



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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INDIA SIGNED FTA WITH EFTA

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "INDIA SIGNED FTA WITH EFTA". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) have signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA). India is currently working on a TEPA with the EFTA countries of Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein.

EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA): A GATEWAY TO EUROPEAN MARKETS

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is a **four-member intergovernmental organisation** established in **1960** to promote economic integration among **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland**. These nations operate alongside the European Union (EU), participating in the Single Market and Schengen Area but remaining outside the customs union.

EFTA's primary functions include:

- Maintaining and developing the EFTA Convention, governing economic relations between member states.
- Overseeing the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, **creating a single market with three EFTA members (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) and the EU**.
- Expanding EFTA's network of free trade agreements globally.

INDIA'S TRADE PACT WITH EFTA

India's historic Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with EFTA marks a significant step towards boosting trade and investment. Here's a breakdown of the agreement's key features and potential impacts:

TEPA HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Investment Boost:** A first-of-its-kind commitment for **EFTA to invest \$100 billion in India over 15 years, potentially creating 1 million jobs**. (Note: This excludes foreign portfolio investments)
- **Market Access:** EFTA offers **duty-free access for approximately 92.2% of its tariff lines**, which covers 99.6% of India's exports. **India offers similar access for 82.7% of its tariff lines**, accounting for 95.3% of EFTA's exports (with limitations on sensitive goods like gold and agricultural products).

- **Service Sector Expansion:** Improved access for Indian service providers through digital delivery, commercial presence, and streamlined processes for temporary stays of key personnel. TEPA also **paves the way for Mutual Recognition Agreements in specific professions**, allowing Indian professionals to work more easily in EFTA countries.
- **Strong IPR Framework:** The agreement acknowledges **India's robust intellectual property regime** while addressing its concerns regarding generic medicines and patent evergreening, striking a balance between innovation and access to affordable medicines.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR INDIA:

- **Trade Opportunities:** TEPA facilitates access to specialised inputs for Indian manufacturers, like high-tech machinery from Switzerland, and **opens doors for the services sector in new markets**. This can lead to a wider range of high-quality goods being produced in India and greater opportunities for Indian IT, consulting, and other service providers. Beyond immediate benefits, TEPA can act as a **stepping stone for Indian companies to integrate into global value chains**. By establishing a strong presence in EFTA markets, Indian firms can become more competitive suppliers on a global scale.
- **EU Market Integration:** Switzerland's strong service exports to the EU present an **opportunity for Indian companies to use it as a base for expanding into the European market**. Indian companies can **leverage Switzerland's expertise and established connections to gain a foothold** in the larger EU market. This can be particularly valuable for Indian companies aiming to enter the high-value services sector of the EU.
- **Supply Chain Diversification:** The agreement helps India **reduce dependence on China for imports**, potentially making its supply chains more resilient. This can be crucial in the face of geopolitical tensions or trade disruptions. Diversification can also **lead to greater bargaining power for India** when negotiating trade deals with other countries.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Boost:** TEPA **encourages domestic manufacturing across various sectors, aligning with India's self-reliance initiative**. The increased inflow of investments can help upgrade India's manufacturing capabilities and infrastructure. However, to truly benefit from TEPA in the long term, **India will need to focus on technological advancements and innovation to ensure its domestically manufactured goods can compete effectively in the global market**.
- **Job Creation:** The pact has the potential to **generate a significant number of direct jobs supported by enhanced vocational and technical training**. This can improve employability and contribute to India's economic growth. The additional job opportunities created in the services sector can also empower women and young professionals, fostering inclusive growth.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

- **Trade Deficit Concerns:** India's history of trade deficits with major partners, including past FTAs, **raises concerns about a potential widening gap**. High average tariffs in India compared to the global average contribute to this trend. The **investment commitment from EFTA aims to mitigate this by generating economic activity in exchange for market access, but India may also need to review its own tariff structure to improve competitiveness**. Additionally, focusing on export promotion initiatives and streamlining trade procedures can help narrow the trade gap.
- **Competition in EFTA Markets:** Switzerland's recent **elimination of import duties on all industrial goods for all countries** poses a challenge for Indian exporters despite any tariff

concessions under TEPA. **Indian manufacturers will need to focus on innovation, quality, and efficiency to compete** effectively in the EFTA markets. EFTA countries are known

- **Political instability:** The timing of agreement endorsement holds significant importance, given the imminent elections in various nations. This factor may potentially postpone the formulation of future trade pacts and geopolitical prospects.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q1. Which countries are part of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)?

- (a) France, Germany, Italy, and Spain
- (b) Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland
- (c) United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, and Sweden
- (d) Portugal, Greece, Austria, and Belgium

Answer: B

Q2. What is the main purpose of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)?

- (a) To establish a customs union
- (b) To promote economic integration among its member nations
- (c) To exclude Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland from the Single Market
- (d) To restrict trade agreements globally

Answer: B

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. Discuss the potential impacts of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) on India's manufacturing capabilities and infrastructure.

Himanshu Mishra

SIXTH EDITION OF KHELO INDIA PROGRAM

SOURCE - THE HINDU AND PIB.

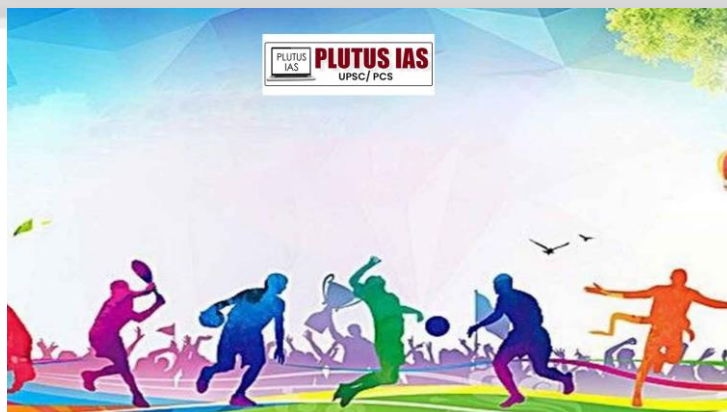
GENERAL STUDIES - POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE OF INDIA, KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES- 2024, GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN POLICY MAKING , SOCIAL JUSTICE, CREATION AND UPGRADATION OF SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE, SILAMBAM IS AN INDIGENOUS MARTIAL ART.

WHY IN THE NEWS?



- Recently, Khelo India Youth Games – 2024 (KIYG-2024) was held in India from January 19 to January 31, 2024 in 4 cities of Tamil Nadu – Chennai, Trichy, Madurai and Coimbatore.
- This sixth edition of Khelo India Youth Games- 2024 (KIYG-2024) concluded on January 31, 2024 in Chennai.
- Maharashtra finished at the top position for the fourth time with a total of 158 medals. The medals won by Maharashtra include 57 gold, 48 silver and 53 bronze medals in this sports competition
- Hosted this sports competition and Tamil Nadu finished second in this competition with a total of 98 medals including 38 gold, 21 silver and 39 bronze.
- Haryana stood third with a total of 103 medals including 35 gold, 22 silver and 46 bronze.
- Khelo India Youth Games 2024 is a flagship event under the Khelo India initiative of the Government of India.
- Khelo India Youth Games- 2024 (KIYG-2024) Athletes in 26 sports competed for a total of 933 medals.
- This Khelo India Youth Games- 2024 (KIYG-2024) In first time Squash was included.
- In this competition, Silambam, an indigenous martial art form, was also showcased as a demonstration game.
- The mascot of this sports competition – **Veera** was invited.
- **Rani Velu Nachiyar, affectionately known as Veera Mangai, was an Indian queen who waged a war against British colonial rule.**
- **Apart from this, famous poets are included in the logo of this sports competition Thiruvalluvar. The shape of was also included.**

INTRODUCTION TO KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES:



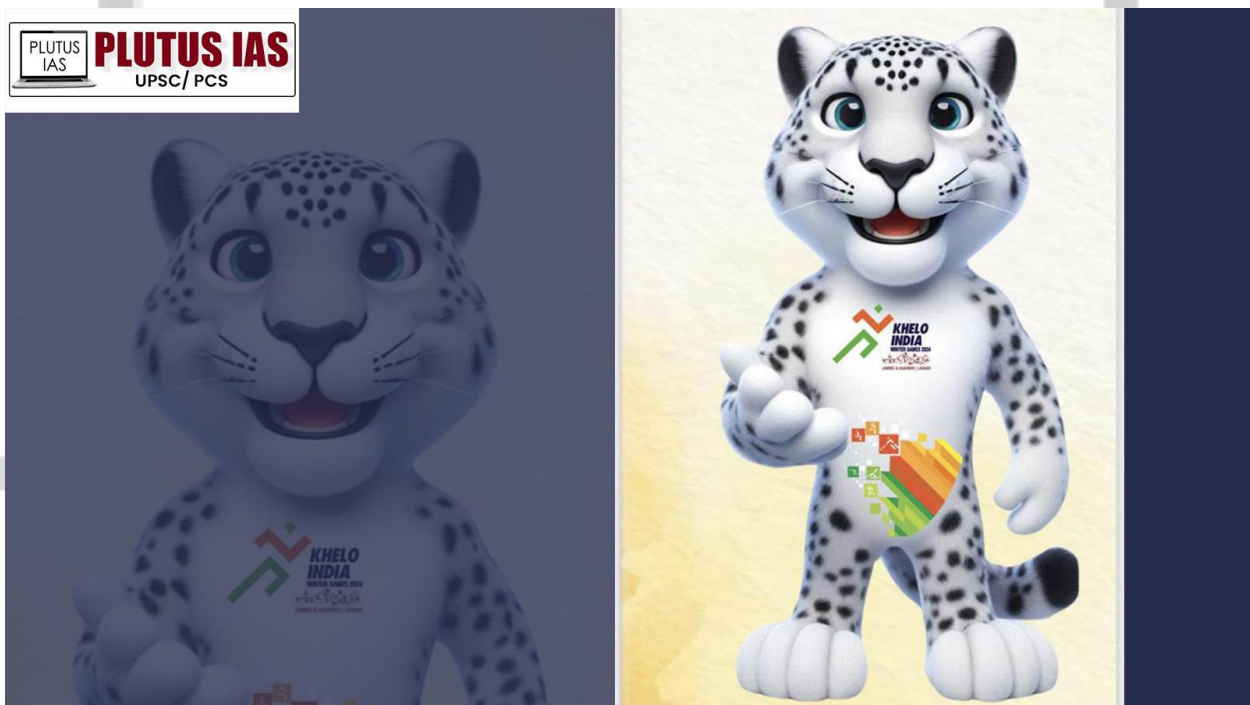
- This sports competition is a national level multidisciplinary sports competition for school and college students in India.

- This sports competition is organized every year in January or February which is organized by the Government of India. Khelo India initiative Are a part of.
- The objective of this sports competition is to promote sports culture and identify sports talents at the grassroots level.
- Earlier, the last 5 editions of this Khelo India Youth Games competition were organized in Delhi, Pune, Guwahati, Panchkula and Bhopal.

FORMAT:

- In India, this sports competition is organized in two categories.
- School students below 17 years of age participate in the first category of this sports competition. Whereas
- The second category is conducted among college students under the age of 21.
- The sporting event is conducted in a team championship format, with the individual performances of athletes or the medals earned by their respective teams being recorded as a contribution to the overall medal tally of their respective state or union territory (UT). goes.
- At the conclusion of the sporting event, the state or union territory securing the highest number of gold medals is declared the winner.
- In this sports competition in India, except the states of Maharashtra and Haryana, no team from any other state of India has won the title of khelo India Youth Games.

IMPORTANT FACTS:



- Khelo India Winter Games 2024 will be held in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.
- The mascot for which was recently unveiled, **snow leopard** whose name is ‘ **Sheen-e-she’ or glory**, Which has a unique relationship with this event inspired by mutual unity and sportsmanship.

INTRODUCTION TO SILAMBAM INDIGENOUS MARTIAL ARTS ART:

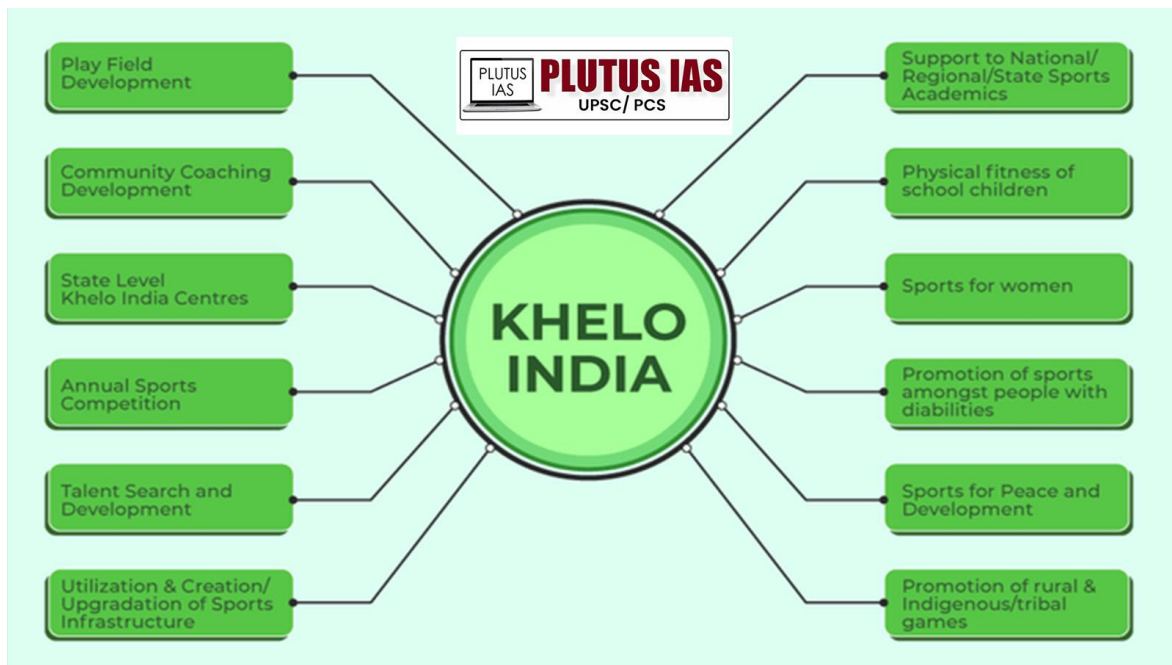
- Silambam is an ancient weapon-based martial art that originated in Tamilakam, which is currently located in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. It is one of the oldest martial arts in the world.
- The word Silambam itself refers to a game. Silam means 'mountain' and bam means bamboo, which is used as the main weapon in this form of martial arts.
- This is the martial art of Kerala Kalaripayattu (Kalaripayattu).

KHELO INDIA OR NATIONAL SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BACKGROUND:



- India's youth represent the most dynamic and vibrant youth population of any other country in the world.
 - India is one of the youngest countries in the world, with about 65% of its population below 35 years of age.
 - The youth population in India in the age group of 15-29 years is 27.5%.
 - To effectively implement and promote widespread participation of Indian youth in sports in India, existing schemes of Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan (RGKA), Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme (USIS) and National Sports Talent Search Scheme (NSTSS) It was considered to be included in a single scheme. Hence its name " **Khelo India National Sports Development Programme** " is placed.
1. **Rajiv Gandhi Sports Campaign** – Its objective was to provide infrastructure towards sports in rural areas of India and to encourage sports culture in the country through competitions.
 2. **Urban Infrastructure Scheme** – The main objective of this scheme was to provide quality sports infrastructure in urban areas so as to provide facilities to the young sports talents of India to hone their skills.
 3. **National Sports Talent Search** – The main objective of this scheme was to identify young talents dedicated to sports in the country.

OBJECTIVE OF KHELO INDIA PROGRAMME :



- It is a central level scheme in India, under which the scheme is implemented by the central government machinery and 100% funding is done by the central government.
- It is an All India Sports Scholarship Scheme, which provides sports scholarships to 1000 most deserving and talented athletes in the field of sports every year.
- Under this scheme, a scholarship amount of Rs 5 lakh is provided to the selected athlete for eight consecutive years.
- This is India's first unprecedented scheme to be implemented to create a long-term sports development path for athletes.
- To enable sportspersons to pursue both academics and sports, the program aims to identify and promote 20 universities in the country as centers of sporting excellence.
- Under this scheme, the latest user-friendly technology will be used to promote sports in India. This includes a Geographic Information System (GIS) to trace sports infrastructure, a user-friendly website for indigenous sports, a national sports talent search portal and disseminating information for sports training through mobile apps.
- To ensure maximum entries for sports competitions organized under the scheme, the program encourages schools and colleges to organize events under high standards.
- Under this scheme, a National Physical Fitness Drive has been planned, in which the physical fitness of children in the age group of 10 years to 18 years is checked. In addition, the scheme has planned activities to support the physical fitness of children in the age group of 10 years to 18 years.
- The main objective of this scheme is to impact the entire sports ecosystem including competition structure, identification of sports talents, coaching arrangements for them and sports related infrastructure.
- The program plans to involve the youth living in underprivileged and disturbed areas of India in sports activities so as to bring them into the mainstream as part of the nation building process and keep them away from disruptive activities related to the unity and integrity of the country. .
- The objective with which this program has been launched is to emphasize the importance of sports and related infrastructure in the country.

SCOPE OF KHELO INDIA PROGRAM :

Khelo India program in India divided into 12 work areas has been done which consists of –

1. To organize sports competitions for peace and development.
2. To encourage rural and indigenous or tribal sports.
3. To create and develop state level Khelo India centers.
4. To provide assistance to national/regional/state sports educationists.
5. To make school students aware about physical health and fitness.
6. To encourage sports culture among the disabled.
7. Organizing sports competitions for women.
8. Per year organized annual sports competition.
9. To discover and develop Game talents.
10. To develop and upgrade sports infrastructure.
11. To develop playgrounds.
12. To finance the development of community coaching.

IMPACT OF KHELO INDIA SCHEME:

- Under the Khelo India scheme, a comprehensive mechanism was created through Khelo India to create sports culture by providing infrastructure, annual competitive platforms, identifying sports talents and developing their skills.
- Through the annual Khelo India Youth Games and University Games in India, athletes in the age group of 17 years and 21 years get a chance to showcase their sporting talent at the national level every year.
- The Khelo India Mobile App, launched by the Honorable Prime Minister in 2019, has assessed the fitness parameters of over 23 lakh school children, thus identifying future sports talent from the age of 5 years.
- Under this, special schemes are also being run by the Central and State Governments to promote indigenous sports and players. Indigenous sports athletes are given out-of-pocket allowance (OPA), training facilities at top centres.
- To ensure maximum participation of women in sports and to empower women to make their mark through sports, specific schemes have been implemented. Along with this, various schemes are being run by the government to provide financial grants to the disabled, to arrange better training facilities for them and to support them towards sports.

CONCLUSION / PATH TO SOLUTION :



Under the Khelo India program, the current status of India's young sports talents has not only improved but its future is also very bright from the sports point of view. Khelo India program can be made successful by some of the following initiatives by the Government of India –

Creation and upgradation of sports infrastructure : The government should invest more in creating and upgrading sports infrastructure across the country, especially in rural areas, tribal areas, north-eastern states and aspirational districts.

Establishing Khelo India Center and Sports Academies : The government should set up more Khelo India Centers and Sports Academies across the country to provide quality coaching, training, equipment, nutrition, medical aid and scholarships to talented players.

Fit India Movement : The government should promote the Fit India Movement as a mass campaign to create awareness and encourage physical activity and fitness among all sections of the society.

Public Private Partnership : The government needs to create public-private partnerships, corporate social responsibility funds and MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) Convergence with other schemes should also be taken of advantage.

Sports competitions and talent development : The government should organize more sports competitions at various levels like school, district, state and national level to provide exposure and opportunities to young athletes.

Promoting inclusivity through sports : The government should ensure that sports are affordable and accessible to all sections of society, especially girls, women, persons with disabilities, minorities and marginalized groups. The government should also provide special incentives, reservations, quotas and awards to encourage participation and excellence among these groups.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :

Q.1. Consider the following statements regarding Khelo India Youth Games- 2024.

1. The mascot of this sports competition -Veera was invited.
2. This sports competition was organized in Chennai, Mumbai, Madurai and Coimbatore. |
3. This fifth edition of Khelo India Youth Games – 2024 concluded on January 31, 2024 in Chennai.
4. In India, this sports competition is organized in four categories.

Which of the above statement / statements is/are correct ?

- (A) Only 1 and 3..
- (B) Only 2 and 4
- (C) Only 4
- (D) Only 1

Answer – (D)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM :

Q.1. Explaining the main features of Khelo India programme, Discuss that What kind of steps can be taken to create, upgrade and be inclusive of all sports infrastructure in India ? Present a logical solution.

Akhilesh Kumar Shrivastava

