



**The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE**

**Friday, 04 Oct , 2024**

**Edition: International | Table of Contents**

<b>Page 01</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 3 : Indian Economy</b>	<b>Govt. opens portal for internships to bridge skill set gap</b>
<b>Page 01</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity</b>	<b>Caste bias, segregation of work in prisons violate dignity, says SC</b>
<b>Page 02</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 3 : Environment</b>	<b>Leopard population in Odisha's forests jumps by 22% to 696 in two years</b>
<b>Page 05</b> <b>Syllabus : Prelims Fact</b>	<b>USCIRF flags India's 'collapsing religious freedom'</b>
<b>Abhiyan In News</b>	<b>Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan</b>
<b>Page 08 : Editorial Analysis:</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations</b>	<b>Why Italy matters to India</b>

Recently, the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme, which was announced by the Union Finance Minister during her Budget speech was launched.

### About PM Internship Scheme:

- ➔ It will enhance youth employability in India by offering them hands-on exposure to real-world business environments.
- ➔ The scheme represents a transformative opportunity to bridge the skills gap and drive sustainable growth in India.
- ➔ **Aim:** The scheme aims to provide internship opportunities to one crore youth over five years, in the top 500 companies.
- ➔ The pilot project will be implemented through an online portal managed by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA).
- ➔ A monthly stipend of ₹4,500 will be provided to the interns from the central government via DBT (Direct Benefit transfer), with an additional ₹500 offset provided by the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- ➔ They will also be provided a one-time grant of Rs 6,000 upon joining and insurance coverage under PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and PM Suraksha Bima Yojana.
- ➔ **Internship period:** One year

### Who is eligible for the scheme?

- ➔ Candidates aged between 21 and 24 years who are not engaged in full-time employment are eligible for the one-year internship programme.
- ➔ Internships are available to those who have passed class 10 or higher.
- ➔ Individuals from families with government jobs are excluded.
- ➔ It is not open to post-graduates.
- ➔ A candidate who has graduated from premier institutes such as IIT, IIM, or IISER, and those who have CA, or CMA qualifications would not be eligible to apply for this internship.
- ➔ Anyone from a household that includes a person who earned an income of ₹8 lakh or more in 2023-24, will not be eligible.

### Benefits of the scheme

- ➔ It will provide on-the-job training to youth and exposure to real-life work environments.
- ➔ The scheme will also benefit the industry by creating a pipeline of skilled, work-ready youth who can be employed post-internship both in large as well as micro, small and medium enterprises.

## Govt. opens portal for internships to bridge skill set gap



The process is expected to result in about one lakh youth joining on-the-job training exercises by December 2. ISTOCKPHOTO

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Thursday opened up a portal for India's top 500 companies to participate in the one-year internship scheme announced in this year's Union Budget to bridge the gap between the skill sets of unemployable youth and those needed by employers.

As many as 111 corporates – including the Mahindra and Mahindra group, Max Life Insurance, and Alembic Pharma – had already signed up within hours of the portal's launch, offering 1,077 internships. This kicked off a process that is expected to result in about one lakh youngsters joining the on-the-job training exercise, officially called The Prime Minister's Internship Scheme in Top Companies, by December 2.

Top sources in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, which is steering the scheme that aims at training one crore youth in five years, said this is a pilot project being undertaken at a cost of ₹800 crore. The lessons learnt from this will help fine-tune the scheme's design before the Cabinet's approval is sought for a full-fledged rollout.

The portal, [pminternship.mca.gov.in](http://pminternship.mca.gov.in), is likely to be opened up for youngsters in the age group of 21 to 24 years to enroll for consideration by compa-

nies on Vijaya Dasami, October 12. This window will be open till October 25 for the first batch of internships.

Candidates' data will be matched with companies' needs and locations using artificial intelligence tools, and a shortlist of candidates will then be generated for companies to consider.

The scheme is not open to post-graduates, children of regular and permanent employees in the Union or State governments, graduates from premier institutes like IITs, IIMs and NIDs, and professionals with qualifications such as CA, CS, and MBBS. Moreover, anyone from a household that includes a person who earned an income of ₹8 lakh or more in 2023-24, will not be eligible.

Internships under the scheme will be granted to candidates who have passed high school or higher secondary school, possess a certificate from an industrial training institute (ITI), hold a diploma from a polytechnic institute, or are graduates with degrees such as BA, B.Sc, B.Com, BCA, BBA, or B.Pharm. Unemployed youth enrolled in online or distance learning courses are also eligible to apply, but anyone undergoing any skilling, apprenticeship, internship, or student training programme under a Union or State government scheme will not be allowed to apply.



The Supreme Court issued a series of directives to the Centre and states to ensure that no inmate is subjected to work assignments or housing arrangements based on their caste. The SC declared this provision in various jail manuals “unconstitutional” for violating the inmates’ right to dignity, equality and non-discrimination.

- ➔ The ruling ended the long-standing practice of discrimination against prisoners based on caste and demanded prompt reforms in all states and UTs.

# Caste bias, segregation of work in prisons violate dignity, says SC

Prison manuals must be revised within 3 months, rules Bench headed by CJI; it says distribution of work on basis of caste amounts to untouchability; court adds it is the highest form of discrimination when state discriminates against a citizen

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Supreme Court on Thursday declared that caste-based discrimination of prisoners, segregation of their work according to caste hierarchy, and the treatment of inmates from the de-notified tribes as “habitual offenders” within prison walls across India are oppressive to fundamental human dignity and personality.

The top court directed the revision of prison manuals within three months. It ordered the deletion of the ‘caste column’ and any references to caste from registers of undertrials and convicts maintained in prisons. The court underscored that members of de-notified tribes must not be

## Removing bias

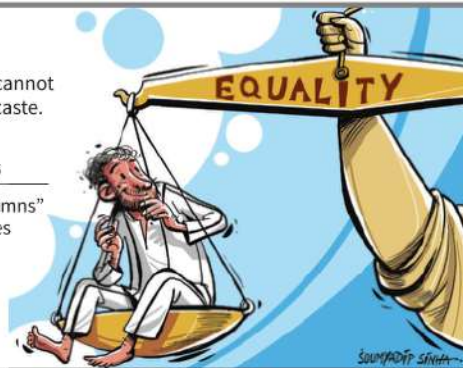
The Bench says “everyone is born equal” and cannot suffer lifelong due to stigma attached to their caste.

**The directions include:**

- States and UTs should revise their Prison Manuals/Rules in three months
- Centre should address caste-based discrimination in the Model Prison Manual 2016 and the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act 2023 in

three months

- “Caste columns” and references to caste in prisoners’ registers should be removed



subjected to arbitrary arrest.

“Everyone is born equal. There cannot be any stigma attached to the existence, touch or presence of any person... More than 75 years since Independence, we have not been able to eradicate the evil of caste discrimination,” a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y.

Chandrachud observed.

The CJI, who authored the judgment, referred to Article 15(1) of the Constitution which enshrines the fundamental right against discrimination. “But if the state itself discriminates against a citizen, then it is discrimination of the highest form. After all, the state is expected to prevent discrimination, not perpet-

uate it,” he noted. He held that discrimination among prisoners and distribution of work on the basis of caste amounted to untouchability, which is forbidden under Article 17 of the Constitution.

Prison manuals, by treating members of the denotified and wandering tribes as “born criminals” and habitual offenders, re-

affirmed colonial caste-based discrimination. The court declared all loose references to ‘habitual offenders’ in prison manuals as unconstitutional.

The judgment declared that compelling marginalised caste inmates to perform tasks like cleaning latrines or sweeping based purely on their caste, constituted a form of coercion.

The court held that the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, which prohibit manual scavenging, has a binding effect in prisons as well.

The court directed the Union government to make the necessary changes to address caste-based discrimination in the 2016 Manual and the 2023 Act within three months.

## SC’s Verdict on Caste Bias, Segregation in Prisons:

- ➔ **Background:** The court’s verdict came on a petition moved by a journalist, urging the court to issue clear directions to ensure that all prison manuals and practices (that reinforce caste hierarchies) are overhauled.

- ➔ **The court’s verdict:**

- The verdict specifically addressed the entrenched discriminatory practices against marginalised communities, including scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and denotified tribes (DNTs) in India's prisons.
- The apex court held that the treatment of inmates from DNTs as "habitual offenders" within prison walls across India are oppressive to fundamental human dignity and personality.
- The bench held that caste-based assignments of labour, such as assigning menial tasks (cleaning and sweeping) to marginalised castes while reserving cooking for higher castes, is a violation of Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution.
- The provision that food shall be cooked by 'suitable caste' reflects notions of untouchability prohibited under the Constitution in Article 17.
- The SC expanded the scope of Article 21, stating that caste-based discrimination hinders personal growth and development.
- The court further held that the selective assignment of menial jobs to specific castes amounted to forced labour under Article 23.
- The judgement highlighted several gaps in the Model Prison Manual of 2016 in addressing caste-based discrimination.
- The court noted that it failed to fully eliminate caste-based segregation and labour division in prisons.
- It also criticised the manual for not incorporating the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013 that bans manual scavenging.

### Court's directives to Centre, states and UTs:

- ➡ To combat caste-based prejudices, the bench called for strict adherence to guidelines laid down in *Armesh Kumar Vs State of Bihar* (2014) and *Amanatullah Khan Vs Commissioner of Police, Delhi* (2024). The guidelines require police officers to ensure procedural safeguards, particularly for vulnerable communities, reinforcing the broader fight against systemic biases.

### Issues Related to Prisons in India:

#### ➡ Fundamental rights of prisoners:

- Article 21 guarantees the right to life and personal liberty.
- Article 39A ensures free legal aid for those in need.
- **Key issues in Indian prisons:** Prison conditions in India face several critical challenges that impact inmates' rights and welfare. These include -
- **Overcrowding:**
  - Currently, prisons in India operate at 117% capacity, primarily due to a high number of under-trial prisoners.
  - The SC has emphasised the right to speedy justice under Article 21 of the Constitution, but many cases remain unresolved.
  - **Unhygienic conditions:** Many inmates lack access to proper medical facilities. Female prisoners often do not receive adequate sanitary products and basic health services.

- **Custodial torture:** Despite the 1986 DK Basu judgement prohibiting torture, reports of custodial violence continue, with increasing cases of custodial deaths.
- **Delays in trials:** Lengthy legal processes disrupt prison administration and prolong inmates' suffering. The right to a speedy trial has been recognised but is often not upheld.
- **Challenges for women prisoners:** The number of female inmates is rising, but they often face inadequate facilities. There is also a lack of dedicated women's prisons.

### Prison Reforms - Recommendations of Committees, Provisions of Laws and Key Judgements:

- ➔ **Justice Mulla committee 1983:** It recommended -
  - Improved prison accommodations,
  - Creation of the Indian Prisons and Correctional Services,
  - Public and media visits for transparency,
  - Reduction of under-trial prisoners through expedited trials.
  - A national policy on prisons.
  - Using alternatives to imprisonment, such as community service, etc.
- ➔ **Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer committee 1987:**
  - Induction of more women into the police force.
  - Separate institutions with women employees alone, especially for women offenders.
  - Necessary provisions to restore the dignity of convicted women.
- ➔ **Justice Amitav Roy panel (2018) of the SC:** It recommended several prison reforms - special fast track courts, improvements in lawyer-prisoners ratio, use of video-conferencing for trial, etc.
- ➔ **Provisions of the Model Prisoners Act of 2023:**
  - **Legal aid to prisoners:** It is the state's duty to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or schemes.
  - **Parole:** It is a form of early release for prison inmates where the prisoner agrees to abide by behavioural conditions.
  - **Furlough:** It is the right of prisoners to retain family and social ties. This also helps them counter the ill effects of prolonged time spent in prison.
  - **Other provisions:** Special facilities for women and transgender prisoners, Provisions for use of technology in prison administration, etc.
- ➔ **Key case laws:**
  - **Hussainara Khatoun vs. Home Secretary (1979):** Emphasises the right to a speedy trial.
  - **State of Rajasthan vs. Balchand (1978):** Establishes that bail is the rule, not jail.



Some good news for wildlife enthusiasts: Odisha's leopard population has increased by 22%, rising from 568 to 696 in two years between 2022 and 2024, despite ongoing concerns about poaching and the illegal trade of leopard skins in the State.

## Leopard population in Odisha's forests jumps by 22% to 696 in two years

Satyasundar Barik  
BHUBANESWAR

Some good news for wildlife enthusiasts: Odisha's leopard population has increased by 22%, rising from 568 to 696 in two years between 2022 and 2024, despite ongoing concerns about poaching and the illegal trade of leopard skins in the State.

The All Odisha Leopard Estimation 2024, released on Thursday, estimates the State's leopard population to range between 668 and 724, with a median count of 696.

However, the present leopard population lags behind the 2018 census carried out by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), which put Odisha's

big cats number at 760. In 2022, the population dropped to 568.

The Forest Department had conducted an estimation across 47 divisions, aimed at much more intensive State-level leopard monitoring. A State-wide field survey was also conducted to identify the presence of leopards through various signs, including pug marks, scrapes, scats, rakes, urine spray, vocalisations, and livestock depredation.

### Camera trap

"Sites with confirmed direct or indirect evidence of leopard were monitored using camera traps to estimate the minimum number of unique adult leopards based on their



**Smile, big cat:** A leopard captured by cameras installed in a forest in Odisha. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

distinctive rosette patterns. Camera trap identification of leopard is a scientifically recognised method and is used in national-level leopard population assessments," says the estimation report.

Susant Nanda, Principal Chief Conservator of For-

est (Wildlife), said: "The big cat population [in Odisha] is healthy. In 2022, the estimation was taken up in a limited area while we had taken up the estimation in much larger area capturing leopards in camera traps. We could discover many melanistic leopards in our forests."

As per the latest NTCA report, the leopard population in India stands at 13,874. The leopard population has dwindled by 75-90% across the country over the last 120-200 years.

According to Wildlife Protection Society of India, around 1,485 leopards were poached in the country in the last 10 years.

As per the information furnished by the Forest and Environment Department in the Assembly, as many as 59 leopard skins were seized from wildlife smugglers between 2018 and 2023. Similarly, a Special Task Force (STF) of the State police has recovered 57 leopard skins from poachers and wildlife article dealers from 2019 to

2024. Overall, 116 leopards were killed and their skins taken. Wildlife experts said in dozens of cases, leopard skins might have reached their destinations unnoticed and unintercepted.

### Forest cover

Odisha's forest cover accounts for 33.50% of the State's total geographic area. The State government said there is one national park, 19 wildlife sanctuaries and two conservation reserves in Odisha.

The latest population estimate report says, "Protected areas proved to be the regions with the highest leopard abundance. Similipal Tiger Reserve has the largest leopard population in Odisha. Due to its

extensive size, Similipal landscape plays a crucial role as a source population for leopards in the surrounding region. It is connected to Hadagarh Wildlife Sanctuary and Kuldih Wildlife Sanctuary, which are essential for leopards to disperse from Similipal to these other protected areas."

The report further states that Satkosia landscape turned out to be another promising site for leopards and boasts of the second highest leopard population in the State. Similarly, Hirakud Wildlife Division, which includes Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, is another key habitat for leopards and has a significant leopard population.

"As high as 45% of the leopard population in Odisha is located outside the protected area network and thus the territorial forest divisions have considerable leopard presence. The rare melanistic leopard morph was recorded from three forest divisions," it observes.

"From the next year, this camera trap based All Odisha Leopard Estimation exercise will be synchronised with the annual All Odisha Tiger Estimation exercise. This comprehensive exercise will involve collecting data on both the big cat occupancy, prey base estimation, and assessments of vegetation structure and human disturbance in the State," the Forest Department said.

## National Tiger Conservation Authority

- National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- It was established in 2005 following the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force.
- It was constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it.

## Project Tiger

- Project Tiger is an ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.
- India now has as many as 2,967 tigers in the wild, with more than half of them in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, according to the latest tiger estimation report for 2018.
- The population of tigers have increased by 33% since the last census in 2014 when the total estimate was 2,226.

## Key Points Related to Leopards

- **Scientific Name:** Panthera pardus
- **About:**
  - The leopard is the smallest of the Big Cat family (of genus Panthera namely the Tiger, Lion (Panthera leo), Jaguar, Leopard, and Snow Leopard), and is known for its ability to adapt in a variety of habitats.
  - A nocturnal animal, feeds on smaller species of herbivores found in its range, such as the chital, hog deer and wild boar.



- Melanism is a common occurrence in leopards, wherein the entire skin of the animal is black in colour, including its spots.
- A melanistic leopard is often called a black panther and is mistakenly thought to be a different species.

➡ **Habitat:**

- It occurs in a wide range in sub-Saharan Africa, in small parts of Western and Central Asia, on the Indian subcontinent to Southeast and East Asia.
- The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*) is a leopard widely distributed on the Indian subcontinent.

➡ **Threats:**

- Poaching for the illegal trade of skins and body parts.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Human-Leopard conflict

➡ **Conservation Status:**

- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix-I
- **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule-I



The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recently released a report flagging concerns over “collapsing religious freedom” conditions in India.

- ➔ It particularly highlighted events around India’s 2024 national elections, legal changes such as anti-conversion laws, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), and the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).
- ➔ The report also raised issues around expropriation of places of worship and misuse of anti-cow slaughter laws.

## USCIRF flags India’s ‘collapsing religious freedom’

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a Washington DC-based bipartisan U.S. federal government agency, has released a country update on India, flagging “collapsing religious freedom conditions”.

The report highlights that religious freedom conditions have “continued to worsen throughout 2024, particularly in the months prior to and immediately following the country’s national elections”. Offering an overview of the various religious freedom violations that took place in 2024, it details changes in legal framework, including the strengthening of “discriminatory legislation like state-level anti-conversion and anti-terrorism laws”, as well as the publication of the rules for implementing the 2019 Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA),

### ‘Biased organisation, malicious report’

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The External Affairs Ministry on Thursday said the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom should utilise its time more productively on addressing human rights issues in the U.S.

“Our views on the United States Commission

on International Religious Freedom are well known. It is a biased organisation with a political agenda,” External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

“It continues to misrepresent facts and peddles a motivated narrative about India. We reject this malicious report, which only serves to discredit USCIRF

further,” he added.

Mr. Jaiswal was responding to queries on the report.

“We would urge USCIRF to desist from such agenda-driven efforts. The USCIRF would also be well advised to utilise its time more productively on addressing human rights issues in the United States,” he said.

anti-conversion laws, “to target religious minorities across India”, detailing that “since the beginning of the year, authorities have arrested dozens of Christians on allegations of conducting or participating in forced conversions”.

It also flags the phenomenon of anti-cow slaughter laws being “frequently exploited” by vigilante groups to “target religious minorities, including Muslims, Christians, and Dalits”, noting that the perpetrators operate with impunity, rarely face punishment and “are often released on bail within 24 hours”.

The release also cites the examples of “hate speeches” by two MLAs, Nitesh Rane and Geeta Jain.

The USCIRF also recommended that the U.S. State Department designate India “as a Country of Particular Concern” for “engaging in severe religious freedom violations”.

and the passing of a State-level Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in Uttarakhand.

#### Ram temple issue

In a section titled “Expropriation and demolition of places of worship and Muslim property”, the report notes “since the beginning of 2024, Indian authorities have facilitated the expropriation of places of worship, including the con-

struction of Hindu temples on the sites of mosques”. It details how the days following the Ayodhya temple’s January 2024 consecration “were marked by a series of attacks and other instances of intolerance against religious minorities across six states”, noting, “in each instance, violence erupted following Hindu nationalist processions through predominantly

Muslim neighbourhoods”. It further states that “beyond demolitions, the government has expropriated several mosques for alternative purposes, directly violating India’s Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act.”

#### Anti-conversion laws

The report notes the trend of authorities using State-level policies, especially

#### About USCIRF:

- ➔ **Established:** Under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).
- ➔ **Type:** Independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission.
- ➔ **Functions:**
  - Reviews religious freedom violations globally.
  - Provides policy recommendations to the U.S. President, Secretary of State, and Congress.
  - Publishes annual reports with recommendations for U.S. policy on religious freedom.





- Composition: Nine commissioners appointed by the U.S. President or Congressional leaders, supported by non-partisan staff.
- ➔ **Objective:** To monitor and recommend actions concerning religious freedom violations based on international human rights standards.



### Abhiyan In News : Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan

Prime Minister of India recently launched the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan in Jharkhand with an outlay of around Rs 80,000 crore.



#### About Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan:

- It aims to foster holistic development in tribal villages, bringing transformative changes to the socio-economic landscape of the region.
- The Abhiyan will cover around 63,843 villages, benefiting more than 5 crore tribal people in 549 districts, and 2,911 blocks spread across all tribal majority villages and aspirational blocks in 30 States/UTs.
- It envisions saturation of critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood through 25 interventions implemented by 17-line ministries of Govt of India by convergence and outreach; and ensures holistic and sustainable development of tribal areas and communities.
- The scheme has a total outlay of Rs.79,156 crores (Central Share: Rs.56,333 crore and State Share: Rs. 22,823 crore).
- It has been planned based on the learning and success of Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN), which was launched in November 2023.
- With a budget outlay of Rs. 24,104 crores, the PM-JANMAN focuses on the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) population.



Page : 08 Editorial Analysis  
*Why Italy matters to India*

In this age of 'polycrisis', Italy and India share common interests but also joint challenges in the Indo-Mediterranean Sea. This region is vital for global trade, especially for Italy which ranks sixth among the world's largest exporters. It is also crucial for digital connectivity: the Blue-Raman submarine data cables will soon connect Genoa with Mumbai. Piracy in the Red Sea, the conflict in Gaza and Lebanon, and the effects of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on agricultural and oil trade require our joint efforts to ensure a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Mediterranean.

Therefore, Italy has stepped up its commitment in security and defence in the Indian Ocean Region and West Asia. Apart from joining the Group of Friends of UNCLOS in 2021, it has been the second largest contributor to the European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Atalanta and the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASoH). Since February 2024, Italy has been a driving force in the EU military operation, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, to safeguard freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Gulf.

#### Naval presence

We have also increased our naval presence in India. After joining the Information Fusion Centre of the Indian Ocean Region in March 2023, patrol ship *ITS Francesco Morosini* visited Mumbai in August 2023. The Italian Carrier Strike Group (aircraft carrier *ITS Cavour* and frigate *ITS Alpino*) is currently in Goa. We are expecting the amazing tall ship *ITS Amerigo Vespucci* in Mumbai from November 28 to December 2. It is the training vessel of the Italian Navy. We are also planning to build an 'Italy village' that will offer cultural, fashion, and culinary events, as well as conferences and exhibitions.

*ITS Cavour* is a short take off and vertical landing ship constructed by the Italian naval shipyard Fincantieri and has been in the service

#### Antonio Bartoli

Ambassador of Italy to India

Piracy in the Red Sea, the conflict in the Middle East, and the effects of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on agricultural and oil trade require our joint efforts to ensure a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Mediterranean

of the Italian Navy since 2009. As a 'dual use' vessel, it can project maritime power, but also provide logistical autonomy and serve environmental and humanitarian interventions. We are delighted that PASSEX exercises (training exercises to develop and maintain mariner skills and strengthen interoperability) are being held during the stay. *ITS Cavour* is also hosting a workshop on defence industry cooperation. At the same time, it serves as a hospital to operate children with facial malformations: a team of Indian and Italian doctors is performing surgeries under the framework of 'Operation Smile', organised by the Smile House Foundation, Italy.

#### Defence ties

Bilaterally, the Italy-India defence cooperation relies on a defence agreement signed in October 2023. This document lays the basis for a further expansion of our defence ties in many fields, from research to industrial cooperation, maritime domain awareness, sharing of information, and education and environmental issues related to military activities. At the same time, our defence cooperation strongly relies on regular talks such as the Italy-India Military Cooperation Group meeting, held in March in New Delhi.

When it comes to defence production, Italy matters to India: two of our companies, Leonardo and Fincantieri, are ranked among the first 50 of SIPRI's top arms-producing and military services companies in the world (2022), while other companies, such as Beretta, Elettronica and KNDS, albeit smaller in size, possess outstanding technical know-how. Over the last few years, Italian defence companies have shown to be open to joint ventures, co-production, and joint development. Fincantieri is cooperating with Cochin Shipyard since 2020, while Elettronica signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bharat Electronics Limited in 2019. This partnership approach is in line with India's 'Make in India' ambitions and can respond to growing

requirements by the Indian armed forces.

Italy also looks at India as a valuable partner for development of the Indian Ocean Region, from East Africa to India's shores via the Arabian Sea. Both Italy and Indian are keen promoters of Africa in international fora and jointly supported the inclusion of the African Union in the G20. During the Italy-Africa Summit in January, Italy launched a new initiative with Africa, the Mattei Plan, aimed at creating a mutually beneficial partnership to realise several important projects across the continent. This initiative mobilises Italian capabilities with €5.5 billion in public investments and the involvement of all public entities and the private sector. Among the first countries chosen for this plan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mozambique are adjacent to the Indo-Mediterranean area. The ambition is to engage with other partners to realise sustainable projects which will help drive economic and social development in Africa.

At the same time, Italy has supported the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Amid the conflict in Gaza and the escalating tensions in West Asia, we believe that IMEC can be part of a long-term vision to ensure shared prosperity in the region. Railway connections, ports, logistics and custom systems can support peace endeavours along a trade route that is as essential for Italy as it is for India.

#### People-to-people ties

Italy matters to India as a friend. We host the second largest Indian diaspora in the EU. Italy is a reliable economic and defence partner, the second largest manufacturing country in Europe, and a robust security provider taking up responsibilities as a member of the EU and NATO. What persists over time are people-to-people ties. These bonds dig deep into an ancient history of contacts between our two civilizations and find new inspiration with every story of cultural exchange, integration, and business success.

**GS Paper 02 : International Relations**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question :** Analyze the significance of Italy-India relations in the context of current geopolitical challenges in the Indo-Mediterranean region.

**What steps can be taken to enhance this bilateral partnership?**



**Context :**

Italy and India are enhancing their collaboration in the Indo-Mediterranean Sea, focusing on mutual interests in trade, security, and cultural exchange amid global challenges.



## Introduction

- ▶ in this age of 'polycrisis', Italy and India share common interests but also joint challenges in the Indo-Mediterranean Sea. This region is vital for global trade, especially for Italy which ranks sixth among the world's largest exporters. It is also crucial for digital connectivity: the Blue-Raman submarine data cables will soon connect Genoa with Mumbai.
- ▶ Piracy in the Red Sea, the conflict in Gaza and Lebanon, and the effects of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on agricultural and oil trade require our joint efforts to ensure a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Mediterranean.
  - Italy's commitment to security and defence in the Indian Ocean Region and West Asia
  - Italy has stepped up its commitment in security and defence in the Indian Ocean Region and West Asia.
  - Apart from joining the Group of Friends of UNCLOS in 2021,
  - It has been the second largest contributor to the European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Atalanta and the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASoH).
  - Since February 2024, Italy has been a driving force in the EU military operation, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, to safeguard freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Gulf.

## Naval presence

- ▶ Italy has increased its naval presence in India.
- ▶ **Joining the Information Fusion Centre:** of the Indian Ocean Region in March 2023, patrol ship ITS Francesco Morosini visited Mumbai in August 2023. The Italian Carrier Strike Group (aircraft carrier ITS Cavour and frigate ITS Alpino) is currently in Goa.
  - The tall ship ITS Amerigo Vespucci in Mumbai from November 28 to December 2 is expected.
  - It is the training vessel of the Italian Navy. We are also planning to build an 'Italy village' that will offer cultural, fashion, and culinary events, as well as conferences and exhibitions.
- ▶ **ITS Cavour:** is a short take off and vertical landing ship constructed by the Italian naval shipyard Fincantieri and has been in the service of the Italian Navy since 2009.
  - As a 'dual use' vessel, it can project maritime power, but also provide logistical autonomy and serve environmental and humanitarian interventions.
- ▶ **PASSEX exercises:** (training exercises to develop and maintain mariner skills and strengthen interoperability) are being held during the stay.
  - ITS Cavour is also hosting a workshop: on defence industry cooperation.
- ▶ **Social duties:** At the same time, it serves as a hospital to operate children with facial malformations:
- ▶ a team of Indian and Italian doctors is performing surgeries under the framework of 'Operation Smile', organised by the Smile House Foundation, Italy.

## Defence ties

- ▶ **Defence Agreement:** Bilaterally, the Italy-India defence cooperation relies on a defence agreement signed in October 2023.

- This document lays the basis for a further expansion of our defence ties in many fields, from research to industrial cooperation, maritime domain awareness, sharing of information, and education and environmental issues related to military activities.
- ➔ **Defence cooperation talks:** At the same time, our defence cooperation strongly relies on regular talks such as the Italy-India Military Cooperation Group meeting, held in March in New Delhi.
- ➔ **Defence production: Italy matters to India:** two of our companies, Leonardo and Fincantieri, are ranked among the first 50 of SIPRI's top arms-producing and military services companies in the world (2022), while other companies, such as Beretta, Elettronica and KNDS, albeit smaller in size, possess outstanding technical knowhow.
- ➔ **Joint ventures in Defence:** Over the last few years, Italian defence companies have shown to be open to joint ventures, co-production, and joint development.
  - Fincantieri is cooperating with Cochin Shipyard since 2020, while Elettronica signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bharat Electronics Limited in 2019.
  - This partnership approach is in line with India's 'Make in India' ambitions and can respond to growing requirements by the Indian armed forces.

### Italy's role in the development of the Indian Ocean Region

- ➔ **Partnership in East Africa:** Italy also looks at India as a valuable partner for development of the Indian Ocean Region, from East Africa to India's shores via the Arabian Sea.
- ➔ **African inclusion in international forum:** Both Italy and Indian are keen promoters of Africa in international for a and jointly supported the inclusion of the African Union in the G20.
  - During the Italy-Africa Summit in January, Italy launched a new initiative with Africa, the Mattei Plan, aimed at creating a mutually beneficial partnership to realise several important projects across the continent.
  - This initiative mobilises Italian capabilities with €5.5 billion in public investments and the involvement of all public entities and the private sector.
  - Among the first countries chosen for this plan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mozambique are adjacent to the Indo-Mediterranean area.
  - The ambition is to engage with other partners to realise sustainable projects which will help drive economic and social development in Africa.

### Italy's support for IMEC

- ➔ Italy has supported the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Amid the conflict in Gaza and the escalating tensions in West Asia, we believe that IMEC can be part of a long-term vision to ensure shared prosperity in the region. Railway connections, ports, logistics and custom systems can support peace endeavours along a trade route that is as essential for Italy as it is for India.

### Conclusion: People-to-people ties

- ➔ Italy matters to India as a friend. We host the second largest Indian diaspora in the EU.





## Daily News Analysis

- ▶ Italy is a reliable economic and defence partner, the second largest manufacturing country in Europe, and a robust security provider taking up responsibilities as a member of the EU and NATO. What persists over time are people-to-people ties.
- ▶ These bonds dig deep into an ancient history of contacts between our two civilizations and find new inspiration with every story of cultural exchange, integration, and business success.

