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1. India Achieves Tier 1 Status in Global Cybersecurity Index 2024

Major Milestone in Cybersecurity

India has achieved a significant milestone by attaining Tier 1 status in the Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2024, published by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). With an impressive score of 98.49 out of 100, India joins the ranks of 'role-modelling' countries, showcasing its commitment to global cybersecurity practices.



Role of the Department of Telecommunications

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) served as the nodal agency representing India in the GCI 2024. Hon'ble Minister of Communications, Shri Jyotiraditya M Scindia, celebrated this accomplishment, calling it a proud moment for Bharat. He emphasized that this achievement reflects

India's strong commitment to cybersecurity and highlights the remarkable growth of its telecom sector.

Assessment Criteria

The GCI 2024 evaluated national cybersecurity efforts based on five pillars: legal, technical, organizational, capacity development, and cooperation. The assessment included a comprehensive questionnaire featuring 83 questions and multiple indicators to thoroughly evaluate each country's cybersecurity landscape.

Government Initiatives and Legal Framework

India's strong cybersecurity performance is attributed to various government initiatives aimed at enhancing cyber resilience and establishing robust frameworks for cybercrime laws and cybersecurity standards. The country's legal institutions are equipped to tackle cybersecurity challenges effectively. Additionally, Sectoral Computer Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs) provide technical support and incident reporting, further bolstering India's cybersecurity capabilities.

Focus on Education and Awareness

Education and awareness are central to India's cybersecurity strategy. Targeted campaigns have promoted secure online practices across various sectors, including private industry, public

institutions, and academia. Integrating cybersecurity into primary and secondary education curricula highlights the country's commitment to fostering a knowledgeable digital citizenry.

Skill Development and International Collaboration

Incentives and grants have driven skill development and promoted research and innovation within India's cybersecurity industry. International collaborations and agreements have enhanced capacity-building and information-sharing efforts, solidifying India's role as a global leader in cybersecurity.

Conclusion

India's elevation to Tier 1 in the GCI 2024 signifies its heightened commitment to cybersecurity. This achievement not only reflects the Government of India's dedication to securing its digital landscape but also sets a benchmark for other nations. The DoT continues to lead efforts in fortifying India's digital infrastructure on the global stage.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Governance

Source: PIB

2. Changes in Canada's international work permit system to reduce immigration

Introduction

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced changes to the country's international work permit system, aiming to reduce the number of immigrant workers in Canada.



In posts on X, Trudeau said Canada will grant 35% fewer international student permits this year, with the number going down by another 10% next year.

He said, "We're reducing the number of low-wage, temporary foreign workers and shortening the duration of their work terms" — something he said in August as

well. "We adjusted the program after the pandemic, but the labour market's changed. We need businesses to invest in Canadian workers," Trudeau added.

Why has Canada curbed international work permits?

Canada issued approximately 4,85,000 student permits in 2024, compared to over 5,00,000 in 2023. The number is expected to further decrease to 4,37,000 in 2025.

This is in line with recent policy changes where the government has cited pressure on cities' infrastructure, higher rents and a "massive" increase in immigration for imposing restrictions. It has also been found that some students used the system to apply for asylum after arriving in Canada. Trudeau said in his post, "Immigration is an advantage for our economy — but when bad actors abuse the system and take advantage of students, we crack down."

The visa-issuance process has been adjusted to detect fraudulent or rejected asylum claims. The proposed reduction in temporary residents, from 6.5 per cent of Canada's population to 5 per cent, will be reflected in the 2025-2027 immigration levels plan to be released by November 1.

What are the new restrictions on PGWP?

The Postgraduate Work Permits (PGWPs) for international graduates, postgraduates, master's and doctoral programme students in Canada are valid for three years.

The Canadian government aims to reduce the number of PGWPs by 1.75 lakh through stricter rules in the next three years. Spouse work permits will be reduced by 50,000, and given only if one's partner is pursuing a master's programme for a minimum of 16 months.

Before applying for the PGWP, students must now pass a language proficiency test called the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB). The required score is 7 for university undergraduates and 5 for college undergraduates for all applications submitted from November 1 onwards. Earlier, the CLB was only needed to apply for Permanent Residency (PR).

Graduates from programmes at public colleges will still be eligible for a PGWP if they graduate from a field of study connected to occupations witnessing long-term labour shortages in the country (as listed by the government).

Students enrolling in master's and doctoral programs need to get a provincial attestation letter (PAL). Earlier, this condition was only for undergraduate students.

What are the challenges for students?

The future of lakhs of diploma holders who completed their courses in August is uncertain. Those who studied business administration, IT, etc., may find their qualifications no longer suit Canada's long-term job requirements, said Nitin Chawla of Kapri, an immigration consultancy firm in Ludhiana.

Canadian colleges offering such courses may also see fewer international students enroll if they do not introduce new programmes. Punjab-based consultants have noted that students with skills in plumbing, refrigeration and air conditioning/heating, mechanics, AI and machine learning, carpentry, health, and the nursing sector — all seeing labour shortages — have opportunities to obtain a PGWP.

What are the alternatives?

According to data from Canada's Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC), there were around 4.90 lakh international student work permit holders in 2017. As of 2023, this number grew to more than 10 lakh. Indian and Chinese students together accounted for more than half of international students in each of the last eight years.

According to Saurabh Arora, CEO of student accommodation service University Living, Canada's decision to reduce the intake of immigrants reflects its commitment towards aligning its international education policy with long-term economic goals.

He added that the shift could encourage Indian students to consider other emerging destinations like Germany, Singapore, Italy and Ireland, which are becoming attractive for educational purposes.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

3. PM Modi Arrives for Quad Summit in the US

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has arrived in the United States to attend the fourth Quad Leaders Summit in Wilmington, Delaware. Here's an overview of the Quad grouping, which includes India, the US, Japan, and Australia.

Brief History and Structure

The Quad originated after the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004, when India, Japan, Australia, and the US formed an informal alliance for disaster relief. In 2007, Japan's then-PM Shinzo Abe formalized it as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).



However, early efforts faced challenges due to a lack of cohesion and perceptions that it was merely an anti-China bloc. The group faded until it was revived in 2017 amid rising Chinese influence. Unlike traditional multilateral organizations, the Quad has no secretariat or permanent decision-making body. Instead, it focuses on enhancing existing agreements and promoting shared values. It does not include collective defense provisions, opting instead for joint military exercises to demonstrate unity.

The Quad's first significant joint military exercises since its resurgence occurred in 2020-21 with the inclusion of Australia in the Malabar naval exercises. The leaders later met virtually in

March 2021, releasing a statement outlining their objectives and goals, culminating in their first in-person meeting in Washington, D.C.

Key Objectives

The Quad aims to enhance:

- Maritime Security: Safeguarding freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific.
- Climate Change: Addressing environmental challenges collectively.
- Investment Ecosystem: Promoting regional economic growth.
- Technological Innovation: Boosting collaboration in technology sectors.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Quad also focused on vaccine diplomacy. There are discussions about expanding the partnership to include countries like South Korea, New Zealand, and Vietnam, referred to as Quad Plus.

In a joint statement, Quad leaders emphasized their commitment to a free and inclusive Indo-Pacific region governed by international law, where countries can make their own political choices without coercion.

Geopolitical Context

While the Quad promotes a range of issues, its primary concern remains the threat posed by China. Each member state has its reasons for being cautious of China's regional ambitions. China has consistently criticized the Quad, with its Foreign Minister labeling it a "headline-grabbing idea" and accusing it of fostering discord in Asia. Beijing views the Quad as part of a strategy to encircle it.

Conclusion

As PM Modi participates in the Quad Summit, the focus will be on addressing regional challenges and reinforcing commitments among the member nations amid evolving geopolitical dynamics.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: Indian Express