

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Context

- Around the world, the representation of women in political spheres has seen significant progress over the years. However, this progress has been uneven, and there's still much work to be done.

Historical Context

- **Universal suffrage** — the right to vote for all citizens — was achieved in various countries after prolonged political movements. For instance:
- **New Zealand**, as a self-governing unit under British rule, granted universal women's suffrage in 1893.
- The **United Kingdom** provided all its women the right to vote only in 1928.
- The **United States** granted equal voting rights through the nineteenth amendment in 1920.
- **In independent India**, women have had the right to vote since the **first general elections in 1952**. However, their representation in legislative bodies has been far from satisfactory.

Current Data

- Universal suffrage was achieved in various parts of the world after prolonged political movements.
- In the recently concluded general elections in the **United Kingdom**, a record 263 women MPs (**40%**) have been elected to the House of Commons.
- The **South African National Assembly** has around **45%** women representation, while the **US House of Representatives has 29%**.

Women and Political Representation

- Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals by 2030**.
- However, data show that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide and that achieving gender parity in political life is far off.

Women in National Parliaments

- **Only 26.9%** of Parliamentarians in single or lower houses are women, up from 11% in 1995.

- **Only six countries have 50% or more women in Parliament** in single or lower houses: Rwanda (61%), Cuba (56%), Nicaragua (54%), Andorra (50%), Mexico (50%), New Zealand (50%), and the United Arab Emirates (50%).
- A further 22 countries have reached or surpassed 40%, including 13 countries in Europe, five in Africa, four in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one in Asia-Pacific.
- Globally, there are 21 States in which women account for less than 10% of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, including two lower chambers with no women at all.
- At the **current rate of progress**, gender parity in national legislative bodies will **not be achieved before 2063 (another 40 years)**.

How do women MPs fare worldwide?

Country wise data on women representation

Country	% of elected women	Quota in Parliament	Quota in political parties
Sweden	46%	No	Yes
South Africa	45%	No	Yes
Australia	38%	No	Yes
France	38%	No	Yes
Germany	35%	No	Yes
U.K.	40%	No	Yes
U.S.	29%	No	No
Pakistan	16%	Yes	No
Bangladesh	20%	Yes	No

^(as of September 2023) | Source: PRS legislative research

- Voluntary or legislated compulsory quotas within political parties.
- Quotas in parliament through the reservation of seats.
- Quotas within political parties allow more democratic choice for voters and flexibility for parties in selecting women candidates.

Women in Local Government

- Data from 141 countries show that women constitute more than 3 million (35.5%) of elected members in local deliberative bodies.
- Only three countries have reached 50%, and an additional 22 countries have more than 40% women in local government.

Women in Indian Politics

- The percentage of **women Members of Parliament (MPs)** in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of India's Parliament) remained very low—between 5% and 10%—until 2004.
 - ♦ It marginally increased to 12% in 2014 and currently stands at 14% in the 18th Lok Sabha.
- **State Legislative Assemblies** fare even worse, with a national average of around 9% women representatives.
- The **73rd and 74th** Constitutional Amendments of the 1992-93, provided for **one-third reservation for women in Panchayats and Municipalities**.
 - ♦ However, attempts between 1996 and 2008 to provide similar reservation in the Lok Sabha and assemblies were unsuccessful.

Expanding Participation in India

- **106th Constitutional Amendment:** It reserves **one-third** of all seats for women in **Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly** of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, including those reserved for SCs and STs.
- It shall come into **effect based on the Delimitation Exercise** after the relevant figures of the first Census conducted after the commencement of this act is published.
 - ♦ **Census is overdue since 2021** and should be conducted without any further delay to ensure that this reservation is implemented starting with the general elections in 2029.
- **India ranks 143** in the list of countries in the **'Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments'** recently published by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union**, a global organisation for national parliaments.
 - ♦ **Naam Tamilar Katchi**, a State party in **Tamil Nadu**, has been following a **voluntary quota of 50% for women candidates** in the last three general elections.
- **Intersectionality Matters:** It's essential to recognize that women are not a homogenous group. Their identities intersect with other factors (such as caste, class, religion, and ethnicity), influencing their political representation.
 - ♦ Ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds have a voice in politics is crucial for genuine representation.
- **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:** Balanced political participation and power-sharing between women and men in decision-

making is the internationally agreed target set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- Women demonstrate political leadership by working across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses — even in the most politically combative environments — and by championing issues of gender equality, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws, and electoral reform.
- While progress has been made, the road to equitable political representation for women remains challenging.
- Advocacy, policy changes, and societal shifts are necessary to create a more inclusive and representative political landscape.

Source: TH

CENTRE RECONSTITUTES NITI AAYOG

Syllabus: GS2/Polity

Context

- The government has **reconstituted the NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog**, increasing the number of special invitees from five to 11.

About

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains the **Chairperson** and economist Suman K Bery will **continue to be the Vice Chairperson** of NITI Aayog.
- While the top positions remain unchanged, several new ministers in the newly formed government have been appointed as either **ex-officio members or special invitees to the Aayog**.

About NITI Aayog

- The institution was formed in the year **2015** through a resolution of the Union cabinet.
 - ♦ The institution replaced the **planning commission** which was instituted in **1950**.
- **The Governing Council** comprises the Prime Minister; Chief Ministers of all the States and Union Territories with legislature; Lt Governors of other UTs; Ex-Officio Members; Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog; Full-Time Members, NITI Aayog; and Special Invitees.

- **Functions:** It is a **policy think tank** of the Indian government which provides inputs regarding the different programmes and policies of the government.
 - ♦ It gives **relevant advice** to the centre and state governments as well as to the Union territories.
 - ♦ It plays an important role in designing the strategies for the long term policies and programmes put forth by the government of India.

Significance in Promoting Cooperative Federalism

- The Governing Council **embodies the objectives of cooperative federalism** and **presents a platform** to discuss federal issues to accelerate the implementation of the national development agenda.
- **Competitive Federalism:** NITI Aayog endeavours to promote competitive federalism by **facilitating improved performance of States/UTs**.
 - ♦ It encourages healthy competition among states through transparent rankings, in various sectors, along with a hand-holding approach.
 - ♦ Some of the indices launched by NITI Aayog are School Education Quality Index, State Health Index, Composite Water Management Index, Sustainable Development Goals Index, India Innovation Index and Export Competitiveness Index.
- NITI Aayog also releases **delta rankings** for the **performance of Aspirational Districts every month**.
- The ranking of States in various social sectors based on quantitative objective criteria **encourages them**, and even districts, to improve their performance.

Source: IE

4TH PERIODIC REVIEW BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Context

- India successfully concluded its **4th periodic review** by the Human Rights Committee under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** in Geneva.

About

- Questions were posed on diverse topics such as anti-corruption measures, non-discrimination,

status of women and of minorities, counter terrorism and national security measures, judicial framework, privacy and data protection laws, new criminal laws, etc.

- The review demonstrated India's commitment to engaging with the international human rights framework and its willingness to address concerns, while continuing its efforts towards protection and promotion of human rights of its citizens.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- The ICCPR was adopted by the **UN General Assembly in 1966** and entered into force in **1976**.
- It is a **multilateral treaty** that **commits nations** to respect the **civil and political rights of individuals**.
 - ♦ The Covenant elaborates further the civil and political rights and freedoms listed in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- The Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris in **1948**.
- It sets out, for the first time, **fundamental human rights to be universally protected** and it has been translated into over 500 languages.
- The document consists of a **preamble and 30 articles** setting out fundamental rights and freedoms.
- It enshrines the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The Covenant is **legally binding**; the **Human Rights Committee**, established under **Article 28**, monitors its implementation.

- India became a State Party to the ICCPR in **1979**.
 - ♦ The rights and freedoms provided in ICCPR are guaranteed under the **Constitution of India** as well as **legislative and judicial framework**.
- India has undergone **three ICCPR reviews in the past** -- the last being in 1997.

Human Rights Committee

- It comprises **18 independent experts** serving in their individual capacity, monitors implementation of ICCPR and reviews reports of all States

Parties (countries) by conducting **periodic reviews**, and then making **observations and recommendations**.

What are Human Rights?

- **Human rights** are fundamental rights and freedoms that are inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or any other status.
- These rights are considered **universal, inalienable, and indivisible**, forming the foundation for **human dignity, equality, and justice**.
- **Human rights are different from the Civil rights** that are created and defined by laws within a specific nation.
 - ♦ **Civil rights** are legal rights granted and protected by a government, and they may change over time as laws are amended or updated.

Significance of Human Rights

- **Inherent Dignity:** Human rights affirm the inherent dignity of every individual.
- **Equality and Non-Discrimination:** They strive to ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities and are treated with fairness and without prejudice.
- **Protection from Abuse:** Human rights provide a framework for holding governments, institutions, and individuals accountable for actions that violate these rights, promoting justice and accountability.
- **Global Standards:** International human rights agreements and treaties establish a global standard for how individuals should be treated, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for upholding these standards.
- **Human Dignity in Crisis:** In times of crisis, human rights provide a foundation for responding to emergencies in a way that upholds human dignity and prevents further harm.

Source: MEA

STATE OF INDIA'S INFORMAL ECONOMY

Context

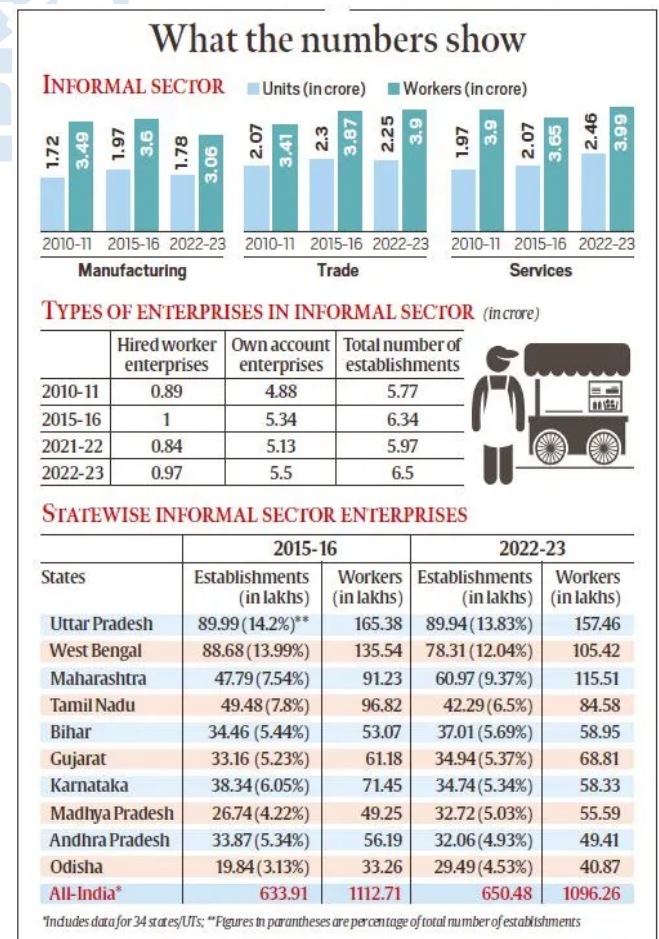
- According to the data of Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises (ASUSE), the informal sector of India is facing challenges as about **16.45 lakh jobs** have been lost over the last seven years.

Difference Between Formal and Informal Sector

- The formal sector has a **written contract between the employer and the employee**, as well as **pre-defined labour conditions**.
 - ♦ This sector is made up of a well-organized group of people who operate in the same environment and are **legally and socially conscious of their rights**.
- **Informal Sector:** All **unincorporated private enterprises** owned by individuals or families involved in the sale and production of products and services on a proprietary or partnership basis are classified as informal.
 - ♦ These enterprises include Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), household units including those with hired workers, and own-account enterprises.

Informal Sector of Indian Economy

- India with **almost 85% informal labour** is generating more than half of the country's GDP.
- The informal sector plays a crucial role in generating jobs and absorbing especially semi-skilled and unskilled labor.



Challenges faced by Informal Sector in India

- **The data of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** reflect the impact of three major exogenous shocks suffered by the economy such as, **Demonetisation (2016)**, the **rollout of GST (2017)**, and the **Covid-19 pandemic (2020)**.
- As the economy moved to **more capital-intensive manufacturing**, it **impacts the employment in labour-intensive manufacturing** in the unorganised sector.
- **Decrease in employment:** The informal sector registered a decrease in employment, though the number of enterprises increased over the years. This indicates a deterioration in the quality of employment as units shifted to self-owned units.
- **Impact on Women Labour Force Participation:** Women make up the majority of informal participants, yet they receive the fewest benefits and face lower salary, income volatility, and a lack of a strong social safety net.
 - ♦ According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey statistics**, female labour force participation fell to 21.2% in March 2021, down from 21.9% the previous year.
- **Low Wages and Exploitation:** Informal employment, by definition, lacks a written contract, paid leave, and hence does not pay minimum wages or pay attention to working conditions.
 - ♦ Working hours that exceed labour standards are widespread in India's unorganised sector.
- **Lack of Social Security:** Workers in the informal sector lack access to social security benefits such as healthcare, pensions, and unemployment insurance.
 - ♦ This leaves them vulnerable to economic shocks and health crises.
- **Tax Evasion:** Because the informal economy's firms are not directly regulated, they typically dodge one or more taxes by concealing revenue and expenses from the legal system.
 - ♦ This is a problem for the government because a large portion of the economy is not taxed.
- **Lack of formal Data for Policy Making:** There are no official statistics available that reflect the true state of the economy, making it difficult for the government to formulate policies affecting the informal sector in particular and the economy as a whole.

Way Forward

- As part of the National Data System, a **comprehensive statistical base** on many elements of the informal economy is required to enable policymakers to make informed decisions.
- Grievances from informal employees should be **heard and resolved on a regular basis** through a **transparent and officially regulated procedure**.
- **Equal compensation for equal effort** is a **directive principle of state policy (Article 39(d))**, but women farm labourers typically earn less than their male colleagues.
 - ♦ Through appropriate legislative support, the government should enhance and enforce this DPSP.

Conclusion

- The plight of **lower-income and semi-skilled workers** underscores the pressing need for concerted action. Income inequality and rising poverty levels serve as stark reminders of the challenges India is facing.
- With **85% of India's workforce** operating in the informal sector, it was **imperative to initiate a structural shift** towards formalisation to ensure equitable opportunities and sustainable livelihoods for all.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

COMMON SERVICES CENTRES

Context

- Common Services Centres Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC SPV) celebrated its establishment day on 16 July.

Common Services Centres

- Common Services Centres are the access points for delivery of **Government-to-Citizen (G2C) eServices** within the reach of the citizen, by creating the physical service delivery ICT infrastructure.
- It helps in making a **transparent service delivery mechanism** and reducing citizens' effort in visiting government offices.

- The programme is an initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, Government of India (GOI).
- **The PPP model of the CSC** envisages a 3-tier structure consisting of the
 - ♦ **CSC operator** (called Village Level Entrepreneur or VLE);
 - ♦ **Service Centre Agency (SCA)**, that will be responsible for a division of 500-1000 CSCs; and
 - ♦ **State Designated Agency (SDA)** identified by the State Government responsible for managing the implementation in the entire State.

Common Services Centres 2.0

- The GOI has initiated **CSC 2.0 Project in 2015**, under the Digital India.
- The objective of the CSC 2.0 project is to set up at least one CSC in **2.50 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs)** across the Country.

Significance

- CSCs have played a significant role in **promoting rural enterprise as well as Digital Inclusion**, mainly for rural citizens.
- The vast network of CSC centers in India has done excellent work in various schemes like **Digital Literacy, Tele-Medicine, Insurance, Tele-law, Skill development**.

Source: ET

COLD FUSION TECHNOLOGY

Context

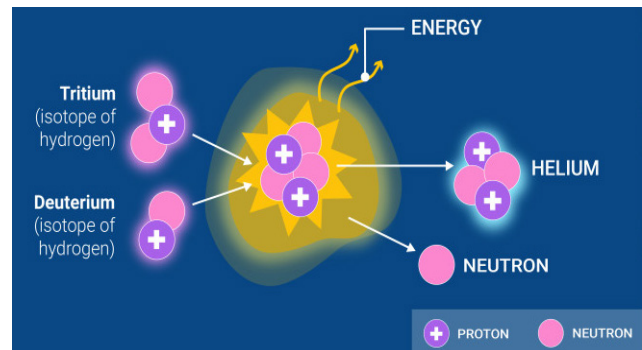
- Hyderabad-based start-up HYLENR demonstrated how cold fusion technology can be used to generate Clean Energy.

About

- HYLENR's reactors utilize **Low Energy Nuclear Reactors** by applying milligrams of hydrogen and a small volume of electricity to stimulate and generate excess heat through fusion.
- The heat produced is used for **space applications (MMRTG), steam generation** for multiple applications, **room heating** across cold regions globally, and **induction heating** for domestic and industrial requirements.

Nuclear fusion

- It is a process in which **two light atomic nuclei combine to form a heavier nucleus**, releasing a significant amount of energy in the process.
 - ♦ This process is the same as what powers stars, including our sun.
- The most common fusion reaction involves the isotopes of hydrogen: **deuterium and tritium**.
- When these isotopes fuse, they form helium and release a neutron, along with a large amount of energy.



Source: BL

MUKHYAMANTRI YUVA KARYA PRASHIKSHAN YOJANA

Context

- The Maharashtra government will spend **Rs 5,500 crore** on the Mukhyamantri Yuva Karya Prashikshan Yojana internship scheme for unemployed youth.

Mukhyamantri Yuva Karya Prashikshan Yojana

- This scheme was announced in Budget 2024-25 in Maharashtra and aims to **enhance the employability and skill set of the youth** and prepare them for a competitive job market.
- It includes a **six-month internship duration and a stipend structure** designed to support interns based on their educational qualifications.
 - ♦ Interns will receive monthly stipends through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Key features of the scheme

- For the 12th pass, a stipend of **₹6,000** is allotted, and for ITI/Diploma - **₹8,000** and degree/post graduation - **₹10,000** will be offered.

- Both government establishments and private sector industries are eligible to participate, provided they meet specific criteria including registration with **Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), GST, and Udyog Aadhar**, and have been operational for a minimum of **three years**.

Source: IE

PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY)

Context

- The Union government plans to launch the **fourth phase** of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

About

- It will be launched to connect 50,000 habitations having population above **250 in plain areas and 100 in special category states** with all-weather roads,

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

- It is a **centrally Sponsored Scheme**, launched in the year **2000**.
- **Objective:** It aims to provide all-weather road connectivity to all eligible unconnected habitations in rural areas of the country.
- The **Ministry of Rural Development** is the nodal ministry for this scheme.

Phases of the scheme

- **The second phase** of the scheme was launched in **2013**.
- After the two phases, another component of the PMGSY, **Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas (RCPLWEA)**, was launched in **2016** for construction of rural roads in LWE areas.
- **The third phase** was launched in **2019**.

Source: IE

U-WIN PORTAL

Context

- The U-WIN portal is set for a pan-India launch likely by the end of August, aiming to maintain an electronic registry of routine immunisations.

About

- **Universal Immunization Web Interface (U-WIN)**, a replication of the Covid-19 vaccine management system Co-WIN, aims to maintain an electronic registry of routine immunizations.
 - ♦ **India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)** is a part of the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Program under **National Health Mission (NHM)**.
- **U-WIN platform** aims to target 2.9 crore pregnant women and 2.6 crore infants (0-1 years) annually by providing 11 vaccines against 12 vaccine preventable diseases through more than 1.2 crore vaccination sessions across the country.
- Vaccination can be availed **against 12 vaccine preventable diseases:**
 - ♦ **Nationally against 11 diseases:** Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Rubella, severe form of childhood Tuberculosis, Rotavirus Diarrhoea, Hepatitis B, Meningitis & Pneumonia caused by Haemophilus Influenza Type B and Pneumococcal Pneumonia and
 - ♦ **Sub-Nationally against 1 Disease:** Japanese Encephalitis (JE vaccine is provided **only in endemic districts**).

Key Features

- **Immunisation Cards:** For pregnant women and children, U-WIN generates immunisation cards linked to their **ABHA ID (Ayushman Bharat Health Account)**. These cards serve as a handy reference for vaccination schedules.
 - ♦ It generates a **uniform QR-based**, digitally verifiable e-vaccination certificate, similar to Covid vaccination certificate, which **can be accessed anytime by the citizens through a single click**. No more manual record-keeping; everything is digitised.
- **Universal Coverage:** U-WIN captures every vaccination event for pregnant women, newborns, and children under the UIP.
- **Real-Time Updates:** U-WIN enables real-time updates on vaccination status, delivery outcomes, and session planning. Healthcare workers and program managers can access accurate information promptly.
- **Individual Tracking:** Each pregnant woman and newborn receives a digital registration. This personalised tracking ensures timely reminders for upcoming doses and follow-ups, reducing dropouts.

Source: IE

NANHE FARISHTE

Context

- Railway Protection Force (RPF) have rescued over 84,119 children **under the operation named ‘Nanhe Farishte’**.
 - ♦ ‘Nanhe Farishte’ is a mission dedicated to **rescuing children** in need of care and protection across various Indian Railway Zones.

Railway Protection Force (RPF)

- It was constituted as a federal Force in the year **1957**, RPF is responsible for the **security of railway property, and passenger and passenger zones**.
- **RPF motto: “Yasho Labhasva”– “Attain Glory’.**”
- It has been implementing innovative solutions suited to the typical needs at the **ground-zero level**.
- RPF has the distinction of being the federal force of India with the largest share of women in its ranks.

Other Operations conducted by RPF

- **Human Trafficking & Operation AAHT:** In order to counter Human traffickers, **Anti Human Trafficking Units** of RPF are operational at the Post level (Thana level) over the Indian Railways.
- **Operation “Jeevan Raksha”:** Due to alertness and swift action by RPF, the lives of various passengers were saved, who had come close to getting run over by trains, at platforms and railway tracks.
- **Women Security (Meri Saheli Initiative):** It has been launched to provide security to lady passengers in long-distance trains, particularly those traveling alone or those who are vulnerable to crime.
- **Action against touts & Operation “Uplabdh”:** In this, various touts were arrested and legal action was taken against them as per law.
- **Operation “NARCOS”:** Many accused have been arrested along with the seizure of **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS)** and the arrested criminals were handed over to empowered agencies for further legal action.

- **Emergency Response & Operation ‘Yatri Suraksha’:** In order to redress security-related complaints of passengers in distress and for immediate assistance, passengers can make complaints on the Rail Madad Portal or through helpline No. 139.
- **Curbing Illegal Goods Transport (Operation Satark):** Under “Operation Satark,” the Railway Protection Force (RPF) seized illegal tobacco products and illegal liquor.

Source: PIB

PEACE DEAL IN COLOMBIA HAS AFFECTED ITS COCAINE INDUSTRY

Context

- Following a peace agreement between the **Colombian government and the FARC rebels**, Columbia has witnessed a **fall in demand for cocaine**.

About

- Colombia is the **global nexus of the cocaine industry**, where Pablo Escobar became the world’s best known criminal, and which **still produces more of the drug than any other nation**.
- The country is facing shifts in the industry due to domestic and global forces.
- The impact on the cocaine industry is an **unintended consequence** of a landmark peace deal eight years ago with the country’s largest armed group.

Consequences

- **Other countries have become important competitors** and have contributed to changes in Colombia’s drug market.
 - ♦ **Ecuador** has emerged as a top cocaine exporter, while **cultivation of coca leaf** has increased in **Peru and Central America**.
- It has helped **push global cocaine production higher** than it has ever been.
 - ♦ Cocaine consumption is growing in **Europe and Latin America and emerging in other regions, like Asia**.

Colombia

- It is a country in **northwestern South America**.
- The country is bordered by **Panama**, which divides the two bodies of water, on the northwest, by **Venezuela and Brazil** on the east, and by **Peru and Ecuador** on the south.
- It is the only American nation that is named after **Christopher Columbus**, the “discoverer” of the New World.



Source: IE

