

MILAN EXERCISE

The Mid Planning Conference (MPC) of MILAN 24 Exercise is to be hosted by the Indian Navy at Visakhapatnam from 19 - 27 February 2024.



About the Milan Exercise:

- MILAN is a **biennial multilateral naval exercise**.
- It was incepted by the **Indian Navy in 1995**.
- Originally conceived in consonance with India's 'Look East Policy, MILAN expanded in ensuing years with the Government of India's 'Act East Policy' and **Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative** to include participation from other Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs).
- The harbour phase of MILAN 24 will comprise an International Maritime Seminar, City Parade at RK Beach, Swavlamban Exhibition, Subject Matter Expert Exchange, and Milan of Young Officers. Ships, Maritime patrol aircraft, and submarines of Friendly Foreign Countries would participate in the sea phase along with Indian Navy units.
- They will involve large-force manoeuvres, advanced air defence operations, Anti-submarine warfare, and Anti-surface warfare operations.
- MILAN 22 was conducted at/ off Visakhapatnam from February 25 Feb - 04 Mar 22 and witnessed participation from 39 countries.

HOW MPS ASK QUESTIONS IN LOK SABHA

What is the procedure for raising the questions in Lok Sabha?

- **Existing rules**
 - The procedure for raising questions is governed by:
 - Rules 32 to 54 of the “Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha” and
 - Directions 10 to 18 of the “Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha”.
- **Procedure**

- To ask a question, an MP has to first give a notice addressed to the lower house's Secretary-General, intimating their intention to ask a question.
 - The notice usually contains:
 - the text of the question,
 - the official designation of the Minister to whom the question is addressed,
 - the date on which the answer is desired, and
 - the order of preference, in case the MP tables more than one notice of questions for the same day.
 - **Number of questions a member can ask**
 - A Member is allowed to give not more than five notices of questions, both for oral and written answers, in all, for any day.
 - Notices received in excess of five from a Member for a day, are considered for the subsequent day(s) concerning that Minister(s) during the period of that session only.
 - Usually, the period of notice of a question is not less than 15 days.
 - **2 Ways through which MPs can submit the notices of their questions**
 - First, through an **online 'Member's Portal'**, where they have to enter their ID and password to get access.
 - Second, through the printed forms available in the Parliamentary Notice Office.
 - **Role of Speaker**
 - After submission of the notices, the next stage is when the Speaker of Lok Sabha examines the notices of the questions in the light of the laid-out rules.
 - It is the Speaker, who decides if a question, or a part thereof, is or isn't admissible.
- Different types of questions**
- **Starred questions**
 - A starred question is asked by an MP and answered orally by the Minister-in-charge.
 - Each MP is allowed to ask one starred question per day.

- Starred questions have to be submitted at least 15 days in advance (so that the Minister-in-charge has the time to prepare the answers) and only 20 questions can be listed for oral answers on a day.
- **Unstarred questions**
 - An unstarred question receives a written reply from the Ministry. These also need to be submitted at least 15 days in advance.
 - Only 230 questions can be listed for written answers in a day.
 - Unlike starred questions, unstarred questions do not permit any follow-up questions.
- **Short-notice questions**
 - Short notice questions are ones pertaining to a matter of urgent public importance.
 - They can be asked with less than 10 days' notice, with reasons for the short notice.
 - Like a starred question, they are answered orally, followed by supplementary questions.

Importance of raising questions

- Asking questions is an inherent and unfettered parliamentary right of an MP.
- The exercise is meant to act as a parliamentary device to practise legislative control over executive actions.
- It can be used to:
 - get information on aspects of administration and government activity,
 - criticise government policies and schemes,
 - throw light on government lapses, and
 - push ministers to take substantive steps for the common good.

CANADA VISA SERVICES NOW AVAILABLE ONLY IN DELHI

Why in news?

- Canada has stopped visa and consular services at its Chandigarh, Mumbai, and Bengaluru consulates. These services will now be available only at the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi.

- This has happened after Canada withdrew **41 diplomats** from India after New Delhi said it would revoke their diplomatic immunity.
- Canada has since called for New Delhi to uphold its obligations under the **1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations**.
- India insists that its actions are consistent with the tenets set forth in **Article 11.1 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations**.

News Summary

1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations

- The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations is an international treaty signed by 61 countries in 1961.
- It puts forth a framework for diplomatic interactions between independent nations and aims to ensure the ‘development of friendly relations among nations’.
- At present **193 countries** are party to the document.

What is the expected fallout of this situation?

- The downsizing of Canada’s diplomatic corps and halting of visa and consular services in three major Indian cities will lead to a significant slowdown of Indian visa applications for Canada.
- A very large chunk of these visa applications are from Indian students who seek to study in Canadian universities.

How many Indian students are there in Canada?

- Around two million Canadians, 5% of the overall population, have Indian heritage.
- Canada is the second largest overseas destination for Indian students after the United States.
- India is by far Canada’s largest source of global students, making up for roughly 40% of study permit holders.
- As of December 31, 2022, a total of **319,130 Indian students** comprised **39.5%** of the international student population in Canada.
- In 2022, India was the top country for permanent residents, temporary foreign workers, and international students in Canada.

WHAT IS WITHHOLDING TAX?

The Supreme Court (SC) recently held that without an express notification, the companies cannot, automatically, claim lower withholding tax of 5%, even if provided for in the Direct Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA).



About Withholding Tax:

- Withholding tax is **withheld or deducted from certain types of income**, such as wages, dividends, interest, and royalties, **when they are paid to the recipient (non-resident individual)**.
- It is also **known as Retention tax**.
- The purpose of withholding tax in India is to **ensure that the government receives a portion of the income tax** owed by the recipient.
- Withholding tax is **applicable in the case of payments made to non-resident individuals**.
- **If the income is paid in India**, the person responsible for payments to NRI must **deduct the withholding tax at the time of payment** or when the amount is credited to the NRI's account, **according to Section 195 of the Income Tax Act**.
- **The amount** of withholding tax in India **depends on the type of income**, the amount of income earned, and the **tax laws of the country where the income is earned**.
- The **tax rate** is decided as **prescribed in the Income Tax Act, 1961, or Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), whichever is lower**.
- The **central government of India collects this tax**.
- India has **signed DTAA's with many countries to avoid taxing individuals twice** for the same income (in India and the partner country). Currently, India has DTAA treaties with more than 80 countries around the world.

Difference between Withholding Tax and TDS?

- **Withholding Tax:** It is the amount that is **deducted in advance**, and the same is **deposited with the government before the amount is paid** to the payer. It is generally **applicable on payments to non – residents**, that are foreign transactions.
 - **TDS (Tax Deducted at Source):** A person (**deductor**) who is **required to make a payment** of a specific nature to another person (**deductee**) **must deduct tax at source** and **send it to the Central Government's** account. It is **applicable on specified transactions under the income tax act, 1961 to both resident and non-resident**.
 - Both withholding tax and TDS **serve the same purpose:** to ensure that **taxes are collected at the source** of income. They are used to **ensure tax compliance and prevent tax evasion**.
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BOMBAY STOCK EXCHANGE (BSE)

The **Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)** recently increased the transaction charges on the equity derivatives segment.



About the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE):

- It is the **oldest and largest stock exchange in India**.
- It was **established in 1875** as the **Native Share and Stock Brokers' Association**.
- In **1957**, the **Indian Government** gave recognition to the BSE under the **Securities Contracts Regulations Act**.
- It is **located on Dalal Street, Mumbai**, and lists over **6000 companies**.
- BSE boasts a **variety of trading options in equity, fiat, debt instruments, derivatives, and mutual funds**.
- In addition, it offers multiple trading services like **clearing, settlement, risk management, and investor awareness**.

How does the BSE work?

- The BSE employs an advanced, electronically managed **trading portal to facilitate financial trades**.

- The exchange allows **shareholders to place orders online** without requiring external help from industry experts.
- This process is possible through the **direct BSE market access offered by the portal**.
- Investors can trade on the BSE share market **via a brokerage firm** For this, they **need to pay a pre-determined price to the broker**.
- The **direct investment option is only for a section of investors with bulky BSE transactions to their credit**.
- The BSE stock exchange **has the Bombay Online Trading Platform (BOLT)** to ensure a safe trading experience.
- The BSE Sensex stocks **follow a T+2 transaction settlement scheme** which implies that **each transaction on the exchange takes two days to complete processing**.
- BSE market **complies with the regulatory guidelines imposed by SEBI** to ensure investors' safety and capital market efficiency.

What is Sensex?

- Sensex is the **benchmark index of the BSE**.
- It was **launched on January 1, 1986**, as a **basket of 30 stocks** representing the country's **largest, financially-sound companies** listed on the BSE.
- The term 'Sensex' is a blend of words 'Sensitive' and 'Index' and was **coined by stock market expert Deepak Mohini**.
- The Sensex **reflects the movements in the Indian stock market**. It is considered the benchmark index of the Indian stock market.

What are Derivatives?

- A derivative is a **contract between two parties** which **derives its value/price from an underlying asset**.
- The commonly used **assets are stocks, bonds, currencies, commodities and market indices**.
- These instruments **allow investors and traders to speculate on the price movements of the underlying asset without owning it directly**.

UNITED NATIONS WORLD TOURISM ORGANISATION (UNWTO)

Recently, the Prime Minister of India hailed the Dhordo village in Kutch district of Gujarat for being awarded as the Best Tourism Village by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).



About the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO):

- It is the **United Nations** agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism.
- **Functions:** It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.
- It was established in 1975.
- **Members:** Membership of the UNWTO includes **159 countries**.
- **Official languages:** The official languages of UNWTO are **Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish**.
- **Organisation structure:**
 - **General Assembly:** It is the principal gathering of the World Tourism Organization. It is composed of full members and associate members. It meets **every two years**.
 - **Executive Council:** It is UNWTO's governing board. It is composed of 35 members elected by the General Assembly in a ratio of one for every five full members. It meets at least twice a year.
- **Headquarter:** Madrid, Spain

Key facts about Best Tourism Villages initiative

- It was launched in 2021 by UNWTO.
- It is part of the **UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Programme**.
- The programme works to foster development and inclusion in rural areas, combat depopulation, advance innovation and value chain integration through tourism and encourage sustainable practises.

DROUGHT IN AMAZON RAINFORESTS | IMPACT, CAUSES & FUTURE

Why in News?

- The Amazon rainforest is reeling from an intense drought. Numerous rivers vital for travel have dried up.
- As a result, there is no water, food, or medicine in villages of indigenous communities living in the area.

About Amazon Rainforests:



- The Amazon rainforest, also called Amazon jungle or Amazonia, is a **moist broadleaf tropical rainforest** in the Amazon biome that covers most of the Amazon basin of South America.
 - This basin encompasses 70 lakh km² of which 55 lakh km² are covered by the rainforest.
- This region includes territory belonging to nine countries and more than 3300 formally acknowledged indigenous territories.
- The majority of the forest, 60%, is in **Brazil**, followed by **Peru** with 13%, **Colombia** with 10%.

Drought in Amazon Rainforests:

- Eight Brazilian states recorded the lowest rainfall between July 2023 to September 2023 in over 40 years.
- Rainfall is forecast to be below average until the end of the year.
- The latest calamity is becoming another cause for accelerating the destruction of the Amazon, called the **planet's lungs** (storing more than 150 billion metric tonnes of carbon).