

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

Topic : Impact of GeM on India's Economy

Relevance : GS Paper 2 Polity and Governance

Source : PIB

Context :



Public procurement plays a fundamental role in shaping a nation's economic development by ensuring efficient spending of government funds while fostering economic opportunities for businesses. Effective and transparent procurement practices not only optimize public resources but also drive employment, innovation, and overall societal growth.

India's **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** has emerged as a transformative force in public procurement, offering an **inclusive and transparent** platform that benefits a wide range of stakeholders—government buyers, local entrepreneurs, startups, women entrepreneurs, and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

GeM has been instrumental in integrating small businesses into the formal economy. For instance:

- **Startups** have secured orders worth ₹35,950 Crore through the platform.

- **Women Entrepreneurs** form **8%** of the total sellers on GeM, with **1,77,786 Udyam-verified women MSEs** fulfilling orders worth **₹46,615 Crore**.

By promoting digital procurement, GeM has made the procurement process **efficient, competitive, and corruption-free**, aligning with India's vision of "Ease of Doing Business."

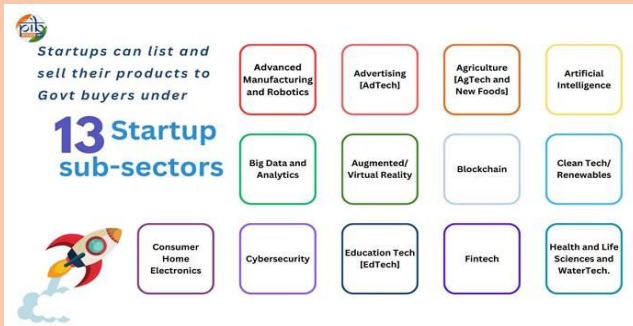


What is GeM?

Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is a digital platform launched by the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry** on **August 9, 2016**, under the leadership of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.

Its primary objective is to create an **open, fair, and transparent** procurement ecosystem where government buyers can directly purchase goods and services from verified sellers, including startups, MSMEs, and self-help groups.

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GeM ensures that:

- **Government procurement is streamlined**, reducing inefficiencies and delays.
- **A level playing field is established**, allowing small businesses to compete with large vendors.
- **Corruption and favoritism are minimized** through digital monitoring and real-time tracking.

With its **user-friendly interface and robust digital infrastructure**, GeM has revolutionized the way public procurement is conducted in India.

Core Principles of GeM

1. Openness

- Ensures easy **access to information** about products, services, and sellers.
- Provides **data-driven insights** to assist buyers in making informed purchasing decisions.
- Maintains **price transparency**, ensuring competitive pricing across suppliers.

2. Fairness

- **Equal opportunity for all sellers**, from large enterprises to small businesses.
- No **preferential treatment** for any particular vendor.
- Supports the government's **preferential market access policies**, ensuring fair competition.

3. Inclusiveness

- Welcomes **all government buyers and sellers** to participate in the platform.
- Provides **training and onboarding support** for sellers unfamiliar with digital procurement.
- Encourages **startups, women entrepreneurs, SC/ST entrepreneurs, and self-help groups** to join the marketplace.

These principles ensure that GeM is a **democratic and equitable** procurement platform, benefiting both government agencies and small businesses.



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SWAYATT: Promoting Ease of Doing Business

SWAYATT (Startups, Women, and Youth Advantage Through e-Transactions) is an initiative to:

- **Train and onboard** small-scale businesses, startups, and entrepreneurs.
- **Improve ease of doing business** for marginalized groups, including women entrepreneurs, SC/ST-owned businesses, and self-help groups.
- **Expand access** to government contracts for businesses that previously lacked direct market linkage.

Since its inception, SWAYATT has empowered **thousands of entrepreneurs** by integrating them into the formal procurement system.

Startup Runway 2.0: Showcasing Innovation

This initiative enables **Startups** to:

- List their **innovative products and services** on GeM.
- Participate in government procurement **without requiring DPIIT certification.**
- Leverage GeM's marketplace functionalities to **scale their businesses.**

This aligns with the "**Make in India**" initiative by encouraging domestic innovation and reducing reliance on imports.

Womaniya: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

The **Womaniya initiative** promotes products made by **women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups (WSHGs)**, offering them direct access to government buyers.



Special categories include:

- **Handicrafts and Handloom**
- **Accessories, Jute, and Coir Products**
- **Bamboo Products and Organic Foods**
- **Home Décor and Office Furnishings**

To foster women-led businesses, GeM reserves **3% of public procurement for women MSME entrepreneurs.**

MSME SC/ST Entrepreneurs on GeM

GeM actively supports **Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) entrepreneurs** by:

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- Partnering with MSME organizations to onboard SC/ST businesses.
- Ensuring that **4% of total government procurement** comes from SC/ST entrepreneurs.
- **Simplifying procurement procedures** for disadvantaged communities.

This initiative aligns with the government's target of **25% procurement from MSMEs**, ensuring **inclusive economic development**.

SARAS Collection:

The **SARAS Collection** showcases **handmade products** from self-help groups across India.



It features:

- **Handicrafts and Handloom Textiles**
- **Office Décor and Accessories**
- **Personal Hygiene and Care Products**

By providing a **national platform** for local artisans, GeM helps preserve **India's cultural heritage** while supporting **rural livelihoods**.

Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Government e-Marketplace (GeM):

1. GeM was launched by the Ministry of Finance in 2016 to streamline public procurement.
2. The **SWAYATT** initiative aims to promote startups, women entrepreneurs, and youth in public procurement.
3. Under the **Womaniya** initiative, a minimum of **3% of government procurement** is reserved for women-led MSMEs.
4. The **SARAS Collection** on GeM features handicrafts and handloom products from large-scale industries.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 1 and 3 only
 (B) 2 and 3 only
 (C) 2, 3, and 4 only
 (D) 1, 2, and 4 only

Answer:

Correct Option: (B) 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is incorrect** – GeM was launched by the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**, not the Ministry of Finance, in **2016** to enhance transparency and efficiency in public procurement.

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2. **Statement 2 is correct** – The **SWAYATT initiative** is designed to empower **startups, women entrepreneurs, and youth**, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, by providing them access to government procurement.
3. **Statement 3 is correct** – The **Womaniya initiative** mandates that **3% of total government procurement** be reserved for **women-led MSMEs**, promoting women's entrepreneurship.
4. **Statement 4 is incorrect** – The **SARAS Collection** on GeM showcases **handmade products from self-help groups (SHGs)**, not **large-scale industries**.

Thus, the correct answer is **(B) 2 and 3 only**.

Mains Model Question

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has revolutionized public procurement in India by ensuring transparency, efficiency, and inclusiveness. Discuss the impact of GeM on India's economy, particularly in empowering startups, MSMEs, and women entrepreneurs. What challenges does the platform face, and how can they be addressed?

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) was launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry to streamline public procurement and create an open, transparent, and efficient marketplace for government buyers and sellers. By eliminating intermediaries and leveraging technology, GeM has significantly enhanced ease of doing business and contributed to economic growth.

162,985 Primary Buyers	228,754 Secondary Buyers	11,006 Product Categories
332 Service Categories	6,286,543 Order Volume in Last FY	403,305 Order Value in Last FY (Cr.)
6,123,691 Order Volume in Current FY	452,594 Order Value in Current FY (Cr.)	37.87 Orders Value (MSE %)

GeM has had a profound impact on the Indian economy, particularly in fostering entrepreneurship and supporting small businesses. The platform has facilitated over ₹35,950 crore worth of procurement from startups, providing them direct market access without bureaucratic hurdles. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) account for a significant share of transactions, with 37.87% of total procurement value originating from them.

Women entrepreneurs have also benefitted immensely under the Womaniya initiative, which reserves 3% of public procurement for women-led MSMEs. Over 1.77 lakh Udyam-verified women-led businesses have participated, generating orders worth ₹46,615 crore. Furthermore, GeM has promoted inclusivity by ensuring that 4% of government procurement is sourced from SC/ST entrepreneurs, helping marginalized communities integrate into the formal economy. The platform has also provided a boost to traditional artisans and self-help groups through the SARAS Collection, which showcases handcrafted and handloom products.

Despite its success, GeM faces several challenges. Many small businesses struggle with digital literacy, making onboarding and navigation difficult. Technical issues such as platform glitches

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and delayed payments deter participation. A lack of awareness among rural entrepreneurs further limits its reach. Addressing these challenges requires targeted digital training programs, streamlined registration processes, and infrastructure upgrades to improve system reliability. By resolving these issues, GeM can further strengthen its role in making public procurement more inclusive and growth-oriented.

Topic : Blue Flag Certification

Relevance : GS Paper 3

Environmental Science

Source : The Hindu

Context :



Rushikonda Beach's temporary withdrawal of Blue Flag status is not a cause for alarm but a

procedural step to ensure continued compliance with high standards. The beach is expected to regain its certification once the safety audit is completed. India's commitment to **sustainable tourism and environmental conservation** continues to grow, with more beaches aiming for **Blue Flag Certification** in the future.

What is Blue Flag Certification?

The **Blue Flag Certification** is an internationally recognized eco-label awarded to beaches, marinas, and sustainable tourism boating operators that meet stringent environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility criteria. The certification is granted by the **Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)**, a Denmark-based non-profit organization operating in collaboration with the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** and the **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**.

The **primary aim** of the Blue Flag program is to promote sustainable tourism and maintain high environmental standards at beaches and marinas.

Key Criteria for Blue Flag Certification

To receive and retain Blue Flag status, a beach must comply with **33 strict criteria**, categorized into four main areas:

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Environmental Education and Information



SIGNIFICANCE

- Promotes food security through activities such as supporting local sustainable fishing communities.
- Enhances international cooperation in the food industry, technology development.
- Create environmental education activities.
- Blue Flag contributes to the achievement of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 7 (Affordable & clean energy) & 10 (reduced inequalities)

INDIA'S BEAMS PROGRAM

- Flagship initiative on the lines of Blue Flag certification, under the (Integrated Coastal Zone Management) approach.
- Launched by: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- Objective: To abate pollution in coastal waters, promote sustainable development of beach facilities, protect and conserve coastal ecosystems and natural resources.

- Display information about local ecosystems, biodiversity, and conservation efforts.
- Provide environmental education activities for visitors.
- Post water quality results and other essential details on a public notice board.

Water Quality

- Maintain excellent bathing water quality with **regular testing** for pollutants.
- No industrial, sewage, or untreated wastewater discharge should be present in or near the beach.

Environmental Management

- Implement proper waste disposal and recycling systems.

- Maintain the natural ecosystem, including dunes, flora, and fauna.
- Restrict activities that can cause environmental degradation.

Safety and Services

- Ensure the availability of lifeguards and first-aid stations.
- Provide proper access for disabled visitors.
- Maintain well-kept and clean restrooms and other facilities.

Rushikonda Beach and Its Temporary Blue Flag Withdrawal



Blue Flag beaches are considered the cleanest beaches of the world. It is an eco-tourism model endeavouring to provide the tourists/beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities, a safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.

It is accorded by the international jury composed of eminent members -

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Denmark-based NGO Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

DO YOU KNOW THE BLUE FLAG CRITERIA?

Environment	Water Quality	Management	Safety & Services
6 criteria	5 criteria	15 criteria	7 criteria

It is an internationally recognised eco-label that is accorded based on 33 criterias. These criterias are divided into 4 major heads.

- Environmental education and information
- Bathing water quality
- Environmental management
- Conservation and safety services in the beaches

India has now 12 Blue Flag Certified beaches.

- Eden Beach (Puducherry)
- Kovalam Beach (Tamil Nadu)
- Golden Beach (Odisha)
- Kappad Beach (Kerala)
- Shivrajpur Beach (Gujarat)
- Kasarkod Beach (Karnataka)
- Ghoghla Beach (Diu)
- Radhanagar Beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)
- Rushikonda Beach (Andhra Pradesh)
- Padubidri Beach (Karnataka)
- Thundi Beach (Lakshadweep)
- Kadmat Beach (Lakshadweep)

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Rushikonda Beach in **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**, was awarded **Blue Flag Certification** in **2021** due to its high environmental and safety standards. However, recent reports indicated a **temporary withdrawal** of the certification.

Reasons for Temporary Withdrawal

According to Visakhapatnam Collector **M.N. Harendhira Prasad**, the **Blue Flag status was not revoked permanently** but temporarily withdrawn due to:

- **Crowd management issues** causing safety concerns.
- **Traffic congestion** affecting beach accessibility.
- **A pending safety audit** by the **Royal Life Saving Society**, scheduled for **March 4, 2025**.

The **Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC)** confirmed that per **Blue Flag International Compliance Protocol**, the flag must not be raised during the withdrawal period. A notice must also be placed on the beach notice board informing visitors about the temporary status change.

When Will the Blue Flag Status Be Restored?

Once Rushikonda Beach successfully **completes the safety audit and re-complies with Blue Flag criteria**, the certification will be reinstated. The concerned authorities must submit necessary

documentation to the **National Operator**, following which the flag will be raised again.

India's Blue Flag Beaches

As of 2024, India has **12 Blue Flag-certified beaches**, including:

- ✓ **Rushikonda Beach** (Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh) – Temporarily withdrawn
- ✓ **Shivrajpur Beach** (Dwarka, Gujarat)
- ✓ **Ghoghla Beach** (Diu)
- ✓ **Kasarkod Beach** (Karnataka)
- ✓ **Padubidri Beach** (Karnataka)
- ✓ **Kappad Beach** (Kerala)
- ✓ **Eden Beach** (Puducherry)
- ✓ **Golden Beach** (Puri, Odisha)
- ✓ **Radhanagar Beach** (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)
- ✓ **Kovalam Beach** (Chennai, Tamil Nadu)
- ✓ **Minicoy Thundi Beach** (Lakshadweep)
- ✓ **Kadmat Beach** (Lakshadweep)

India has been actively working towards increasing the number of **Blue Flag beaches** under the **BEAMS (Beach Environment & Aesthetic Management Services) program**, launched by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.

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INDIA'S 12 BEACHES SELECTED FOR 'BLUE FLAG CERTIFICATION'

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has selected 12 beaches in India for 'Blue Flag' certification.

Japan and South Korea are the only countries in Asia to have Blue Flag beaches.

Spain has the highest number of Blue Flag beaches (566), followed by Greece (515) and France (395).

BEACH	STATE
Shivrajpur	Gujarat
Bhogave	Maharashtra
Ghoghla	Diu
Miramar	Goa
Kasarkod and Padubidri	Karnataka
Kappad	Kerala
Eden	Puducherry
Mahabalipuram	Tamil Nadu
Rushikonda	Andhra Pradesh
Golden	Odisha
Radhanagar	Andaman & Nicobar Islands

The Blue Flag is one of the world's most recognised voluntary eco-labels awarded to beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators; run by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).



1. It is awarded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. The certification ensures that a beach meets environmental, safety, and cleanliness standards.
3. In India, the Blue Flag program is implemented under the BEAMS initiative by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer:

Correct Option: (b) 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** Blue Flag Certification is awarded by the **Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)**, not UNEP. However, UNEP and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) support the program.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** The certification ensures that a beach meets **strict environmental, safety, and cleanliness criteria** for sustainable tourism.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** In India, the Blue Flag initiative is implemented under the **BEAMS (Beach Environment & Aesthetic Management Services) program** by the

Significance of Blue Flag Certification

- **Boosts Tourism** – A Blue Flag designation makes a beach more attractive to international and domestic tourists.
- **Ensures Cleanliness & Safety** – It guarantees high environmental, safety, and cleanliness standards.
- **Supports Sustainable Development** – It promotes eco-friendly tourism and conservation of coastal ecosystems.
- **Encourages Local Economy Growth** – Certified beaches attract more tourists, boosting local businesses and employment.

Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Blue Flag Certification:

DEL – HYD – B'LORE – PUNE – TPT

<https://pragnyaiascoachinghyderabad.com/>

+91 98804 86671

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)**Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).**

Thus, the correct answer is **(b) 2 and 3 only**.

Mains Model Question

Discuss the significance of Blue Flag Certification in promoting sustainable tourism in India. Highlight the challenges associated with maintaining this certification and suggest measures to ensure compliance.

Blue Flag Certification is an internationally recognized eco-label awarded to beaches that meet stringent environmental, safety, and cleanliness criteria. It plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism by ensuring that coastal ecosystems remain well-preserved while also enhancing the experience of tourists. In India, this certification is implemented under the BEAMS (Beach Environment & Aesthetic Management Services) initiative by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). As of 2024, India has 12 Blue Flag-certified beaches, reflecting its commitment to balancing tourism with environmental conservation.

The significance of Blue Flag Certification extends beyond tourism promotion. It helps maintain high water quality, proper waste management, and safety standards, thereby improving the overall sustainability of coastal regions. Certified beaches attract eco-conscious travelers, boost local economies, and encourage responsible tourism practices. Moreover, adherence to the certification criteria fosters awareness about environmental conservation among local communities and visitors.

Despite its benefits, maintaining Blue Flag Certification poses several challenges. Increasing footfall on certified beaches often leads to waste accumulation, pollution, and ecosystem disruption. Unregulated tourism activities, traffic congestion, and inadequate enforcement of environmental regulations further threaten compliance. The temporary withdrawal of Blue Flag status for Rushikonda Beach due to crowd management and safety concerns exemplifies these challenges. Additionally, limited funding and infrastructure constraints make it difficult for local authorities to sustain compliance with the rigorous certification criteria.

To ensure consistent adherence to Blue Flag standards, authorities must implement stricter regulations on waste management and pollution control. Enhancing public awareness, improving beach infrastructure, and deploying trained personnel for crowd management can help maintain compliance. Sustainable tourism policies must be reinforced with community participation and technological interventions, ensuring that India's beaches remain environmentally viable while continuing to attract tourists.

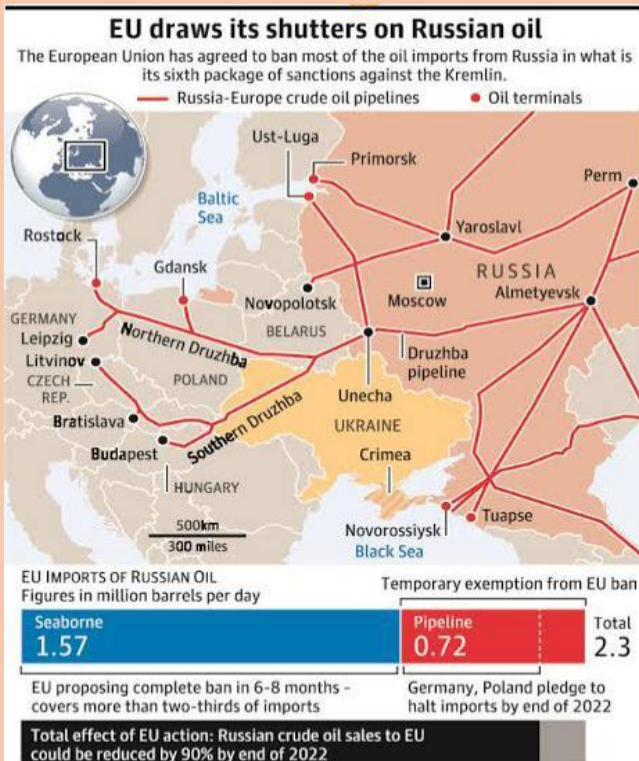
Topic : U.K. and European Nations Push for a Ukraine Peace Deal Amid U.S. Uncertainty

Relevance : GS Paper 2
International Relations

Source : Indian Express

Context :

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1. **Sustaining military and economic aid to Ukraine to prevent immediate vulnerabilities.**
2. **Intensifying economic pressure on Russia through sanctions and diplomatic isolation.**
3. **Bolstering Ukraine’s defense capabilities, ensuring it can protect itself post-war.**
4. **Establishing a “coalition of the willing” to enforce and sustain peace after any ceasefire.**

However, Starmer indicated that **not all nations involved in discussions will join this coalition**, as internal differences remain. A major point of concern is ensuring **U.S. support**, which remains uncertain due to Trump’s unpredictable approach toward Ukraine.

The United Kingdom, along with France and other European nations, is spearheading efforts to formulate a **peace deal between Ukraine and Russia**, aiming to present it to former U.S. President Donald Trump. This initiative follows a **contentious Oval Office meeting** where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a heated exchange with Trump and U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance over America’s stance on the war.

British Prime Minister **Keir Starmer**, who met Zelenskyy in London, emphasized the importance of **European leadership in the peace process**. The U.K., France, and potentially other European countries have agreed on a **four-step framework**:

The French connection



France and India are taking long-term bets on each other, seeking to shape a multipolar world

WHILE INDIA HAS been touting strategic partnership with various countries, it would be misleading to say that they all are of the same significance. Two of them are crucial in this context. One, as a full-spectrum strategic partnership, France has the strategic partnership on questions about the test of time. France has the strategic partnership with India through thick and thin from the time the strategic partnership was first established in 1998.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has just concluded a highly significant visit to France. For once, words like “improvement” and “boost” are not just lip service. This time after all France, not of course, there was pomp and circumstance. France bestowed on PM Modi the highest civilian honor. Our IT services companies, which in the past have been criticized for not doing enough for India, have now made over 100 jobs in India. The joint communiqué, the Horizon 2047 roadmap and the list of specific outcomes set out by the two sides is enough to overcome even the most intransigent policy wonk. Some have compared this visit to the one that PM Modi undertook to the US not so long ago. It should be obvious that the fact that PM Modi went to France to discuss the needs of the US is the ultimate expression of India’s strategic autonomy.

The defence sector always grabs attention at France-India summits and this was no exception. Key agreements – Safran, the French company and the DEDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) will jointly develop engines for the advanced medium combat aircraft. Airbus Safran will continue with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited engines for the Indian multi-role helicopter programme. Subscribers are expected to be jointly built by Mazars (Dok), Shubh Builders and the Naval Group of France, in all of the

above, the main takeaway is this: France-India defence ties have truly moved from a mere buyer-seller model to that of jointly designing, developing and co-producing in India. This is a paradigmatic shift from the French side in terms of willingness to part with know-how and state-of-the-art technology. France can genuinely claim that it is one strategic partner with whom there is no misunderstanding substantially in a bilateral which is “unmistakable”. Questions have been raised about the fate of the 2016 naval marine aircraft carrier Vikram. This will, no doubt, happen in due course for India, following the war in Ukraine. Diversification is the name of the game in defence acquisition. It is becoming increasingly clear that France will play a huge role in this.

The Indo-Pacific, predictably enough, occupied centre stage in discussions between the two leaders. A roadmap has been agreed upon. France is not just a resident power in the Indian Ocean but has massive real estate in the form of La Réunion, New Caledonia and French Polynesia. It has a long exclusive Economic Zone with 13 million citizens living there. Its commitment bases in the Indo-Pacific. The roadmap already talks of cooperation being comprehensive and including the field of defence. Joint exercises between the two countries, use of French military bases by Indian forces and achieving real-time maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean are of paramount importance for India. Bilateral air arrangements with Australia and UAE are allied. More than anything else, it is refreshing to note that while there is no lip service language on a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific, the roadmap underlines the fact that France-India cooperation needs to secure not just economic but also security interests. The roadmap should attract attention in Beijing where it is often argued that the US “Indo-Pacific” and “One Belt One Road” are not just competing but also “China’s” “Belt and Road” perspective, it should be clear that while we are on our own on the land border with China, in the maritime space India can count significantly on France along with our Quad partners.

The trust developed between the two countries over the last 25 years has been unshakable. So, the divergence between the two countries in the war in Ukraine has not been allowed to jeopardise the remarkable development of their bilateral ties. There was a discussion at length between the two leaders on the situation in Ukraine in a spirit of mutual understanding of each other’s position. PM Modi would have benefited more, mostly from the French assessment of the war in Ukraine in view of the forthcoming G20 summit to be chaired by India.

France-India cooperation in critical technologies, be it supercomputing, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and quantum technologies is crucial for India’s future and may well determine the trajectory of the relations over the next 25 years. This will have a huge impact on the Indo-Pacific Trade and Technology Council, which has been slow to get off the blocks.

France has come to the informed conclusion that no global problem can be tackled meaningfully without India’s participation. This explains the extraordinary emphasis on bilateral cooperation in the fields of climate change, energy security, biodiversity loss and counter-terrorism efforts, all of which figures prominently in the Horizon 2047 statement. This also illustrates France’s determination to support India’s candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

In sum, France and India are essentially talking long-term bets on each other. These are two middle powers, one in Europe and the other in Asia, with a similar conception of the world. In effect, both countries follow an independent foreign policy and practice strategic autonomy, which they hope will enable them to shape a multipolar world. More crucially, both these powers realise that there is a much better chance of the happening if they work in close concert.

The writer is former Indian Ambassador to France and currently Dean, Professor or JNU Global University, Visva-Veritas

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Challenges in Engaging the U.S. and Trump's Position

Despite Starmer's confidence that Trump aims for **lasting peace**, skepticism persists among European leaders. Trump has **criticized Ukraine**, referring to Zelenskyy as a **"dictator"** and accusing Ukraine of **provoking the war**. His administration recently **voted against** a European-backed United Nations resolution condemning Russia's invasion, a move that raised alarm in the EU.

Adding to concerns, Trump has shown interest in a **U.S.-Ukraine economic deal**, primarily focusing on **mineral extraction** rather than military support. His emphasis on an **immediate ceasefire** contradicts Ukraine's and Europe's approach, which prioritizes a **structured, durable peace agreement** that does not compromise Ukraine's sovereignty.

The role of European intermediaries is growing. Apart from Starmer, **French President Emmanuel Macron** and **Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni** have positioned themselves as key negotiators. Meloni, who enjoys a good rapport with Trump, has proposed a **high-level meeting between Trump and European leaders** to align strategies.

The central challenge remains **bridging the gap between European and American approaches** to the war. While Europe insists on **long-term security guarantees for Ukraine**, Trump's focus on **ending the war quickly—regardless of conditions—creates friction**.

A turning point for Ukraine and its women's rights

Its ratifying the Istanbul Convention is also timely in the context of Russia's invasion and Kyiv moving closer to Europe



AKANKSHA KHELLAR

The Ukrainian Parliament – the Verkhovna Rada – passed a Bill on June 20 ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Better known as the Istanbul Convention, it is the most far-reaching international treaty designed to set legally binding standards for prevention, protection, and prosecution of gender-based violence.

According to official numbers, 259 deputies voted in favour of the bill, eight voted against it, 28 voted blank and 47 abstained.

It will make a difference While the convention was first signed by Ukraine in 2011 – despite repeated calls from activists to ratify it – the government, for years, remained stubbornly mute on the subject and continued to delay its ratification because of opposition by religious and conservative groups over the term "gender" used in the document, as a recent article by Asami Terajima in the



A woman holding a blue ribbon, symbolizing support for women's rights.

abuse by their troops, the truth is that women in Ukraine have been disproportionately affected by the war. And as the tensions continue to rise, the risk of gender-based violence will also be heightened, with survivors suffering more severe levels of abuse. The prompt implementation of the convention could thus equip the Ukrainian authorities to deal with these atrocities and serve to reassure the survivors and provide them with the confidence to seek justice.

Besides, women's rights activists in Ukraine have long been calling for changes – as highlighted in Ms. Terajima's article – in legislation to impose harsher forms of punishment against the offenders of gender violence. For instance, domestic violence has been an administrative offence in Ukraine since 2003, which is punishable by a fine, community work of up to 60 hours or by imprisonment of up to 15 days. Then in 2019, systematic domestic violence was criminalised, which in practice meant that criminal charges will only be imposed if the abuser commits three offences in a year. However, these pieces of legislation and forms of punishment often fell short of what the victims anticipated in their prosecution, discouraging them and others to go through the process of seeking justice.

In this sense, the convention's ratification will not only expand the list of abuse against women punishable by law in Ukraine – including but not limited to psychological abuse, stalking, forced marriage, physical and sexual assault, forced abortion, sterilisation – but also provide the authorities with the opportunity to bring about changes in its legislation and procedural approaches. In furtherance, it will also mean that Ukraine will be responsible for financing more shelters for women, training social workers to adequately handle cases of sexual violence, and increase resources of assistance available for victims.

Aiding EU integration Apart from being a decisive step in the fight against gender-based violence, the adoption of the Istanbul Convention will also help in Ukraine's European integration. Guaranteeing human rights is the most important aspect that is considered when European Union (EU)

membership is being extended to a country, it has thus been crucial for Ukraine to demonstrate actions that will bring the country closer to European legislations and values. And a good way of doing this is through the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The decision is in fact, of particular significance for the Netherlands and Sweden, two 'sceptical' countries that were initially blocking Ukraine's candidate seat but have now eventually agreed to back EU member status for Ukraine.

The ratification, as Ms. Terajima's article highlights, is thus, a big milestone for Ukraine and has been applauded by many institutions, including the United Nations Human Rights Council and the EU Commission on human rights in the hope that it will decrease both the number of gender-based violence and domestic violence cases. It will also bring Ukraine closer to other countries that have already ratified the convention. However, an important thing to keep in mind is the fact that the proper implementation of the convention will require financial resources, which seems like a challenging goal for a country already facing economic downfall due to the Russian invasion.

Asami Terajima is the Assistant Manager, Ministry of Women and Child Development Desk at Invest India

U.K.-Ukraine Relations:

Since Russia's invasion in 2022, the United Kingdom has emerged as one of Ukraine's **most steadfast allies**, providing a comprehensive support package that includes:

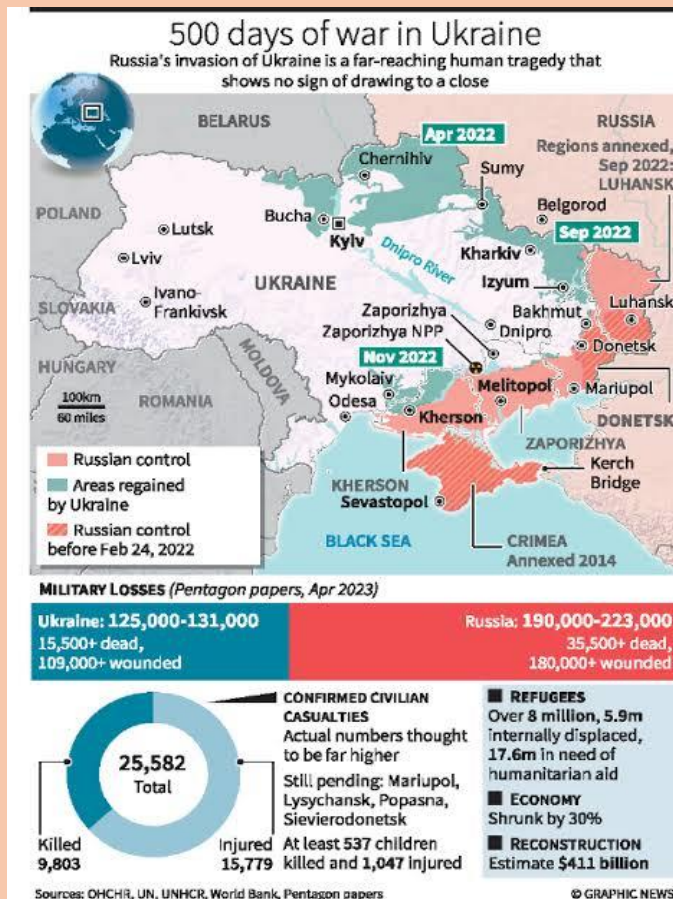
- **Military Aid:** The U.K. was the first country to supply Ukraine with **Western tanks (Challenger 2), advanced air defense systems, and long-range missiles**. It has also trained thousands of Ukrainian soldiers.
- **Economic Assistance:** London has extended **billions in financial aid** to help Ukraine's economy withstand the war.
- **Diplomatic Support:** The U.K. has been at the forefront of **imposing severe sanctions on Russia**, cutting it off from the global economy and reducing its ability to finance the war.
- **Advocacy for Ukraine's NATO Membership:** Britain has strongly backed Ukraine's accession to NATO, arguing that it is key to **European security**.

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The European Union's Multi-Faceted Support for Ukraine

The European Union has played a decisive role in assisting Ukraine, both militarily and economically. The EU's efforts include:

- **Economic Relief and Reconstruction:** The EU has pledged €50 billion in financial aid for Ukraine's war recovery and long-term rebuilding efforts.
- **Accelerating Ukraine's EU Membership Process:** Ukraine was granted EU candidate status in 2022, and discussions continue on **fast-tracking** its entry.



- **Comprehensive Sanctions on Russia:** Restricting Russian banks, limiting energy exports, and freezing assets of key Russian figures.
- **Military Aid and Arms Supply:** EU nations have provided **tanks, drones, artillery, and air defense systems** to strengthen Ukraine's battlefield position.

Despite these strong commitments, **differences persist among EU nations** regarding how to handle **peace negotiations with Russia**. Some countries advocate for a **compromise to end the war quickly**, while others stress **Ukraine's full territorial integrity as a non-negotiable condition**.

The Road Ahead for Peace

The diplomatic push led by the **U.K., France, and other European powers** reflects a growing **European desire to shape the endgame of the Ukraine war**. However, the **U.S. position under Trump remains unclear**, adding uncertainty to negotiations.

As tensions between Ukraine and Trump's administration continue, **Europe faces the challenge of keeping Western unity intact**. The coming months will be crucial in determining whether Europe and the U.S. can find **common ground on a peace deal** that ensures Ukraine's sovereignty while ending the conflict in a sustainable manner.

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Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the recent diplomatic efforts to establish a peace deal between Ukraine and Russia:

1. The United Kingdom and France are leading efforts to formulate a peace deal between Ukraine and Russia, with an aim to present it to the United Nations Security Council for approval.
2. U.S. President Donald Trump has fully endorsed Ukraine's position and has actively supported European efforts to negotiate the peace deal.
3. The proposed peace plan includes military and economic aid to Ukraine, increased economic pressure on Russia, and a coalition to enforce peace post-ceasefire.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (c) 3 only

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** The U.K. and France are leading the peace efforts, but the deal is aimed at gaining support from the U.S., particularly Donald Trump, rather than being directly presented to the United Nations Security Council.

- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** Trump has been skeptical of Ukraine's position, previously calling Zelenskyy a "dictator" and accusing Ukraine of provoking the war. His stance contrasts with the European approach, as he prioritizes an immediate ceasefire rather than Ukraine's long-term security.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The peace plan discussed by European leaders includes continued aid to Ukraine, economic pressure on Russia, boosting Ukraine's defenses, and forming a "coalition of the willing" to enforce peace.

Thus, the correct answer is (c) **3 only**.

Mains Model Question

Q. Discuss the role of the European Union (EU) in supporting Ukraine during the Russia-Ukraine conflict. How has the EU's assistance shaped the geopolitical dynamics of the war?

The European Union (EU) has played a crucial role in supporting Ukraine during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, emerging as a key economic, military, and diplomatic ally. Since Russia's invasion in 2022, the EU has provided extensive financial aid, military assistance, and imposed stringent sanctions on Russia.

Economically, the EU has allocated over **€85 billion** in financial assistance to Ukraine, including direct budgetary support and reconstruction aid. Additionally, it granted **candidate status to Ukraine** in 2022, symbolizing long-term political and economic integration. The EU has also facilitated trade through the **Solidarity Lanes**

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initiative, ensuring the export of Ukrainian grain and essential goods despite Russian blockades.

Militarily, the EU launched the **European Peace Facility (EPF)** to fund arms and defense equipment for Ukraine. Member states, particularly Germany, Poland, and France, have supplied modern weaponry, tanks, and air defense systems. NATO allies, though independent of the EU, have also coordinated their military efforts in alignment with EU policies.

Diplomatically, the EU has been instrumental in isolating Russia through sanctions, targeting its energy sector, financial institutions, and key oligarchs. It has also played a crucial role in countering Russian propaganda and cyber threats. The EU's diplomatic engagement with the U.S., U.K., and NATO has strengthened collective Western resistance against Russian aggression.

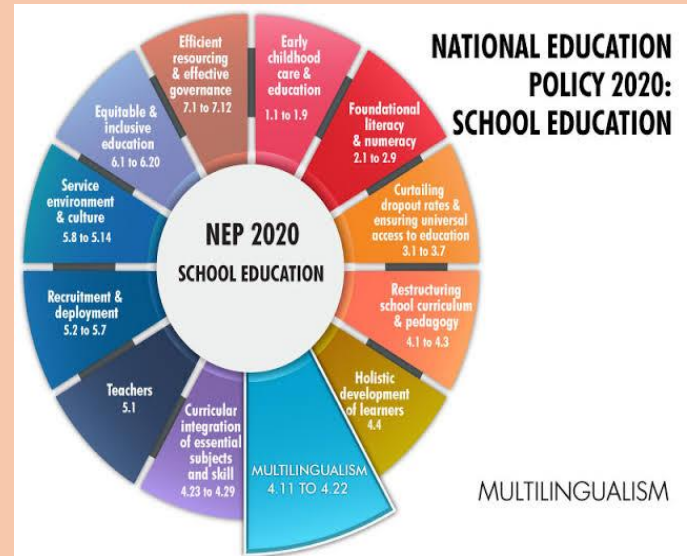
This support has significantly impacted the war, ensuring Ukraine's resilience while challenging Russian military advances. However, internal divisions within the EU and varying levels of military contributions among member states remain challenges. Moving forward, the EU's role in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and NATO integration will shape the broader European security landscape.

**Topic : Three-Language Formula
and National Education Policy
2020**

Relevance : GS Paper 2 Polity and Governance

Source : The Hindu

Context :



The debate surrounding the **three-language formula** has been reignited with the introduction of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**. While the policy aims to enhance linguistic skills and promote national integration, concerns have been raised regarding its practical implementation, particularly in public schools.

The Three-Language Formula:

The three-language formula was introduced in **1968 and reaffirmed in 1986 and 1992**, aiming to:

- Promote multilingual proficiency among students.
- Enhance cognitive abilities and cultural integration.
- Improve employment opportunities by enabling mobility across states.

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However, concerns persist regarding its effectiveness and feasibility:

Burden on Students and Learning Outcomes

- Public school students, especially in **non-Hindi-speaking states**, already struggle with foundational literacy, as highlighted in the **ASER 2024 survey**, which reported **88% of Class 3 students in Tamil Nadu lack basic literacy proficiency**.
- Introducing a third language may **dilute focus from core subjects** like Mathematics and Science, leading to **surface learning rather than deep understanding**.
- Research indicates a **strong foundation in the mother tongue** is critical before introducing additional languages.

Challenges in Implementation

- Lack of qualified teachers** for the third language, especially in rural areas.
- Financial constraints**, as most of the education budget is allocated to teacher salaries rather than improving infrastructure.
- Unequal access to supplementary learning**—private school students can afford tuition, while public school students may struggle.

Technological Advancements and Language Learning



- With AI-powered translation tools, **language proficiency is no longer a barrier** to acquiring knowledge.
- Future education should focus on **critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity** rather than rote memorization of multiple languages.

NEP 2020 and the Three-Language Formula

NEP 2020 reinforces the three-language formula but allows **states flexibility in language choice**. Key provisions include:

- Medium of instruction:** Emphasis on **mother tongue/local language** until Grade 5, preferably until Grade 8.

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- **Flexibility:** No specific languages are mandated, allowing **states to decide** based on regional needs.
- **Multilingualism for cognitive benefits:** While the policy states that multilingual education **enhances cognitive development**, it does not provide concrete evidence that learning more languages leads to **proportionate cognitive improvements**.

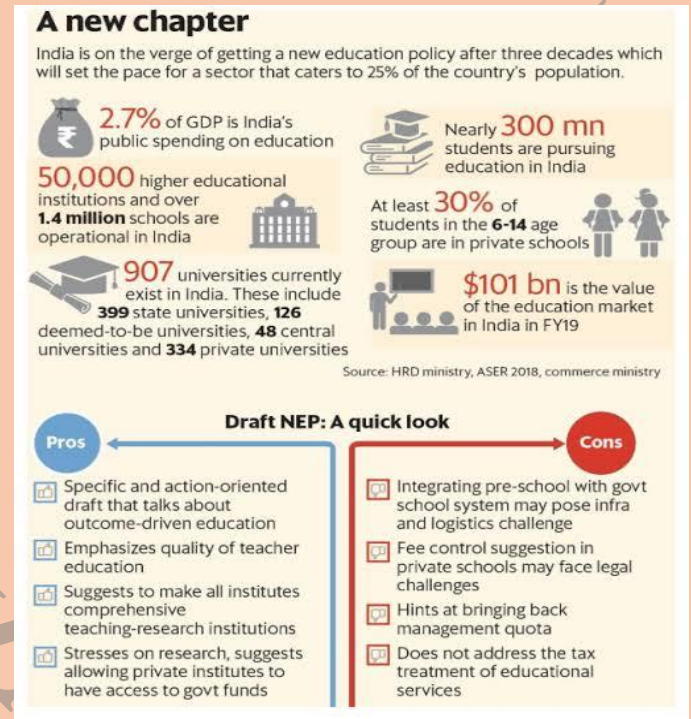
Balanced Approach :

A **pragmatic approach** would ensure language learning aligns with students' needs rather than being an additional burden. Key recommendations:

1. **Prioritize foundational literacy and numeracy** before introducing a third language.
2. **Offer Hindi (or any third language) as an optional subject** rather than mandatory.
3. **Strengthen English proficiency**, as it remains crucial for national and global opportunities.
4. **Invest in teacher training and infrastructure** before expanding language policies.

While **multilingual proficiency has advantages**, it should not come at the cost of **educational quality and accessibility**. NEP 2020 provides **flexibility** in language learning, and states should adopt policies that align with their students' best interests. A rigid approach could **disadvantage students**, limiting their competitiveness in national and global job markets. Therefore, a **balanced, inclusive, and**

student-centric approach is essential to ensure **holistic education** without unnecessary burden.



Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Three-Language Formula in India:

1. The Three-Language Formula was first introduced in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
2. NEP 2020 mandates Hindi as a compulsory third language in all states.
3. The formula aims to promote multilingual proficiency and national integration.
4. Under NEP 2020, the medium of instruction should mandatorily be in English from primary school onwards.

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Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 4 only

Answer: (b) 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is incorrect:** The Three-Language Formula was first introduced in **1968** and reaffirmed in later policies (1986, 1992). It is not a new provision of NEP 2020.
2. **Statement 2 is incorrect:** NEP 2020 **does not mandate Hindi** as a compulsory third language. States have the **flexibility** to choose languages based on regional and cultural considerations.
3. **Statement 3 is correct:** The formula aims to **enhance multilingual proficiency, cognitive development, and promote national integration** by encouraging students to learn multiple languages.
4. **Statement 4 is incorrect:** NEP 2020 recommends that **the medium of instruction should be in the mother tongue or regional language** at least **until Grade 5, preferably until Grade 8**, not necessarily in English.

Thus, the correct answer is **(b) 3 only**.

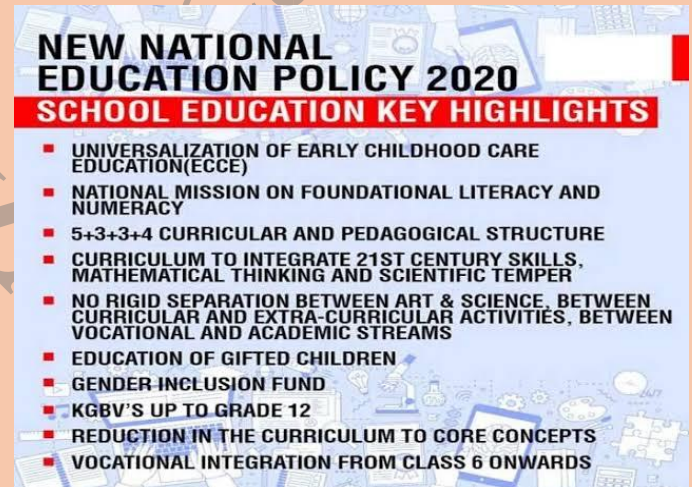
Mains Model Question

Q. Discuss the Three-Language Formula in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP)

2020. Highlight its objectives, challenges, and implications for students in public schools.

The **Three-Language Formula** was introduced in **1968** and reaffirmed in **NEP 2020** to promote multilingualism and national integration. It encourages students to learn three languages—**two native to India and one additional language**—to enhance cognitive skills and improve communication.

Objectives of the Three-Language Formula:



1. **Cognitive Development:** Multilingual learning is linked to better memory, problem-solving, and creativity.
2. **Employment Mobility:** Proficiency in multiple languages helps in **job opportunities** across regions.
3. **National Integration:** Encouraging the learning of languages beyond one's native tongue fosters **cultural harmony**.

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Challenges in Implementation:

1. **Burden on Students:** Public school students, especially in rural areas, struggle with basic literacy. Adding a third language could **divert focus from core subjects**.
2. **Teacher Shortage:** Many schools **lack qualified teachers** for additional languages.
3. **Resource Constraints:** Public schools have **limited infrastructure**, and introducing new language courses could strain budgets.
4. **Medium of Instruction Issue:** NEP 2020 **prioritizes mother-tongue instruction**, but English remains crucial for national and global competitiveness.

Implications for Public School Students:

- **If well-implemented**, the formula can **broaden learning opportunities**.
- **If poorly executed**, it may **widen the learning gap** between public and private school students.

Way Forward:

- **Flexibility in Language Choice:** States should decide languages based on regional needs.
- **Focus on Foundational Literacy:** Strengthening **mother-tongue and English proficiency** should take precedence.
- **Gradual Implementation:** A phased approach can ease the burden on students.

Topic : Private U.S. Spacecraft Lands Upright on the Moon

Relevance : GS Paper 3 Science and Technology

Source : Indian Express

Context :



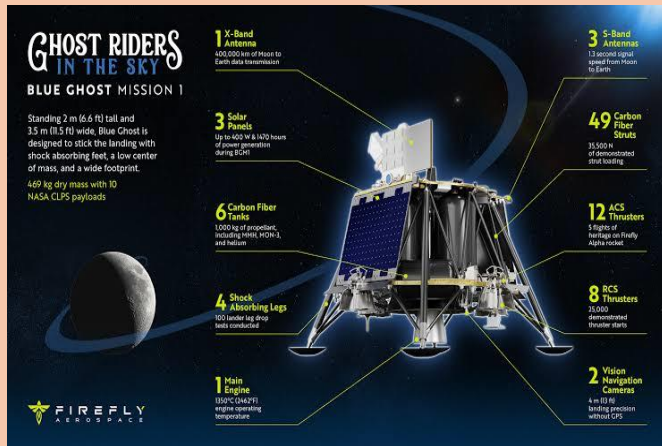
In a historic achievement, **Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost Mission 1** successfully landed on the **Moon's northeastern near side** on **February 25, 2025**. This marks only the **second private lunar landing** and the **first to land upright**, reinforcing the growing role of private companies in space exploration.

The Blue Ghost Mission 1: A Significant Leap in Lunar Exploration

The mission, nicknamed "**Ghost Riders in the Sky**", is part of NASA's **Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) program**, aimed at leveraging private industry to reduce the cost of lunar exploration. The **Golden lander**, about the size of a **hippopotamus**, touched down near **Mons**

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Latreille, a volcanic formation in Mare Crisium, after a **2.8-million-mile journey**.



on the mysterious **lunar horizon glow**, a phenomenon first documented by Apollo astronaut Eugene Cernan.

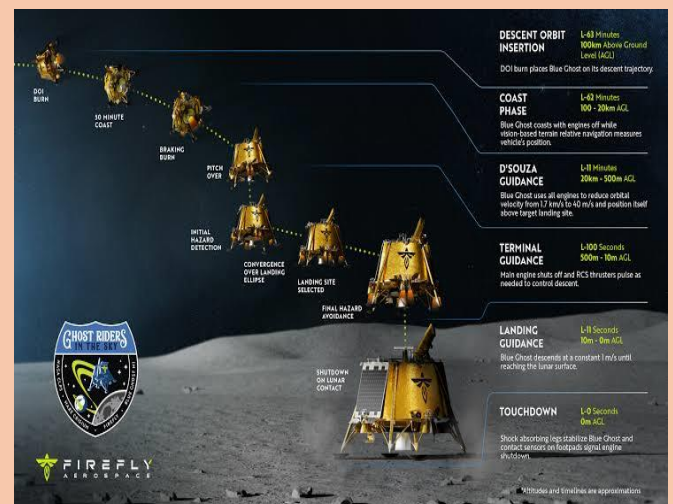
Blue Ghost and NASA’s Artemis Program

Blue Ghost Mission 1 supports NASA’s **Artemis Program**, which aims to **return astronauts to the Moon** and establish a sustainable human presence. Artemis is focused on:

- **Lunar exploration** as a stepping stone for Mars missions.
- **Resource utilization**, including water ice for fuel production.
- **Technology development**, including habitat construction and navigation systems.

- The lander was launched on **January 15, 2025**, aboard a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket**.
- It carries **10 scientific instruments**, including:
 - **Lunar soil analyzer** to study the Moon’s regolith composition.
 - **Radiation-tolerant computer** to test electronic resilience in space.
 - **Satellite navigation experiment** to evaluate GPS-like navigation for lunar missions.
- The mission is designed to operate for **one lunar day (14 Earth days)**, conducting experiments and capturing imagery.

The Rise of Private Space Missions



Scientific Contributions & Future Exploration

One of its key objectives is to observe a **total lunar eclipse on March 14, 2025**, when Earth will **block sunlight from the Moon**, providing insights into how sunlight affects **lunar surface dust**. It will also record a **lunar sunset** on March 16, shedding light

The success of Blue Ghost reflects the **growing importance of private companies** in space exploration. Previously, only **government agencies** like NASA, Roscosmos, CNSA, and ISRO led lunar

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missions. However, recent efforts by **Firefly Aerospace, SpaceX, and other private firms** have revolutionized space travel by **reducing costs and increasing accessibility**.

The mission follows **Intuitive Machines' Odysseus lander**, which made history as the **first U.S. commercial lander** to reach the Moon in February 2024 but landed on its side. The **Blue Ghost's upright landing** demonstrates the rapid progress in lunar landing technology and enhances confidence in **future commercial missions**.

The **successful landing of Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost Mission 1** represents a **turning point in lunar exploration**. By **reducing costs, advancing technology, and supporting Artemis**, this mission paves the way for a **new era of commercial space travel**. With NASA collaborating with private firms, we are witnessing the **dawn of a sustainable lunar presence**, bringing us closer to deep-space exploration and a potential human mission to Mars.

Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost Mission 1:

1. It is the first private U.S. mission to land on the Moon in an upright position.
2. The mission is a part of NASA's Artemis Program.
3. It carries scientific instruments to study lunar soil, radiation effects, and navigation feasibility.
4. The lander will operate for one lunar year (365 Earth days).

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 1 and 3 only
- (B) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (C) 2 and 4 only
- (D) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Answer: (A) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Blue Ghost Mission 1 is the **first private U.S. mission** to land upright on the Moon. The previous private mission (Odysseus by Intuitive Machines) landed on its side.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** While the mission supports NASA's **Artemis program**, it is actually part of NASA's **Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) program**, which involves private companies in lunar exploration.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The lander carries **10 scientific instruments**, including a **lunar soil analyzer, radiation-tolerant computer, and a navigation experiment** to test GPS-like systems for future missions.
- **Statement 4 is incorrect:** The mission is designed to operate for **one lunar day (14 Earth days)**, not a full lunar year.

Thus, the correct answer is **(A) 1 and 3 only**.

Mains Model Question

Q. Examine the role of private companies in space exploration, particularly in lunar missions.

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Discuss their contributions, challenges, and future opportunities.

The involvement of private companies in space exploration has transformed the industry, making missions more cost-effective and frequent. Traditionally dominated by government agencies like NASA, ISRO, and Roscosmos, space exploration has now opened up to private players such as SpaceX, Blue Origin, and Firefly Aerospace, leading to advancements in technology, efficiency, and accessibility.

Private companies have significantly contributed to lunar missions through cost reduction and innovation. The development of reusable rockets by firms like SpaceX has drastically lowered launch expenses, enabling more frequent missions. The NASA-led Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) program has further encouraged private firms to participate in Moon landings. Firefly Aerospace's recent success with its Blue Ghost Mission 1, which landed upright on the lunar surface, highlights how private enterprises are now capable of executing complex missions that were once the exclusive domain of national space agencies.

Despite these advancements, private space exploration faces significant challenges. The cost of developing and maintaining advanced space technologies remains high, and private firms must secure substantial funding to sustain their missions. Technical hurdles such as precise lunar landings, radiation protection, and communication delays add to the complexity. Regulatory challenges also exist, as international space laws, including the Outer

Space Treaty, limit commercial ownership of celestial resources, raising concerns over future exploitation and governance.

The future of private space exploration is promising. With growing interest in lunar mining, infrastructure development, and deep-space exploration, private firms have the potential to create a sustainable space economy. Collaboration with governments and international organizations could ensure responsible and effective space utilization. If managed well, private sector participation could pave the way for human settlement beyond Earth, making space exploration more ambitious and achievable than ever before.

