



**PLUTUS IAS**  
Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. ( GST NO-09AAPCA1478E1ZH)  
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to Priyagold Building  
gate, Sector 2, Pocket I, Noida, Uttar Pradesh  
201301, CONTACT NO- 8448440231

## **Russia Withdraws from Open Sky Treaty after US Departure**

### **Context:**

- In another setback to the world's arms control framework, Russia has decided to withdraw from an international treaty that allows surveillance flights over military facilities after the U.S. exit from the pact.

### **Reasons for withdrawal of Russia:**

- Russia said that the pact was seriously compromised by the withdrawal of the United States. It significantly upended the balance of interests of signatory states.
- Russia has raised concerns that despite leaving the treaty Washington could potentially retain access to overflight intelligence gathered by allies who remain members in the treaty.
- Moscow had tried to get guarantees from other countries that they would not share such intelligence with the U.S. but had not been given any assurances.

### **Background:**

- The United States left the Open Skies arms control and verification treaty in November 2020.
- The US accused Russia of non-compliance with OST protocols, blaming Moscow of obstructing surveillance flights on its territory, while misusing its own missions for gathering key tactical data.
- Moscow has warned that the U.S. withdrawal will erode global security by making it more difficult for governments to interpret the intentions of other nations.

- The European Union has urged both U.S. and Russia to reconsider and called on Russia to stay in the pact and lift flight restrictions.

### **About Open Skies Treaty:**

- It was first proposed in 1955 by former US President Dwight Eisenhower as a means to de-escalate tensions during the Cold War.
- The landmark treaty was eventually signed in 1992 between NATO members and former Warsaw Pact countries following the demise of the Soviet Union.
- It went into effect in 2002 and currently has 35 signatories along with one non-ratifying member (Kyrgyzstan).
- Under the treaty, a member state can “spy” on any part of the host nation, with the latter’s consent.
- The information gathered, such as on troop movements, military exercises and missile deployments, has to be shared with all member states.

### **Objectives of the Treaty:**

- The treaty was intended to build trust between Russia and the West by allowing reconnaissance flights over each other’s territories to collect information about military forces and activities.
- The treaty aimed at fostering transparency about military activity and helping monitor arms control and other agreements.
- The treaty aims at building confidence among members through mutual openness, thus reducing the chances of accidental war.

### **Significance of the Open Skies Treaty**

- The OST was signed in 1992, much before the advent of advanced satellite imaging technology which is currently the preferred mode for intelligence gathering.
- The surveillance aircraft provide key information that still cannot be gathered by satellite sensors, such as thermal imaging data.
- Also, since only the US has an extensive military satellite infrastructure, other NATO members relied on Washington to obtain classified satellite data.
- OST data was gathered and used during the 2014 Russia-Ukraine conflict.

**Impact of withdrawal:**

- Russia's departure would adversely impact Washington's European allies, which rely on OST data to track Russian troop movements in the Baltic region.
- The demise of the Open Skies Treaty follows the U.S. and Russian withdrawal in 2019 from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty— another security agreement that had been credited with curtailing the arms race in Europe towards the end of the Cold War.

**Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty):**

- The INF Treaty, which was signed in 1987 by U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.
- The treaty limited the use of medium-range missiles, both conventional and nuclear.
- Under the INF treaty, the US and formerly Soviet Union agreed not to develop, produce, possess or deploy any ground-based ballistic and cruise missiles that have a range between 500 and 5,500 km.

**Importance of the (INF) Treaty in U.S.-Russia relations:**

- The treaty helped mitigate the possibility of military escalation and operational miscalculation.
- It helped to shift the logic of MAD [mutually assured destruction] to the higher "more sensitive" political level.
- It also built some trust between Washington and Moscow and contributed to the end of the Cold War.

The OST exit is only the most recent example in the list of important pacts that Washington has stepped away from during the Trump presidency, such as the Paris Agreement and the Iran nuclear deal.

Experts are now contemplating the fate of the much larger US-Russia 'New START' nuclear arms control agreement, which is slated to expire in February 2021. The US administration stated that they would not renew the treaty unless China joins.

**About New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START):**

- New START is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation on measures for the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.
- It is a successor to the START framework of 1991 that limited both sides to 1,600 strategic delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads.
- New START was signed in 2010 by the U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.
- It entered into force on 5th February, 2011.
- It limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance.
- By encouraging increased communication between the two countries, the treaty reduces the risk of miscalculation.
- It will lapse in February 2021 unless extended for a five-year period.

# **PMKVY 3.0 Launched To Empower Youth With New-Age Skills To Boost Employability**

## **Context:**

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) launched the third phase of its flagship skilling scheme Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 3.0).

## **Background:**

- “Skill India Mission” has gained tremendous momentum through the launch of its flagship scheme PMKVY to unlock the vision of making India the ‘Skill Capital’ of the world.
- PMKVY was launched in 2015 as a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- It aims to train over 40 crore people in India in different skills by 2022.
- It aims at vocational training and certification of Indian youth for a better livelihood and respect in the society.
- Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- PMKVY is implemented by the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) under the guidance of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

## **Objectives of PMKVY 2016-20:**

- Enable and mobilize a large number of youths to take up industry designed quality skill training, become employable and earn their livelihood.
- Encourage standardisation of the Certification process and put in place the foundation for creating a registry of skills.
- Benefit 10 million youth over the period of four years (2016- 2020).

### **About PMKVY 3.0:**

- Launched in 717 districts, 28 states/8 UTs, PMKVY 3.0 marks yet another step towards 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'.
- It envisages training 8 lakh candidates over the scheme period of 2020-2021 with an outlay of Rs 948.90 crore.
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- It will be launched in 600 districts across all states of India.
- The 729 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs) will be rolling out PMKVY 3.0 training to build a robust pool of skilled professionals.
- The role of PMKVY 3.0 will be a propagator of vocational education at an early level for youth to capitalize on industry-linked opportunities.

### **Features of PMKVY 3.0:**

- The newer version of the scheme tries to match the current policy doctrine and energize the skilling ecosystem affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The scheme is designed towards making skill development more demand-driven and decentralised in its approach.
- The focus is on bridging the demand-supply gap by promoting skill development in areas of new-age (digital technology) and Industry 4.0 job roles.
- It aims to empower the country's youth with employable skills by making over 300 skill courses available to them.
- It will be implemented in a more decentralized structure with greater responsibilities and support from states/UTs and districts.
- It will be a propagator of vocational education at an early level for youth to capitalize on industry-linked opportunities.
- The new scheme will be more trainee- and learner-centric addressing the ambitions of aspirational Bharat.
- District Skill Committees (DSCs) will be formed under the guidance of State Skill Development Missions (SSDM). It shall play a key role in addressing the skill gap and assessing demand at the district level.

### **Significance of PMKVY 3.0:**

- By taking the bottom-up approach to training, it will identify job roles that have demand at the local level and skill the youth, linking them to these opportunities (Vocal for Local).
- It will encourage healthy competition between states by making available increased allocation to those states that perform better.

**Additional Informations:****PMKVY 1.0:**

- India's largest Skill Certification Scheme - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) - was launched on 15th July, 2015 (World Youth Skills Day).
- It aims to encourage and promote skill development in the country by providing free short duration skill training and incentivizing this by providing monetary rewards to youth for skill certification.
- Implementation: Key Components: Short Term Training, Special Projects, Recognition of Prior Learning, Kaushal & Rozgar Mela, etc.
- Outcome: In 2015-16, 19.85 lakh candidates were trained.

**PMKVY 2.0:**

- It was launched by scaling up both in terms of sector and geography and by greater alignment with other missions of the Government of India like Make in India, Digital India, Swachh Bharat, etc.
- The scheme broadened the skill development with inclusion of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and focus on training.

**Implementation so far:**

- More than 1.2 Crore youth have been trained/oriented through an improved standardized skilling ecosystem in the country under PMKVY 1.0 and PMKVY 2.0.

The skilling is not an objective, but a necessary prerequisite for the economic growth of the country. As a young nation, we're poised to seize the opportunities that will make India the skill capital of the World.

We need to move with speed and scale if we are to fulfill the vision of making India the skill capital of the world and from there, the industrial capital of the world.

# Henley Passport Index

## **Context:**

Recently Henley and Partners has released the Henley Passport Index.

## **About the Index:**

This passport Index is the ranking of all the World's passports which is according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa

## **Background:**

The index was started in 2006 by Henley and Partners visa Restrictions index (HVRI) and further it was modified and renamed in 2018.

## **Ranking criteria:**

- On the basis of data collected by the International Air Transport Association the ranking is given.
- It is known as world's largest and most accurate database of travel information and research which was performed by Henley and Partners Research Department

## **Key Findings of the Index:**

- The index is topped by Japan where passport holders are able to access 191 destinations around the world with visa free.
- India ranks at 85th position with 58 visa free scores.
- Nepal continues to be in the worst passports to hold category with rank 104.
- Pakistan ranking is 107

# World's oldest cave Painting

## **Context:**

- Recently A team of archeologists have discovered the world's oldest known cave art which is a life sized picture of a wild pig. It is said that it was painted at least 45,500 years ago.

## **About the Paintings:**



The painting was found in the Leang Tedongage cave in a remote valley on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia. In the painting a figurative depiction of a warty pig and a wild boar has been found. Both of the animals are endemic to the Indonesian island.

## **Technique used to identify its age:**

Archaeologists have used a technique to identify its age is known as Uranium Series Dating to analyse a mineral formation that overlapped part of the image and that must have formed after the cave art was produced.

## **Significance of the Findings:**

- The painting has provided the earliest evidence of human settlement of the region.
- Some Scholars claimed it as the oldest human produced art but it is the oldest world's oldest art depicting a figure not the oldest human produced art.
- A hashtag like doodle created in South Africa 73000 years ago is to be believed as the oldest known drawing.