



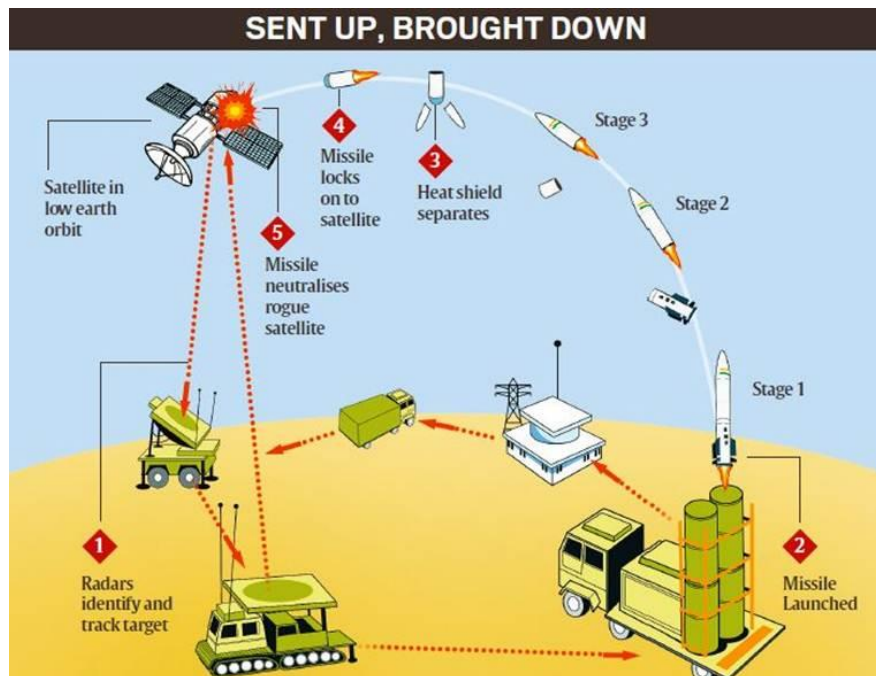
Current Affairs of the Day

Why the US wants a ban on ASAT missile testing

1. Recently, the United States (US) announced a national, unilateral moratorium on “destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite [ASAT] missile testing”.

2. The US aims to establish “a new international norm for responsible behaviour in space,” which would “benefit all nations”.

3. Setting a norm takes time and requires the participation of several prominent actors. When



China and Russia are firmly in the opposite bloc, it will be a big surprise if either of those two cooperates with the US in establishing a norm.

4. In effect, the US is restraining only its own behaviour, even as its two major adversaries can continue to test direct-ascent ASAT missiles (allowed in international law).

There are four reasons why the US has little to gain by testing direct-ascent ASAT capabilities and much to benefit from a freeze in space capabilities of every country where they currently are.

1. First, the US is the world leader in space-based military capabilities. It relies heavily on its satellites for intelligence collection, reconnaissance, communication, targeting, navigation, and early warning of threats.



2. If the US can enforce a norm against these missiles, it hopes that it will be able to arrest its adversaries from further developing and perfecting weapons that could harm its military's eyes and ears.
3. Second, the US already has a well-developed capability to hit satellites. The direct-ascent ASAT technology has a lot of overlapping components with missile defence technologies.
4. Third, the US has no option other than to go alone because of the nature of ASAT technology. The crucial difference between nuclear and counter-space weapons is the former are weapons of deterrence while the latter are weapons of war-fighting. In other words, unlike weapons of deterrence, war-fighting weapons do not automatically lead to mutual deterrence and stability.
5. Fourth, the US is not just a leader in military applications of space but also in its economic ones. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists Satellite Database, out of 4,852 operating satellites as of January 1, the number of US satellites stands at 2,944.
6. As a State deeply invested in non-military use of space, it is in the interest of the US to keep space free of debris, which poses direct harm to the commercial and scientific exploitation of space.

Mission Shakti

WHAT

Obsolete satellite destroyed by DRDO-developed ballistic missile interceptor missile



Satellite was at height of 300 km, was tracked with sensors that confirmed the kill

Demonstrates India's ability to detect, target and destroy space objects

DRDO had capability to develop system in 2012; made presentations, but was not given go-ahead

WHERE

Ground-based interceptor missile units based in Balasore testing range

WHEN

Preparations started in 2016, tests carried out in 2017 and in February this year

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SC again pulls up govt over tribunal vacancies

1. The Union government should not lecture the judiciary on the sufferings of the common man when people have been rendered remediless on account of non-functional tribunals, the Supreme Court said, venting its anguish at delays in filling up vacancies in tribunals across the country.
2. The court recorded in its order that it cannot keep the high courts troubled with cases “when the government seems to be unconcerned with the consequences” of not appointing members to the tribunals.
3. The bench took note that the Foreign Exchange Management Act Appellate Tribunal was non-functional for the last two years due to unfilled vacancies, leading the parties to file writ petitions before the high courts to seek relief.
4. The government needs to make appointments in the tribunals on the recommendations of the Search-Cum-Selection Committee (SCSC), which is headed by a Supreme Court judge.

Bolster court infrastructure

1. India has a sanctioned strength of more than 24,000 judges in the district judiciary, but only 20,000-odd courtrooms. A report compiled by the Supreme Court (SC) registry on what ails the 3,028 court complexes threw up disconcerting statistics: 26% did not have separate washrooms for women; 46% didn't have purified drinking water; 95% didn't have basic medical facilities; 67% were not disabled-friendly; 49% didn't have libraries, and 73% didn't have computers on judges' dais with video-conferencing facilities.
2. The figures are startling for a country with 40 million cases choking the system at the district level.

National Judicial Infrastructure Authority (NJIA)

1. To strengthen the justice delivery mechanism, the SC, headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana, recently proposed a National Judicial Infrastructure Authority (NJIA).
2. The authority was envisaged as an umbrella body to move from ad-hoc committees to a more streamlined, accountable and organised structure.



3. The proposal was considered so that the funds allocated by the Centre and states for infrastructure could be utilised through special purpose vehicles.
4. The Centre rejected establishing such authority.

According to a 2018 study, failure to deliver timely justice costs the country 9% of the annual GDP. Given the dismal state of affairs, the government would do well in shedding its apprehensions, and commence a dialogue afresh on NJIA to arrive at a mutually agreeable mechanism that can give India a state-of-the-art judicial infrastructure — a much-awaited and desired reform.

Urban unemployment at 8.8% in Dec quarter: NSO

The urban unemployment rate in India stood at 8.8% in the quarter ending December 2021. While this marks a sequential improvement over the numbers in the June and September quarters, it is still marginally higher than the pre-pandemic value for the quarter ending December 2019.

1. India's urban unemployment rate fell for the second consecutive quarter in the three-month period ending December 2021.
2. However, the unemployment situation continues to be worse than in the pre-pandemic period, even though GDP levels have surpassed their pre-pandemic values.
3. There are also indications that India's labour markets continue to see a worsening in gender balance and quality of jobs.
4. These conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the quarterly report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for the period October 2021 to December 2021, which was released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on May 6.
5. Because the quarterly PLFS rounds do not cover rural areas, they only convey a partial picture of the overall economy.

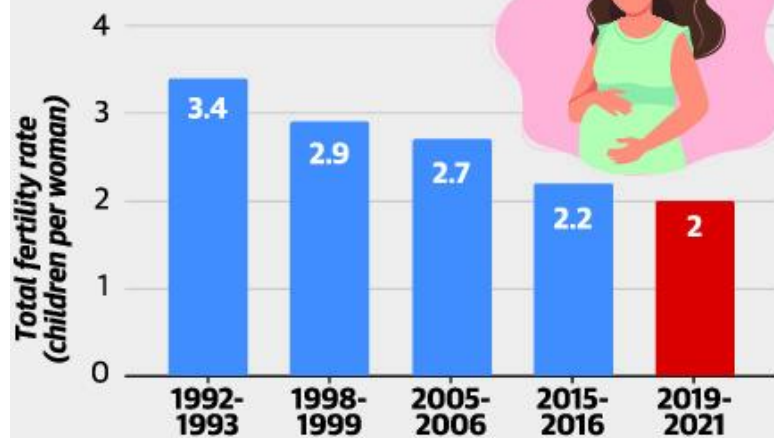


'Fertility rate falls further, obesity rises'

- The main objective of successive rounds of the NFHS has been to provide reliable and comparable data relating to health and family welfare and other emerging areas in India. The NFHS-5 national report lists progress from NFHS-4 (2015-16) to NFHS-5 (2019-21).
- The report also provides data on socioeconomic and other background characteristics; useful for policy formulation and effective programme implementation.

1. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR), the average number of children per woman, has further declined from 2.2 to 2.0 at the national level between National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 4 and 5.

Fewer children | A look at the total fertility rate at national level in three decades



SOURCE: NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY

2. There are only five States — Bihar (2.98), Meghalaya (2.91), Uttar Pradesh (2.35), Jharkhand (2.26) Manipur (2.17) — in India which are above the replacement level of fertility of 2.1 as per the national report of the NFHS-5, released by the Union Health Ministry.
3. The other key highlights of the survey include institutional births increased from 79% to 89% across India
4. As per the results of the NFHS-5, more than three-fourths (77%) of children aged between 12 and 23 months were fully immunised, compared with 62% in NFHS-4.
5. The level of stunting among children under five years has marginally declined from 38% to 36% in the country in the last four years. Stunting is higher among children in rural areas (37%) than in urban areas (30%) in 2019-21.



THE HINDU

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Sign of rising agency of women:

1. Additionally, NFHS-5 shows an overall improvement in Sustainable Development Goals indicators in all States/Union Territories (UTs).
2. The extent to which married women usually participate in three household decisions (about health care for themselves; making major household purchases; visiting their family or relatives) indicates that their participation in decision-making is high
3. The prevalence of women having a bank or savings account has increased from 53% to 79% in the last four years.

A rise in obesity

Compared with NFHS-4, the prevalence of overweight or obesity has increased in most States/UTs in NFHS-5.

MAINS DAWP	<p>Q1. India's new push for stronger ties with Europe comes at a crucial time for both. Comment.</p> <p>Q2. Critically discuss USA's reaction against direct-ascent anti-satellite [ASAT] missile tests across the world.</p>
MCQs	<p>Q1. The quarterly PLFS rounds cover</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Rural areas only b. Both Urban and rural areas c. Urban areas only d. Agricultural employment data along with rural and urban employment numbers