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ISSUE **7** August
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ENGLISH MONTHLY

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67th
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- Agnipath :
Defence Policy
Reform
- 4th State Food Safety
Index, 2021-22
- The Global Liveability
Index, 2022
- Sustainable
Development Report,
2022
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2022
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See Cover Page - 2

CRISIS in
Sri Lanka

Concept
360°

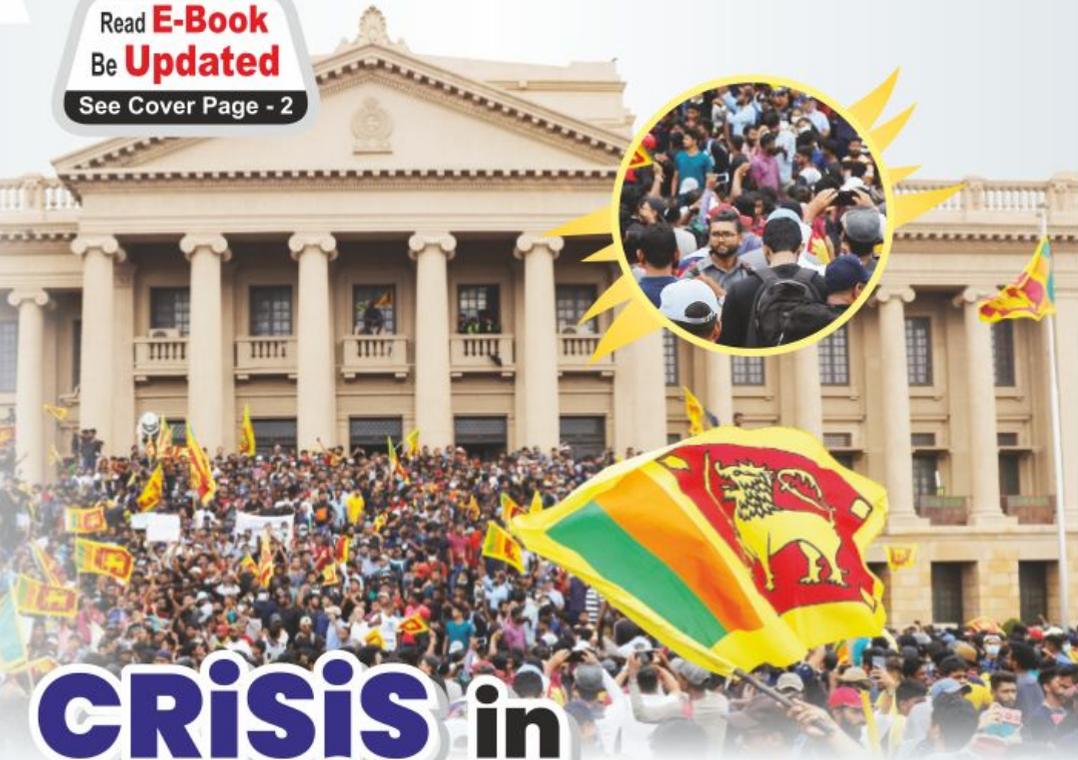
RECENT NATIONAL DISASTERS

CASH BACK ₹25



Validity upto August, 2023

See Cover Page - 2



Current Drishti

>>> ENGLISH MONTHLY <<<

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EDITORIAL

Certain events that happen in a country can affect the happenings going on in other parts of the world. Hence, current affairs have an important role in our daily life. Owing to this importance and its dynamic nature, current affairs is a section that we can find in every competitive exams. This is to test a student's ability to be abreast of what is happening in the world.

Current affairs comprises topics like **National and International Affairs, Economics, Environment, Law & Justice, Science and Technology, and myriad others like important Personalities, Places, Organisations, Military Exercises, Awards, Appointments, Agreements, Sports** etc. which are related to competitive exams.

The "**CURRENT DRISHTI**" is a Monthly Magazine presented by **Sam Samayik Ghatna Chakra** encapsulates all the dimensions of the current affairs in a single book.

A New feature "**Concept 360°**" is added in this magazine, under which different dimensions of the current topics are depicted like - Historical, Geographical, Constitutional etc.

For the preparation of Civil Services Examinations, special sections of **Mains Answer Writing Practice, Ethics Booster Series, Learning through Maps** etc. have been initiated in this magazine.

This compendium of current affairs will definitely be beneficial for not only the aspirants of the civil services examinations, but to every reader who wants to be updated about the contemporary international and national events.

Hope You Will Enjoy This...

INDEX

Cover Story	3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Stockholm+50● Indian Prime Minister's visit to UAE			
Focus	6-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Quick Bits			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Agnipath : Defence Policy Reform● 4th State Food Safety Index, 2021-22● The Global Liveability Index, 2022● Carbon Bombs● Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Report, 2022● The Asia University Ranking, 2022● Global Peace Index, 2022● Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D)● Gold Refining and Recycling Report : World Gold Council● SIPRI Year Book, 2022		Economy	31-35		
National	16-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Accessible India Campaign● Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL)● Har Ghar Dastak 2.0● SHRESHTA Scheme● NTPC's Biodiversity Policy, 2022● National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) Report, 2021● Amendments in Information and Technology Rules, 2021● CiSS Application● CDS : Amended Service Rules of the Army, Navy and Air Force● Bharat Gaurav Trains● One National One Ration Card now Extended to Pan India● Bedti-Varada River Intelinking Project● Quick Bits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● RBI's Payment Vision, 2025● Business Reform Action Plan 2022 Assessment● Black Swan Event● Vivatech 2022● The Global Startup Ecosystem Report, 2022● Quick Bits	Science & Technology	36-39
International	25-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 14th BRICS Summit 2022● World Mental Health Report● West Seti Hydro Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prithvi-II Missile● Ethenol Blending● India gets world's first liquid-mirror telescope● Ancovax : Nation's first animal vaccine against Covid-19● Quick Bits	Environment	40-43
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 'Clean and Green' Campaign● Global Status Report, 2022● UN-Habitat Plan For Jaipur● Green Jobs● National Air Quality Resource Framework of India (NARFI)● Quick Bits	Concept 360°	44-48
				Learning Through Map	49-51
				<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Oman● Yemen● Maldives	
			Mains Answer Writing	52-55	
			Ethics Booster Series – 7	56-58	
			Short News	59-74	
			Sports	75-80	
			67th BPSC Pre Exam 2022 Solved	81-104	



COVER STORY



Crisis in Sri Lanka

❑ Crisis in Sri Lanka

Recently in July 2022, Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn-in as Sri Lanka's President and he will face the tough task of leading the country out of its on-going economic crisis.

- Sri Lanka, is under the grip of an unprecedented economic turmoil, the worst in seven decades, leaving millions struggling to buy food, medicine, fuel and other essentials.
- The crisis has been characterized by high inflation and severe shortage of fuel and electricity.

❑ Status of Present Crisis in Sri Lanka

- The growth of **Sri Lanka's economy slowed down to 1.8%** in the fourth quarter of the FY2021-22, with annual growth of 3.7%.
 - This is much lower than projected growth of 5% by the Sri Lanka's Central Bank.
 - **Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) is at 16.8%**
- Sri Lanka is left with foreign reserves of only around US\$ 2.31 billion as of February 2022.
- It faces debt payments of about US\$ 4 billion through the rest of the year, indicating rising susceptibility of defaulting on debt.
 - The **US\$ 4 billion debt includes a US\$ 1 billion international sovereign bond** that matures in July 2022.
- Sri Lankan Rupee has fallen.
- The crisis has been caused by mismanaged government finances and ill-timed tax cuts, besides the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The price of cooking gas spiked and the price of the milk powder shot up.

- Authorities were forced to cancel school examinations for millions of students, due to a shortage of paper.

❑ Reasons behind the economic crisis

- **Huge Loss in Tax Revenue:** The Sri Lanka government reduced value-added tax by nearly half and abolished some other taxes as a way to boost consumption and growth.
 - The tax cuts led to a loss of billions of rupees in tax revenues, putting further pressure on the public finances of the already heavily indebted economy.
- **Rising Expenditure:** Due to a rise in government expenditures, the **fiscal deficit exceeded 10% in 2020-21.**
- **Fertilizer Ban:** The Government wanted to become first country to fully adopt organic farming. So the use of chemical fertilizers was banned in April 2021.
 - However, **90% of Sri Lanka's farmers used chemical fertilizers** for cultivation. The move led to drastic reduction in food production, resulting in high prices.
- **Drain of Forex Reserve:** The country's foreign exchange reserves have fallen 70% in the past two years, from **US\$ 8 billion in 2020 to about US\$ 2.31 billion in 2022.**

Sri Lanka's usable forex reserves reached their lowest point – **\$50 million** – in **May 2022** amid a spiraling external debt.

According to reports, **Sri Lanka will need at least \$5 billion** for essential supplies in the **next six months.**

Low reserves have led to a shortage of essentials like fuel.

- ➔ **Crippled Remittances:** Remittances from Sri Lankans working overseas also declined sharply. Sri Lanka's public debt is estimated to have risen from **94% in 2019 to 119% of GDP in 2021 during the pandemic period.**
- ➔ **China's Debt Trap Policy:** It played a significant role in economic instability in Sri Lanka. With the depleting forex, now the country has foreign debt obligations of about **USD 7 billion in 2022.**
- ➔ **COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 gave a huge blow to the tourism sector of Sri Lanka that accounts for **over 12% of country's total economic output.**
 - ☞ Exports of tea, rubber, spices and garments suffered due to pandemic.
- ➔ **Rising Inflation and Oil Price rise:** The crisis got compounded by the Russia-Ukraine conflict that has led to a steep hike in oil prices.
 - ☞ The data released by the Government show that now the **inflation has reached 25.7%.**
- ➔ **Policy Failures of Government:** The government declared emergency regulations for the distribution of essential food items.
 - ☞ It put wide import restrictions to save dollars which in turn led to consequent market irregularities and reported hoarding.

Considering all these reasons, the Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa declared national public emergency on April 1, 2022 to contain rising food prices, a depreciating currency, and rapidly depleting forex reserves.

❑ **Outcome of the Crisis**

- ➔ **Rising Inflation:** The Sri Lanka inflation has reached 25.7%, which has created a severe shortage of food.
- ➔ **Exponential Price rise in Fuel:** The last fuel price hike was announced on May 24, 2022 after which Petrol and diesel costs LKR 470 and LKR 460 per litre.
- ➔ **Unemployment and Poverty:** According to World Bank data, the share of the poor based on a daily income of US\$ 3.20 was estimated to have grown to 11.7% in 2020 from 9.2% in 2019. Job loss and rising prices caused rapid increase in poverty.

- ➔ **Trans-shipment nature of Sri-Lankan ports:** Thousands of containers sent from India to Sri Lanka, including for its own consumption as well as trans-shipment cargo, have been lying uncleared at Colombo port as authorities can't economically afford to transfer containers between terminals.
- ➔ **Lower Electricity Production:** Hydro-electricity contributes 40% to Sri Lanka's electricity generation. The electricity crisis has been exacerbated by low water level in reservoirs.
- ➔ **Massive Protest:** Sri Lanka has witnessed massive protests over shortages and steep prices, with thousands gathering on the main Galle Road in Colombo in June 2022. Protestors were demanding the resignation of the current President. The mob attacked the President House and the President left the office with immediate effect.

❑ **India's Immediate Response to Sri Lankan Crisis**

- ➔ India has come to rescue Sri Lanka which is currently under a severe economic crisis.
- ➔ In line with its "**neighbourhood first**" policy, India has been highly active to help Sri Lanka during its economic crisis.
- ➔ India has extended this year itself an unprecedented support of over **USD 3.8 billion in 2022** for ameliorating the serious economic situation in Sri Lanka.'
- ➔ In February 2022, India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement for a **USD 500 million** supply of petroleum products from the Indian Oil Company through a credit line.
 - ☞ This was expanded by a further USD 200 million in April.
- ➔ More than **25 tons of drugs and medical supplies** which were donated by the government and people of India during the last two months are valued at close to SLR 370 million.

❑ **Concerns for India**

- ➔ 60% of India's trans-shipment cargo is handled by the Colombo port. The present crisis has slowed down the process of Indian imports.

- ➔ More than one-fifth of Sri Lanka's total imports come from India, but due to currency crisis this import will also be reduced that will result into lower income from export to India.
- ➔ India is one of the largest contributors to Foreign Direct Investment in Sri Lanka.
- ➔ FDI from India amounted to about US\$ 1.7 billion from 2005 to 2019. The present crisis will reduce the income of these Indian companies.
- ➔ Refugees, mostly Sri Lankan Tamils, have started arriving in India via the sea-route. The influx is going to rise in future if the crisis does not abate.

□ India-Sri Lanka Relations

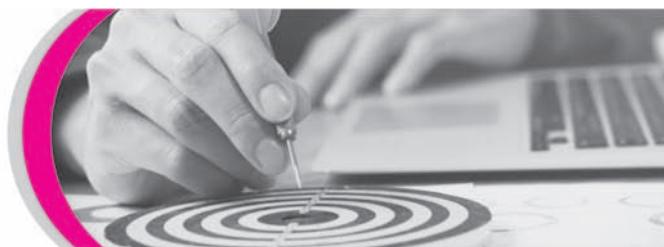
- ➔ **India and Sri Lanka have a legacy** of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic interaction and the relationship between the two countries are more than 2500 years old.
- ➔ Sri Lanka is one of **India's major development partners**.
 - ☞ The entry into force of the **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) in 2000** contributed significantly to the expansion of trade between the two countries.
- ➔ Sri Lanka is one of **India's largest trading partners in SAARC** (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation).
- ➔ In 2020, India was **Sri Lanka's 2nd largest trading partner** with the bilateral merchandise trade amounting to about **USD \$ 3.6 billion**.
- ➔ The main **items of exports to India** from Sri Lanka are: Base Oil, Poultry feeds, Areca nuts, (waste and scrap) paper or paperboard, Pepper, Ignition Wiring Sets, Copper wire, Marble, travertine and alabaster.
- ➔ Main **items of Imports from India** to Sri Lanka are: Gas oil/ Diesel, Motorcycles, Pharmaceutical Products, Portland cement, Semi finished products of Iron, Military weapon, Fuel oil, Rice, Cement clinkers, Kerosene Type jet Fuel.
- ➔ The nearly three-decade long armed conflict between Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE came to an end in

May 2009. During the conflict, **India supported the right of the Government of Sri Lanka to act against terrorist forces**.

- ➔ In recent years, significant progress in the implementation of developmental assistance projects for **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** and disadvantaged sections of the population in Sri Lanka.
- ➔ **11 Lines of credit (LOC) have been extended to Sri Lanka** by the **Export-Import Bank of India** in the last 15 years.
 - ☞ Important sectors in which Projects have been executed/ are under execution, under these LOCs include railways, transport, connectivity, defence, and solar.
- ➔ **Buddhism is one of the strongest pillars** connecting the two nations and civilizations from the time when the Great Indian Emperor Ashoka sent his children Arhat Mahinda and Sangamitta to spread the teachings of Lord Buddha at the request of King Devanampiya Tissa of Sri Lanka.

□ Way Forward

- ➔ Sri Lanka has shown keen interest to negotiate with the IMF in order to prevent the looming Balance of Payment crisis.
- ➔ This deal should be brokered swiftly in order to provide sufficient cushion to the island nation.
- ➔ The country should try to revive its key driving sectors like Tourism.
 - ☞ Proactive measures should be undertaken to make sure tourists are safe and secure in the nation.
 - ☞ Tourism was brutally hit even before the pandemic when the 2019 **Easter Sunday suicide bombings** took place and killed more than 250 people.
- ➔ The work on building a trans-shipment hub in Kerala has begun, it is still in India's interest to help Sri Lanka come out of the economic crisis.
 - ☞ Therefore it must extend more aid and resources to help the island nation.



Agnipath Defence Policy Reform

On **14th June 2022**, **Ministry of Defence**, Government of India has unveiled **Agnipath scheme** for recruiting soldiers across the three services (Army, Navy and Airforce).

Those recruited will be called **Agniveer** and this will be only mode of recruitment of **'Other Ranks' in armed forces**.

□ About the Agnipath

- ➔ **Launched by:** Government of India
- ➔ **Launched on:** 14th June 2022
- ➔ **Launched for:** Recruitment scheme for Other Ranks (non commissioned officers or personnel other than officers) in armed forces.

□ Ranking System in Indian Armed Forces

- ➔ Indian Army Ranks can be broadly classified into three categories: **Commissioned Officers, Junior Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks**.
- ➔ **Commissioned Officers** who are equivalent to All India Services & Group "A" Service officers.
- ➔ **Junior Commissioned Officers** who are equivalent to Group B Gazetted officers.
- ➔ **Other Ranks** comprising non-commissioned officers and soldiers.

□ What is in Agnipath ?

- ➔ Under Agnipath scheme around 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually, and will be discharged on completion of four years of service.
- ➔ At the time of completion of their 4 year of service, on discharge Agniveer will be paid a **'Seva Nidhi' package** of around 11 lakhs to enable them to return to the society for pursuing employment in other sectors.

- ➔ After discharge all of them will be able to apply for permanent commission and **upto 25% of them will be granted permanent commission**.
- ➔ Agniveer after their discharge **will not be eligible for any pension, gratuity** or other facilities being offered to regular recruits.

□ Agniveer recruitment: Eligibility criteria

- ➔ Separate eligibility criteria for six categories have been announced.
- ➔ Aspirants between the **ages of 17.5 years and 23 years** will be eligible to apply.
- ➔ The upper age limit is relaxed to 23 years for year 2022-23 only.

□ Objectives

- ➔ To enable a youthful and tech savvy profile of Armed Forces.
- ➔ To provide an opportunity to the patriotic and motivated youth to join forces.

□ Benefits

- ➔ Makes armed forces much leaner and younger. Current average age is 32 years in armed forces which will go down to 26 in six to seven years.
- ➔ Younger people will be more tech savvy which will enhance tech profile of forces and helping them for future warfare.
- ➔ It will substantially reduce pension and salary cost from defence budget. This money will be utilized to buy new weaponry and systems.
- ➔ **Increased employment opportunities and higher skilled workforce:** Apart from job opportunities in the army, recruits because of the skills and experience acquired during the four-year service such soldiers will get employment in various fields.

❑ Criticism

- ➔ **Doubt about training:** 6 months of short training may not be enough to trust them with the same kind of tasks that current troops can be trusted with.
- ➔ **All India All Class recruitment of Agniveer may hamper the culture** of loyalty towards their regiments (Naam-Namak-Nishan).
- ➔ Agniveers will be cautious and most of them will be seeking for a second job.
- ➔ May result in the militarization of society and the

annual unemployment of 35,000 adolescents with war experience.

❑ Conclusion

- ➔ More than half of defence budget is spent on salaries and pensions due to which modernisation of armed forces takes a back seat.
- ➔ Something like Tour of Duty Concept was long needed however it should have been done after having a thorough debate in parliament so that all doubts regarding the process should have been eliminated.

4th State Food Safety Index 2021-22

FSSAI has developed State Food Safety Index to measure the performance of states on various parameters of Food Safety. The Index is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model that provides an objective framework for evaluating food safety across all States/UTs. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) releases the State Food Safety Index (SFSI) annually for each financial year.

❑ About 4th State Food Safety Index 2021-22

- ➔ **Published on** - June 7, 2022,
- ➔ **Published by**- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
- ➔ The first SFSI was published in 2018-19 with the aim of creating a competitive and positive change in the food safety ecosystem in the country.

❑ Parameters of SFSI

- ➔ The index measures the performance of States across five parameters of food safety. These are :-

Parameters	Weightage (in percentage)
1. Human Resources and Institutional Data	20
2. Compliance	30
3. Food Testing- Infrastructure and Surveillance	20
4. Training and Capacity Building	10
5. Consumer Empowerment	20

❑ Key Findings of the SFSI 2021-22

- ➔ **Tamil Nadu is the top-ranking state** among the large states, followed by **Gujarat** and **Maharashtra**.
- ➔ **Goa** is the top-ranking state among the small states, followed by **Manipur** and **Sikkim**.
- ➔ **Jammu & Kashmir** is the top-ranking UT among the UTs, followed by **Delhi** and **Chandigarh**.

❑ States/UTs with significant improvement in ranking during last year :

- ➔ **Uttarakhand** in Large State category.
- ➔ **Tripura** in Small States category .
- ➔ **Ladakh** in the category of UTs.

❑ Ranking of States/UTs

Ranking of Large States in SFSI 2021-22

Rank	States	Rank	States
1	Tamil Nadu	9	Karnataka
2	Gujarat	10	Rajasthan
3	Maharashtra	11	Punjab
4	Himachal Pradesh	12	Jharkhand
5	West Bengal	13	Chhattisgarh
5	Madhya Pradesh	14	Assam
6	Kerala	15	Telangana
7	Uttarakhand	16	Bihar
8	Odisha	17	Andhra Pradesh
8	Uttar Pradesh		

□ Ranking of Small States

Rank	States
1	Goa
2	Manipur
3	Sikkim
4	Tripura
5	Meghalaya
6	Nagaland
7	Mizoram
8	Arunachal Pradesh

□ Ranking of Union Territories

Rank	Union Territories
1.	Jammu & Kashmir
2.	NCT of Delhi
3.	Chandigarh
4.	Andaman and Nicobar Island
5.	Ladakh
6.	Puducherry
7.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu
8.	Lakshadweep

□ About the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

- ➔ The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has been established under **Food Safety and Standards, 2006** which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- ➔ FSSAI has been created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- ➔ Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.
- ➔ The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) have been appointed by Government of India.
- ➔ The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to Government of India.

The Global Liveability Index 2022

The Global Liveability Index assesses which locations around the world provide the best or the worst living conditions. Assessing liveability has a broad range of uses, from benchmarking perceptions of development levels to assigning a hardship allowance as part of expatriate relocation packages. The liveability rating quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in any given location and allows for direct comparison between locations. To assess the best city, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has published the 'Global Liveability Index 2022'.

□ About The Global Liveability Index 2022

- ➔ **Published In** - June 2022,
- ➔ **Published by**- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)
- ➔ **Published**- The 'Global Liveability Index 2022'.
 - ⊕ The index covers **173 cities** to quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in these cities worldwide.

□ Methodology

- ➔ The index ranked the cities based on five broad categories:
- ➔ **Stability** (weight-25%)
- ➔ **Healthcare** (weight-20%)
- ➔ **Culture & Environment** (weight-25%)
- ➔ **Education** (weight- 10%)
- ➔ **Infrastructure** (weight: 20%)

□ Key Findings

- ➔ **Austria's city Vienna** ranked first and **Damascus** ranked last (172nd) in the Global Liveability Index 2022.
- ➔ **Copenhagen (Denmark)** has moved up 13 places to second, and **Zurich (Switzerland)** now shares third place with **Calgary (Canada)**, which has risen from 18th position.
- ➔ In Global Liveability Index 2022, India's two cities, **New Delhi** and **Mumbai** are ranked **112th and 117th position respectively.**

□ Top 5 cities

City	Location	Rank	Index	Stability	Healthcare	Culture & Environment	Education	Infrastructure
Vienna	Austria	1	99.1	100.0	100.0	96.3	100.0	100.0
Copenhagen	Denmark	2	98.0	100.0	95.8	95.4	100.0	100.0
Zurich	Switzerland	3	96.3	95.0	100.0	96.3	91.7	96.4
Calgary	Canada	3	96.3	95.0	100.0	90.0	100.0	100.0
Vancouver	Canada	5	96.1	90.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	92.9

□ Bottom 10 Cities

City	Location	Rank	Index	Stability	Healthcare	Culture & Environment	Education	Infrastructure
Karachi	Pakistan	168	37.5	20.0	33.3	35.2	66.7	51.8
Algeria	Algeria	169	37.0	35.0	29.2	45.4	50.0	30.4
Tripoli	Libya	170	34.2	30.0	29.2	33.0	41.7	41.1
Lagos	Nigeria	171	32.2	20.0	20.8	44.9	25.0	46.4
Damascus	Syria	172	30.7	20.0	29.2	40.5	33.3	32.1

□ About the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

- ➔ EIU is the research and analysis division of **The Economist Group**, the sister company to **The Economist newspaper**.
- ➔ It was **created in 1946**.
- ➔ They help businesses, financial firms and governments to understand how the world is changing and how that creates opportunities to be seized and risks to be managed.
- ➔ **Headquarter-** London, United Kingdom

Carbon Bombs

In May, 2022, more than 70 NGOs and activist groups from around the world have formed a “Carbon Bomb Defusal” network to share expertise and resources in the fight to halt the projects and prevent the catastrophic climate breakdown they would cause.

□ What is Carbon Bomb?

- ➔ These are an oil or gas project that will result in **at least a billion tonnes of CO2 emissions over its lifetime**.

- ➔ Whenever coal, oil, or gas is extracted it results in pollution and environmental degradation.
- ➔ Further, carbon emissions take place in particularly large amounts when fuel is burned.

□ Carbon Bombs around the world

- ➔ In total, around 195 such projects have been identified worldwide including USA, Russia, Australia, West Asia and India.
- ➔ Collectively they will overshoot the limit of emissions that had been agreed to in the **Paris Agreement of 2015**.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Report 2022

The Sustainable Development Report (SDR) reviews progress made each year on the Sustainable Development Goals since their adoption by the **193 UN Member States in 2015**. Fifty years after the release of **Limits to Growth** and the first UN Conference on the Environment, held in **Stockholm in 1972**, this **7th edition of the SDR** is published. Ahead of the **SDG Summit in September 2023**, which will convene at the level of heads of state under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, the SDR 2022 identifies major priorities to restore and accelerate **SDG progress towards 2030 and beyond**.

□ About Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Report 2022

- ➔ **Published on** - June 2, 2022,
- ➔ **Published by**- The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)
- ➔ **Published** - The Sustainable Development Report 2022.
- ➔ This year's report discusses the critical need and channels of development finance for low-income and lower-middle income countries.

□ What is Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ?

- ➔ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were **adopted by the United Nations in 2015** as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.
- ➔ The 17 SDGs are integrated—they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.
- ➔ The 17 SDGs are as follows-



□ Key Findings

- ➔ Peace, diplomacy, and international cooperation are fundamental conditions for the world to progress on the SDGs towards 2030 and beyond.
- ➔ For the second year in a row, the **world is no longer making progress on the SDGs**.
- ➔ A global plan to finance the SDGs is urgently needed.
- ➔ At mid-point on the way to 2030, policy efforts and commitments supporting the SDGs vary significantly across countries, including among G20 countries.
- ➔ Rich countries generate negative international spillovers notably through unsustainable consumption; Europe is taking actions.
- ➔ The COVID-19 pandemic forced data providers to innovate and build new forms of partnerships; these should be leveraged and scaled up to promote SDG impacts by 2030 and beyond.
- ➔ Science, technological innovations, and data systems can help identify solutions in times of crises and can provide decisive contributions to address the major challenges of our times.
- ➔ These require increased and prolonged investments in statistical capacities, R&D, and education and skills.

□ Top 10 Countries in SDGs Report 2022

Rank	Country	Score
1.	Finland	86.5
2.	Denmark	85.6
3	Sweden	85.2
4	Norway	82.3
5	Austria	82.3
6	Germany	82.2
7	France	81.2
8	Switzerland	80.8
9	Ireland	80.7
10	Estonia	80.6

□ Bottom 5 countries in SDGs Report

Rank	Country	Score
159	Sudan	49.6
160	Somalia	45.6
161	Chad	41.3
162	Central African Republic	39.3
163	South Sudan	39.0

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