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

1. 4.87 lakh youth register for PM's internship scheme in top companies

Context: The Prime Minister's internship scheme, launched in October through an online portal this year, has thrown open 1.27 lakh internship opportunities from top companies for which approximately 4.87 lakh youths have completed their KYC and registered themselves, according to the year-end review of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. The interns will be provided with financial assistance of Rs 5,000 per month, of which Rs 4,500 will be disbursed by the Union government, and Rs 500 per month will be paid by the company from its CSR funds. Additionally, a one-time grant of Rs 6,000 for incidentals would be disbursed by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) to each intern, upon joining the place of internship. The duration of the internship under the PM Internship Scheme is 12 months.

Key points

- **Overview:** The government launched the pilot phase of the ambitious Prime Minister's Internship Scheme, which aims to provide 1.25 lakh internship opportunities during the fiscal year 2024-25.
- **Origin:** Announced in Budget 2024-25 as part of the Prime Minister's Package for Employment and Skilling.
- **Aim:** To provide 1 crore youth with hands-on work experience in top 500 companies over five years, enhancing employability and skill development.
- **Budget:** ₹2 lakh crore overall, with ₹2,000 crore allocated for the fiscal year 2024-25.
- **Criteria:** Youth aged 21-24 who are not in full-time employment or education. Must hold qualifications like high school diplomas, ITI certificates, or graduate degrees (e.g., B.A., B.Sc., B. Com). Excludes candidates from IITs, IIMs, and those holding advanced degrees (e.g., MBA, CA).
- **Features:** 12-month internships with a stipend of ₹5,000 (₹4,500 from the government, ₹500 from companies). Interns are insured under government schemes like PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana. Multilingual helpline and grievance redressal system.
- **Significance:** Enhances practical experience for youth, improving employability. Focuses on skill development in real-world job environments across sectors like pharma, auto, and agriculture. Supports the government's vision of self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat) by developing skilled manpower.

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

2. After 2 years of India-Australia trade deal, export utilization reaches 79%

Context: The Ministry of commerce and Industry on Sunday announced that export utilisation under the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) has reached 79% after two years of implementation, while import utilisation stood at 84%. However, trade between and Australia has declined during the current financial year. Official trade data revealed that goods exports to Australia totalled 3.99 billion dollars during the six months from April to September 2024, down from 4.98 billion dollars last year, marking a 18% decline, during the same period imports also fell by 18%, dropping to 6.7 billion dollars this year from 8.3 billion dollars last year.

Key points

- **Overview:** In April 2022, India and Australia signed an Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement (ECTA). The aim of this agreement is to double the bilateral trade to \$50 billion in five years and ease movement of people, goods and services across borders.
- **Significance of ECTA for Australia:** Many analysts described the ECTA as an antidote for Australia's China trouble as it will give exporters duty-free access to India. In 2020, China punished Australia economically after the Canberra government supported an international inquiry into the origins of Covid-19. Since then, Australia has witnessed sustained trade sanctions from its top trading partner, China.
- **Significance of ECTA for India:**
 - Labour-intensive sectors* - The major boost would be in its labour-intensive sectors, which are currently subject to import duty of 4-5% by Australia.
 - Manufacturing sector* - Exports of textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, furniture, sports goods, jewellery, machinery, railway wagons and select agricultural and marine products are seen to be the top beneficiaries in addition to pharma.
 - Power sector* - Coal accounts for three-fourths of Indian imports from Australia. LNG, alumina, and manganese are other vital imports. The Indian power sector will gain from cheaper coal.

Service sector - There are major gains on the services side too. Australia has committed to facilitate India's services in IT, ITeS, business services, health, education and audio-visual, among others. It has agreed to provide a post-study work visa of 2-4 years for Indian students and a work and holiday visa for youth. It has also offered a quota for entry of 1,800 Indian chefs and yoga teachers.

India-Australia relations

- **About:** India and Australia established diplomatic relations in the pre-Independence period, with the establishment of India Trade Office in Sydney in 1941.
- **Strategic Relationship:** In 2009, India and Australia established a 'Strategic Partnership', including a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation. This cooperation has been further elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2020. The Australian foreign policy blueprint released in November 2017 sees India in the front rank of Australia's international partnerships. To pursue the CSP, Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries agreed to meet in a '2+2' format biennially.
- **Economic and Trade Relationship:** As part of its efforts to develop strong economic relationship with India, the Australian Government commissioned the India Economic Strategy to 2035 in July 2018. This was done to define a pathway for Australia to unlock opportunities offered by Indian Economic growth.
- **Bilateral Trade:** India had a trade deficit of \$8.5 billion with Australia in FY22, with \$8.3 billion worth of exports and \$16.8 billion worth of imports. Total bilateral trade is expected to cross \$45-50 billion in five years from \$ 27.5 billion at present after the free trade deal comes into force. India was the 8th largest trade partner of Australia with trade in goods and services representing 3% share of the total Australian trade in FY 2019-20.
- **Defence Cooperation:** During PM Modi's visit to Australia in November 2014, both sides decided to extend defence cooperation to cover research, development, and industry engagement. India and Australia conduct their bilateral naval exercise 'AUSINDEX' since 2015.
- **Repatriation of Indian Cultural Artifacts:** Several artifacts have been successfully repatriated to India in recent years. They include-
 - Bronze Idol of Nataraja from Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) (2019)
 - Nagaraja stone sculpture (2020)
 - Two Dwarpala stone sculptures (2020).
- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:** A Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between the two countries was signed in September 2014 during the visit of then PM Tony Abbott to India. The agreement provides the framework for substantial new trade in energy between Australia and India.

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3. Incidents on loop, but it's escape for regulator, airlines

Context: The recent incident, on December 5, 2024, involving an Air India Airbus A320 aircraft at Goa's Mopa airport is another wake-up call for Indian aviation. The crew of the Hyderabad-bound aircraft had to reject take off after entering a parallel taxiway instead of the main runway, this falls under the category of runway confusion. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the regulatory body that primarily deals with safety issues, as we have seen during the past 20 years, will blame the pilots, and sweep the report under the carpet. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)'s Annex 13 makes it

mandatory for a member-state to investigate accidents, serious incidents and incidents and identify the cause and take corrective steps to prevent a recurrence.

Key points

- **Overview:** Aviation safety is a comprehensive system of practices, technologies, and regulations designed to minimize the risks associated with air travel.
- **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO):** Sets global standards for aviation safety, security, efficiency, and environmental protection. ICAO is a United Nations (UN) specialized agency, established in 1944, which laid the foundation for the standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation.
- **Air Traffic Control (ATC):** *Communication* - Effective communication between pilots and air traffic controllers is vital for safe and efficient air travel.
Surveillance - Advanced radar and satellite technologies help monitor aircraft movements and prevent collisions.
- **Maintenance and Inspections:** *Routine Maintenance* - Regular checks and scheduled maintenance ensure that aircraft systems are in optimal condition.
Safety Inspections - Aircraft undergo thorough inspections to identify and rectify potential issues before they become critical.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** *Training* - Crew members and ground personnel are trained for emergencies, including evacuations and first aid.
Emergency Equipment - Aircrafts are equipped with emergency exits, life vests, rafts, and other safety gear.
- **Safety Management Systems (SMS):** *Risk Management* - Airlines and aviation organizations implement SMS to proactively identify and manage potential risks.
Continuous Improvement - Regular safety audits and reviews lead to ongoing improvements in safety protocols.
- **Aviation safety in India:** Aviation safety in India is a critical aspect of the country's civil aviation sector, which has witnessed substantial growth in recent years. The regulatory framework, infrastructure development, and adherence to international safety standards play key roles in ensuring the safety of air travel within India.
 - Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), under the Ministry of Civil Aviation, is the regulatory body responsible for overseeing civil aviation activities, including safety, licensing, and airworthiness in India.
 - In 2023, India's aviation safety oversight ranking jumped to 55th position from 112th place, with a significant improvement in the country's score under the ICAO's coordinated validation mission.
- **Aviation safety & economic growth:** *Facilitates Business and Trade* - A safe and efficient aviation network connects regions within a country and facilitates international trade, enabling the movement of goods and services.
Encourages Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) - A robust aviation safety record enhances a country's credibility and attractiveness for foreign investors, encouraging FDI in various sectors.
- **Conclusion:** Aviation safety is a multifaceted and dynamic endeavour that involves the collaborative efforts of regulatory bodies, airlines, manufacturers, pilots, air traffic controllers, and other stakeholders. Continuous advancements in technology, training, and safety management systems

contribute to the overall safety of air travel. The aviation industry's commitment to a safety-first culture and the ongoing application of lessons learned from investigations play a crucial role in maintaining and improving the lofty standards of aviation safety worldwide.

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4. Oil companies backtrack on renewables

Context: Major European energy companies have doubled down on oil and gas in 2024 to focus on near-term profits, slowing down and reversing climate commitments in a shift that they are likely to stick with in 2025. Against this backdrop, the likes of BP and Shell this year sharply slowed their plans to spend billions on wind and solar power projects and shifted spending to higher-margin oil and gas projects. The oil companies' retrenchment is sad news for efforts to mitigate climate change. Global heat-trapping carbon emissions are forecast to climb to a new high in 2024, which will be the warmest year on record.

Key points

- **Overview:** The retrenchment by oil majors comes after governments around the world slowed the rollout of clean energy policies and delayed targets as energy costs soared following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
- **Renewable Energy benefits:** *Sustainable* - Energy generated from renewable sources will be cleaner and greener and more sustainable.
Market assurance - From the economy point of view, renewable sources provide the market and revenue assurance which no other resources can provide.
- **India's Key Focus:** *The Twin Challenge* - India has a twin challenge of providing more energy as well as cleaner energy to the masses in India.
Methanol and Biomass - Looking for other alternatives such as methanol-based economy and biomass.
Hydrogen based FCV - Hydrogen in technology is likely to change the landscape of renewables, shifting towards Hydrogen Based Fuel Cells Vehicles (FCV) is another area of focus.
Grid Integration - It is the practice of developing efficient ways to deliver variable renewable energy (RE) to the grid.
- **Challenges with Renewable Energy:** *Integration with the Main Grid* - Integrating the renewables with the main grid is the area India needs to work upon. To accelerate the uptake of renewables, storage and battery solutions is needed in massive quantities.
Cost factor - Renewable resources are slightly more expensive than conventional sources.
*24*7 Power Supply* - Sustainable, round-the-clock power supply along with the storage system is a big challenge ahead.
- **Way Forward:** *Hydrogen fuel cell-based vehicles and Electric vehicles* - These are the most suitable options when it comes to shifting towards renewable sources of energy, which is where we need to work upon.
Agriculture subsidy - Agricultural subsidy should be rectified to ensure that only the required amount of energy is consumed.
- **Conclusion:** A well-planned road map is needed, for which NITI Aayog is producing Energy Vision 2035 to achieve India's clean energy goals. India should be working on areas like investment in infrastructure, capacity building and better integration in the near and immediate future.

5. Trump's protectionism vis-à-vis India

Context: During his campaign, Trump proposed a 60% tariff on Chinese imports and an additional 10% tariff on all Chinese products, along with a 20% tariff on goods from other countries. This significant difference of 60% for China versus 20% for others has created more chances for Indian products to compete in the US market. The United States remains India's largest trade partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$120 billion in FY24, slightly exceeding India's trade with China. India ranks sixth globally with a \$36.8 billion increase in exports, driven by growth in electronics, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods. If India develops a supportive ecosystem, e-commerce exports could grow to \$200-250 billion by 2030.

Key points

- **Overview:** With Donald Trump securing a second term as President of the United States 'Trump 2.0,' the dynamics of US-India trade relations are poised for significant shifts with renewed focus on his 'America First' policies, which are expected to impact various sectors of the Indian economy.
- **Economic Interests:** Both India and the US share a pro-business stance and a focus on economic growth, which could drive substantial changes on the global economic stage. Trump's 'America First' policy, while often seen as isolationist, aligns with Modi's 'Make in India' initiative, potentially fostering deeper economic ties.
- **Trade Policies:** Trump's protectionist stance, including higher tariffs on imports, could pose challenges for Indian exporters. During his first term, Trump was vocal about reducing the trade deficit with countries like India. For India, this could complicate trade relations, especially in sectors like IT, pharmaceuticals, and textiles, which rely heavily on the US market.
- **Trade Wars and Global Economy:** The return of Trump's aggressive trade policies could reignite trade tensions with major economies like China and the European Union. It could disrupt global supply chains and impact economic stability worldwide. For emerging economies like India, navigating these tensions will be crucial to maintaining growth.
- **Geopolitical Dynamics:** Trump's foreign policy, marked by unpredictability and a transactional approach, could alter geopolitical alliances. For India, this means balancing its strategic partnership with the US while managing relations with other global powers like China and Russia.
- **Global Economic Watch - Fed Policy and China's Stimulus Package:** Two key events are expected to impact global markets. First, the Federal Reserve's November 6-7 policy meeting will provide updated inflation insights. Second, China's Standing Committee is likely to approve a substantial economic stimulus package aimed at boosting land purchases, bank recapitalization, and local debt refinancing.

Q. Analyse the recent developments in India-US relations. Do you believe they signify a new era in bilateral ties? Discuss the key factors driving this transformation and its potential implications for the global geopolitical landscape. (ভাৰত-আমেৰিকাৰ সম্পৰ্কৰ শেহতীয়া উন্নয়নসমূহ বিশ্লেষণ কৰক। এইবোৰে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পৰ্কত এক নতুন যুগৰ সূচনা কৰে বুলি আপুনি বিশ্বাস কৰে নেকি? এই পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ মূল কাৰকসমূহ আৰু বিশ্বৰ ভূ-ৰাজনৈতিক দৃশ্যপটৰ ওপৰত ইয়াৰ সম্ভাৱ্য প্ৰভাৱসমূহ আলোচনা কৰক।)