

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 11-02-2025

### European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

#### Why in News?

India recently establishes European Free Trade Association (EFTA) desk to boost trade with European nations.

India and the EFTA bloc signed a free trade agreement (FTA) recently to boost trade and investment ties.

- **EFTA** - Is a *regional trade organization* set up for the promotion of **free trade and economic integration** between its members, within Europe and globally.
- **Established by** - Signing a Convention in Stockholm on 4 January 1960.
- **Founding Members** - Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.
- **Member States** - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
- **Headquarters** - Geneva.
- **Governing Body** - EFTA Council.
- It usually meets 8 times a year at Ambassadorial level (Heads of Permanent Delegations to EFTA) and once a year at Ministerial level.
- Each Member State is represented, and decisions are taken by consensus. The Member States take turns to chair the Council, **rotating yearly**.
- **Features** - The Council manages relations between the EFTA States themselves under the EFTA Convention.
- It adopts decisions to reflect legislative developments in the EEA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) Agreement and in the Switzerland-EU bilateral agreements.
- EFTA's worldwide network of free trade and partnership agreements with third countries.
- **Significance** - EFTA has *one of the world's largest free trade networks*, with 31 agreements covering 42 partner countries outside the EU.
- More than 80% of EFTA's merchandise trade is currently covered by the trade bloc's preferential agreements.
- India-EFTA two-way trade was about \$24 billion in 2023-24 against \$18.65 billion in 2022-23.

*Switzerland is the largest trading partner and investor in India followed by Norway in the bloc.*

- India received \$10.72 billion in foreign direct investment from Switzerland during

April 2000 and September 2024.

- **India- EFTA Agreement** - The pact is also known as *Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)*.
- The deal is set to come into effect in the next four-six months after the 4 nations receive necessary Parliamentary approvals.
- It comes against the backdrop of an investment commitment made by EFTA nations under the trade agreement \$50 billion investment in India within 10 years of the agreement.
  - Taking into effect and an additional \$50 billion in the next 5 years.
- The investment is expected to facilitate the creation of 1 million direct jobs in India in 15 years.
- The dedicated platform will act as a centralized support mechanism for EFTA companies looking to expand in India.
- It aims to fast track processes to make it easier for companies to do business, ensure seamless flow of capital, and navigate areas of concerns.

## References

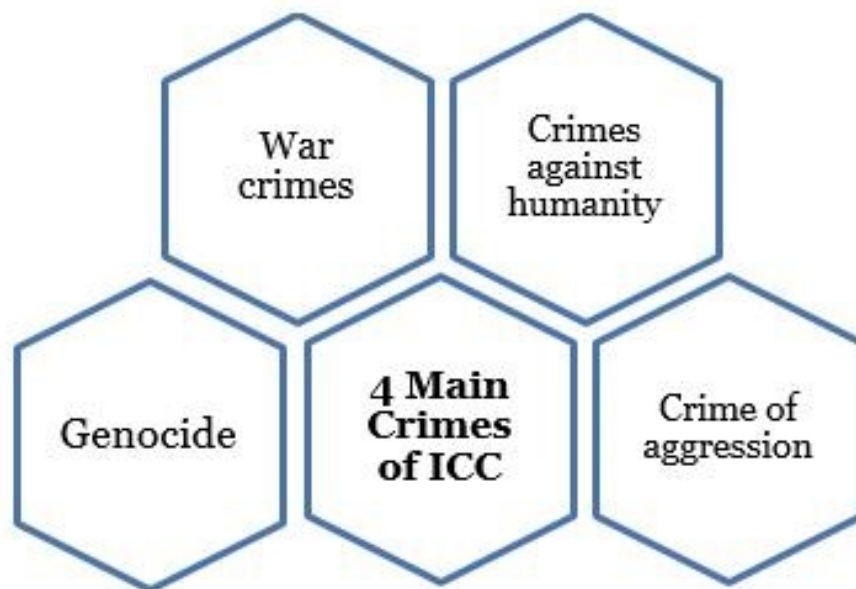
1. [The Hindu | India establishes EFTA desk](#)
2. [EFTA | ABOUT EFTA](#)
3. [Business Standard | FDI with EFTA](#)

## International Criminal Court (ICC)

### Why in News?

*President Donald Trump authorized economic and travel sanctions targeting people who work on ICC investigations, protested against the ICC's arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.*

- It is a ***permanent international court*** to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression when member states are unwilling or unable to do so themselves.



- The ICC does not replace national criminal justice systems rather, it complements them.
- It can investigate and, where warranted, prosecute and ***try individuals*** only if the State concerned does not, cannot or is unwilling to do so genuinely.
- **Founding treaty** - The Rome Statute.
- **Established in** - 2002.
- **International Tribunal** - The Hague, Netherlands.
- The Rome Statute provides that the Court may sit elsewhere whenever the judges consider it desirable.
- It can prosecute crimes committed by nationals of member states or on the territory of member states by other actors.
- **Member states** - It has 125 member states.
- Palestine became the 123<sup>rd</sup> member (2015), Malaysia became 124<sup>th</sup> State party (2019) and Ukraine became the 125<sup>th</sup> member.
- **India**, United States, China and Russia, Myanmar, Israel are ***not members of ICC***.
- **Funded by** - Contributions from the States Parties and by voluntary contributions from governments, international organisations, individuals, corporations and other entities.
- The ICC is a ***permanent autonomous court***, whereas other similar courts, established under United Nations are to deal with specific situations, and only have a limited mandate and jurisdiction.
- In 2004, the ICC and the United Nations signed an agreement governing their institutional relationship.
- No one is exempt from prosecution because of ***his or her current functions*** or because of the position he or she held at the time the crimes concerned were committed.
- **Under the age of 18** - The Court has ***no jurisdiction*** with respect to any person who was ***under the age of 18*** when the crimes concerned were committed.

## References

1. [The Indian Express | International Criminal Court](#)
2. [ICC | Understanding the ICC](#)

## Gross Domestic Knowledge Product (GDKP)

### Why in the news?

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation had a session on “Conceptual Framework of Gross Domestic Knowledge Product (GDKP) Measurement” recently.

- **GDKP** - Seeks to capture the contribution of knowledge-driven sectors, innovation, and intellectual assets to economic growth.
- It acknowledges that GDP, while important, doesn't fully reflect the value of knowledge and its impact on society.
- **NITI Aayog** - It is *not a new idea* and it was *discussed in 2021* when NITI Aayog presented a concept note.
- However, at that time, the *National Statistical Commission* and the *Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)* raised concerns.
- The concerns were about the *lack of a clear methodology for data collection and calculation*, as well as the subjective nature of the concept.
- **Significance** - The government recognizes the increasing importance of the knowledge economy and the need for a metric that reflects this.
- **Informed decisions** - By developing a robust framework for measuring GDKP, policymakers hope to better understand the drivers of knowledge-based growth and make informed decisions.
- **Current status** - MoSPI is now actively working on developing this framework.
- They recently held a session on the "Conceptual Framework of Gross Domestic Knowledge Product (GDKP) Measurement."
- The goal is to move from purely economic indicators to a more knowledge-centric approach.
- **"Satellite account" approach** - MoSPI is considering using a "satellite account" approach, similar to how they account for tourism or culture, to capture the knowledge base of the economy.
- **A technical committee** - Will be formed to evaluate the proposal and guide the measurement of the knowledge economy.
- **Challenges** - Key challenges include:
  - **Methodology** - Defining a clear and objective methodology for measuring knowledge is crucial.
  - This includes identifying relevant parameters and finding ways to quantify them.
  - **Data availability** - Data on knowledge-related aspects may not be readily available, requiring the use of surveys and potentially subjective assessments.
  - **Integration with GDP** - Determining how GDKP will complement or integrate with GDP is essential.
  - The relationship between the two metrics needs to be clearly defined.
  - **Subjectivity** - The concept of "knowledge" itself can be subjective, making it difficult to measure objectively.

## Reference

[The Indian express - Gross Domestic Knowledge Product \(GDGP\)](#)

## SRY Gene (sex-determining region Y)

### Why in the news?

*Exceptional instances of females possessing the SRY gene have been reported three times in the medical literature, two in 2024 itself.*

- **The SRY gene** - Provides instructions for making a protein called the sex-determining region Y protein.
- **SRY Gene's Role** - The SRY gene, *located on the Y chromosome*, is the primary determinant of maleness.
- Its presence typically leads to the development of male characteristics, while its absence leads to female development.
- **Typical Sex Determination** - Eggs carry an X chromosome, while sperm carry either an X or a Y.
- XX combinations result in females, and XY combinations result in males.
- **SRY Translocations** - Rarely, the SRY gene can move from the Y chromosome to an X chromosome (a translocation).
- **Sterile male** - If this X chromosome fertilizes an egg, the resulting XX individual usually develops as a sterile male, a man who is unable to reproduce due to a lack of sperm or other reproductive issues.
- **Exceptional Females with SRY** - Cases of fertile females with the SRY gene on an X chromosome are exceptional cases.
- **Key to Female Development in These Cases** - The key difference in these exceptional females lies in a specific *deletion on the X chromosome carrying the SRY gene*.
- This deletion results in the inactivation of the translocated X chromosome during female development.
- This "biased" inactivation silences the SRY gene, allowing female development to proceed.
- If the other X chromosome were inactivated, the individual wouldn't survive because the deleted genes are essential for life.
- **Significance** - These cases reinforce the SRY gene's importance in male development.
- Only when it is silenced (through biased X-inactivation due to the deletion) can female development occur even with the SRY gene present.
- **Further Research** - The article suggests the need for more research to understand the long-term effects of SRY translocations, even when they result in female development.
- It also highlights the potential value of screening for such translocations in the future.

## Reference

## One Liners 11-02-2025

### History, Art and Culture

#### **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya**

- **Born in** - 1916 in Nagla Chandrabhan village, now Deendayal Dham, UP.
- Deendayal Upadhyay is an Indian politician, one of the most important leaders of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the forerunner of Bharatiya Janata Party.
- Started monthly magazine "**Rashtra Dharma**", weekly "**Panchajanya**", and daily "**Swadesh**".
- His mantra for the journalism was 'Don't distort the news'.
- **Books** - Samrat Chandragupt, Jagatguru Shankaracharya, Political Diary, Integral humanism, Ekatmamanav - vad and an analysis of the Five Year plans in India.
- In 2019, PM unveiled a 63 feet statue of Pandit Upadhyaya at the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Memorial Centre in Padao on the Varanasi.

### Polity & Governance

#### **Scholarships for Young Achievers Scheme (SHREYAS)**

- **Initiated by**- Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **Offers scholarship** - Programs for (SC), (OBCs) & Divyangjan.

#### **SHREYAS for Scheduled Castes**

- *Central Sector Umbrella Scheme* which comprises 04 sub-schemes.
- **Sub-schemes**
  - Top Class Education for SC students (TCS)
  - National Fellowship for Scheduled Caste students (NFSC)
  - National Overseas Scholarship for Scheduled Castes (NOS)
  - Free Coaching for SC and OBC Students (FCS)

#### **SHREYAS for OBC and Others**

- Central Sector Umbrella Scheme which comprises two sub-schemes namely
  - National Fellowship for OBC, Scholarship scheme.
  - Dr.Ambedkar Central Sector Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loans for Overseas Studies for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Economically Backward Classes (EBCs).

#### **Scholarship for Students with Disabilities (Divyangjan)**

- **Implementing Agency** - Department of Persons with Disabilities.
- Comprises 6 sub-schemes
  - (a) Pre-Matric (b) Post-Matric (c) Top Class Education (d) National Overseas Scholarship (e) National Fellowship for PwDs and (f) Free Coaching Scheme.
- It does not come under SHREYAS.

## Hostel Facilities under Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY)

- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** since 2021-22.
- **3 main parts**
  - Adarsh Gram’,
  - ‘Grants-in-aid for District/State-level Projects for Socio-Economic betterment of Scheduled Caste (SC) Communities’, and
  - ‘Hostel.
- **Objectives** - To improve socio-economic developmental indicators in the SC dominated villages.
- To reduce poverty of the SC communities by generation of additional employment opportunities.
- To increase literacy and encourage enrolment of SCs in schools and higher educational institutions, especially in the aspirational districts/ SC dominated blocks and elsewhere in India.

## Scheme for Promotion of Culture of Science (SPoCS)

- **Implementing Agency** - National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), an autonomous organization under Ministry of Culture
- **Aim** - To establish Science Cities, Science Centres, Digital Planetarium, Innovation Hubs across the country.
- It established the above ones based on the proposals received from different State Government and UTs.

## Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) scheme

*Government recently approved the continuation of the PM- AASHA during the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission Cycle up to 2025-26.*

- **Aim** - Provide remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce and also controlling price volatility of essential commodities by ensuring their availability at affordable prices to consumers.
- **Components** - Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS), Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) and Price Stabilisation Funds (PSF).
- **Ministry** - Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.

## International Relations and Issues

### Dunki Routes

- “Dunki” or “donkey journey” refers to the long-winding, often *dangerous routes* that people across the world take to reach the places they want to immigrate to.
- These difficult journeys are undertaken due to a **lack of requisite legal permits** or financial resources.
- The American authorities recently deported those who have taken this illegal route to reach America.

## Security

### **Hindustan Jet Trainer (HJT) Renamed 'Yashas'**

*HJT 36, the flagship training aircraft of HAL has been renamed 'Yashas', unveiled at Aero India 2025.*

- **Aim** - To Enhance improvised training effectiveness and operational efficiency.
- **Upgrades**
  - Stage-II pilot training, counter-insurgency and counter-surface force operations, armament training and aerobatics.
  - **Powered by** - FADEC controlled AL55I Jet engine, providing best in class thrust to weight ratio, optimised thrust management and reliability.
  - A stepped up rear cockpit provides excellent all-around vision and enhanced situational awareness with multi-function displays (MFDs) and head-up displays (HUDs).
  - **Capabilities** - Stall and spin, aerobatics, armament carriage up to 1,000 kg, single point ground refuelling and defuelling.

