

Migration pattern

- This year, International Migrants Day (observed annually on December 18) must be seen in the backdrop of unprecedented volatility that began in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Besides this infectious disease outbreak, there were events such as the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, worsening poverty in the sub-Saharan region, and also climate change, resulting in large-scale migration.
- According to the International Organization of Migration (IOM)'s World Migration Report 2022, there were 281 million international migrants globally in 2020, with nearly two-thirds being labor migrants.
- While there were 169 million labor migrants in 2019, the figure touched 164 million in 2020.
- In the larger pool of migrants, South Asia's share is nearly 40%; further, the South Asia-Gulf Migratory corridor is the world's largest migrant corridor.
- Long-term data on international migration show that "migration is not uniform across the world and is shaped by economic, geographic, demographic and other factors, resulting in distinct migration patterns, such as migration corridors developed over many years".
- Recently, there were cases of around 300 Indian engineers from Tamil Nadu who were trafficked to Myanmar to work for a crypto-scam and nearly 20 Indian nurses were trafficked to the United Arab Emirates for fake job offers.
- Despite India being the largest migrant-sending and remittance-receiving country, the welfare of Indian migrants abroad is hardly a priority for the Government and policymakers.
- It is a matter of serious concern that India has yet to have a tangible and comprehensive migration policy to ensure decent living and safe movement of migrants.
- India manages or governs Indians migrating abroad using the Emigration Act, of 1983.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the existing exploitative nature of the Kafala system (a 'sponsorship system that regulates the relationship between employers and migrant workers) which has invariably resulted in the mass retrenchment of the labor force.
- Presently, South Asian countries, including their civil society

organizations, scholars, and migrant activists are leading a 'justice for wage theft' campaign for the disbursement of the pending salary benefits and other related dues of labor.

- The recurring problems that migrant labourers face are irregular payment, poor working conditions, the negation of labor rights, the absence of proper grievance redress mechanisms, and access to a transparent judicial system.
- Irregular payment and non-payment of wages, and abuse at the workplace have been a long-term problems in the GCC countries.

Focus on women workers

- Attention needs to be focussed on the women migrant workforce, largely limited to GCC countries and also to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries to some extent.
- Interestingly, Indian nurses and care-givers have been working in the most volatile countries such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Israel, and even remote Papua New Guinea.
- The United Nations, through its non-binding resolution, "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly Migration and Regular Migration", recognises

the challenges migrant labour faces across the world.

India Africa and the USA

- India, through the G20 presidency, intends to be remembered as the voice of the Global South at the heart of which is Africa.
- Most of the 54 countries of this continent are developing or least developed countries.

Washington summit

- The second U.S.-Africa summit was held in Washington from December 13 to 15.
- The leaders also deliberated on the ways to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and future pandemics, respond to the climate crisis, promote food security and deepen diasporic ties.
- First, the U.S. announced its support for the AU to join the G20 as a permanent member.
- Second, the U.S. said it "fully supports" reforming the UN Security Council (UNSC) to include permanent representation for Africa.
- The U.S. announced new investments and initiatives, including \$21 billion to the International Monetary Fund to provide access to necessary

financing for low -and middle -income countries, and \$10 million for a pilot programme to boost the security capacity of its African partners.

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China's shadows

- China, on the other hand, has emerged as the largest trading partner and the fourth largest investor in the African continent, ahead of the U.S., through its steady diplomacy and extensive economic engagement.
- The U.S. and other nations can take a cue from the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), established in October 2000.
- China has a full-fledged inter-ministerial mechanism to ensure the timely implementation of FOCAC decisions.

Implications for India

- India's equity in Africa is older and richer than that of China and the U.S
- The G20 presidency is India's opportunity to ensure that the AU becomes a permanent member of this grouping and to reflect firmly Africa's Agenda 2063 for development.

- India and the U.S. should work closer together in Africa.
- Finally, the fourth India Africa Forum Summit should be held in early 2024, lest the third summit held in 2015 becomes a distant memory.

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CERVICAL CANCER

The story so far:

- The government has announced that it will roll out vaccines for the prevention of cervical cancer to girls aged between 9 and 14 years through schools.
- The National Technical Advisory Group for Immunisation (NTAGI) recommended the introduction of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)

Why is it important to launch the HPV vaccine?

- Cervical cancer is preventable and curable if it is detected early and managed effectively.
- It is the second most common cancer in women in India, and the cause of a large number of deaths annually.
- It is caused by infection with the human papillomavirus, and there are vaccines to protect against cancerous HPV.

- A recent study in The Lancet shows that more than 58% of all cases of cervical cancer and deaths globally were estimated in Asia with India accounting for 21% of cases and 23% of deaths, followed by China (18% and 17%).

What are the challenges?

- The study identified substantial geographical and socioeconomic inequalities in cervical cancer globally, with a clear gradient of increasing rates for countries with lower levels of human development.
- In 2022, India ranked 132 out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index.
- However, health experts say the fact that India's fertility rate is declining due to a variety of factors, including improved literacy rate, increase in the age of marriage, and so forth, and should prompt everyone in the ecosystem, from the government, doctors to ground level health workers to launch campaigns on cervical cancer awareness, push vaccinations and screening for all girls.

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CAG Report on NRC

The story so far:

- A recent Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG) report on the update exercise of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam has flagged serious irregularities, including "haphazard development" of software for the exercise, making it prone to data tampering, and flagged undue profits worth crores amassed by the system integrator (SI) by violating the Minimum Wages Act.
- The auditor flagged concerns in a compliance report of 'logistical arrangements for NRC update project in Assam' tabled in the Assam Assembly on December 24.

What is the NRC exercise?

- An NRC was first created in 1951 in Assam to identify those born in India and migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.
- In 2013, the Supreme Court issued directions to the Centre and State to initiate an exercise in Assam to update the 1951 register.

What are the CAG's concerns?

- At the time, the process to update the NRC was started in December 2014 with a deadline for completion

in February 2015 and the project cost was pegged at ₹288.18 crores.

- There was, however, a five- fold increase in the cost by March 2022 due to additional time to complete it and changes in the updated software.
- The CAG stated that the intended objective of preparing a valid and error -free NRC was not met despite incurring excess expenditure

What has the CAG recommended?

- The country's top auditor sought penal measures against Wipro Limited for violating the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act and for paying data operators less than minimum wages.
- Secondly, the report recommended action against the State Coordinator of National Registration (SCNR) for "excess, irregular and inadmissible payments"
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Delimitation Commission

- Delimitation literally means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country or a province having a legislative body. The job of delimitation is assigned to a high-power body. Such a body is

known as Delimitation Commission or a Boundary Commission

- In India, such Delimitation Commissions have been constituted 4 times in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952, in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962, in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972, and in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002.
- The Delimitation Commission in India is a high-power body whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called into question before any court. These orders come into force on a date to be specified by the President of India on this behalf.
- The copies of its orders are laid before the House of the People and the State Legislative Assembly concerned, but no modifications are permissible therein by them.

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