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The Hindu & The Indian express

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Trade deal is a launchpad for growth, says British PM

India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement presents unparalleled opportunities, says Starmer as he begins two-day visit; he will hold wide-ranging talks with Narendra Modi today

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The opportunities waiting to be seized under the **India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement** are "unparalleled", British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in Mumbai on Wednesday as he kick-started his first visit to India after assuming charge.

"It's the **biggest deal we've struck** since we left the European Union," Mr. Starmer said. "I think it's also the biggest deal that India has ever struck, so it's hugely important."

Mr. Starmer, accompanied by a delegation of nearly 100 entrepreneurs, cultural representatives, and university Vice-Chancellors, arrived in Mumbai for a two-day visit to take advantage of the opportu-



Boosting ties: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer talking to a delegation of leaders who joined him during his trip to India. AFP

ities brought about by the **India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement** signed in July.

"It's not just a piece of paper, it's a **launchpad for growth**. With India set to be the **third biggest economy in the world by 2028**, and trade with them about to become quicker and

cheaper, the opportunities waiting to be seized are unparalleled," he said. He will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday. They will address the **sixth edition of the Global Fintech Fest** in Mumbai.

"Welcome Mr. Starmer on your historic first visit to India," Mr. Modi said on

X. "Looking forward to our meeting tomorrow for advancing our shared vision of a stronger, mutually prosperous future."

"During the visit, on October 9 in Mumbai, the two Prime Ministers will take stock of progress in diverse aspects of the India-U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in line with **'Vision 2035'**, a **focused and time bound 10-year road map of programmes and initiatives** in key pillars of trade and investment, technology and innovation, defence and security, climate and energy, health, education and people to people relations," the External Affairs Ministry said.

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'AN ANCHOR FOR TIES'

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Trade deal is a launchpad for growth, says British PM

Source: The Hindu, Page 1

GS-2: International Relations GS-3: Economy - Foreign Trade Agreement

Context:

Why in News:

- **British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is on a two-day visit to India, his first since assuming office.**
- **The visit focuses on advancing implementation of the India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which was signed on 24 July 2025.**
- **Both leaders will review progress under "Vision 2035", a structured roadmap for strengthening the India-U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership across multiple sectors.**

India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)

Signed: 24 July 2025

Objective: Boost bilateral trade, investment & tech cooperation by reducing tariffs and easing market access.

Coverage: Goods, services, investment, digital trade, IPR, and sustainable development. Significance: Largest U.K. trade deal post-Brexit; major boost to India's global trade network.

Vision 2035

- 10-year roadmap for the India-U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- Aim: Align long-term economic and strategic goals through structured, sustained cooperation.



India to boost solar pumps scheme in Africa, island nations

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government is looking to showcase the PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan) programme to several African countries and island nations, Union Minister for Renewable Energy (MNRE) Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday.

“We are looking to showcase both the PM-KUSUM and the PM Surya Ghar (for rooftop solar installations) programme in countries which have problems with connectivity. We are doing this in Africa and island countries through the ISA (International Solar Alliance) platform,” Mr. Joshi said at a curtain-raiser event for the ISA’s eighth General Assembly, sche-

duled later this month. The ₹34,000-crore PM-KUSUM programme is meant to boost solar energy infrastructure in agriculture by setting up 100 GW of solar power plants in farmer-owned land. Launched in 2019, it was to have added a solar capacity of 308 GW by 2022, but has missed targets. The Centre then set a new target, of 348 GW with a deadline of March 2026.

As of September 30, only one part of the scheme, where 17.5 lakh standalone solar pumps were to be installed has made notable progress. About 70% of the pumps have been installed. On the other hand, only 6% of decentralised grid-connected renewable energy power plants, and 16%-25% of grid-connected solar pumps have been installed.

India to boost solar pumps scheme in Africa, island nations

Source: The Hindu, Page 12

International Relations & Renewable Energy

Why in News

- India plans to showcase the PM-KUSUM and PM Surya Ghar schemes to African and island nations through the International Solar Alliance (ISA) platform.
- The move aims to help countries with energy and connectivity challenges and project India as a leader in renewable energy.

PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan)

- **Launched:** Mar 2019 | **Budget:** ₹34,422 cr
- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)
- **Objective:** Promote solar energy in agriculture, reduce diesel use, and raise farmer income.
- **Components:**
 - A. Decentralised solar plants
 - B. Standalone pumps
 - C. Solarisation of existing pumps
- **Target:** 348 GW by Mar 2026

- **Status (Sept 2025):** 70% standalone pumps, 6% decentralised plants, 16-25% grid-connected pumps installed.
- **Significance:** Strengthens clean-energy infrastructure in agriculture; supports India's net-zero pathway.

PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

- **Launched:** 29 Feb 2024 | **Budget:** ₹75,021 cr
- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)
- **Objective:** Promote rooftop solar for energy self-reliance and lower household bills.
- **Target:** 300 units of free power/month for 1 crore homes.
- **Implementation:** MNRE with up to 40% subsidy for rooftop systems (≤ 3 KW).
- **Significance:** Expands decentralised renewable capacity; advances India's net-zero commitment.

Draft labour policy unites social security schemes

It aims at creating universal, portable social security accounts for all workers by 2030; it also seeks to raise women's labour participation to 35%, offer single-window digital compliance for MSMEs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Universal and portable social security is a major component of the draft **National Labour and Employment Policy**, which proposes to create a universal account by integrating the Employees Provident Fund Organisation, Employees State Insurance Corporation, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, e-SHRAM, and State welfare Boards.

The draft policy, known as the **Shram Shakti Niti, 2025**, was released on Wednesday for public consultation.

The proposals include the implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Code with risk-based inspections, gender-sensitive standards, and the convergence of various skills schemes. The draft policy presents a renewed vision for a fair, inclusive, and future-ready world of work aligned with the national aspiration of a developed India by 2047, Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said.

"Rooted in India's civilisational ethos of **śrama dharma**, the dignity and moral value of work, the



Workforce reforms: The policy envisions a labour ecosystem that improves protection and productivity for every worker. FILE PHOTO

policy envisions a labour ecosystem that ensures protection, productivity, and participation for every worker. It seeks to create a balanced framework that upholds workers' welfare while enabling enterprises to grow and generate sustainable livelihoods," Mr. Mandaviya said.

Policy outcomes

Expected outcomes of the policy include universal worker registration and social security portability, near-zero workplace fatalities, increased female la-

bour-force participation, a sharp reduction in informal jobs through digital compliance, AI-driven labour-governance capacity in all States, the creation of millions of green and decent jobs, and a fully converged "One Nation Integrated Workforce" ecosystem. The last date to submit suggestions on the draft is October 27.

The draft policy seeks to increase women's participation in the labour force to 35% by 2030, and expand entrepreneurship and career guidance initia-

tives for youth. It also proposes a single-window for digital compliance, with self-certification and simplified returns for MSMEs. Promotion of green jobs, AI-enabled safety systems, just-transition pathways for workers, and a unified national labour data architecture ensuring inter-ministerial coherence and transparent monitoring are also part of the policy document.

Accountability plan

Policy implementation will proceed in three phases. **Phase I** (2025-27) focuses on institutional setup and social-security integration.

During **Phase II** (2027-30), the nationwide rollout of universal social security accounts, along with skill-credit systems, and district-level Employment Facilitation Cells. **Phase III** (beyond 2030) will bring in paperless governance, predictive analytics, and continuous policy renewal.

"Progress will be tracked through real-time dashboards, a Labour & Employment Policy Evaluation Index (LPEI) benchmarking States, and an Annual National Labour Report to Parliament," the document says.

Draft labour policy unites social security schemes

Source: The Hindu, Page 12

GS Paper: GS-3 - Economy (Labour Reforms, Inclusive Growth)

Why in News

The Labour Ministry released the Draft National Labour & Employment Policy - Shram Shakti Niti, 2025 for consultation to unify social security schemes and modernise India's labour ecosystem.

Special Provisions:

- 1. Universal Social Security:** Portable accounts for all workers by 2030, integrating EPFO, ESIC, PM-JAY, e-SHRAM, and State boards.
- 2. Women's Participation:** Raise female LFPR to 35% by 2030 via gender-sensitive, flexible work norms.s.
- 3. Digital MSME Compliance:** Single-window system, self-certification, simplified returns.
- 4. Phased Plan:**
 - (2025-27) Setup & integration
 - (2027-30) Universal rollout & facilitation cells
 - (Post-2030) Paperless, analytics-based governance
- 5. Green & Tech Jobs:** Promote green employment, AI-enabled safety, and just transition.
- 6. Accountability:** Real-time dashboards, Labour Policy Index, and annual national report.

Scientists win Chemistry Nobel Prize for bridging metals and organics

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

An Australian, a Japanese and a Jordanian-American scientists were announced winners of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for discovering and creating a class of materials, called metal-organic frameworks (MOFs).

Metallic and organic substances are as far apart in the chemical world as Australia and the U.S. geographically and it was inconceivable that stable, useful products could be made out of materials formed by integrating them. But beginning Richard Robson's initial conception of them in the mid 1970s, sparked from a science project for his Melbourne University students; to Susumu Kitagawa's dogged determination, in Kyoto University, at creating porous molecules – despite knowing that they were “useless” – but tinkering with them until he created the right kind of structures that were useful enough to work as a filter whilst remaining flexible and pliant; to finally Omar Yaghi at the University of California, Berkeley, making a variety of metal-organic frameworks, as he named them, that were capable of drawing water vapour out of desert air at night and releasing them as water in the day.

The three will equally share the prize of 11 million Swedish kroner, about ₹1 crore.

Following the laureates' groundbreaking discoveries, chemists have since built tens of thousands of different MOFs. Some of



Protracted effort: From left, Susumu Kitagawa, Richard Robson and Omar Yaghi, who won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. AP

these may contribute to solving some of human-kind's greatest challenges, with applications that include separating PFAS (a family of chemicals that are believed to be toxic) from water, breaking down traces of pharmaceuticals in the environment, capturing carbon dioxide or harvesting water from desert air, a press statement noted.

Molecular kit

Researchers have developed a molecular kit with a wide range of different pieces that can be used to create new MOFs. These have different shapes and characters, providing incredible potential for the rational –or AI-based – design of MOFs for different purposes.

First of the block and inspired by a project to make wooden block representations of chemical bonds, Mr. Robson began by testing the inherent properties of atoms in a new way. He combined positively charged copper ions with a four-armed molecule; this had a chemical group that was attracted to copper ions at the end of each

arm. When they were combined, they bonded to form a well-ordered, spacious crystal. It was like a diamond filled with innumerable cavities.

Mr. Robson immediately recognised the potential of his molecular construction, but it was unstable and collapsed easily. However, Mr. Kitagawa and Mr. Yaghi provided this building method with a firm foundation; between 1992 and 2003 they made, separately, a series of revolutionary discoveries.

Mr. Kitagawa showed that gases can flow in and out of the constructions and predicted that MOFs could be made flexible.

Mr. Yaghi created a very stable MOF and showed that it can be modified using rational design, giving it new and desirable properties.

Initially, it was challenging for the broader scientific community to appreciate MOF as they didn't seem to be much better than a class of materials called zeolites. But things changed when they succeeded in developing soft MOFs – a step up over zeolites that were hard.

Scientists win Chemistry Nobel Prize for bridging metals and organics

Source: The Hindu | Page: 14

Science & Technology

Why in News:

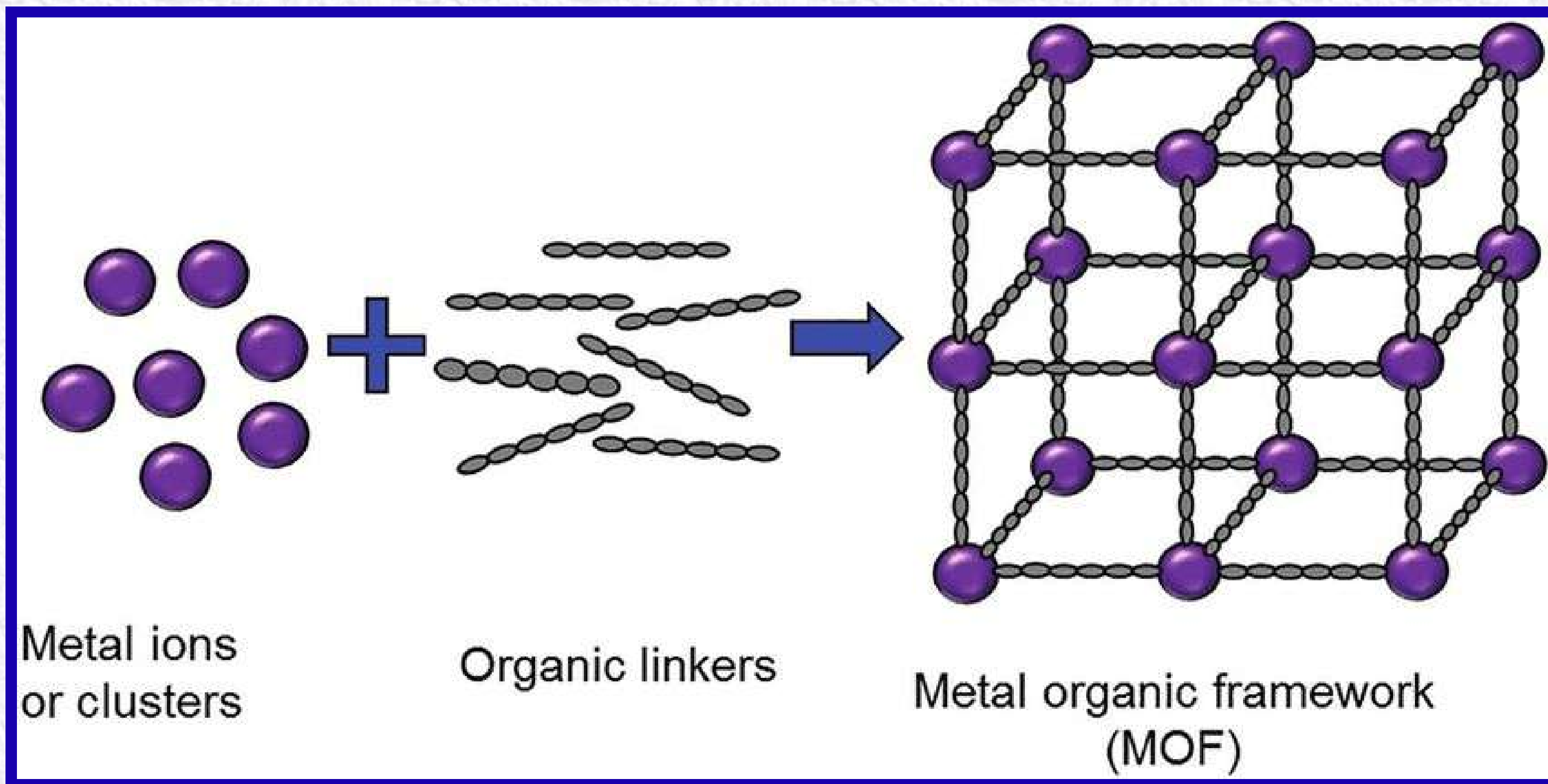
The 2025 Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded to Richard Robson (Australia), Susumu Kitagawa (Japan), and Omar Yaghi (Jordanian-American) for discovering and creating Metal-Organic Frameworks (MOFs) - a new class of materials that connect metals with organic molecules.

Metal-Organic Frameworks (MOFs):

- **Definition:** Tiny, sponge-like materials made by linking metal ions with organic molecules, forming porous crystal structures.
- **Properties:** Extremely light, porous, and flexible, capable of trapping and releasing gases or liquids.

Utility / Applications:

1. **Water purification** - removes PFAS and pharmaceutical residues.
2. **Carbon capture** - absorbs CO₂ from air and industries.
3. **Water harvesting** - draws water vapour from dry air.
4. **Gas storage** - stores hydrogen or methane for clean energy.
5. **Catalysis & sensors** - used in chemical reactions and environmental monitoring.





Cong. targets Centre over U.S.-Pakistan military deal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday targeted the Centre after reports that the United States is set to supply Raytheon-manufactured air-to-air missiles to Pakistan, saying it shows how quickly “diplomatic setbacks accumulate”.

Taking to social media platform X, Congress general secretary (Communications) Jairam Ramesh cited two public notifications of the U.S. Department of War on military contracts.

According to the notification, the contract involves foreign military sales to over 30 countries, including the U.K., Germany, Australia, and Pakistan, with delivery expected by May 2030.

Cong. targets Centre over U.S.-Pakistan military deal

Source: The Hindu, Page 12

Why in News:

- The U.S. approved a global arms contract involving Raytheon-made air-to-air missiles, with Pakistan among 30+ recipient countries.

About the Missile & Deal:

- **Missile:** AIM-120 AMRAAM (Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile) - made by Raytheon, used on F-16, F-15, and similar aircraft.
- **Contract value:** Around US \$2.5 billion (latest \$41.6 million modification).
- **Countries included (major):** UK, Germany, Australia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Korea, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and Pakistan (among 30).
- **Delivery deadline:** May 2030.



Mains Enrichment

Role of Family and Society in Moral Development



Sheetal Devi in action. Credit: World Archery

Sheetal Devi: 'My parents instilled the belief in me that I am no less than anybody'

New para archery world champion, only the second armless competitor to go so, on what gives her mental strength, and the technical and mental challenges she faced to reach the top in her sport