

## AIR Spotlight - Operation Ganga and Developments in Ukraine

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, Operation Ganga amidst the current crisis in Ukraine is featured.

### Participants:

1. Uday Bhaskar, Retired Commodore, and Strategic Analyst
2. Manash Pratim Bhuyan, Journalist

### Context:

Operation Ganga is an operation by the Government of India to provide humanitarian assistance and to evacuate Indian citizens from Ukraine amidst the Ongoing [Ukraine-Russia War](#). The article will discuss the different aspects of the operation and the challenges involved.

### Background:

- Thousands of Indians, especially students studying medicine in Ukraine, have been stuck in the country since it closed its airspace as a security measure after Russia launched “special military operations”.
- As the Russian invasion into Ukraine has left its major cities, including its capital Kyiv, under siege, India is making efforts to evacuate its citizens stuck in the war-torn country.

### What is Operation Ganga?

- ‘Operation Ganga’ is the initiative launched by the government of India to bring back Indians stranded in Ukraine. Under this, India has already successfully brought back more than 1,000 of its nationals from the country.
- It has also set up 24×7 control centres to assist in the evacuation of Indians through the border crossing points with Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Slovak Republic.
- A Twitter handle, ‘OpGanga Helpline’, has also been dedicated to the mission, where all information regarding the evacuation process and advisories of embassies are shared to keep everyone up-to-date.
- The Union government has also deployed around 20 flights from Air India, Air India Express, and SpiceJet.

### Ministers to Oversee Evacuation Efforts:

- The Union Minister of Civil Aviation will oversee the evacuation operations of stranded Indians in Romania and Moldova, while the Minister of Law will be visiting Slovakia.
- Furthermore, the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas will overlook operations in Hungary, while the Minister of State in the Ministry of Road Transport, General (Retd) VK Singh will manage evacuations in Poland.

### Indians in Ukraine:

- Ukraine has been providing both employment and education to a large number of foreign citizens.
- There are about 20,000-30,000 Indian citizens who are currently residing in Ukraine.

- There are many other nationalities, particularly from Africa and Asia and also those from Europe who are either studying or working in different sectors of the Ukrainian economy.
- The immediate priority of all these countries whose citizens are stuck in Ukraine is to ensure that they are able to move towards one of the bordering countries where evacuation is being planned.

**India's Efforts to Evacuate Citizens:**

- India is ensuring that the Indian citizens are evacuated safely. However, it is difficult for those people who are stuck in the Eastern part of Ukraine to move because there are certain constraints in terms of the ability to operate aircraft in a safe manner.
- Many students who reached Ukraine's borders with Poland and Romania have not been allowed to enter those nations. The Indian Embassy, however, assured them that alternative arrangements would be made to help them fly back to India.
- It is believed that day-by-day India will get to know the exact estimate of Indian citizens and accordingly the Ministry of External Affairs will efficiently plan the safe evacuation of its citizens as it has done in the past during the Iraq-Kuwait War in 1991.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that guided by India's motto of the 'World being One Family', India will also help people from neighbouring countries and developing countries stranded in Ukraine.

**India's Humanitarian Assistance to Ukraine:**

- Whenever there has been a humanitarian crisis of this scale, India has provided humanitarian support, for example, India provided great support and aid to the people of Afghanistan.
- India has decided to send humanitarian assistance to war-torn Ukraine, which has been resisting an invasion by Russia since February 24.
- The issue of humanitarian assistance was raised by the Ukrainian ambassador Igor Polikha in interaction with Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.
- The Government of India would send medicines and other essentials to the eastern European nation following the request from the ambassador.

**Way Forward:**

- There should be an appeal to Indian citizens also to have a Ukraine Fund so that the government's own efforts could be complemented.
- We have seen in the past that the citizens of India have been very forthcoming when it comes to any crisis. Hence, a kind of coordination and support is needed in this exigency.