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### **1. 2023: Global Military Spending Peaks at \$2443bn; US Leads, India 4th: SIPRI Report ( April 23, 2024 )**

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) published its 'Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2023' report on April 22, 2024.

#### **An Overview of the News**

- Global military expenditure reached an unprecedented USD 2443 billion in 2023, marking the ninth consecutive year of increase.
- This surge represents a notable 6.8% rise in real terms from the previous year, the most substantial year-on-year increase since 2009.
- The top five countries contributing to this expenditure in 2023 were the United States of America (USA), China, Russia, India, and Saudi Arabia, collectively responsible for 61% of the world's military spending.
- **India secured the fourth position among global military spenders in 2023**, with a total expenditure of USD 83.6 billion. This figure reflects a 4.2% increase from 2022 and a substantial 44% rise from 2014.
- In 2023, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, including the USA, contributed a combined total of USD 1341 billion to global military spending, comprising approximately 55% of the overall expenditure.

#### **SIPRI:**

- It provides data, analysis and recommendations on armed conflicts, military spending and arms trade.
- SIPRI also focuses on disarmament and arms control.
- Its function is to contribute to global peace and security initiatives.
  - Headquarters - Solna
  - Founded - 6 May 1966
  - Director - Dan Smith
  - Chair - Stefan Löfven
  - Founders - Tage Erlander, Alva Myrdal

### **2. UN DESA Report: \$4.2 Trillion Investment Gap for Sustainable Development ( April 13, 2024 )**

On April 9, 2024, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) issued the 9th edition of the 'Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024 (FSDR 2024)'.

**An Overview of the News**

- The report, developed by the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, centers on the theme 'Financing for Development at a Crossroads'.
- An estimated USD 4.2 trillion in investments is now deemed necessary to address the development financing gap, compared to the pre-COVID-19 estimate of USD 2.5 trillion.

**Significance of Economic Transitions:**

- The report underscores the critical role of economic transitions in realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the need for unprecedented investment levels.

**Collaborative Production:**

- 'FSDR 2024' is a collaborative endeavor involving the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development (IATF), comprising various UN agencies and international organizations.

**Debt Servicing Expenses for LDCs:**

- Between 2023 and 2025, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are projected to face debt servicing costs amounting to USD 40 billion, representing a notable increase of over 50% (USD 26 billion) from 2022.

**About UN DESA:**

- The head of UN DESA is the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Economic and Social Affairs, currently held by Li Junhua.
- Its headquarters are situated in New York, United States (US), established in 1948.

**3. Moody's Report: India's GDP to Slide to 6.1% in 2024 ( April 13, 2024 )**

Moody's Analytics report titled "APAC Outlook: Listening Through the Noise" forecasts India's GDP to decline to 6.1% in 2024 from the 7.7% growth observed in 2023.

**An Overview of the News**

- Output in India is noted to be 4% lower than it would have been without the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, which includes supply disruptions and international conflicts.
- Economies in the South and Southeast (SE) Asia region are expected to experience robust output gains in 2024, although their performance is somewhat inflated due to delays in the post-pandemic rebound.
- The overall APAC region is projected to achieve a growth rate of 3.8% in 2024, while the global economy is expected to grow by 2.5%.
- China and India face greater uncertainty regarding inflation, according to the report.

- India's Consumer Price Index inflation rate, at around 5%, is close to the inflation target range of 2% to 6% set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), indicating no clear trend toward easing price pressures.

#### **4. JNU Leads Indian Institutions in Global Development Studies Rankings: QS Report 2024 ( April 12, 2024 )**

The 14th edition of QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024, released on April 10, 2024, highlighted Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) as India's top-ranking institution in Development Studies, securing the 20th position globally.

##### **An Overview of the News**

- Music was introduced as a new subject category in the 2024 rankings, diversifying the scope of evaluation.
- This edition featured 55 individual subjects categorized into five broad areas: Arts & Humanities, Engineering & Technology, Life Sciences & Medicine, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences & Management.
- Harvard University of the United States (US) emerged as the leading institution in the four broad subject categories.
- A total of 69 Indian universities were included in the 2024 QS World University Rankings by Subject, contributing to 424 entries, marking a notable 19.4% increase from the previous year.

##### **About Quacquarelli Symonds (QS):**

- The organization is headed by CEO Jessica Turner and is headquartered in London, United Kingdom (UK).

#### **5. Finland tops the happiness ranking for the seventh year, Afghanistan in last place ( March 21, 2024 )**

The World Happiness Report, conducted annually by the United Nations, rates countries based on a variety of factors including life satisfaction, GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and corruption.

##### **An Overview of the News**

- Finland retained its title as the happiest country in 2024 for the seventh consecutive year, with other Nordic countries such as Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden also ranked in the top 10.

##### **Situation in Afghanistan:**

- Afghanistan remains the unhappiest country facing ongoing humanitarian crises since the resurgence of the Taliban in 2020.

**Ranking changes:**

- The United States and Germany fall out of the top 20 happiest countries, ranking 23rd and 24th, respectively, while Costa Rica and Kuwait enter the top 20.

**India's ranking**

- India has maintained its ranking at 126th in the happiness index.

**Factors Contributing to Finland's Happiness:**

- Finland's happiness is attributed to factors such as a strong connection to nature, a healthy work-life balance, an attainable sense of success, a strong welfare society, trust in state officials, low corruption levels, and accessible healthcare and education.

**Top 10 happiest countries of 2024:**

Rank	Country
1.	Finland
2.	Denmark
3.	Iceland
4.	Sweden
5.	Israel
6.	Netherlands
7.	Norway
8.	Luxemburg
9.	Switzerland
10.	Australia

**6. Begusarai Leads Global Ranking as Most Polluted City ( March 20, 2024 )**

Begusarai in Bihar has been identified as the most polluted city in the world in the World Air Quality Report 2023 by IQAir.

## **An Overview of the News**

- According to the report, 83 of the top 100 most polluted cities globally are located in India.
- After Begusarai, Guwahati is the second most polluted city, while Delhi and Mullanpur (Punjab) are in the third and fourth positions respectively.

## **India's ranking in the Global Air Pollution Report**

- Globally, according to the list of 134 countries, India ranks third behind Bangladesh and Pakistan among the top five most polluted countries.
- The World Air Quality Report underlines that India's PM2.5 level is 54.4 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, which is 10 times higher than WHO's annual guideline of PM2.5 refers to harmful fine particulate matter.

## **Impact of air pollution in South Asia**

- South Asia has emerged as the most affected region, hosting the top 10 most polluted cities globally, with factors such as climate conditions and cross-border haze increasing PM2.5 levels across Southeast Asia.
- Of the 134 countries surveyed, only 7 countries, including Australia, New Zealand, and Iceland, meet WHO's annual PM2.5 guideline.

## **7. On top of the list of missing women in India: Maharashtra ( July 29, 2023 )**

On-top-of-the-list-of-missing-women-in-India--Maharashtra

Among all states, Maharashtra topped the list with the highest number of missing women in 2021, with a **reported count of 56,498**.

## **An Overview of the News**

- In 2021, a total of 375,058 women (above 18 years) were reported missing in India, according to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) as mentioned in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) press release.
- Additionally, 90,113 girls (under the age of 18) were also reported missing in India during the same year.
- **The second-highest number of missing women was in Madhya Pradesh with 55,704 cases.**
- Following closely, **West Bengal reported 50,998 missing women, while Odisha recorded 29,582 cases in the same year.**
- Compared to the previous year, in **2020, there were 320,393 women and 71,204 girls** reported missing across the country.
- Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra were the two states that witnessed the highest number of missing girls and women from 2019 to 2021.

- In the three-year period from 2019 to 2021, a concerning total of 10,61,648 women and 2,51,430 girls went missing in India.

### **About Maharashtra**

- It is a state located in the western part of India and covers a significant part of the Deccan Plateau.
- Chief Minister - **Eknath Shinde**
- Governor - **Ramesh Bais**

### **8. UN report: Only 1% of women live in countries with high gender equality, women empowerment ( July 20, 2023 )**

A new global report launched by UN Women and UNDP at the Women Deliver conference highlights the challenges in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment around the world.

#### **An Overview of the News**

- The report introduces two important indices to assess progress in women's human development: the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) and the Global Gender Equality Index (GGPI).

#### **Women Empowerment Index (WEI)**

- It measures the power and independence of women in various dimensions including health, education, inclusion, decision making and violence against women.
- Globally, women achieve only 60% of their full potential, as measured by the WEI.

#### **Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI)**

- It evaluates the position of women relative to men in key dimensions of human development, such as health, education, inclusion and decision-making.
- On average, women achieve 72% more than men, reflecting a 28% gender gap.

### **Conclusion**

- A worrying finding is that less than 1% of women and girls live in countries with high levels of female empowerment and gender equality, while more than 90% of the female population live in countries with significant empowerment deficits and gender gaps.

### **9. NITI Aayog released 'Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022' report ( July 19, 2023 )**

The ITI Commission released the 3rd edition of 'Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022' for the States/UTs of India.

## An Overview of the News

- The report was released by Vice President Suman Berry and other officials.
- It aims to promote India as a global export player by leveraging regional competitiveness and diversity.
- The focus is on export performance both at the state and district levels.

## Objectives of EPI 2022

- Empowering state governments with sector-specific insights for decision making.
- Identify strengths and address weaknesses to promote comprehensive development.
- To promote competitive federalism among the States/UTs.

## Four Pillars of EPI 2022

1. **Policy pillar:** Evaluates the adoption of the export-related policy ecosystem and institutional framework at the state and district levels.
2. **Business Ecosystem:** Assesses the business environment, supporting infrastructure and transport connectivity in the States/UTs.
3. **Export ecosystem:** Focuses on export-related infrastructure, business support and research and development (R&D) to foster innovation.
4. **Export Performance:** Measures the growth, concentration and global market footprint of a state's exports.

**Ten sub-pillars** - Export Promotion Policy, Institutional Framework, Business Environment, Infrastructure, Transport, Connectivity, Export Infrastructure, Trade Support, R&D Infrastructure, Export Diversification, and Growth Orientation

## Top Performing States/UTs

Coastal states including Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat performed well in all categories.

## EPI 2022 Rankings

Rank	State	Category	Score
1	Tamil Nadu	Coastal	80.89
2	Maharashtra	Coastal	78.20
3	Karnataka	Coastal	76.36
4	Gujarat	Coastal	73.22

5	Haryana	Landlocked	63.65
6	Telangana	Landlocked	61.36
7	Uttar Pradesh	Landlocked	61.23
8	Andhra Pradesh	Coastal	59.27
9	Uttarakhand	Himalayan	59.13
10	Punjab	Landlocked	58.95

### **10. 13.5 crore Indians out of multidimensional poverty in 5 years ( July 19, 2023 )**

According to the 'National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023' report released by NITI Aayog, between 2015-16 and 2019-21, 135 million people in India have successfully lifted themselves out of multidimensional poverty over a period of five years.

#### **An Overview of the News**

- The report highlights a sharp decline in the number of multidimensionally poor persons in India, which **increased from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-21, showing a significant decrease of 9.89 percentage points.**
- Rural areas have seen the fastest decline in poverty, with the **poverty rate falling from 32.59% to 19.28% during the same period.**
- India is making significant progress towards achieving **SDG target 1.2, which aims to reduce multidimensional poverty by at least half before 2030, well ahead of schedule.**
- Improvements in various areas have contributed to **poverty reduction, including nutrition, years of schooling, sanitation and access to clean cooking fuel.**
- Among states, **Uttar Pradesh leads with the largest decline in the number of poor persons, followed by Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.**
- Improvements are evident in all 12 indicators of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), including nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, maternal health, education, access to basic amenities and financial inclusion.

#### **About NITI Aayog**

- Its full name is **National Institution for Transforming India**, serves as the **apex public policy think tank of the Government of India.**
- Its primary goals are to catalyse economic growth and promote cooperative federalism, involving state governments in the economic policy-making process through a bottom-up approach.



Formed - **1 January 2015**

Objective - **To promote participation in the economic policy-making process by the state governments of India**

Jurisdiction - **Government of India**

Headquarters - **New Delhi**

Chairman - **Narendra Modi**

Founder - **National Democratic Alliance**