UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 25-09-2024

The Great Stupa of Sanchi

External Affairs Minister recently stopped by the replica of the East Gate of Sanchi's Great Stupa standing in front of Humboldt Forum museum in Berlin.

- **Stupa -** A stupa is a Buddhist commemorative monument usually containing sacred relics of the Buddha or other venerable saints.
- The archetypal stupa is a hemispherical structure whose origins can be traced to pre-Buddhist burial mounds found in India. The Great Stupa of Sanchi exemplifies this form.
- **Great Stupa of Sanchi –** It is a Buddhist monument and one of the oldest stone structures in India.
- It is located in the village of Sanchi in the Raisen district of ***Madhya Pradesh.***
- It is the largest and oldest structure in a complex of Buddhist monuments comprising numerous other stupas, temples, and monasteries.
- **Construction** - The Great Stupa was built by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE. Originally it is about half the size and built from large bricks and mud mortar.
- It is believed it had raised terraces at the base, was enclosed by a wooden railing, and was crowned by a stone umbrella.
- The stupa was enlarged using local ***sandstone*** during the ***Sunga period***, which began about 50 years after Ashoka's death.
- **Walkway -** A circumambulatory walkway was constructed around the stupa which was bounded by a stone railing also known as Vedika.
- Circumambulation or pradakshina is an important part of ritual and devotional practices in Buddhism. A Harmika or square structure was also added to the stupa.
- **Harmika -** The main body of the stupa symbolises the cosmic mountain. It is topped by a 'harmika' to hold the triple umbrella, or 'chhatraveli'.
    - It represents the 3 jewels of Buddhism – the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.
- The elaborately-carved gateways were added later, in the ***1st century BC.*** The gateways and the stone balustrade were added later.
- **Gateways** - The gateways at the 4 cardinal points or Toranas are the highlights of the structure, with a series of detailed carvings showing Buddhist symbols and important historical and religious scenes.
- These toranas comprise of two stone pillars surrounded by capitals.
- **Chronological sequence of Gateways** – Southern, Northern, Eastern and Western.
- The sculpture of Buddha in dhyana-mudra at the eastern side of the stupa, added to the site in the 5th century AD by the Guptas.
- During the Gupta period, additional structures were built at Sanchi, including a

Buddhist temple and a lion pillar.

- An inscription celebrating the victory of Chandragupta II is found on the railing of the Great Stupa, which dates back to the fourth century A.D.
- Sanchi is believed to have been an important religious center from the 3rd century BC to the 13th century AD.
- However, it began to decline as a major religious site around the same time that Buddhism itself was declining in the Indian subcontinent.
- The Sanchi Stupa has been a ***UNESCO World Heritage Site*** since 1989.



References

1. The Indian Express | Great Stupa of Sanchi
2. Indian Culture | Sanchi monument rediscovery

Ideas4LiFE portal

The union government recently launched the Ideas4LiFE portal.

- **Aim –** It is for inviting ideas related to products and services for inducing behavioral changes related to environment-friendly lifestyles.
- **Developed by-** The portal is developed in partnership with ***UNICEF YuWaah.***
- **Ministry -** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- The winning ideas under each of the 7 themes of Mission LiFE will be recognized and awarded with attractive prizes for individuals as well as for institutions.
- **Themes-** The initiative is aligned with Mission LiFE and focuses on seven themes
    - Water Conservation
    - Energy Efficiency
    - Waste Reduction
    - E-Waste Management
    - Minimizing Single-Use Plastics
    - Embracing Sustainable Food Practices

- Fostering Healthy Lifestyles

Mission LiFE

- Mission LiFE, or "LiFEStyle For Environment", is a campaign that aims to encourage people to adopt environmentally conscious lifestyles.
- The campaign was announced at the UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP26) in 2021.
- **Goals**
  - Mobilizing at least one billion people to take action to protect the environment
  - Making at least 80% of villages and urban local bodies environment-friendly by 2028
  - Encouraging people to engage in small, everyday actions that can halt climate change
- Mission LiFE emboldens the spirit of the ***P3 model*** i.e. Pro Planet People.
- Mission Life, unites the people of the earth as pro planet people, uniting them all in their thoughts.
- It functions on the basic principles of 'Lifestyle of the planet, for the planet and by the planet'.

Reference

PIB | Ideas4LiFE Initiative

Barak Bhuban Wildlife sanctuary

The National Green Tribunal's (NGT) eastern bench in Kolkata has ordered a stay on road construction work inside the Barak Bhuban wildlife sanctuary in Assam's Cachar district.

- It is situated in Barak valley of ***Assam***.
- It is named after the second-largest river in the northeast, the Barak.
- It spreads between the Barak and Sonai rivers.
- **Faunas**
  - The area has 8 recording species of primates like slow loris, rhesus macaque, pig-tailed macaque, stump-tailed macaque, Assamese macaque, capped langur, hoolock gibbon and phayre's leaf monkey.
  - **Endemic –** King Cobra, Gorals, Himalayan Serow.

Barak valley

- The Barak Valley is a region in the southern part of Assam.
- It is known for its tea cultivation and is nicknamed the "Valley of Peace".
- It is considered part of the ***Indo-Myanmar biodiversity hotspot.***
- The Barak Valley is a ***horseshoe-shaped plain*** bordered by Mizoram, Tripura, Bangladesh, Meghalaya, and Manipur.
- The main city of the Barak Valley is Silchar, which is also the administrative divisional office for the region.

- The Barak Valley is made up of 3 administrative districts - Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi.
- The official languages of the Barak Valley are Bengali and Meitei (Manipuri).
- Assam's first sanctuary 'Borel Wildlife Sanctuary' is in Barak Valley itself.

References

1. The Indian Express | Barak Bhuban Sanctuary
2. Hindustan Times | Barak Bhuban Wildlife Sanctuary

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

Recently, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) released its 7th annual report for July 2023 to June 2024.

- **The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) -** It is a survey that estimates key employment and unemployment indicators in India.
- **Indicators**
  - Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR),
  - Worker Population Ratio (WPR), and
  - Unemployment Rate (UR)
- **Released by -** The Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- It is an initiative of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

Findings of the report

- **Stagnant Unemployment Rate –** The survey shows that there is ***no major change*** in the unemployment rate.
- The unemployment rate remains at 3.2%, like last year.
- Rural unemployment decreased from 5.3% (2017-18) to 2.5% (2023-24), and urban unemployment fell from 7.7% to 5.1% for the same period.
- **Sector-Wise Employment**
  - **Agriculture -** Workforce participation in agriculture has increased for the fourth consecutive year, indicating a shift back to agriculture for employment, possibly due to lack of non-farm job opportunities.
  - **Distribution in agriculture -** There is a ***minor increase*** in the distribution of workers in agriculture.
  - **Manufacturing -** The manufacturing sector shows ***no growth*** in providing jobs compared to previous years.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) -** The labor force is made up of individuals aged 15 and older, who fall into one of two groups
  - Those who are currently employed
  - Those who are unemployed but eager to work and are actively searching for a job.

Rural areas	Climbed from 50.7% in 2017-18 to 63.7% in 2023-24

Urban areas	Saw an increase from 47.6% to 52.0%
Males in India	Went up from 75.8% in 2017-18 to 78.8% in 2023-24
Females in India	From 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7%. 2023-24
Muslim women	Rose from 15% in 2021-22 to 21.4% in 2023-24
Hindu women	Rose from 26.1% in 2021-22 to 33.3% in 2023-24
Sikh and Christian women	19.8% to 26.7% and from 34.2% to 38.3%, respectively during same time line.

- **Concerns -** The Labour economist pointed out that the employment situation remains grim, especially in non-farm jobs.
- The increase in agriculture jobs is seen as a sign of unpaid family labour being counted as employment, which is misleading.
- The manufacturing sector's share in employment has not improved, remaining at 11.4% (down from 12.8% in 2012).
- The construction sector's contribution to employment is stagnant at 12%.

Reference

The Hindu | Periodic Labour Force Survey

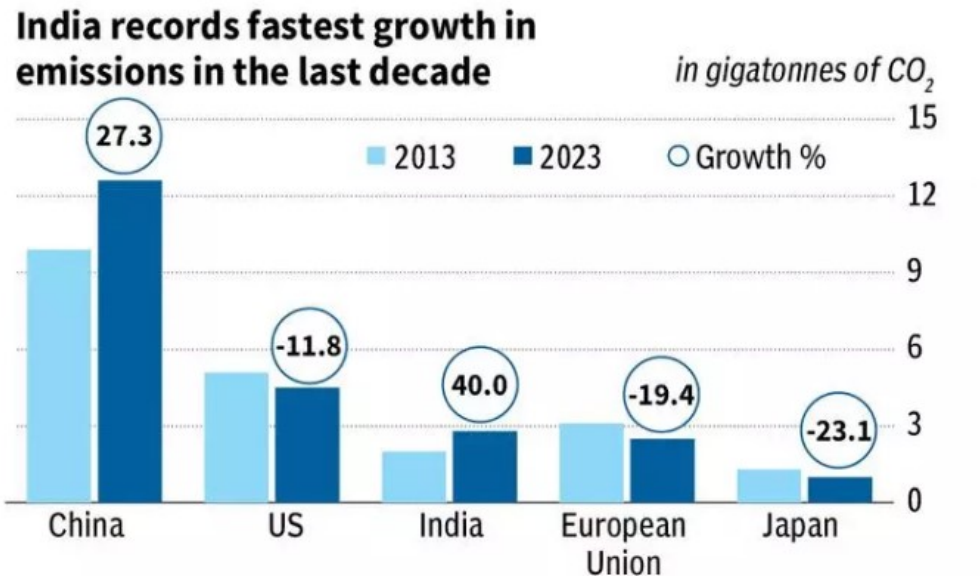
Report on Green House Gas (GHG) Emissions in India

The recent report of European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) says that India emerged as the third-highest CO2 emitter globally, accounted for 7.8% in 2023.

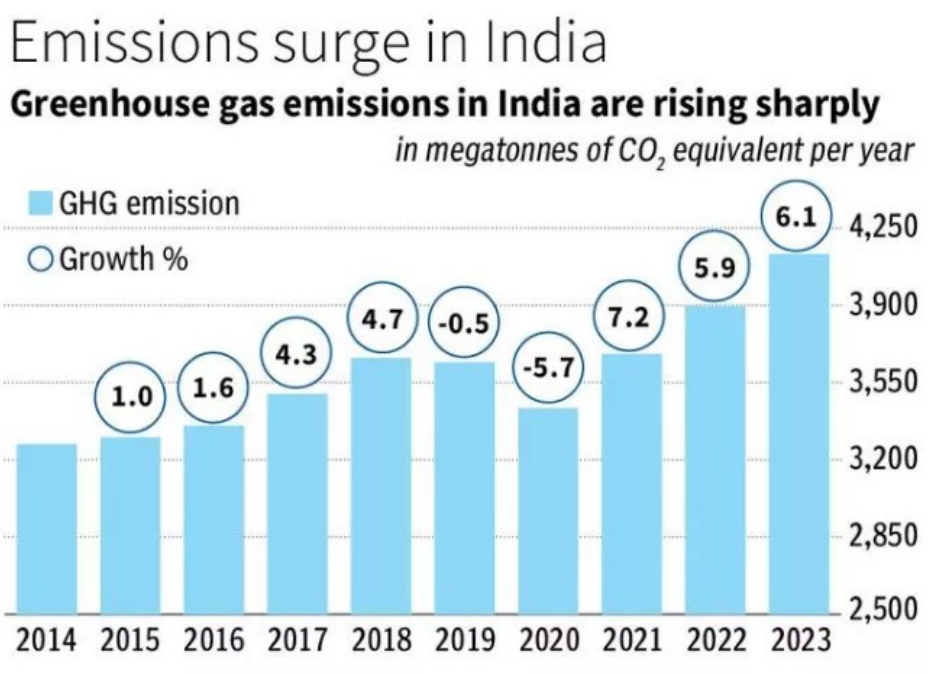
- The report indicates that GHG emissions increased from 3,270.4 Mt CO2eq/year in 2014 to 4,133.6 Mt CO2eq/year in 2023.

  GHG emissions are defined as gases released into the atmosphere that trap heat, thus contributing to the greenhouse effect and global warming include carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), and nitrous oxide (N2O).

- **Global -** China (30.1 %) ranks the top in 2023 followed by the United States (11.3 %).
- **India -** India's overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have steadily increased over the years, measured in megatonnes of CO2 equivalent per year (Mt CO2eq/yr).



- India has the lowest per capita emissions amongst G20 nation.
- **Primary Contributor of GHG -** Power sector (46.6%), industrial combustion (20.9%), and transportation (11.5%).
    - The increase was particularly steep at 6% in 2023, following growth rates of 5.9% in 2022 and 7.2% in 2021.
    - Over the years, India's total GHG emissions have shown a consistent upward trend, measured in megatonnes of CO2 equivalent (Mt CO2eq/yr).
- **Secondary Contributor of GHG -** Burning of fossil fuels, methane emissions from livestock, aluminum and cement production.
- **India's per capita GHG emissions -** It reached 2.9 CO2eq/cap/year in 2023, up from 2.5 CO2eq/cap/year
- Fossil fuels accounted for 88% of primary energy consumption in India and 77% of total electricity generation in 2022.
- International Energy Agency report says that CO2 Emissions in India’s carbon emissions have surged during this decade, escalating from 2 Gigatonnes (Gt) in 2013 to 2.8 Gt in 2023, a 40% rise.
- Despite comprising approximately 17% of the global population from 1850 to 2019, India's cumulative contribution to global GHG emissions is only 4%.
- **India’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)**
    - It targets a 33 to 35% reduction in emissions intensity of its GDP by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.
    - It establishes an extra carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through enhanced forest and tree cover by 2030.
- **Spearhead -** Global solar alliance, INSPA (International Agency for Solar Policy & Application), uniting all nations situated between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn.



Reference

[The Hindu Business Line | India's greenhouse gas emissions]

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