

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 30-11-2023

Exercise Milan



The next edition of Exercise MILAN is scheduled to be held in February 2024.

About Exercise Milan

It is a biennial multilateral naval exercise that began in 1995.

It has since significantly expanded in scope and scale to become the largest exercise held by India.

It was started with the participation of only four countries, viz., Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand, in the 1995 edition, the exercise has since transitioned leaps and bounds in terms of the number of participants and complexity of exercises.

Originally conceived in consonance with India's 'Look East Policy, MILAN expanded in ensuing years with the Government of India's 'Act East Policy' and Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative to include participation from other Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs).

The mid-planning conference of Milan-24 was held in October this year. The last edition of Milan, which is held off the coast of Visakhapatnam, saw participation from over 40 countries.

What is the SAGAR initiative?



It is an Indian foreign policy doctrine that was introduced in 2015.

The aim of SAGAR is to enhance cooperation and mutual trust between India and its neighbouring countries, particularly in the Indian Ocean region.

The SAGAR policy has several components, including ensuring maritime security and safety, promoting sustainable development and economic growth, and strengthening cultural and people-to-people ties between nations.

Prime Minister interacts with beneficiaries of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, launches the Prime Minister Mahila Kisan Drone Center

The Prime Minister, interacted with beneficiaries of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra via video conferencing today. He also launched Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kisan Drone Kendra. During the program, the Prime Minister dedicated the landmark 10,000th Jan Aushadhi Kendra at AIIMS, Deoghar.

He also launched the program to increase the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras in the country from 10,000 to 25,000. Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister gave the welcome address.

On the occasion, Prime Minister said that the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is completing 15 days today and has now picked up pace. Nothing the affection and participation of the people that has led to a change in the nomenclature of the VBSY van from 'Vikas Rath' to 'Modi Ki Guarantee vehicle', the Prime Minister thanked the citizens for their trust in the government.

The government's approach of recognizing the needs of citizens and giving them their rights based on the principles of natural justice-social justice has created new aspirations and ended the feeling of neglect among crores of citizens.

Underlining at the start of the VBSY that it is based on 4 Amrit pillars of 'Viksit Bharat', the Prime Minister recalled India's Nari Shakti, Yuva Shakti, the farmers and the poor families of India and said that the progress of these four creeds will make India a developed country. Shri Modi said that the government strives to improve the standard of living and drive away poverty from poor



families, create employment and self-employment opportunities for the youth, empower the women of India by tackling their issues, and improve the income and capabilities of India's farmers. "I will not rest until the issues of the poor, women, farmers and the youth are completely addressed", PM Modi said. The ongoing campaign to make women self-reliant through self-help groups will get strength from Drone Didi and additional sources of income will be available. With this, farmers will be able to get modern technology like drones at a very low cost, which will save time, medicine and fertilizers.

Referring to the inauguration of the 10,000th Jan Aushadhi Kendra, Shri Modi said that it has become a center for procuring medicines at cheaper rates for the poor and middle class.. He informed that roughly 2000 types of medicines are sold at an 80 to 90 percent discount at such centers. He also congratulated the citizens, especially the women of the country, for the launch of program to further expand the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras from 10,000 to 25,000. He also expressed happiness that the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna has been extended for another 5 years.. Concluding the address, the Prime Minister highlighted the importance of the entire government machinery and government employees in initiating this entire campaign. He also recalled the success of the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan a few years ago and informed that the campaign was run in two phases in about 60 thousand villages of the country with seven schemes being taken to the beneficiaries. "Thousands of villages in aspirational districts were also included in this",

ly. Since their inception, the common man's expenditure on medicines has reduced by lakhs of rupees and people are using this amount for other purposes. If there will be 25 thousand Jan Aushadhi kendras in the country, then the countrymen will get great facilities and it will benefit the them.

The idea of Drone Didi program to enhance their capabilities and improve their livelihood is wonderful. When urea, DAP and pesticides are sprayed in the fields, it affects the health. Also, there remains an imbalance like over- and under-spraying at some places, but when the use of drones increases, the side

effects on the health will be less and the consumption of fertilizer will also reduce. Use of Nano Urea and Nano DAP as alternatives will also increase. Through the Ujjwala scheme, work has been done to provide free LPG cylinders to more than 9 crore sisters. Through PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, work is being done to provide free food grains to more than 80 crore people of the country, which is the largest program in the world. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Modi, India became self sufficient and can give to the world rather than taking from them. A large part of the world today looks towards India for help.

DEFENCE ACQUISITION PROJECTS



Defence Acquisition Council, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, gives initial approval for acquisition of the indigenously developed aircraft for armed forces; 98% of total procurement to be sourced from domestic industries.

Approved Projects:

Tejas Aircraft: Initial approval granted for the procurement of 97 Tejas light combat aircraft.

Prachand Helicopters: Approval for the acquisition of 156 Prachand combat helicopters.

Focus on Self-Reliance:



Emphasizing self-reliance, 98% of the total procurement is set to be sourced from domestic industries, aligning with the goal of achieving 'aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in defence manufacturing.

Combat Fleet Upgrades:

Indian Air Force's proposal to upgrade its Su-30 fighter fleet by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) received approval.

Anti-Tank Munitions:

Approval for the procurement of two types of anti-tank munitions: Area Denial Munition (ADM) Type-2 and -3.

Naval Assets Enhancement:

Acquisition and integration approval for automatic target tracker (ATT) and digital basaltic computer (DBC) for T-90 tanks.

Procurement approval for medium-range anti-ship missiles (MRAShM) for the Navy, serving as a primary offensive weapon for Indian naval ships.

Significance

Enhanced Combat Capabilities: The acquisition projects aim to significantly augment India's combat capabilities, modernizing its defence assets and fostering indigenous defence manufacturing.

Strategic Defence Enhancement: The move aligns with India's efforts to bolster its defence infrastructure amidst ongoing military stand-offs, emphasizing the importance of self-reliance and indigenous defence production capabilities.

About DAC

Role and Functions:

Decision-Making Body: The DAC holds the highest authority in the Ministry of Defence for approving and guiding the acquisition of new defense equipment, technologies, and systems for the armed forces.

Capital Acquisitions: It is responsible for approving procurement proposals, including the acquisition of defense platforms, weapons, technology upgrades, and major defense systems.



Policy Formulation: The council is involved in formulating defense acquisition policies, strategies, and frameworks aimed at enhancing India's defense capabilities and modernizing its armed forces.

Composition:

Chairmanship: The Minister of Defence chairs the Defense Acquisition Council, leading discussions, deliberations, and decision-making processes related to defense acquisitions and policies.

Membership: The council comprises senior officials from the Ministry of Defence, the Armed Forces, and other stakeholders involved in defense acquisition and policymaking.

History:

Formation: The DAC was established in 2001 following recommendations from the Group of Ministers after the Kargil War in 1999. These recommendations aimed at reforming the national security system, enhancing defense preparedness, and streamlining defense acquisitions.

Post-Kargil Reforms: The formation of the DAC was part of the post-Kargil reforms to revamp and strengthen India's defense apparatus, particularly in the context of defense acquisitions and decision-making processes.

INS Kadmatt

Indian Navy Ship (INS) Kadmatt deployed to the North Pacific recently conducted Underway Replenishment (UNREP) with Japan's JS Towada.

About INS Kadmatt:

It is an indigenous stealth anti-submarine warfare corvette.



It is the second of four anti-submarine warfare corvettes built for the Indian Navy by the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers of Kolkata under Project 28.

It was commissioned into the Indian Navy in January 2016.

The ship was inducted into the Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Navy.

It has been named after the Kadmat Island of India's Lakshadweep Islands.

The primary role of the INS Kadmat is in anti-submarine warfare—to protect ships in convoys and ports from enemy submarine attacks.

Features:

Length: 109 m (358 ft)

Beam: 12.8 m (42 ft)

Speed: 25 knots (46 km/h)

Range: 3,450 mi (5,550 km) at 18 knots (33 km/h)

Complement: 180 sailors and 13 officers

The ship is fitted with state-of-the-art weapons, sensors, and machinery and is also designed to embark on the Sea King anti-submarine helicopter.



The ship also has on-board early warning, navigation, and fire control radars, besides underwater sensors and integrated communication and electronic warfare systems.

It produces low levels of radiated underwater noise, which reduces its chances of detection.

It is equipped with anti-aircraft guns, torpedoes, and rocket launchers.

Paddy harvesting

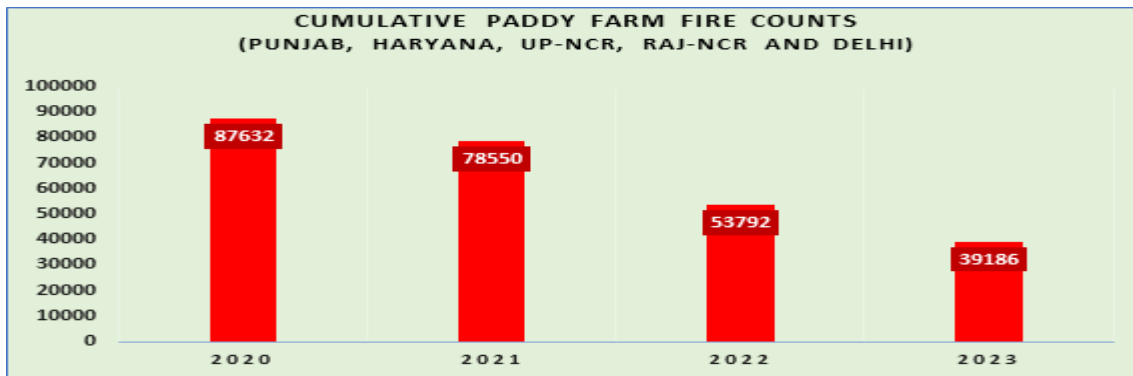
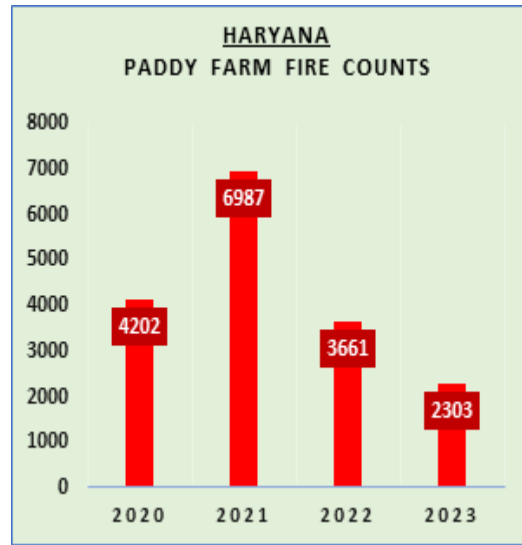
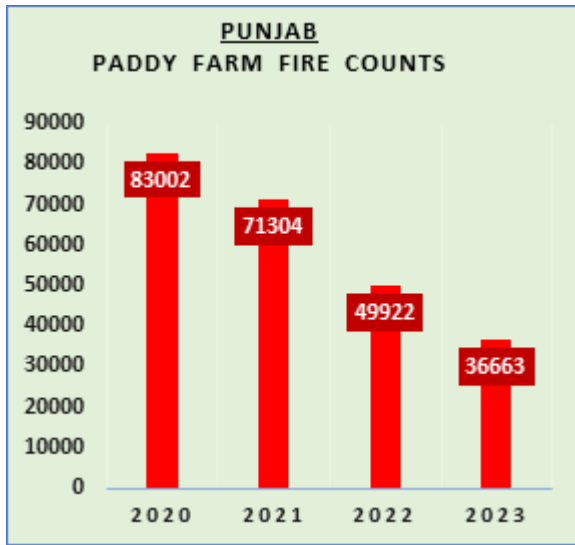
Paddy harvesting season 2023 comes to an end witnessing significant decrease in stubble burning with efforts made towards management of paddy straw for the current season.

Recording of paddy straw burning events, through a standard protocol developed by ISRO, is carried out on year-to-year basis from 15th September to 30th November. Paddy harvesting season 2023 now comes to an end and with it, the efforts made towards management of paddy straw for the current season have also been concluded. Over the last 3 years, incidences of paddy stubble burning have witnessed a significant decrease, including in 2023, both for Punjab and Haryana.

Formulation of district specific action plans, intensified monitoring at the level of Chief Secretary, Dy. Commissioners and officers concerned in the State Govts., improving availability and utilisation of machines for *in-situ* / *ex-situ* management and a quantum rise in utilisation of paddy straw for various industrial / commercial applications has led to substantial decrease in paddy straw burning incidents in Punjab and Haryana.

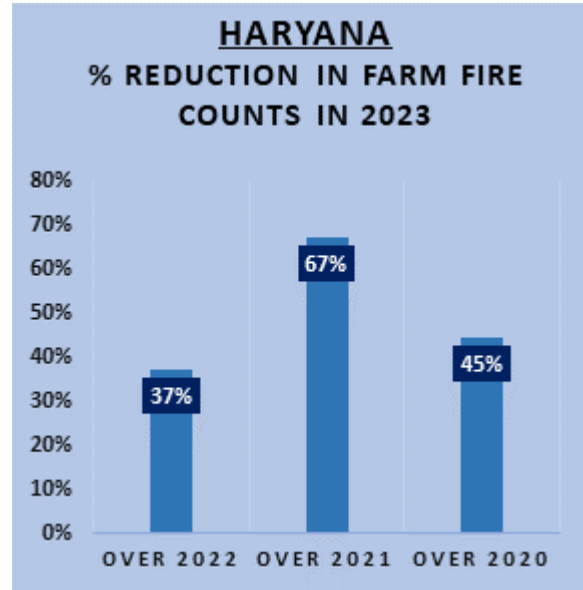
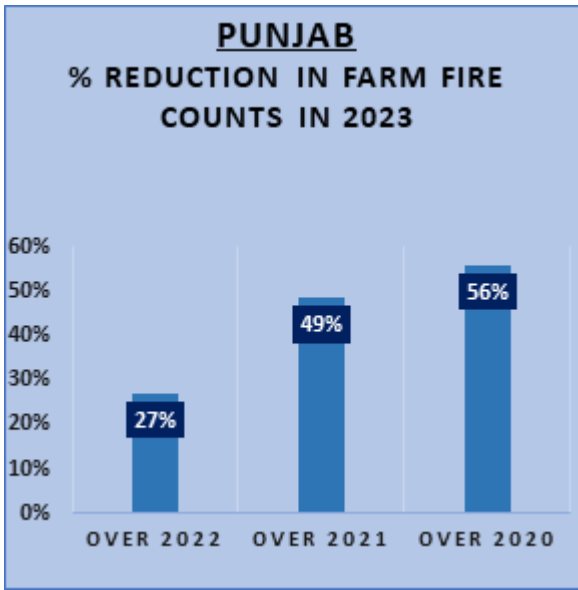
Against cumulative 83,002 fire counts on account of paddy stubble burning in Punjab during 2020, the fire counts in the corresponding period were 71,304 during 2021, 49,922 during 2022 and 36,663 during 2023.

For the State of Haryana 4,202 fire counts were reported in 2020. Against this figure, paddy stubble burning cases were 6,987 in 2021, 3,661 in 2022 and 2,303 in 2023 respectively.



Punjab thus recorded an overall 27% decrease in the total fire counts owing to paddy stubble burning during 2023 as compared to 2022. The % reduction in the farm fires in 2023 with respect to the figures in 2021 and 2020 has been 49% and 56% respectively.

Likewise, substantial reduction has also been witnessed in the total number of paddy farm fires in Haryana i.e., 37% reduction in 2023 vis-à-vis 2022. The reduction in farm fire incidences in 2023 with respect to 2021 has been much higher at 67% while a reduction of 45% has been witnessed as compared to the incidences in 2020.



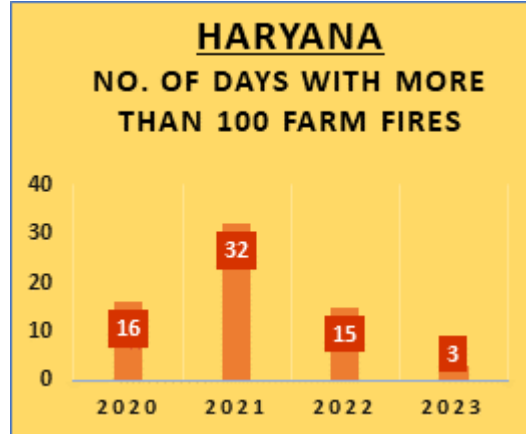
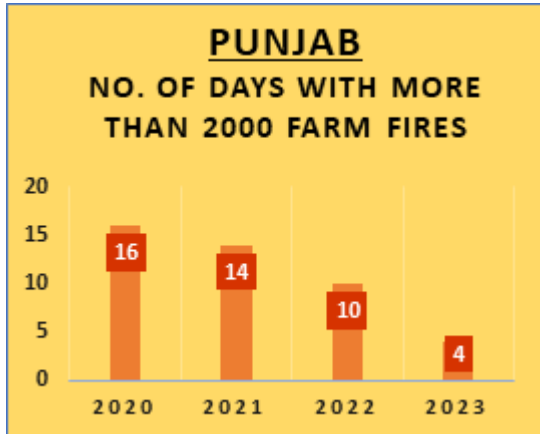
In terms of district wise performance of Punjab in this context, 4 districts namely Muktsar, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur and Rupnagar recorded more than 50% reduction in the paddy farm fires during 2023 as compared to 2022, while 5 districts viz. Bathinda, Fazilka, Ludhiana, Tarn Taran and Patiala recorded an improvement of 27% - 50% in their respective fire counts over figures in 2022. 11 districts namely Barnala, Faridkot, Fatehgarh Sahib, Ferozepur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Malerkotla, Mansa, Moga, Sangrur and SBS Nagar also witnessed a reduction ranging up to 27% in the farm fires during 2023. Three districts in Punjab namely Amritsar, SAS Nagar and Pathankot emerged as a concern with increase in the number of their respective fire counts during 2023 vis-à-vis 2022.

For the state of Haryana, the 3 districts which achieved more than 50% reduction in the fire counts during 2023 as compared to 2022 are Kaithal, Karnal and Panipat while 3 districts viz. Kurukshetra, Sirsa and Yamuna Nagar recorded a reduction between 37% - 50% over the corresponding figures in 2022. There were 5 other districts viz. Ambala, Fatehabad, Jind, Hisar and Sonipat where the improvement ranged up to 37% over the 2022 figures. 5 districts in Haryana viz. Rohtak, Bhiwani, Faridabad, Jhajjar and Palwal however recorded higher paddy farm fire counts in 2023 over their corresponding figures for 2022.

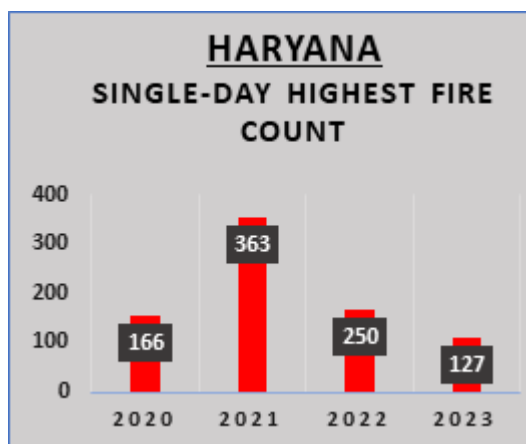
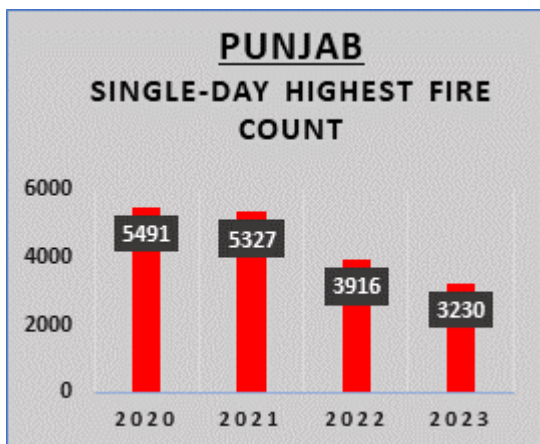
While number of days where more than 2000 fire counts were reported in a single day from Punjab were 16 in 2020, 14 in 2021, 10 in 2022, the current

year 2023 witnessed only 4 days where the individual fire counts exceeded the 2000 mark.

For Haryana, there were 16 days where more than 100 fire counts were reported in 2020. Such instances were 32 in 2021 and 15 in 2022. 2023 however, witnessed only 3 days where individual fire counts exceeded the 100 mark.



The single-day highest fire count in Punjab was 5491 in 2020, 5327 in 2021, 3916 in 2022 and 3230 in 2023. The single-day highest fire count in Haryana was 166 in 2020, 363 in 2021, 250 in 2022 and 127 in 2023.



High number of fire counts in a single day, coupled with meteorological factors like wind speed and direction etc. have been greatly impacting the AQI in



Delhi-NCR as evident from the records of AQI of Delhi and number of farm fires in Punjab / Haryana, year on year.

Despite significant reduction in the number of farm fires owing to paddy stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, achieved owing to concerted and collective efforts of all the stakeholders, the resultant improvement did not reflect as much in the daily average AQI of Delhi / NCR during the month of November, 2023, primarily owing to highly unfavourable meteorology and climate conditions prevailing over the region particularly since the last week of October, with low speed winds from the north-westerly direction, very low rainfall and near-calm wind conditions over Delhi which badly impeded the dispersion of pollutants, thus reflecting in a much higher AQI during the month of November, 2023 as compared to the November months in preceding years.

With further concerted actions and strengthening of the action plans to prevent and control paddy stubble burning, it is expected that straw burning events will see a further significant decline in the ensuing year, thereby also improving upon the over all air quality scenario in Delhi-NCR during the paddy harvest season.

ESTIMATES OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT FOR THE SECOND QUARTER (JULY-SEPTEMBER) OF 2023-24

The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is releasing in this Press Note the estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the July-September quarter (Q2) of 2023-24, both at Constant (2011-12) and Current Prices.

2. Quarterly and Half-yearly estimates of Gross Value Added (GVA) at Basic Prices by kind of economic activity and expenditure components of GDP for the years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 at Constant (2011-12) and Current Prices are given in Statements 1 to 8.



3. Real GDP or GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in Q2 2023-24 is estimated to attain a level of ₹41.74 lakh crore, as against ₹38.78 lakh crore in Q2 2022-23, showing a growth of 7.6 percent as compared to 6.2 percent in Q2 2022-23.

4. Nominal GDP or GDP at Current Prices in Q2 2023-24 is estimated at ₹71.66 lakh crore, as against ₹65.67 lakh crore in Q2 2022-23, showing a growth of 9.1 percent as compared to 17.2 percent in Q2 2022-23.

5. GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in April-September 2023-24 (H1 2023-24) is estimated at ₹82.11 lakh crore as against ₹76.22 lakh crore during the corresponding period of previous year, showing a growth of 7.7 percent in H1 2023-24 as against 9.5 percent in H1 2022-23. GDP at Current Prices in H1 2023-24 is estimated at ₹142.33 lakh crore as against ₹131.09 lakh crore during the corresponding period of previous year, showing a growth of 8.6 percent in H1 2023-24 as against 22.2 in H1 2022-23.

6. Quarterly Estimates of GDP are indicator based and are compiled using the benchmark-indicator method, i.e., quarterly estimates available for the previous year referred to as the benchmark year are extrapolated using the relevant indicators reflecting the performance of sectors. Data sourced from various Ministries/ Departments/ Private Agencies serve as valuable inputs in the compilation of these estimates. The sector-wise estimates have been compiled using indicators like (i) Index of Industrial Production (IIP), (ii) Financial performance of listed companies in the Private Corporate Sector based on available quarterly financial results for these companies, (iii) First Advance Estimates of Crop Production for 2023-24, (iv) Production estimates of Major Livestock Products for summer season for 2023-24, (v) Fish Production, (vi) Production/ Consumption of Cement and Steel, (vii) Net Tonne Kilometres and Passenger Kilometres for Railways, (viii) Passenger and Cargo traffic handled by Civil Aviation, (ix) Cargo traffic handled at Major and Minor Sea Ports, (x) Sales of Commercial Vehicles, (xi) Bank Deposits and Credits, (xii) Accounts of Central and State Governments, etc., available for Q2 2023-24. Percentage changes in the main indicators used in the estimation are given in the Annexure.



7. Total tax revenue used for GDP compilation includes Non-GST Revenue as well as GST Revenue. The latest information available on the website of Controller General of Accounts (CGA) and Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) have been used for estimating taxes on products and subsidies on products at Current Prices. For obtaining Taxes on Products at Constant Prices, volume extrapolation is done using volume growth of taxed goods and services and aggregated to get the total volume of taxes. Latest available data on the CGA and CAG websites for Revenue Expenditure, Interest Payments, Subsidies etc., have been used for estimating Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE).

8. Improved data coverage and revision in input data made by source agencies would have a bearing on subsequent revisions of these estimates. Estimates are, therefore, likely to undergo revisions for the aforesaid causes in due course, as per the release calendar. Users should take these into consideration while interpreting the figures.

9. The next release of quarterly GDP estimates for the quarter October-December, 2023 (Q3 2023-24) will be on 29.02.2024.