23	Growth & development (IE)	15

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

1. PM POSHAN: Centre to bear additional cost of ₹425.62 cr. due to food inflation

Context: The Centre has announced that it will bear the additional cost of ₹425.62 crore on account of inflation in food material cost under the Centrally sponsored PM POSHAN Scheme in the financial year 2024-25. Based on the inflation index provided by the Labour Bureau, the Education Ministry has enhanced the material cost of pulses, vegetables and oil by 13.7%. The material cost could not be revised during 2023-24; therefore, the inflation value of items under PM POSHAN basket for both 2022-23 (6.45%) and 2023-24 (6.74%) has been considered for enhancement of cost.

PM Poshan Scheme

- About:** In September 2021, the Union Cabinet approved the Government Scheme called Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman, or PM-POSHAN, aiming to provide one hot cooked meal in

Government and Government-aided schools. With a financial outlay of Rs 1.31 trillion, this scheme replaced the national Mid-day Meal Scheme. It's launched for an initial five-year period, from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

- **Objectives:** The primary objective of the PM Poshan Scheme is to reduce the prevalence of stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia, and low birth weight in children, as well as to address the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating mothers. Malnutrition, which includes both undernutrition and overnutrition, is a significant public health concern in India, affecting millions of children and women across the country.

ICDS and Anganwadi Services Strengthening - The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program, along with Anganwadi centres, plays a central role in delivering essential nutrition and health services to children and mothers at the grassroots level. The scheme focuses on enhancing the quality and coverage of these services, including supplementary nutrition, growth monitoring, immunization, and health check-ups.

Community Mobilization and Awareness - Poshan Abhiyan emphasizes community engagement and mobilization to create awareness about the importance of nutrition, health, and hygiene practices. This includes behaviour change communication activities, outreach programs, and the involvement of frontline workers such as Anganwadi workers, ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists), and AWWs (Anganwadi Workers).

- **Features:** *Coverage* - The PM-POSHAN scheme provides 100 grams of food grains per day to primary (1-5) and 150 grams to upper primary (6-8) schoolchildren, ensuring a minimum of 700 calories. It also extends to balvatikas (ages 3-5) in pre-primary classes.

Nutritional Gardens - Encouraging locally grown nutritional foods through "school nutrition gardens" involving Farmers Producer Organizations (FPOs) and Women Self Help Groups for economic growth.

Supplementary Nutrition - Provisions for supplementary nutrition in aspirational districts and areas with high anaemia prevalence, allowing states to include additional items like milk or eggs without bearing extra cost.

Tithi Bhojan Concept - Community participation program, TithiBhojan, encourages special food provision to children on occasions/festivals.

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) - States and UTs are directed to switch to DBT for compensating cooks and helpers, aiming to prevent leakages.

Nutrition Expert - Each school to appoint a nutrition expert ensuring health aspects like BMI, weight, and haemoglobin levels are monitored.

Social Audit - Mandatory social audit for each school in each state to assess scheme implementation, ensuring accountability.

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

2. India against China-led investment facilitation proposal at WTO

Context: India is against the move led by countries such as China to push a proposal on investment facilitation at the World Trade Organization (WTO). A China-led group of 128 countries is pushing for the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) proposal. The proposal will be binding for only the signatory members. The IFD was first mooted in 2017 by China and other countries that depend heavily on Chinese investments, and countries with sovereign wealth funds are party to that pact. Among major countries, the US is also sitting out of the agreement.

Key points

- **Overview:** India will submit papers to the WTO against the investment facilitation, in addition that such agreements would dilute the multilateral nature of the Geneva-based organization.
- **Plurilateral Agreement/Pact:** A plurilateral agreement is a trade agreement between more than two countries, but not necessarily encompass all members of a larger organization such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). These agreements are binding only on the signatories and not on the entire membership of the organization under annexure-4 of the WTO. They allow for deeper integration among interested parties without requiring full consensus, which can be difficult to achieve in larger multilateral frameworks.
- **China-led Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement (IFD):** The IFD Agreement is a proposed pact by China, with support from other countries, to streamline and facilitate foreign investment. The proponents of the IFD argue that it would bring benefits to all WTO members, especially developing and least-developed countries, by creating a more predictable and transparent investment climate.
Objectives - Enhancing transparency of investment measures. Streamlining and speeding up investment-related authorization procedures. Promoting international cooperation, information sharing, and exchange of best practices. Encouraging sustainable investment practices.
- **India's stand:** India has taken a firm stance against the inclusion of the IFD Agreement in the WTO framework for several reasons:
Investment is Not a Trade Issue - India argues that investment does not fall within the traditional purview of the WTO, which primarily focuses on trade issues. It points out that past Ministerial decisions have explicitly kept investment outside the WTO's scope.
Sovereignty Concerns - A significant concern for India is the potential impact on its policy space. The IFD Agreement includes provisions that would require the government to consult with investors on policy matters, which India fears could undermine its ability to make sovereign decisions.
Lack of Consensus - India, along with South Africa, has highlighted the absence of a unanimous consensus among WTO members regarding the inclusion of the IFD as a plurilateral agreement. They argue that without exclusive consensus, it should not be brought onto the formal agenda.
Policy Autonomy - India is wary that the IFD Agreement's requirements could constrain its autonomy in regulating investments to align with national development priorities and strategies.
Procedural Concerns - India contends that the issue should not have been part of the MC13 agenda and instead, should be discussed at the General Council, given the divisive nature of the proposal among WTO members.
- **Conclusion:** India's opposition to the IFD Agreement at the WTO stems from a combination of concerns about preserving national sovereignty, adhering to established WTO boundaries regarding trade versus investment issues, and ensuring that any significant changes in the WTO framework are backed by broad-based consensus.

Q. The broader aims and objectives of WTO are to manage and promote international trade in the era of globalisation. But the Doha round of negotiations seems doomed due to differences between the developed and the developing countries." Discuss in the Indian perspective. (বিশ্ব বাণিজ্য সংস্থাৰ বিস্তৃত লক্ষ্য আৰু উদ্দেশ্য হৈছে গোলকীকৰণৰ যুগত আন্তঃৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় বাণিজ্য পৰিচালনা আৰু প্ৰচাৰ কৰা। কিন্তু উন্নত আৰু উন্নয়নশীল দেশসমূহৰ মাজৰ পাৰ্থক্যৰ বাবে দোহা পৰ্যায়ৰ আলোচনা বিফল হোৱা যেন লাগিছে। " ভাৰতীয় দৃষ্টিকোণৰে আলোচনা কৰক।)

QUICK FACTS: RESEARCHERS DEVELOP AI-BASED PLATFORM TO RAPIDLY FIND AGE-DEFYING MOLECULES

An Indian group from the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi have developed AgeXtend as a tool to efficiently cut down the time taken to identify viable molecules with geroprotectors, or age defying properties, through conventional research. They used a platform based on Artificial Intelligence to discover molecules that promote healthy ageing. The authors who have published the experiment in a recent issue of Nature Aging, have said that they screened over 1.1 billion compounds, over a period of two years, and the platform had uncovered several promising candidates validated through experiments on yeast, worms (*C. elegans*), and human cell models.

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

3. Saurashtra fossils say early humans didn't stick to coast as they migrated

Context: Studies suggest that humans who arrived at Saurashtra moved inland, dispersing away from the coast. Further, there is no evidence of the utilisation of 'marine resources,' which would indicate coastal settlement. Scientists mostly agree on this out-of-Africa theory of human evolution and migration, but they frequently disagree on when exactly our ancestors migrated and what routes they took to different parts of the globe. Several genetic studies have supported the coastal dispersion idea: that migrating humans travelled along the coast, especially in the tropics, where the weather was warm and wet, and food was plentiful.

Key points

- **Overview:** A new study of archaeological sites in India's Saurashtra peninsula, published in the journal *Quaternary Environments and Humans* in October, has mounted yet another challenge to the coastal dispersion model.
- **Early humans in Saurashtra:** Discovery of artefacts & tools made by early human inhabitants like, pieces of chert, jasper, chalcedony, bloodstone, and agate that were chipped again and again to achieve a desired shape and size. It has been estimated that the artefacts found in the Aji and Bhadar River basins were 56,000 to 48,000 years old which are from the Middle Palaeolithic age.
- **Human Evolution:** Human evolution is the long process by which humans evolved from their apelike ancestors. Scientific data suggests that the physical and behavioural characteristics common by all humans evolved over a six-million-year period from apelike ancestors.
- **History of Human Evolution:** The term "prehistory" refers to the period before written history began. Prehistory makes up more than 99 percent of man's story. Historians agree that man is approximately 1 million years old, yet he did not begin writing until 5000 years ago. Even though the prehistoric man left no written records, he unwittingly left us knowledge about his manner of life, which has been interpreted by various scientists.
- **Homo Sapiens:** Humans in your midst are thought to be the same species as *Homo sapiens*, which developed into its present form in Africa some 300,000 years ago. Throughout human evolution, the brains of human ancestors have grown in proportion to their bodily size, and today's humans have the largest brains of the group. Modern humans lack the pronounced forehead ridges and forward-jutting jaws of earlier hominids.
- **Middle Palaeolithic Age in India (1,00,000- 40,000 BC):** Middle Palaeolithic culture in India is called Nevasian (like Mousterian), as flake tools were found at Pravara, Nevasa. Early *Homo sapiens* lived

in the Middle Palaeolithic Age, marked by the evolution of modern language, the systematic burial of the dead with rituals, and the use of more sophisticated tools. This age witnessed a variety of tools made on flakes, produced by specialised techniques. Therefore, it is widely referred to as the flake tool industry.

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

4. What is the extent of the global share of solar energy?

Context: On November 5, the World Solar Report 2024 by the International Solar Alliance (ISA) was released. From 1.22 GW in 2000, the world's solar capacity has surged to 1,419 GW in 2023, charting a CAGR of about 36%. Today, solar capacity represents three-quarters of all renewable capacity additions worldwide. The 2024 World Solar Report shows that the average auction prices for utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) projects have consistently decreased across all regions. The Report further shows that the average auction prices for utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) projects have consistently decreased across all regions. India's remarkable ascent as the world's third-largest producer of solar power in 2023 underscores a significant shift towards renewable energy sources in the global energy landscape.

Key points

- **Overview:** Recently, at the 7th Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the 3rd edition of the World Solar Report Series was released. This year's series comprises four key reports: the World Solar Market Report, the World Investment Report, the World Technology Report, and the Green Hydrogen Readiness Assessment for African Countries.
- **Key Highlights of the World Solar Report Series:** The World Solar Report series, launched by the ISA in 2022, offers a concise overview of global solar technology advancements, key challenges, and investment trends, providing valuable insights into the industry's growth.
World Solar Market Report - Global solar capacity has grown exponentially from just 1.22 GW in 2000 to an impressive 1,418.97 GW in 2023, reflecting a remarkable 40% annual growth rate.
World Investment Report - Global energy investments to rise from USD 2.4 trillion in 2018 to USD 3.1 trillion by 2024, with clean energy investments nearly doubling that of fossil fuels.
World Technology Report - Monocrystalline solar PV modules (solar panel) have achieved 24.9% efficiency, while multijunction perovskite cells (a type of solar cell) promise higher efficiency and lower costs, potentially outpacing traditional silicon panels.
Green Hydrogen Readiness Assessment for African Countries - The report identifies Egypt, Morocco, Namibia, and South Africa as potential leaders for developing a green hydrogen economy due to their renewable energy resources.
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** The ISA is an international organisation with 120 Member and Signatory countries. It works with governments to improve energy access and security worldwide and promote solar power as a sustainable transition to a carbon-neutral future.
- **India's Renewable Energy Capacity:** India's total electricity generation capacity has reached 452.69 GW. Having the 8,180 MW (megawatt) of nuclear capacity, the total non-fossil fuel-based power now accounts for almost half of the country's installed electricity generation capacity. As of 2024, renewable energy-based electricity generation capacity stands at 201.45 GW, accounting for 46.3 percent of the country's total installed capacity.

- **India's Targets:** India has a vision to achieve Net Zero Emissions by 2070, in addition to attaining the short-term targets which include: Increasing renewables capacity to 500 GW by 2030, Meeting 50% of energy requirements from renewables.

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

5. Female Labor force participation rate rose during 2017-18 to 2022-23

Context: Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) increased in almost all states in India during 2017-18 to 2022-23, with rural areas seeing larger gains than urban areas. Rural female LFPR rose to 41.5% from 24.6%, while urban LFPR rose to 25.4% from 20.4%. Among the eastern states, rural Bihar had the lowest LFPR, in the northeast there has been improvement in female LFPR in the rural areas with Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh leading among the states of the region. The northern states, Punjab and Haryana have recorded low female LFPR.

Key points

- **Overview:** The Central Government is planning to bring out a National Policy document on female labour force participation (FLFP) with a focus on providing an enabling atmosphere like a viable care economy structure.
- **Female Labour Force Participation (FLFPR) Rate:** Female labour force participation (FLFPR) rate refers to women (over 15 years) who are either working or looking for a job.
- **FLFP Rate in India:** The Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2022-23 highlights that the FLFPR for prime working age group (15 years & above) has increased from 23% in 2017-18 to 37 % in 2022-23.
 - In Rural areas - 36.6% of females aged 15 years & above are participating in the labour force, as against 78.2% male in 2021-22.
 - In Urban areas - 23.8% of females aged 15 years & above are participating in the labour force, as against 74.7% male in 2021-22.
 - From 2017 to 2022, women's LFPR increased relative to men, in rural areas because of the larger engagement of rural women in agriculture and allied activities.
 - Only four states, namely Assam, Bihar, Haryana, and Delhi, have a FLFPR below 25%, with Delhi recording the lowest rate at 14.8%.
- **Necessary factors for National Policy on FLFP:** *Unpaid care work* - Women must bear the burden of unpaid care work (taking care of children, elderly family members, and household chores). It is often undervalued and not recognised as work, which limits women's ability to participate in paid employment.
Limited job opportunities - Women often face discrimination in the job market, and there are fewer job opportunities available to them compared to men. For example, the technology and finance sector.
- **Conclusion:** These strategies can contribute to meeting goals of SDG 1 (end poverty); SDG 3 (ensure healthy lives); SDG 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education); SDG 5 (achieve gender equality) etc.

Q. Distinguish between 'care economy' and 'monetized economy'. How can care economy be brought into monetized economy through women empowerment? ('যত্নশীল অর্থনীতি' আৰু 'নগদীকৃত অর্থনীতি' ৰ মাজত পাৰ্থক্য কৰক। মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ জৰিয়তে যত্নশীল অর্থনীতিক কেনেকৈ নগদীকৃত অর্থনীতিত আনিব পাৰি?)