

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

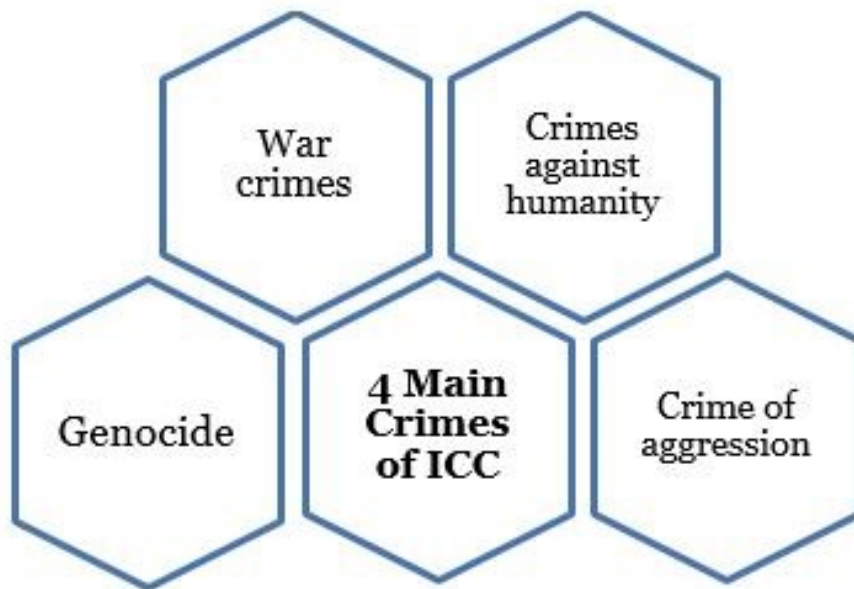
1. [The Hindu | India establishes EFTA desk](#)
2. [EFTA | ABOUT EFTA](#)
3. [Business Standard | FDI with EFTA](#)

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 123rd member (2015), Malaysia became 124th State party (2019) and Ukraine became the 125th 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

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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 15th 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.

