

Today's Prelims Topics

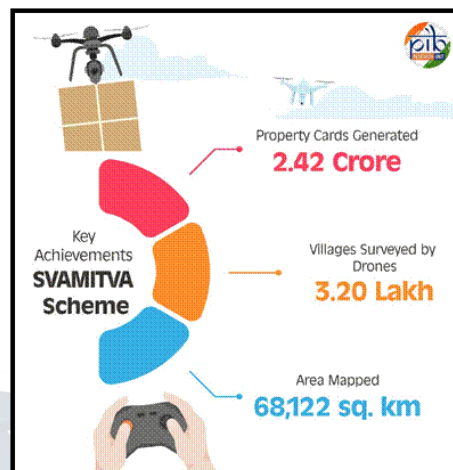
5 Years of SVAMITVA Scheme

Context

SVAMITVA Scheme has completed 5 years of its launch.

About SVAMITVA Scheme

- SVAMITVA stands for **Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas**.
- It's a **Central Sector Scheme** launched on **National Panchayati Raj Day (24th April) in 2021**.
- **Objectives of the scheme:**
 - **Financial Asset Creation:** Property can be used as collateral for loans and other financial benefits. Land parcels will gain market value and facilitate credit availability in villages.
 - **Revenue and Taxation:** Enables determination and collection of property taxes. States with empowered Gram Panchayats will directly benefit from property tax revenue.
 - **Rural Planning:** It will facilitate rural planning by creating precise property maps and improving **Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs)**.
 - **Reduction in Property Disputes:** Legal ownership rights will reduce conflicts over property. Improved property records will help to prevent illegal occupations.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- **Stakeholders involved:** Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Revenue Department, State Panchayati Raj Department and Survey of India.
- **Important features:**
 - **"Record of Rights"** are provided to rural households using the latest Drone Technology and **Continuously Operating Reference Station (CORS) technology** for capturing images.
 - Such accurate maps provide a clear demarcation of land holdings in a very short frame of time compared to on ground physical measurement.



Source:

- [PIB - SVAMITVA Scheme](#)

Global Pandemic Treaty

Context

After over three years of negotiations, WHO member states have agreed on a draft of a **legally binding treaty** aimed at improving global preparedness and response to future pandemics.

Key Provisions of the Draft Pandemic Treaty

- **Pathogen Access & Benefit-Sharing System (PABS):**
 - It is designed to enable **timely and fair access** to data and products during a pandemic.
 - **Pharma companies get access** to pathogen samples and genomic data.
 - **In return:**
 - They must **reserve 10%** of vaccines/diagnostics/therapeutics for **WHO allocation**.
 - Another **10% to be sold at affordable prices**.
- **Technology and Knowledge Sharing:**
 - Member states should **facilitate or incentivize** technology transfer.
 - Empowering **developing countries** to manufacture their own drugs and vaccines.
- **Government Intervention Allowed:**
 - Governments will be empowered to **intervene in markets** during pandemics to ensure access, especially for drugs developed with **public funding**.

- This treaty, set to be ratified at the World Health Assembly in May.
- It will become the **2nd legally binding** treaty in WHO's history—**1st - 2003 tobacco control treaty**.

Limitations

- **No Power to Enforce:** WHO cannot override national laws or policies.
 - It cannot: **Mandate travel bans, Order lockdowns etc.**
- **Unclear Implementation:** No clear framework yet on how the PABS (pathogen access and benefit sharing) system will work.
- **No U.S. Participation:** The United States has withdrawn from the treaty process

Source:

- [Indian Express - Global Pandemic Treaty](#)

News in Short

Text Neck

- According to a recent **study** **79%** of individuals aged **18 to 44** have their phones with them **almost constantly**, spending only **2 hours per day** without them.

About Text Neck

- Text neck** is a **repeated stress injury** and **pain syndrome** resulting from excessive use of handheld devices (like smartphones or tablets) in a **head-down position** for prolonged periods.
- It is common among people who frequently use mobile devices without proper posture or breaks.
- Symptoms of Text Neck:** Headaches, Neck stiffness, Shoulder pain, Reduced **muscle strength, endurance** and **cervical mobility**.

Source:

- [The Hindu - Text Neck](#)



Saora Tribe

- It is one of the ancient tribes of **Odisha**, which is also mentioned in the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata.
- They are called by various names such as **Savaras, Sabaras, Saura, Sora, etc.**
- They have their **own native language called Sora**.
- They are one of the very few tribes of India that have a script for the language - **Sorang Sompeng**.
- There are only 2 types of Saora:**
 - Lanjia Saora**- who live on the hills and still practice their unique customs and traditions.
 - Sudha Saora**- who live in the plains and have assimilated into the mainstream society.



Source:

- [The Hindu - Saora Tribe](#)

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)

- The PLO has voted to establish the position of Vice President, potentially paving the way for a successor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

About PLO

- It was conceived in **1964 at an Arab League summit in Cairo, Egypt** with the sole aim of liberating Palestine with the help of an armed struggle.
- It is a coalition of **smaller Arab groups (except Hamas and Islamic Jihad)**.
- In the 1990s, it was officially recognised by the **Arab League and the United Nations General Assembly** as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people".
- It was invited to participate in all UN activities under **observer status**.

- In 1988, it endorsed a two-state solution to the conflict with Israel.

Source:

- [The Hindu - PLO](#)

Ban on Eggs made of Mayonnaise

- The Tamil Nadu government has banned the manufacture, storage, distribution and sale of mayonnaise made using raw eggs, citing public health risks.

What is Mayonnaise?

- It is a **semi-solid emulsion** made of: Egg yolk, Vegetable oil, Vinegar & Other seasonings
- **Egg yolk protein** acts as an **emulsifier**, blending oil and water.
- It is widely used in **fast foods**.

Health Risks of Raw Eggs in Mayonnaise

- **Risk of Bacterial Contamination:**
 - **Raw eggs** are not heat-treated, so pathogens remain inside.
 - It is a **High-risk food** due to potential **microbial contamination**, especially in **hot and humid climates** like India.
- **Main Pathogens of Concern:** Salmonella & E. coli.

Source:

- [Indian Express - Mayonnaise](#)

Quantum Gravity Gradiometer

- NASA scientists have proposed deploying a Quantum Gravity Gradiometer (QGG) onboard a satellite in low-Earth orbit to detect minute gravitational variations on Earth.

About QGG

- It is a highly-sensitive instrument that can detect minute variations in Earth's gravitational field by using the principles of **quantum mechanics**.
- **Key Components of QGG:**
 - Ultra-cold atoms (usually rubidium or cesium).
 - Laser optics to manipulate atoms.
 - Vacuum chambers.
 - Atomic clocks for timing and synchronization.
- **Potential Applications:**
 - Subsurface exploration (minerals, groundwater).
 - Tectonic movement and fault detection.
 - Climate science (ice melt, water redistribution).
 - Aquifer Mapping.

Source:

- [Space](#)

Editorial Summary

Is the World Trade Organization still relevant?

Context

Amid rising protectionism and U.S. reciprocal tariff, World Trade Organisation (WTO) relevance is questioned, demanding urgent structural reforms.

About WTO

- **Established:** 1 January 1995 by Marrakesh Agreement (signed in 1994)
 - **Predecessor:** General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 1947
- **Purpose:**
 - To promote **free, fair, and predictable international trade**.
 - To provide a **rules-based framework** for global trade.
 - To ensure **non-discriminatory trade** among member nations (e.g., MFN & National Treatment principles).
 - To resolve trade disputes between countries.
 - To assist developing countries in trade capacity building.

WTO's Core Functions Have Eroded

The WTO was built around **three core pillars**:

- **Negotiation Function:** The WTO's primary goal was to negotiate multilateral agreements under the principle of *non-discrimination* and *consensus*.
 - The **Doha Development Round** (launched in 2001) aimed at addressing issues like agricultural subsidies and development concerns.
 - However, negotiations stalled due to mismatched ambitions and lack of flexibility.
 - **Only one multilateral agreement — the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement —** has been partially concluded.
- **Dispute Settlement Function:** The **Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM)** is governed by the **Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU)**.
 - The **Appellate Body**, acting as the WTO's highest court for trade disputes, has been **dysfunctional since December 2019** because the U.S. blocked appointments to it — first under President Obama, and later intensified by President Trump.
 - U.S. critics argue that the Appellate Body **overstepped its mandate and began "legislating,"** instead of merely interpreting trade rules (violating **Article 3.2 of the DSU** which restricts judicial overreach).
- **Trade Monitoring Function:** Under **Article X of the Marrakesh Agreement**, the WTO is responsible for reviewing members' trade policies and ensuring transparency.
 - However, the WTO struggles to monitor opaque trade practices, especially from major economies that fail to disclose domestic trade measures.
- **Paralysis in Decision-Making:** WTO operates on **consensus-based decision making (Article IX of the Marrakesh Agreement)**.
 - Attempts to introduce **voting-based reforms** have been opposed by countries like **India and the U.S.**
 - This rigid structure prevents even basic institutional reform, such as restoring the Appellate Body or resolving deadlocks in negotiations.
- **MFN Principle Undermined:**
 - **Article I of GATT (MFN Clause):** Requires that any favorable treatment granted to one country must be extended to all WTO members.

- Increasingly, countries are prioritizing **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**, which are an *exception to the MFN rule* under **Article XXIV of GATT**.
- The WTO has failed to rigorously scrutinize these FTAs, weakening the universality of the MFN principle.
- **Can't Avert a Future Crisis:** WTO lacks enforcement power, flexibility, and trust to act swiftly in emergencies.
 - It is not a forum conducive to honest multilateral engagement in a time of rising economic nationalism and strategic competition.

U.S. China, India And WTO

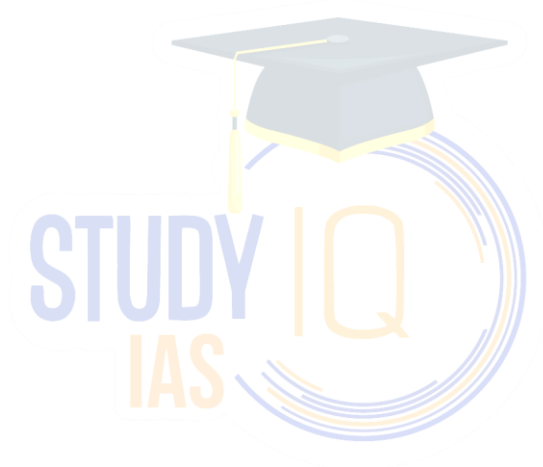
Aspect	United States	China	India
WTO Membership	Founding Member (1995)	Joined in 2001	Founding Member (1995)
Role in WTO	Major funder and rule-setter; influential in forming GATS, TRIPS	Rapid economic rise post-accession; major exporter	Vocal leader of developing countries; defender of food security and Special and Differential Treatment SDT
Key Contributions	Advocated for liberalization of services and IP	Complied with WTO commitments to open markets post-accession	Strong focus on agriculture and public stockholding
Trade Practices Criticized For	Unilateral tariffs (Section 232, 301); Appellate Body blockage	Market distortion, subsidies, limited access, overcapacity in key sectors	Blocking consensus on subsidies, e-commerce; high tariffs on imports
Dispute Settlement Stance	Regularly uses DSM; currently blocks Appellate Body appointments	Involved in many disputes as respondent; maintains procedural compliance	Active DSM participant; supports Appellate Body reform, not dismantling
Stance on Reform	Wants Appellate Body restricted; prefers bilateralism over multilateralism	Opposes reforms that undermine developing country benefits	Supports reform but insists on preserving development flexibilities and consensus decision-making
FTAs vs Multilateralism	Shifted toward bilateral deals under Trump; continues under Biden	Uses WTO but also signs bilateral and regional FTAs	Prefers multilateral system but now also pursuing FTAs with UK, EU, UAE
Developing Country Status	Opposes self-declaration of developing status by advanced economies (e.g., China)	Claims developing country status, enjoys SDT	Strong advocate of SDT and policy space for development
Major Areas of Disagreement	Dispute over Appellate Body, MFN principle, agricultural subsidies	Trade transparency, subsidies, forced technology transfers	Public stockholding, agricultural subsidies, opposition to labor/environmental linkages at WTO

Conclusion

- **Symbolic Relevance:** It still provides a foundational legal framework for trade and a reference point for disputes.

- **Practical Relevance:** Minimal. The world is moving toward bilateral and regional arrangements, bypassing WTO norms.
- **Future Relevance Depends On:**
 - Reforming decision-making (consensus to qualified majority),
 - Reviving the DSM,
 - Updating rules to address new trade realities (e.g., digital trade, climate-linked trade, industrial overcapacity),
 - Rebalancing developed vs developing country interests.

Source: [The Hindu: Is the World Trade Organization still relevant?](#)



Fix The Government School

Context

Inadequate quality in government schools contributes to the growth of private institutions, thereby widening educational inequality.

Recent Trends / Issues Children Are Facing

- **Mass Detentions** in Class XI and earlier grades to protect school results.
- **Rising School Fees** in private institutions causing distress across classes.
- **Pushouts Mislabelled as Dropouts**, especially from marginalized communities.
- **Data Surveillance** through police intervention in tracking school dropouts.
- **Language and Cultural Alienation** in curriculum delivery.
- **Vocational Segregation** under NEP 2020 pushing underprivileged children into early tracking.

Impact on Society

- **Widening Inequality** in educational access and outcomes.
- **Loss of Democratic Values** due to exclusionary education.
- **Criminalization of Poverty** via surveillance-based interventions.
- **Reduced Social Mobility** for disadvantaged communities.
- **Deepening Stratification** between elite and public schooling.
- **Erosion of Trust** in the public education system.

Why There's a Need to Improve the Quality of Government Schools

Reason	Explanation
1. Constitutional Mandate	Article 21A of the Constitution ensures the right to free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14. Poor quality schooling undermines this fundamental right.
2. Ensure Equity and Social Justice	Government schools primarily serve children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Neglecting them perpetuates inequality and social stratification.
3. Addressing Pushouts, Not Dropouts	Many children are not leaving school by choice but are being excluded due to a lack of support, language barriers, poor pedagogy, and humiliation.
4. Curbing Commercialisation of Education	The deterioration of public schools fuels the growth of private institutions, turning education into a commodity and increasing inequality.
5. Preventing Child Vulnerability	Children who drop out are more vulnerable to child labor, early marriage, crime, and drug abuse — especially when state responses are punitive rather than supportive.
6. Creating a Cohesive Society	Shared public schooling spaces can help bridge class, caste, and communal divides, fostering mutual respect and democratic values.

How the Issues Can Be Resolved

Solution	Actionable Steps
1. Improve Infrastructure & Resources	Ensure availability of classrooms, toilets, clean water, libraries, laboratories, and technology in all government schools.
2. Teacher Training & Recruitment	Hire qualified teachers and train them in inclusive, multilingual, child-centric pedagogy. Fill existing vacancies urgently.
3. Strengthen Implementation of RTE Act	Enforce no-detention policy properly in classes I-VIII, conduct continuous assessments, and provide remedial support for weak learners.
4. End Data-Driven Surveillance	Drop the policy of sharing dropout data with police; instead, use community-based mechanisms to re-engage children.
5. Increase Public Investment in Education	Allocate at least 6% of GDP to education (as recommended by Kothari Commission), with a major share to strengthen public schools.
6. Unified and Common School System	Move towards a model where children of all classes attend similar schools with equitable facilities and curriculum.
7. Inclusive Curriculum	Teach in local languages, value students' home knowledge, and integrate critical thinking instead of rote learning.
8. Engage Communities and Parents	Set up school management committees with real power and participation from all socio-economic groups to ensure accountability.

Source: [Indian Express: Agree/ Disagree- Rising fee in Private schools of Delhi](#)