

1. Govt ordered mock drills, boosting civil defence: What does this entail?**Why in News?**

Amid rising tensions between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam attack, the Centre directed all states and Union Territories to conduct mock drills on May 7 and strengthen civil defence mechanisms across categorised Civil Defence Districts in the event of a hostile attack.

What are Civil Defence Districts?

Civil Defence Districts are demarcated areas or regions, including towns and districts, which the government designates for implementation of civil defence programmes. These are demarcated on the recommendation of the Ministry of Defence. These demarcations are made based on the location of the towns or districts (such as near the borders), vulnerability to attacks, location of vital installations (such as defence installations, nuclear plants, thermal power plants, key government buildings, etc) and critical infrastructure (such as key highways, railways, ports etc.).

There are in all 259 Civil Defence Districts, notified by the MHA in 2010. These are spread across all states and UTs and divided into three categories. Category I districts (13) require full implementation of civil defence programmes, while category II (201) and Category III (45) require partial implementation in varying degrees.

What is civil defence?

World over, civil defence refers to government programs which provide guidance and assistance in preparing for, responding to and recovering from public emergencies due to conflict or natural disasters.

Civil defence or civil protection is an effort to protect the citizens of a state (generally non-combatants) from military attack. It uses the principles of emergency operations: prevention, mitigation, preparation, response, emergency evacuation and recovery.

Under the Civil Defence Act of 1968 in India, civil defence organisations were established to protect individuals, properties, and establishments against any hostile attacks. These are manned by volunteers from different walks of life who are given the necessary training.

In the event of any untoward incidents like flood, earthquake, terror attack, fire, explosion etc., the civil defence organisation would have a corpus of trained employees and volunteers, who can render assistance and relief before the official agencies reach the site. The first few minutes are always crucial to rescue and relief operations.

What prompted India to opt for a formal civil defence unit?

Until the declaration of a national emergency in 1962 (amid the India-China war), the Civil Defence Policy of the Government of India was in place. However, it was confined to making the states and UTs conscious of the need for civil protection measures and to ask them to keep ready civil protection paper plans for major cities and towns. This was under the Emergency Relief Organisation (ERO) Scheme.

The Chinese aggression in 1962 and the India-Pakistan conflict in 1965 led to a rethinking of the policy and scope of civil defence. The Parliament thus passed the Civil Defence Act in May 1968.

The Act has been suitably amended by the Civil Defence (Amendment) Act, 2009, by Notification No. 3 of 2010, to include disaster management as an additional function for the Civil Defence Corps, while retaining its primary role. The additional role in disaster management will be enacted by the Civil Defence Personnel before, during and after emergencies arising out of calamities/disasters, whether natural or man-made.

What was the May 7 mock drill entail?

In its communication to states and UTs sent on May 2 and May 5, the Ministry of Home Affairs has asked them to ensure operationalisation of Air Raid Warning Sirens; operationalisation of Hotline/Radio Communication Links with the Indian Air Force; activation and Manning of Control Rooms / Shadow Control Rooms; training of civilians, students, etc, on the Civil Defence aspects to protect themselves in the event of hostile attack; activation of Civil Defence Services, especially, warden services, firefighting, rescue service, depot, etc;; provision of crash black out measures (a sudden switching off of lights to reduce a potential target's visibility); provision for early camouflaging of vital plants / installations; updation of Civil Defence Plan and its rehearsal; updation of evacuation plan and its rehearsal; and cleaning of bunkers, trenches, etc.

How does this impact the general public?

While Civil Defence preparedness involves direct participation civil defence units such as district controllers, various district authorities, civil defence wardens/volunteers, home guards, National Cadet Corps, National Service Scheme volunteers, Nehru Yuva Kendra volunteers and students in general, normal life of the public tends to get affected in notified districts.

For example, notified towns and cities may have to deal with sudden power outages for a brief period. Following an air raid warning, all vehicular traffic in a notified area would have to come to a halt and passenger would be expected to take shelter and other precautionary measures. Occupants of vulnerable villages and towns may be evacuated and moved to shelters, bunkers or trenches.

The Civil Defence Act of 1968, under which these mock drills would be conducted, empowers the government, in times of emergencies, to restrict movement, impose curfews, control assemblies or gatherings, close roads, ports, and transport services as needed. The government may detain or arrest a person without the usual legal processes and even order killing of animals.

It also allows the government compulsory acquisition of property, requisitioning services, and controlling the supply and distribution of goods (especially essentials).

The government under the law can direct individuals or classes of persons to perform certain work or duties, and control industries crucial to national security. It also empowers government to regulate or censor communications, publications, and broadcasts.

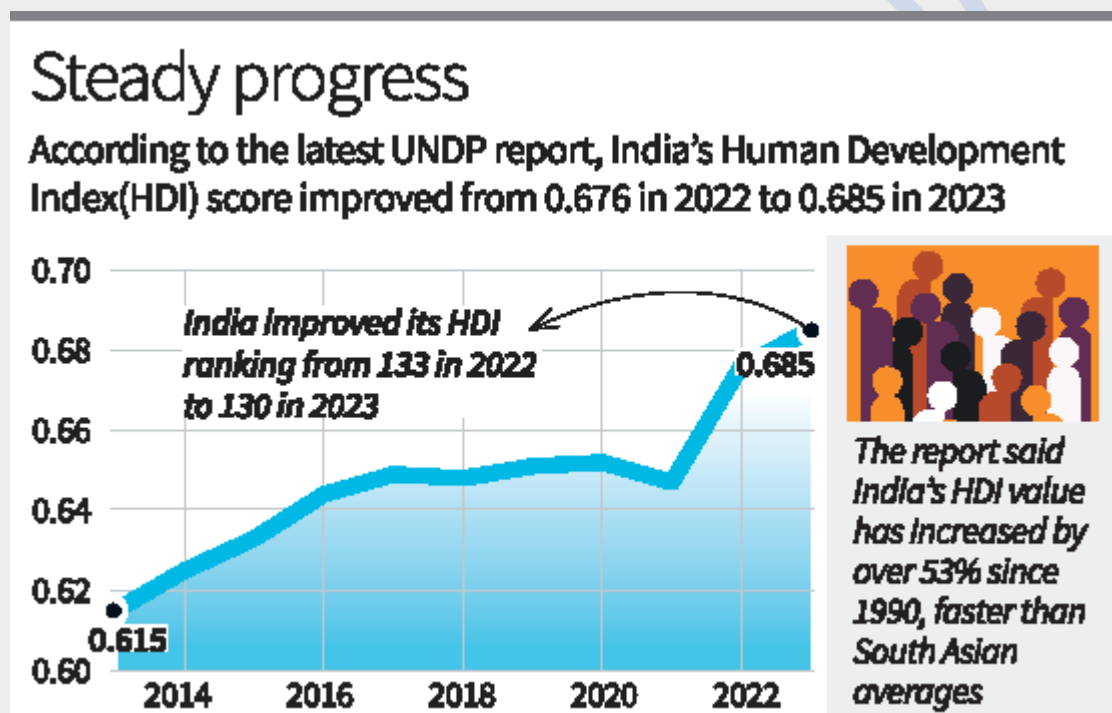
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Internal Security

Source: Indian Express

2. India climbs 3 spots to 130 among 193 nations in HDI

Improvement in rank

India moved up three spots in the Human Development Index, ranking 130 out of 193 countries in 2023, as per the Human Development Report 2023 released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



With the HDI value improving to 0.685 in 2023 from 0.676 in 2022, India remained in the medium human development category, moving closer to the high human development threshold of 0.700.

Rising Income

The Gross National Income per capita rose over four times to \$9,046.76 in 2023 from \$2,167.22 in 1990, while 135 million Indians escaped multidimensional poverty between 2015-16 and 2019-21.

Better life expectancy

Life expectancy in India rose to 72 years in 2023 from 58.6 years in 1990, the highest since the inception of the index. The report attributed this to the national health programmes followed by successive governments, including the National Rural Health Mission, Ayushman Bharat, Janani Suraksha Yojana, and the Poshan Abhiyaan.

Improving educational standards

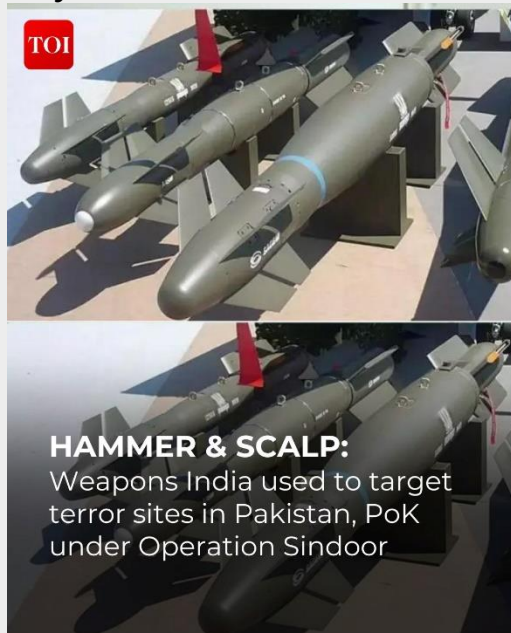
Also, children today are expected to stay in school for 13 years on average, up from 8.2 years in 1990. Initiatives like the Right to Education Act, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, the National Education Policy 2020 have enhanced outcomes. However, quality and learning outcomes remain areas for continued focus.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Organisations

Source: The Hindu

3. Operation Sindoor: Precision guided long range weapons in Indian military's arsenal

Why in News?



India has not revealed what weapons were used in Operation Sindoor. The official statement said that the Indian Armed Forces carried out precision strikes, hitting terrorist infrastructure deep inside Pakistan and in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Over the past several years, the Indian military has built up a formidable arsenal of new-age weapons that includes a range of precision-guided long-range weapons and drones, including loitering munitions. Among them:

HAMMER: The Highly Agile and Manoeuvrable Munition Extended Range (HAMMER) air-to-ground precision-guided weapon system for the Rafale fighter aircraft has a range of up to 70 km, and can also be fitted to bombs and various guided systems.

Built by the French aerospace, defence, and security corporation Safran, the HAMMER weapon system is highly versatile, and can be used for precision strikes against a range of targets in medium-range tactical operations.

SCALP: This is an air-launched cruise missile with stealth features, designed for long-range deep strikes. SCALP-EG (Système de Croisière Autonome à Longue Portée — Emploi Général), known as Storm Shadow in Britain, can be operated at night and in all weather conditions.

The missile, manufactured by the European multinational MBDA, has a range of 450 km, and is difficult to detect due to its low-flying capability when fired from an aircraft.

METEOR: The Meteor is a new-generation Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) system which is effective in dense electronic-warfare environments.

According to its manufacturer MBDA, the missile's solid-fuel 'ramjet' motor provides it with thrust all the way to the target intercept, and thus the largest 'No Escape Zone' of any air-to-air missile system.

BRAHMOS: These supersonic cruise missiles, which have been operationalised in all three defence services, are built by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya.

BrahMos missiles operate at close to Mach 3 speed in the cruise phase, which ensures reduced flight time, lower dispersion of targets, and quicker engagement time and non-interception.

LOITERING MUNITIONS: They are used for surveillance and identification of targets, and can carry out precision strikes, autonomously or otherwise. The Armed Forces in the last few years have been procuring a range of drones, including loitering munitions.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

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