# Prelim Bits 17-02-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

## Schengen Area

*Recently, Kosovo secured visa-free access to the Schengen zone in Europe, world's largest zone of free movement*

- **Schengen agreement** – A treaty, signed ***in 1985 in Schengen***, by France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Netherlands and came ***into force in 1995***.

  ***Schengen*** *is a village in Luxembourg, bordering France and Germany.*

- **Aim** – To *abolish internal border checks* and to provide a *single set of rules* for controls at the external borders in Schengen area.
- **Parties** – 27 countries
- **Membership** – It has allowed *both EU and non-EU countries*.
- *Today, 23 of 27 EU countries* are parties except Cyprus and Ireland but Bulgaria and Romania to join in March, 2024.
- It includes non-EU States like Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

## SCHENGEN AREA

**Countries**
- EU - Yes/Schengen - Yes
- EU - No/Schengen - Yes
- EU - Yes/Schengen - No

*United Kingdom (UK) is a non-EU and non-Schengen Country.*

- **Schengen Visa** – It is issued *for short stays **under 90 days**.*
- **Benefits** – Freedom to travel to other European nations without border checks.
- Alongside the single currency adopted by 20 EU countries, Schengen visa is the most visible symbol of European integration.
- **Challenges** – The *flow of migrants and asylum seekers* is seen as a threat to internal security and affected member states uses the Schengen Borders Code to introduce internal border controls.

---

**Quick facts**

- **Kosovo** - A Balkan nation which broke away from Serbia in 1999 and declared

- independence in 2008.
  - It has not been accorded legal statehood by the UN and denied recognition by Russia and China.
  - **Balkan countries** - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

**Reference**

The Hindu| Kosovo joining Schengen Area

## National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)

*Recently, Vice-Chairman (Chairman in-charge) of the NCSC submitted its annual report 2022-23 to the President of India.*

- It is a ***constitutional body under Article 338*** of the Constitution of India.
- **Aim** – To provide *safeguards against the exploitation of SCs* and Anglo Indian communities and to promote & protect their *social, educational, economic and cultural interests*.
- **Composition (5)** - Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and 3 other Members.
- **Appointed by** – ***President,*** by warrant under his hand and seal.
- President may by rule determine the conditions of service and tenure of office of all the members.

> **89$^{th}$ Constitutional Amendment Act (2003),** *separated the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into 2 separate commissions - National Commission for SC and National Commission for ST (NCST).*

- **Powers and Function** – It shall have the power to *regulate its own procedure*.
- To *investigate and monitor* all matters relating to all safeguards provided for the SCs and to evaluate their working.
- To *inquire into specific complaints* with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the SCs.
  - It has all the ***powers of a civil court*** like summoning attendance, requiring documents, receiving evidences, requisition public copy from court or office and examining the witnesses.
- To advise on the *planning process of socio-economic development* and to evaluate the progress under the Union and any State.
- To discharge such *other functions as the President may*, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, by the rule specify.
- The Union and every State Government shall consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting SCs.
- **Report** – Presented *to the President, annually* and at such other times as the

Commission may deem fit where it _recommends measures_ that should be taken by the Union or any State.

_National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) under **Article 338 (A)** and National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) under **Article 338 (B)** are constitutional bodies for the protection and development of STs and BCs of India respectively._

**References**

1. PIB| Annual Report of NCSC
2. Constitution of India| Article 338 of Indian Constitution

# Army Martial Arts Routine (AMAR)

_Recently, a Punjab Regiment unit deployed close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Kibithu in eastern Arunachal Pradesh, demonstrated their martial arts training to a group of visiting journalists._

- **AMAR** – A unique and _standardised mixed martial arts (MMA) programme_ to train soldiers in basic and advanced techniques and manoeuvres of MMA.
- **Induction of martial arts** – Post the Galwan conflict in 2020, the Udhampur-based Northern Command introduced the _Israeli-origin martial art **Krav Maga.**_
- Later units picked up different martial arts based on their affiliations.
  - **The Ghatka** – By the Punjab regiment
  - **The Khukri dance** – By the Gorkha Regiment
  - **The Kalari Payattu** – By the Madras regiment
- **Aim** – To improve _soldier readiness and close-quarters fighting_ skills by focussing on offensive assault training and the ability to counter sharp-edged weapons.

_**Battle Preparedness and Efficiency Test (BEPT)** is a mandate for all personnel up to 45 years of age once in every quarter. One has to run 5 km in 25 minutes for up to 30 years of age and for those above 30 years up to 40, additional 2 minutes are given._

| Important Martial Arts | Origin State |
|---|---|
| Kalaripayattu | Kerala |
| Gatka | Punjab |
| Kuttu Varisai | Tamil Nadu |
| Silambam | Tamil Nadu |
| Thang-ta | Manipur |

**References**

1. [The Hindu| Indian Martial arts Training for Army troops](#)
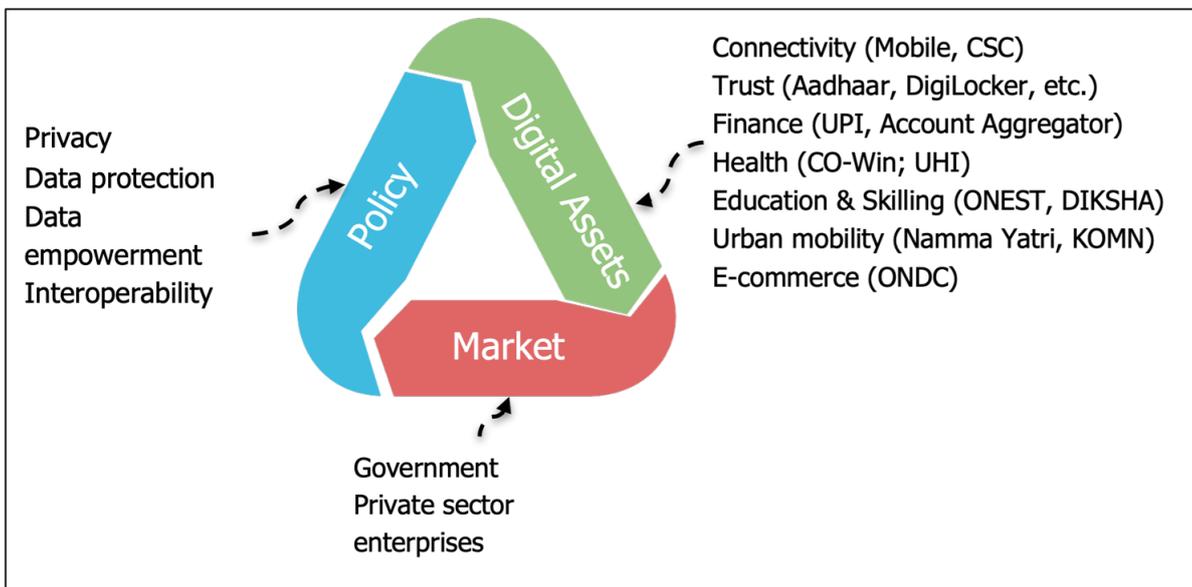2. [Times of India | Indian Martial Art Forms](#)

## India's open-sourced DPIs

*India and Colombia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation to share India's open-sourced DPIs.*

- **India Stack Solutions** – It is India's open-sourced DPI, a democratic and inclusive *set of open Application Programming Interface (APIs)* that stack upon each other to address various social challenges arising from economic underdevelopment.
- **Digital public infrastructure (DPI)** – It is a set of *shared digital utilities* powered by interoperable open standards providing *equal access to drive innovation, inclusion,* and competition at scale having open, transparent, and participatory governance.

    ***Open source software (OSS)** is software with a source code that that anyone can inspect, modify, and enhance with its original rights.*

- **Digital public goods (DPGs)** – A set of digital assets *made freely available* allowing anyone to build and operate their own DPIs in a faster, cheaper, and interoperable manner.
- **India's DPI framework**



- **Significance** – DPI approach can *reduce implementation cost* thereby increasing society-wide impact of digitalisation.
- It can *make India genuinely a leader of the Global South*, as is evident from the fact that 8 countries have already signed MoU for the stack.

    *India has launched [Global DPI Repository (GDPIR)](#), a virtual repository of DPI*

*voluntarily shared by G20 members and beyond. Currently, the GDPIR features 54 DPIs from 16 countries.*

**References**

1. [PIB| India Signs MoU with Columbia to Share India's DPI](#)
2. [Business Today| India's DPI goes Global](#)

## Operations of Railway Protection Force

*The Railway Protection Force (RPF) undertake various operations to safeguard railway property, passenger areas, and the well-being of travellers.*

- **Railway Protection Forces** – It is established through ***RPF Act, 1957*** and was amended in 1985 to make RPF *an Armed Force*.
- **Aim** – To ensure a *safe and comfortable travel experience* for all rail passengers and thereby upholding the values of integrity, compassion, and responsibility.

| Operation | Objective | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| Nanhe Faristey | Rescuing Lost Children | Reuniting the children in need of care and protection with their families. |
| Jeevan Raksha | Saving Lives | Saving the lives of passengers who had accidentally fallen while de-boarding or boarding moving trains. |
| Meri Saheli | Empowering Women Passengers | Providing security assurance to lady passengers. |
| Uplabdh | Cracking Down on Touts | Arresting touts and Seizing future reserved railway tickets. |
| NARCOS | Combating Drug Crimes | Arresting drug peddlers and seizing narcotics. |
| Yatri Suraksha | Protecting Passengers | Supplementing police in preventing and detecting crimes against passengers. |
| Sanraksha | Ensuring Safety | Maintaining passenger safety from perilious acts of stone pelting on running trains. |
| Seva | Assisting Those in Need | Assisting elderly, sick or injured passengers during their rail travels. |
| Satark | Curbing Illegal Goods Transport | Seizing illegal tobacco products, illegal liquor and unaccounted cash, gold and silver. |

*In addition to this, RPF promptly addressed security-related passenger complaints through Rail Madad Portal and the Helpline (No. 139 integrated with Emergency Response Support System No. 112).*

**References**

1. [PIB| Operation of RPF](#)
2. [RPF| Railway Protection Force](#)