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COAL SECTOR

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PRELIMS



POLITY & GOVERNANCE



Article 142

Context: In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court observed that it could directly grant a divorce to couples under **Article 142**.

About Article 142:-

- It deals with the **enforcement of decrees and orders of the Supreme Court**.
- Article 142 **provides discretionary power to the Supreme Court**.
- Article 142 provides a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do “complete justice” between the parties, where, at times, the law or statute may not provide a remedy.
- In those situations, the Court can pass a decree or an order to put an end to the dispute in a manner that would fit the facts of the case. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Understanding Article 142](#)).
- **Subsection 1** of Article 142 provides a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do **complete justice** between the parties. ([UPSC MAINS: alternate dispute resolution mechanism in India.](#))
- The **framers of the Constitution felt that this provision is of utmost significance** to those people who have to **suffer due to the delay** in getting their necessary reliefs due to the disadvantages of the judicial system. ([UPSC CSE: Judicial Accountability](#)).

Significance of Article 142: -

- **Prevents Injustice:** It provides a special and extraordinary power to the Supreme Court to do complete justice to the litigants who have suffered illegality or injustice in the proceedings.
- **Uphold citizen’s rights:** Article 142 has been invoked for protecting the rights of the different sections of the population.
- **Check on Government:** Works as a system of checks and balances with the Government or Legislature.

Criticisms of Article 142:

- The sweeping nature of these powers has invited the criticism that they are arbitrary and ambiguous.
- It is further argued that the Court then has wide discretion, and this allows the possibility of its arbitrary exercise or misuse due to the absence of a standard definition for the term “complete justice”.
- Defining “complete justice” is a subjective exercise that differs in its interpretation from case to case.
- In 1998, the apex court in **‘Supreme Court Bar Association vs Union of India’** held that the powers under Article 142 are supplementary in nature and could not be used to supplant or override a substantive law and “build a new edifice where none existed earlier”.

MUST READ: [Judiciary & AI](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

National SC-ST Hub Scheme

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister praised **National SC-ST Hub Scheme** for crossing over 1 lakh beneficiary registrations.

About National SC-ST Hub Scheme:-

- The National SC-ST Hub (NSSH) is under the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**. ([UPSC CSE: Empowering MSMEs digitally](#))
- The National SC/ST Hub (NSSH) would provide professional support to the SC/ST enterprises and enable them to effectively participate in public procurement process.
- The Hub would also work towards the development of new entrepreneurs to participate in procurement process leveraging on the 'Stand up India' programme. Selected entrepreneurs would be provided with support and mentoring by industry experts, CPSEs, and incubators. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Launch of Stand Up India Scheme](#))
- **The key action areas of NSSH include** vendor development, participation in public procurement, building a reliable database, mentoring and handholding support, policy advocacy with states, credit facilitation, capacity building, private affirmative action, technology upgradation, marketing support, and special subsidies under various schemes.

Key Benefits of the Scheme: -

- To achieve the **4% Public Procurement target** from SC-ST entrepreneurs
- Facilitating SC/ST Entrepreneurs to be part of vendor development programs and **mentoring support**. ([UPSC CSE: National Commission for SCs – Needs to be reimagined](#))
- **Collection, collation and dissemination of information** regarding SC/ST enterprises and entrepreneurs
- **Distribution of trade-specific tool kits** to trained candidates

Eligibility:-

- Existing and Aspiring SC/ST Entrepreneurs

MUST READ: [SAMARTH initiative for women](#)

SOURCE: [NEWSONAIR](#)

Meiteis

Context: Recently, the **Meitei community members** declared their intention to file contempt proceedings against the Hill Areas Committee (HAC) of the Manipur Legislative Assembly.

About the Meitei community:-

- Meitei community is the dominant population of **Manipur in northeastern India**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Manipur Insurgency](#))
- They are **predominantly Vaishnavite Hindus**.
- They are **divided into clans**, the members of which **do not intermarry**.
- An interesting aspect of the village socio-economic organization in Meitei society is the **Marup system** (literally means friendship association), a type of cooperative saving and credit institution.
- They **speak a Tibeto-Burman language**.
- They differ culturally from the surrounding hill tribes due to **following Hindu customs**.

Hill Areas Committee (HAC) of the Manipur Legislative Assembly:-

- The HAC was set up through a **1972 order**.
- It **comprises legislators of all constituencies** that fall partly or wholly within the State's hilly areas.

- The tribal hill districts of **Manipur** enjoy **special protections under Article 371C** of the Constitution, which says that **all laws affecting the districts must be vetted by the hill areas committee** of the Manipur Legislative Assembly. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Manipur's NRC exercise](#))

MUST READ: [Kuki Insurgency in Manipur](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

CU-Chayan portal

Context: Recently, UGC launched the '**CU-Chayan**' portal for faculty recruitment in Central varsities.

About CU-Chayan portal:-

- CU-Chayan portal is a **new platform to hire faculty members in central universities**.
- The portal will provide a **consolidated list of job openings across all 46 central universities** under the Union Ministry of Education. ([UPSC CSE: Governor's Role in Universities](#))
- **Central universities will still be responsible** for advertising job openings, accepting applications, screening applicants, conducting interviews, and hiring faculty members, just as they did before.
- However, all of these tasks will **be managed through the admin dashboard for each university** on the portal.

Benefits for Applicants and Universities:-

- Both applicants and universities will benefit from it as it provides a **simple interface** to apply for job openings.
- The portal will also throw up **real-time data** on vacancies, applications under consideration, and whether the **reservation policy** is being followed or not. ([UPSC MAINS: reservation in education institutions](#))
- It will **fast track the recruitment process** without centralizing the faculty hiring for the central universities.

About UGC:-

- UGC came into existence in **1953**.
- It became a **statutory body** by an **Act of Parliament in 1956**.
- **Background:-**
 - UGC was formed in **1946** to oversee the work of the **three Central Universities** of Aligarh, Banaras and, Delhi.
 - In **1947, the Committee** was entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with all the then existing Universities.
 - After independence, **the University Education Commission was set up in 1948** under the Chairmanship of **S. Radhakrishnan** and it recommended that the UGC be reconstituted on the general model of the University Grants Commission of the United Kingdom.
 - An Act of Parliament formally established the UGC in November 1956.
- **Objective:** for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education.
- The head office of the UGC is located in **New Delhi**.
- It is charged with coordination, determination and maintenance of **standards of higher education**.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It provides recognition to universities in India. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It disburses funds to such recognized universities and colleges. <p>MUST READ: Common University Entrance Test (CUET) SOURCE: HINDUSTAN TIMES</p>
World Press Freedom Index	<p>Context: The World Press Freedom Index was released recently.</p> <p>About World Press Freedom Index:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The World Press Freedom Index is published every year since 2002 by Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) or Reporters without Borders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporters Without Borders: it is an independent NGO based in Paris with consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF). OIF: 54 French speaking nations collective. The Index ranks countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists. (UPSC MAINS: Challenges to Freedom of Press) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> However, it is not an indicator of the quality of journalism. Evaluation Criteria:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each country or territory's score is evaluated using five contextual indicators. These include political context, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context and safety. <p>World Press Freedom Index 2023 Rankings:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norway, Ireland and Denmark occupied the top three positions in press freedom. Vietnam, China and North Korea constituted the bottom three. India's ranking in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index has slipped to 161 out of 180 countries. (UPSC PRELIMS: World Press Freedom Index 2022) <p>MUST READ: Index Monitoring Cell (IMC) SOURCE: THE HINDU</p>
Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act	<p>Context: Recently, the Bombay High Court stated that the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was not enacted to punish minors in a consensual relationship.</p> <p>About the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) was enacted in 2012. Objective: to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and pornography. (UPSC MAINS: Pornography – Impact on Children & Society) The Act has been amended in 2019. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amendment contains provisions for the enhancement of punishments for various offences and provides security and dignified childhood for a child. (UPSC PRELIMS: National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) <p>Salient provisions of the Act:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Act defines a Child as any person below eighteen. The Act remains gender-neutral. The Act also defines different forms of sexual abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It includes penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography.

- The Act deems a **sexual assault to be “aggravated”** if the abused child is **mentally ill** or **the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority** like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.
- The law **provides for relief and rehabilitation as soon as the complaint is made.**
- The **Special Juvenile Police Unit or the local police** will make immediate arrangements for the care and protection of a child.
 - The Arrangements such as obtaining emergency medical treatment for the child and placing the child in a shelter home etc. will be made available.
- The Act contains provisions for **Mandatory reporting.**
 - This casts a **legal duty upon a person who has knowledge** that a child has been sexually abused to report the offence.
 - If he fails to do so, **he may be punished with six months’ imprisonment and/ or a fine.**
- The Act provides for the **establishment of Special Courts** for the trial of offences under the Act.
- The Act prescribes a **maximum punishment of life imprisonment or the death penalty.**
- The Act provides a **mandatory minimum punishment of three years.**

MUST READ: [Sexual Intent is Key to POCSO Act: SC](#)

SOURCE: [THE PRINT](#)

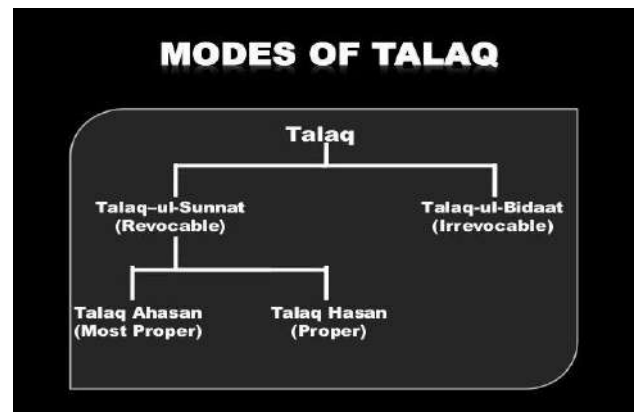
Talaq-e-Hasan

Context: Recently, the Supreme Court agreed to examine the validity of the practice of **talaq-e-Hasan.**

About Talaq-e-hasan:-

IMAGE SOURCE: [TALAQ AND TALAQ E TAFWEEZ \(slideshare.net\)](#)

- Talaq-e-Hasan is a form of ‘triple talaq’. ([UPSC CSE:Personal Laws in Marriage](#))
- Under this, a Muslim man can divorce his wife by pronouncing ‘talaq’ at three separate intervals.
 - The gap is at least one month or one menstrual cycle.
- According to **Sharia or the Muslim personal law**, men are allowed to practice polygamy that is, they can have more than one wife at the same time, up to a total of four. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Uniform Civil Code](#))
- **Nikah halala** is a process in which a Muslim woman has to marry another person and get divorced from him before being allowed to marry her divorcee husband again.
- **Triple talaq allows a husband to divorce his wife by repeating the word "talaq" (divorce) three times** in any form, including email or text message.
- In Islam, **talaq and khula** are two terms for divorce for men and women respectively.



- A man can part ways through 'talaq' while a woman can separate from her husband through 'Khula'.

MUST READ: [Religion and Indian Constitution](#)
SOURCE: [THE TIMES OF INDIA](#)

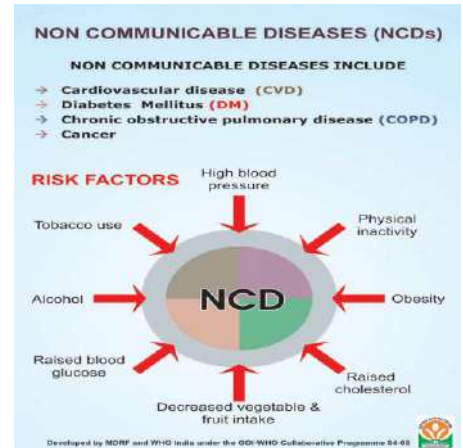
National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD)

Context: The NPCDCS programme has been renamed **National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD)** recently.

About the National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD):-

IMAGE SOURCE: [EMANTHI-NEWSBLOG: Health Minister To Appoint A Special Add. Secretary On Non-Communicable Diseases](#)

- The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) programme **launched in 2010**, has been renamed National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD) amid widening coverage and expansion.
- The new name **reflects the shift in focus from only controlling** the four major non-communicable diseases (NCDs) **to preventing them as well.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Non-Communicable Diseases \(NCDs\)](#))
- According to the MoHFW, the NP-NCD will aim to **reduce the burden of NCDs by promoting healthy lifestyles, early detection and timely treatment.**
- The programme will also **integrate with other health initiatives** such as Ayushman Bharat and National Health Mission.
- The programme will also **strengthen the health system** by enhancing human resources, infrastructure, equipment and drugs.
- The NP-NCD will also **leverage digital technologies** such as **telemedicine and m-health** to improve access and quality of NCD care. ([UPSC CSE: WHO and Traditional Medicine](#))



MUST READ: [National Non-Communicable Disease Monitoring Survey \(NNMS\)](#)
SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

CISO Deep-Dive Training Programme

Context: Recently, NeGD organised the 36th **CISO Deep-Dive Training Programme** under Cyber Surakshit Bharat.

About CISO Deep-Dive Training Programme:-

IMAGE SOURCE: [Infographic: The 8 most common types of Cyber Attacks - CyberOne](#)

- It's a training programme, under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- It is a **five-day intensive training programme**.
- The CISO training programme was **launched in 2018** under the **Public Private Partnership (PPP) model**.
 - NeGD has organized 36 sessions of CISO deep-dive training programs for more than 1,419 CISOs and IT officials since that time.
- **Participants:** it had 24 participants, including CISOs, technical wings of police and security forces, CTOs, and members of technical/PMU teams from Central Line Ministries and States/UTs.
- The purpose of the CISO Deep-Dive training programme is to **provide CISOs with a comprehensive understanding of cyber-attacks, the latest safeguarding technologies, and how to communicate the benefits of a strong e-infrastructure to organizations and the public.**
(UPSC PRELIMS: India's cyber infrastructure)
- Additionally, the training seeks to give a comprehensive view of legal provisions and help build concrete **crisis management plans for cyber-attacks.** **(UPSC CSE: Cybercrime)**



Cyber Surakshit Bharat:-

- It is the initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**
- It was conceptualized with the mission **to spread awareness about cybercrime** and build capacities of Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT officials, across all government departments, for ensuring adequate safety measures to combat the growing menace.

MUST READ: [Cyber Attacks in India](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi

Context: Recently, the Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani launched the '**Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi**' schemes.

About Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi:-

- Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi is an initiative for **strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development launch it.
- **Objective:** to ensure that India has the world's largest, universal, high-quality preschool network, as suggested by the NEP 2020. **(UPSC CSE: National Education Policy 2020)**

- It emphasizes the **links with primary education** as well as **early childhood health and nutrition services**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: POSHAN Maah](#))

Salient Features:-

- The government will target **children's development in every domain** mentioned in the **National Curriculum Framework**.
- These include physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, etc.
- All States will follow the national ECCE task force recommendations for a **play-based, activity-based learning pedagogy**.
- It is **targeted** specifically at **developmental milestones of 0-3-year olds** as well as **3-6-year olds**.
- It will include special support for **Divyang children**.
- Every child would be provided with **at least two hours of high-quality preschool instruction on a daily basis**.
- **Anganwadi Centres will be strengthened with high-quality infrastructure**, play equipment, and well-trained Anganwadi workers/teachers.
- It will **provide for the mother tongue as the primary teacher instruction medium**.
- It will also ensure **different types of teaching-learning material** (visual aids, audio aids, audio-visual and bodily-kinaesthetic aids) **to Anganwadi Sewikas**.
- It will help **build a Jan Andolan, to involve communities** in strengthening the foundations of the country's future generations.

MUST READ: [Education & Nation Building](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

Central Consumer Protection Authority

Context: Recently, the CCPA has asked e-commerce sites to stop selling car seat belt alarm stoppers
About CCPA:

- Central Consumer Protection Authority is a regulatory authority set up under Section 10(1) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- It regulates matters affecting the rights of consumers by individuals or entities following improper trade practices or by the display of inappropriate or wrong advertisements affecting public interest and helps promote consumer trust by enforcing the rights of consumers through effective guidelines.
- Members:
 - Chief Commissioner
 - Two Commissioners - One commissioner for goods and one for services.
 - The CCPA will have an Investigation Wing that will be headed by a Director General.
 - Central Government appoints all of them.
- Central Consumer Protection Authority has the following powers:
 - Inquire or cause an inquiry, either on receipt of complaint or suo moto or as directed by Central Government.
 - It can order an investigation by the District Collector or by Director General. They have powers of search and seizure, and authority to ask submission of any record or document.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The commission can direct recalling of any dangerous, hazardous or unsafe goods or withdrawal of similar services and order refunding of the amount collected. ○ The commission can involve in consumer advocacy, suggesting remedial actions, involving itself in related research, creating awareness and guiding consumers on safety precautions. ○ The commission can direct to a trader or manufacturer or endorser or advertiser or publisher after investigation to discontinue advertisements which are wrong or misleading or prejudicial to consumers. ○ The commission can also prevent the endorser of an advertisement which is wrong or misleading from making the same in relation to any product or service for a time period ranging up to one year, and three years in case of subsequent contravention. <p>Source: Indian Express</p>
<p>Data Governance Quality Index</p>	<p>Context: The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) has secured the second position among 66 ministries in the highly influential Data Governance Quality Index (DGQI) assessment for 2022-2023 (Q3)</p> <p>About Data Governance Quality Index (DGQI):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The DGQI is a comprehensive framework that evaluates the data governance practices of various ministries and departments of the Government of India. ● It covers aspects such as data quality, data security, data sharing, data analytics, data innovation and data literacy. ● The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) conduct the DGQI assessment in collaboration with the NITI Aayog. <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To assess the data preparedness of various ministries and departments on a standardized framework. ● To drive healthy competition among them and promote cooperative peer learning from best practices. <p>3 key pillars: The DGQI assessment covers three key pillars of data preparedness:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data Strategy: It evaluates the existence and implementation of systemic guidelines for data governance. 2. Data systems: It assesses the processes of data generation, management and use. 3. Data-driven outcomes: It measures the extent to which data is utilized and widely shared by institutions to drive decision-making. <p>Source: The Print</p>
<p>National Medical Commission</p>	<p>Context: The National Medical Commission (NMC) issued a notification that obliges doctors to seek a transfer of their practice license when they move to another state.</p> <p>About National Medical Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The National Medical Commission Act of 2019 establishes the National Medical Commission (NMC), which is responsible for the creation and regulation of all elements of medical education, practice, and institutions. ● National Medical Commission consists of 25 members including

- The Chairperson, Presidents of Postgraduate Medical Education Boards, and Presidents of Undergraduate Medical Education Boards
- Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
- Director General of Health Services.
- There are four boards in the National Medical Commission
 - **Under-Graduate Medical Education Board (UGMEB)**- sets norms for undergraduate courses
 - **Post-Graduate Medical Education Board (PGMEB)**- sets norms for post-graduate courses
 - **Medical Assessment and Rating Board**- inspects and rates the medical education institutes
 - **Ethics and Medical Registration Board**- regulates professional conduct of the doctors and registers them
- The **draft National Medical Commission (NMC) bill 2022** seeks to introduce a **fifth autonomous body** under the country's apex medical education regulator to conduct the National Exit Test (NExT)

MUST READ: <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/next-replacing-neet-pg-becomes-a-two-part-exam-nmc-releases-draft-rules-2315022-2022-12-29>

SOURCE: The New Indian Express
<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/may/18/doctors-peeved-at-nmc-notificationon-licence-transfer-2576217.html>

All India Survey of Higher Education

Context: The AISHE Survey 2020-21 conducted under the Ministry of Education found that the Muslim community's enrolment in higher education declined at a time when the enrolment of SCs, STs and OBCs improved.

About All India Survey of Higher Education

- **All India Survey of Higher Education is an annual web-based survey which started in 2010-11 and conducted by Ministry of Education.**
- Various **parameters of data collection includes teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, and infrastructure.**
- For the first time, the **Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of India have filled their data using an entirely online data collection platform** through the Web Data Capture Format (Web DCF) developed by the Department of Higher Education and the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

Key findings from the report:

- Gross Enrolment Ratio (**GER**) for all enrolments (as per 2011 Census) increased by over **two points to 27.3.**
- The **female enrolment in higher education programmes** had increased to **49% of total enrolments in 2020-21** compared to 45% in 2019-20.
- SC: There were two lakh more SC students who were enrolled in 2020-21 compared to the previous year.

- ST: The year also saw about three lakh more ST students and six lakh more OBC students being enrolled for higher education.
- The proportion of Muslim students enrolling for higher education dropped to 4.6% in 2020-21 from 5.5% in 2019-20
- Gender Parity Index (GPI) has increased from one in 2017-18 to 1.05 in 2020-21. More women enrolled themselves on science courses than men
 - The Gender Parity Index is a socioeconomic index usually designed to measure the relative access to education of males and females. UNESCO releases this index.
- During **2020-21**, the number of **universities has increased by 70**, and the number of **colleges has increased by 1,453**.
- The female per 100 male faculty has improved to 75 in 2020-21 from 74 in 2019-20 and 63 in 2014-15.

Other points

- Be it learning or teaching, the Muslim community is lagging behind all communities, including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in higher education

SOURCE: [The Hindu](#)

Government's Power to Promulgate and Repromulgate Ordinances

Context: Recently, the central government **promulgated an Ordinance** that undid the unanimous **verdict of a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court**.

About Promulgation of Ordinance;

- **Article 123 of the Constitution grants the President of India to promulgate Ordinances.**
- President can promulgate ordinance at any time when both Houses of Parliament are not in session (recess of Parliament) , the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary for him/her to take immediate action, he/she may promulgate such Ordinances as the circumstances appear to him/her to require.
- These ordinances have the same force and effect as an Act of Parliament but are in the nature of temporary laws.
- The ordinance can only be promulgated on those subjects on which Parliament is empowered to legislate, that is, the Union list or Concurrent list.
- An ordinance is subject to the same constitutional limitations as an Act of Parliament. Hence, an ordinance cannot abridge or take away any of the fundamental rights.
- Every ordinance issued **must be laid before both the Houses of Parliament within six weeks from the reassembly** of Parliament and it ceases to exist if it is not approved within six weeks of reassembly.
- Whenever a Bill seeking to replace an ordinance is introduced in the House, a statement explaining the circumstances that had necessitated immediate legislation through ordinance route should also be placed before the House.
- After the ordinance has been passed it is **required to be approved by the parliament within six weeks of reassembling**. The same **will cease to operate if disapproved** by either House.

- 44th Constitutional Amendment has reiterated that the satisfaction of the President to promulgate ordinance could be challenged in case an 'immediate action' was not required. Thus, it is subject to Judicial Review.
- The President may withdraw an ordinance at any time. However, he exercises his power with the consent of the Council of Ministers headed by the President.
- The Ordinances may have retrospective effect and may modify or repeal any act of parliament or other ordinances.
- **Article 213 deals with the broadly analogous powers of the Governor to promulgate/withdraw an Ordinance** when the state legislature is not in session.
- An Ordinance is valid for six weeks, or 42 days, from the date on which the next session starts. If the two Houses start their sessions on different dates, the later date will be considered, say the explanations in Articles 123 and 213.

Repromulgation of Ordinance;

- To re-promulgate Ordinance simply means to effectively extend the life of an Ordinance.
- An Ordinance 'ceases to operate' 6 weeks after the two Houses reassemble, except if it is converted into an Act by then. Re-promulgation sidesteps this limitation.
- In 2017, (Krishna Kumar Singh and Another v. State of Bihar) a seven-judge Bench of the court, which included present Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud, reiterated that legislation should normally be done by the legislature, and the Governor's power to issue an Ordinance is in the nature of an emergency power.
- The court clarified that there might be circumstances permitting the re-promulgation of an Ordinance — however, it said, repeated re-promulgations without bringing the Ordinance to the legislature would usurp the legislature's function, and will be unconstitutional.
- In Dr D C Wadhwa and Ors v. State of Bihar and Ors (1986) case, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court headed by then CJI P N Bhagwati held that "an Ordinance promulgated by the Governor to meet an emergent situation shall cease to be in operation at the expiration of six weeks from the reassembly of the Legislature."
- If the government wishes for the Ordinance to continue in force beyond the six-week period, it "has to go before the Legislature", which is the constitutional authority entrusted with law-making functions.

SOURCE: [The Hindu](#)

National e-Vidhan Application

Context: The Union Minister for Ministry of Commerce and Industry inaugurated the two-day National Workshop on **National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)**.

About National e-Vidhan Application;

- "National eVidhan Application (NeVA)", a **Mission Mode Project for Digital Legislatures** to make the functioning of all Legislative Houses in the country paperless.
- It has been developed on the theme of '**One Nation – One Application**'.
- NeVA is transforming **all State Legislatures** into '**DIGITAL HOUSES**'.
- It enables the legislatures **to transact entire Government business on digital platform** including information exchange with the State Government Departments in digital mode.
- The **aim** of the project is to bring **all the legislatures of the country together, in one platform**.
- Thereby creating a **massive data depository** without having the complexity of multiple applications.
- NeVA is a workflow system deployed on **NIC Cloud, MeghRaj**.

- It helps the Chair of the House to conduct the proceedings of the House **smoothly and in a paperless manner**.
- NeVA is a **device neutral and member centric application** created to equip them to handle diverse House Business smartly by putting entire information regarding
 - member contact details
 - rules of procedure
 - list of business
 - notices, bulletins and bills
 - starred/unstarred questions and answers
 - papers laid,
 - Committee reports etc.
- NeVA will completely eliminate the process of sending out a notice/request for collection of data.
- The application **hosts a secure page for each Member** of the House for submitting questions & other notices.
- **mNeVA** is a user-friendly **Mobile App of NeVA** which is available on Android as well as on iOS.
- mNeVA has made **information on the conduct of business** in Legislatures accessible anytime, anywhere to everyone.

MUST READ: [National E-governance Plan \(NeGP\) \(UPSC Mains\)](#).

SOURCE: [PIB](#).

Forum Shopping

Context: Chief Justice of India, D.Y.Chandrachud condemned 'forum shopping' practise in courts.

About Forum Shopping:

- "Forum shopping" is a term that describes the **strategy of some litigants or lawyers** who try to **find the most favourable court or judge for their case**.
- Litigants or lawyers do this by looking at various factors, such as the **reputation, law, or procedure of the court or judge, and the likelihood of getting a positive outcome**.
- This practice **undermines the integrity and impartiality** of the judicial system, as well as the merit of judgements of judicial system.
- Moreover, it can also lead to **wastage of judicial resources, delay in justice delivery, and inconsistency in legal precedents** by resorting such practises to get favourable judgements.

Indian Judiciary on Forum Shopping:

- The concept of forum shopping has **not been defined** in any Indian statute.
- However, Indian Judiciary through its observation has assisted in **streamlining this concept in the country's legal system**.
- The practice of forum shopping is **not permitted** by Indian law.
- **Types of Forum shopping** includes;
 - Filing multiple lawsuits in different courts on the same or similar issues, hoping that one of them will grant the desired relief.
 - Choosing a court or a jurisdiction that has a more lenient or favourable substantive or procedural law for the case.
 - Seeking to transfer or remove a case from one court to another for strategic reasons.
 - Influencing or bribing judges or court officials to assign a case to a particular judge or bench.

- **SC Bench of Justice S. Abdul Nazeer and Justice Krishna Murari in the case of ‘Vijay Kumar Ghai vs. State of W.B-** termed forum shopping as a “disreputable practise by the courts” that “has no sanction and paramountcy in law”.

Impacts of forum shopping in Indian Judiciary:

- **Creates uncertainty:** It creates uncertainty and confusion among litigants and lawyers about the proper jurisdiction and venue for their cases.
- **Losses trust:** It erodes public confidence and trust in the judiciary, as it creates an impression that justice is not based on merit but on manipulation.
- **Conflicting Judgements:** Creating conflicting or inconsistent judgments on the same or similar issues, leading to legal uncertainty and chaos.
- **Produce favourable judgements in absence of merit:** Eroding the credibility and impartiality of the judiciary, as well as the trust and respect of the public and the legal profession.
- **Creates venues of corruption:** Encouraging forum shopping by other litigants or lawyers creates a vicious cycle of abuse and corruption.

Bench Hunting

- The term “Bench hunting” refers to **petitioners managing to get their cases heard by a particular judge or court to ensure a favourable order.**
- Recently, based on the 2017 SC ruling in ‘Kamini Jaiswal vs. Union of India’, the court observed that the practise of bench hunting and related unacceptable practises are prevalent to find a court or forum of their choice.

Must Read: [Supreme court collegium](#)

SOURCE: [The Indian Express](#)

Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023

Context: On May 19, 2023, the President of India promulgated the **Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023.**

About the news:

- The ordinance extends the **powers over services in the administration of the national capital** to the **Delhi Lieutenant Governor.**
- Thus, the **Lieutenant Governor** has the **power to transfer and appoint bureaucrats** posted to Delhi.
- The Ordinance is aimed at **nullifying the effect of the CJI led Constitution Bench’s verdict,** which gave the Delhi government power over administrative services in the capital.
- During the judgement, the SC interpreted **Article 239AA,** the provision that deals with the governance structure of Delhi, as one that underlies the principles of federalism, participatory democracy, and collective responsibility.

Article 239 AA:

- It is inserted into the Constitution by **the 69th Amendment Act, 1991.**
- Article 239AA conferred special status on Delhi following the recommendations of the **S.Balakrishnan Committee** that was set up in 1987 to look into Delhi's demands for statehood.
- The article states that the **NCT shall have a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers** headed by a **Chief Minister.**
- The **Legislative Assembly** shall have the power to make laws on all matters in **the State List and the Concurrent List,** except for those matters that are specifically excluded by the Constitution.

- The **Council of Ministers** shall be responsible to the **Legislative Assembly**.

About Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023:

- The ordinance seeks to establish for the first time the **National Capital Civil Service Authority (NCCSA)**.
- **NCCSA Composition:** It will be headed by the **Chief Minister of Delhi**, with the **Chief Secretary and Principal Home Secretary of Delhi** being the other two members.
- **Functions of NCCSA;**
 - It will make **recommendations to the Lieutenant Governor (LG)** regarding transfer, posting, vigilance and other incidental matters of all Group 'A' officers and officers of DANICS serving in the Government of NCTD.
 - All matters required to be decided by the NCCSA shall be decided by **majority of votes** of the members present and voting.
 - This means, that in effect, **the decision of the elected chief minister of Delhi** can be overruled by the two senior bureaucrats.
- **Role of LG:**
 - The ordinance stated that the LG will **pass orders to give effect to the recommendations** passed by the NCCSA.
 - However, **LG can ask** for the **relevant material** with regard to officers belonging to All India Services and DANICS serving the Delhi government.
 - In case the LG differs with the recommendation made, he/she may return the recommendation to the Authority for reconsideration by the Authority. For this, reasons will have to be recorded in writing.
 - However, as per the ordinance, in case of difference of opinion, the decision of the LG shall be final.
- There is no specific provision in the ordinance regarding the transfer posting, discipline etc. of Group B and Group C officers, which seems to indicate that the elected government of Delhi would continue to have control over these officers.

MUST READ: [Delhi CM-LG stalemate \(UPSC Mains\)](#)

SOURCE: [The Hindu](#)

SAMARTH Campaign

Context: Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj launches SAMARTH campaign to promote digital transactions at Gram Panchayat Level

About SAMARTH campaign:

- The SAMARTH campaign, which stands for **Sashakt Mahila, Aatmanirbhar Rashtra**.
- It is a **joint initiative** of the **Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)**, and **Common Service Centres (CSCs)**.
- **Coverage:** The campaign will **cover all the 2.6 lakh Gram Panchayats** across the country and will involve various activities such as training, workshops, competitions, and awards.
- Targets to reach **2.5 crore rural households**, including **1.25 crore women** members of self-help groups (SHGs).

Features of SAMARTH campaign:

- It seeks to **empower rural communities** by enabling them to participate in the digital economy and access the benefits of digital transactions.
- **Provides** training and awareness on various digital payment modes such as the **Aadhaar-enabled payment system (AePS), Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app, Bharat QR code**, etc.

- Facilitates opening of **bank accounts and linking of Aadhaar and mobile numbers** for seamless transactions.
- Encourages **adoption of digital transactions** for various purposes such as savings, credit, remittances, social security benefits, government subsidies, etc.
- **Monitors and rewards** the performance of gram panchayats, SHGs, community resource persons (CRPs), bank mitras, etc. based on predefined indicators.

MUST READ: [Samarth Scheme of Ministry of Textiles](#)

[SAMARTH initiative for women](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**ASEAN India
Maritime
Exercise
(AIME-2023)**

Context: Recently, Indian Naval Ships arrived in Singapore to participate in the Inaugural **ASEAN India Maritime Exercise (AIME-2023)**.

About ASEAN India Maritime Exercise (AIME-2023):-

- ASEAN India Maritime Exercise (AIME-2023) will inaugurate in **Singapore**.
- **Objective:** to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the Indian Navy and ASEAN navies in the maritime domain. ([UPSC PRELIMS: India-ASEAN relations](#))



- The **Harbour Phase** of the exercise is scheduled to be held at **Changi Naval Base** from 02 to 04 May 2023.
 - During this phase, participating nations will engage in various professional and cultural exchanges.
- The **Sea Phase** will be conducted from 07 to 08 May 2023 in the **South China Sea**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Taiwan Strait, Yellow Sea and Bohai Sea](#))
 - This phase will include a wide range of **naval exercises** such as surface warfare exercises, anti-submarine warfare exercises, and air defence exercises.
- **INS Delhi and INS Satpura are a part of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet based at Visakhapatnam.**
 - **INS Delhi** is India's first indigenously-built guided missile destroyer, and
 - **INS Satpura** is an indigenously-built guided missile stealth frigate.
 - The ships, will also participate in **International Maritime Defence Exhibition (IMDEX-23)** and **International Maritime Security Conference (IMSC)** being hosted by Singapore.

MUST READ: [Indian Ocean Naval Symposium](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

**U.S.
Commission
for
International
Religious
Freedom
(USCIRF)**

Context: Recently, the **U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)** sought sanctions on Indian agencies over the 'violation' of religious freedom.

About U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF):-

- USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan **US federal government commission**.
- It was **established by the US government in 1998** after the inaction of the **International Religious Freedom Act**.

- It is Headquartered in **Washington DC**.
- It is dedicated to defending the **universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad**.
- It is an **advisory body to the US Congress**.
- The recommendations of USCIRF are **non-binding** on the state department
- Traditionally, **India does not recognize the view of USCIRF**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: India's designation by the USCIRF](#))
- It monitors the **universal right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) abroad**. **USCIRF Functions:-**
 - **Advises Congress** by working with Congressional offices, convening and testifying at hearings, and holding briefings on countries and thematic issues.
 - **Engages the Executive Branch** by regularly meeting with Executive Branch officials.
 - **Monitors Religious Freedom Conditions Abroad**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Religious Tolerance and Social Harmony](#))
 - It makes **policy recommendations** to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.
 - **Raises Public Awareness** by holding public events, hosting podcast episodes, releasing public statements, and publishing op-eds.
 - **Issues an Annual Report & Other Publications** that assess foreign countries that violate religious freedom in a systematic, ongoing, and/or egregious manner.

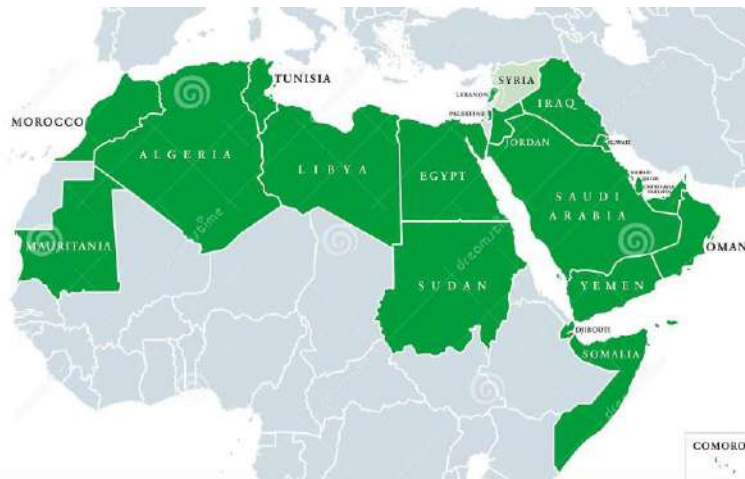
MUST READ: [The hijab case and the essential practices doctrine](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

Arab League

Context: Recently, **the Arab League** voted to reinstate Syria's membership after its suspension more than 10 years ago

About Arab League:



- The Arab League, formally known as the **League of Arab States**, was established in **1945**.
- It is a **regional organization of Arab states in the Middle East and parts of Africa**.
- The **founding member states** were **Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan (now Jordan), Saudi Arabia, and Yemen**.

- Currently, it has **22 member states**, who have pledged to cooperate on economic and military affairs, among other issues.
- Other members are **Libya (1953); Sudan (1956); Tunisia and Morocco (1958); Kuwait (1961); Algeria (1962); Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (1971); Mauritania (1973); Somalia (1974); the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO; 1976); Djibouti (1977); and Comoros (1993)**.
- Each member has **one vote** on the League Council, **decisions being binding only on those states that have voted for them**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Gulf region](#))

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The signing on April 13, 1950, of an agreement on joint defence and economic cooperation also committed the signatories to the coordination of military defenses measures. (UPSC PRELIMS: Arab Spring) <p>MUST READ: Contribution of Indian Diaspora</p> <p>SOURCE: THE INDIAN EXPRESS</p>
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)	<p>Context: The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) recently published a new study on the rising challenges of extreme weather events and natural disasters.</p> <p>About United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is the main legislative organ of ESCAP. It reports to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN. (UPSC MAINS: Peacekeeping efforts of UN) It provides a forum for all governments of the region to review and discuss economic and social issues and to strengthen regional cooperation. The Commission meets annually at the ministerial level. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It discusses and decides on important issues pertaining to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the region, to decide on the recommendations of its subsidiary bodies and of the Executive Secretary. It reviews and endorses the proposed strategic framework and programme of work, and makes any other decisions required, in conformity with its terms of reference. Members: It has 53 member States and 9 associate members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Commission promotes cooperation in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations. (UPSC MAINS: Reforms in the United Nations (UN)) Functions:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge. It provides technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also provides support to partners at the national level. <p>MUST READ: United Nations Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH)</p> <p>SOURCE: DOWN TO EARTH</p>
Global Report on Internal Displacement - 2023	<p>Context: The Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023 (GRID-2023) stated that in 2022, over 32 million people were displaced by disasters, 98% of which were triggered by weather-related events such as floods and storms.</p> <p>About the publisher:</p>

- The **Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023 (GRID-2023)** is published by the **Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)**.
- IDMC is the world’s leading source of data and analysis on Internal Displacement (ID).
- IDMC is an international non-governmental organization established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council in Geneva.
- It is focused on monitoring and providing information and analysis on the world’s internally displaced persons.

About Internal displacement:

- Internal displacement refers to the situation where people are forced to leave their homes but remain within their country’s borders.
- Unlike refugees, internally displaced people have not crossed international borders and are not covered by any international convention.
- India has one of the highest numbers of IDPs in the world.
- India does not have a national policy or legal framework to deal with refugees or IDPs.
- India has not ratified the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and does not permit UNHCR access to most refugee groups.

Key highlights of the report:

Highlights	Details
Total Number of IDPs	Over 71 million IDPs across 110 countries and territories at the end of 2022, a 20% increase in a year
Highest displacement	Pakistan had the highest number of disaster displacements in the world in 2022, at 8.16 million. It was followed by Philippines and China.
Total IDPs in India	India recorded the fourth largest disaster displacement, with 2.5 million displacements.
Actions needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional cash assistance for supporting the immediate needs of IDPs; • Developing livelihoods and skills for IDPs; • Building resilience and preparedness at an individual, community, and national levels; • Addressing the impacts of climate change and investing in adaptation measures are crucial to mitigate future displacements

Factors for Internal Displacement:

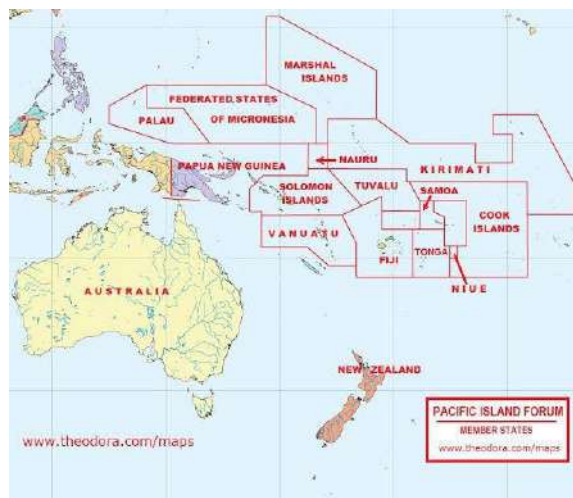
- Internal displacement in India arises from secessionist movements, identity-based autonomy movements, localized violence, and environmental disaster and development-induced displacement.
- In 2022, the Russia-Ukraine caused a displacement of 16.9 million — **“the highest figure ever recorded for any country.”**
 - The number of displacements associated with conflict and violence nearly doubled to 28.3 million.
- In recent years, disasters have displaced more people than historically dominant reasons for conflicts and violence. This makes climate change — that leads to frequent weather-related disasters — the key driver of massive internal migration of people, who we popularly call “climate refugees”.
- As per the report, in 2022, 32.6 million people were displaced due to disasters and 6 out of 10 disaster displacements were triggered by floods.

Why is there a sudden increase in such disasters?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The prolonged three-year La Niña phenomenon has contributed to the rise in weather-related disasters, especially floods, leading to widespread disasters across the globe. There is also a rise in drought in Eastern Africa which also adds to the displacement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Niña is the cooler than the normal phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.
Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) 2023	<p>Context: The sixth international Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) began in Dhaka, Bangladesh.</p> <p>About the 6th IOC: The theme of this year's conference is 'Peace, Prosperity and Partnership for a Resilient Future' due to the post-Covid situation and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.</p> <p>About IOC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) was started in 2016 It has emerged as the "flagship consultative forum" for countries in the region over regional affairs. The conference aims to strengthen partnerships with Indian Ocean countries, enhance regional political engagement, and facilitate decision-making in crisis situations. The conference aims to bring critical states and principal maritime partners of the region on a common platform to deliberate upon the prospects of regional cooperation for Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR). <p>Source: NewsOnAir</p>
South Asia Gas Enterprise	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5-billion undersea UAE-Gujarat gas pipeline proposed proposed 2,000-km-long energy corridor connecting Middle East and India, a \$5 billion project, can lead to an annual saving of about `7,000 crore in comparison with similar quantity of liquefied natural gas (LNG) import. <p>About South Asia Gas Enterprise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Asia Gas Enterprise (SAGE), an international consortium of companies in deepwater pipeline projects, has sought the support of ministry of petroleum and others to develop an undersea gas pipeline from Gulf to India. The proposed 2,000-km-long energy corridor connecting Middle East and India, a \$5 billion project, can lead to an annual saving of about `7,000 crore in comparison with similar quantity of liquefied natural gas (LNG) import. South Asia Gas Enterprise Private Limited is a Private incorporated on 21 November 2005. It is classified as Non-govt company and is registered at Registrar of Companies, Delhi. It is promoted by the New Delhi based Siddho Mal Group, in Joint Venture with a UK-based Deepwater Technology Company. SAGE is working with a Global Consortium of some of the most reputed companies in the field of Deepwater Pipelines, to create a Multi-Billion Dollar "Energy Corridor" that can transport gas from the Middle East to India, bypassing the land route through Pakistan. <p>Significance of the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed 2,000-km energy corridor connecting the Middle East and India will lead to an annual saving of about Rs. 70 billion (\$849.60 million). The route will run via Oman and UAE through the Arabian Sea, allowing import from Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkmenistan and Qatar, a region with 2,500 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qatar, Iran, Iraq and Turkmenistan together have enormous Natural Gas reserves to the tune of 2,000 trillion cubic feet (TCF) and SAGE plans to transport some of this to India through its Deepwater Pipeline Infrastructure. Dialogue and discussions with the above-mentioned countries are on at the Highest Levels. The option of Gas Swaps between these nations is also being explored. • In addition, SAGE also plans to supply Natural Gas to Oman/ UAE on its Pipeline Route to India, and seeks to further build Cooperative Relations with the friendly Gulf and Middle East countries. <p>SOURCE: The Financial Express</p> <p>MUST READ: TAPI gas pipeline project</p>
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	<p>Context: The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development pledged further support for war-torn Ukraine as shareholders consider a proposal to boost EBRD capital by 3 billion-5 billion euros.</p> <p>About European Bank for Reconstruction and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is a multilateral financial institution established in 1991. • The organization was developed to help Eastern European and ex-Soviet countries transitioning into democracies by developing free-market economies after the fall of communism. • EBRD is headquartered in London, United Kingdom. • It is publicly owned by shareholders in 69 countries. It only supports countries that are committed to democratic principles • The bank finances large and small projects in a variety of sectors including public works, agribusiness, natural resources, and municipal infrastructure. • Organization does not finance projects related to the tobacco industry, defense, certain alcoholic products, stand-alone gambling facilities, or substances banned by international law. • Despite its public sector shareholders, it invests mainly in private enterprises, together with commercial partners. • India has become the 69th shareholder of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). This move will enable Indian companies to undertake joint investments in regions in which the EBRD operates. <p>MUST READ: New Development Bank https://iasbaba.com/2021/12/new-development-bank-2/</p> <p>https://iasbaba.com/2022/01/asian-infrastructure-investment-bank-aiib/</p> <p>SOURCE: The Print https://theprint.in/world/ebrd-pledges-more-support-for-ukraine-eyes-capital-boost/1581166/</p>
Forum for India–Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPI) Summit 2023	<p>Context: Recently, Prime Minister of India attended Forum for India–Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPI) Summit in Papua New Guinea.</p> <p>About Forum for India–Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPI) Summit</p>

- Forum for India-Pacific Islands cooperation is a multinational grouping developed in 2014 for cooperation between India and 14 Pacific Islands nations.
- FIPIC consists of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
- India established the Forum for FIPIC as a part of the Act East Policy.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Fiji convened FIPIC’s inaugural gathering in 2014. All 14 countries actively participated in this landmark event.
- In 2015, the second meeting of the forum was held in Jaipur, with the participation of all 14 countries.
- During this gathering, numerous initiatives were announced to promote the development and well-being of the people.
- Third summit of India-Pacific Islands Co-operation (FIPIC Summit 2023) held at Port Moresby was jointly hosted with Papua New Guinea.
- Prime minister of India co- chaired the summit with PM of Papua New Guinea.
- On this occasion, Prime Minister of India unveiled a comprehensive 12-step initiative aimed at advancing India's collaborations with the countries in the Pacific region.
- India's development partnership with Pacific Island Countries (PICs) encompasses various areas, such as infrastructure development, with a particular emphasis on education, health, and culture.
- Additionally, community development projects have involved initiatives such as refurbishing libraries and school buildings, renovating colleges, providing IT infrastructure to educational institutions, and establishing digital libraries.



MUST READ: ASEAN

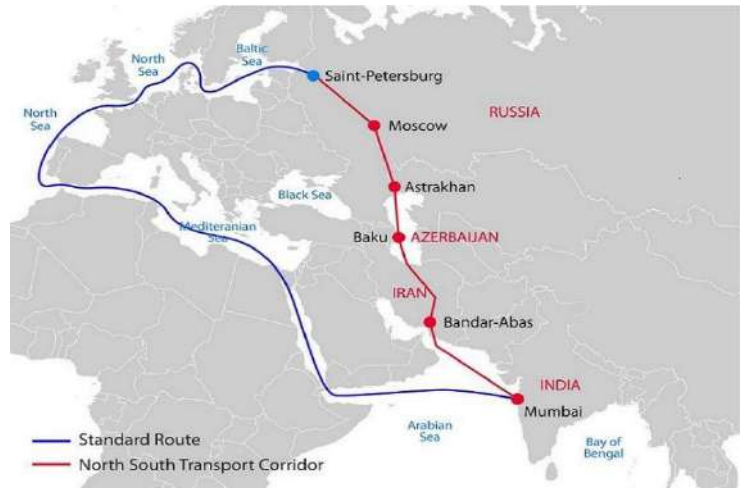
SOURCE: The Hindu <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pm-modi-underlines-importance-of-free-and-open-indo-pacific-at-fipic-summit-in-papua-new-guinea/article66879690.ece>.

International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

Context: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin are signed an agreement to finalize the construction of the Rasht (Iranian city on Caspian Sea)-Astara (Azerbaijan) railway, which is expected to boost the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

About International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

- International North-South Transport Corridor is a multi-modal transportation established in 2000 for promoting transportation cooperation among the Member States.
- Russia, India and Iran signed preliminary agreements to develop the 7,200-km-long International North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) in 2002.
- Three years later, Azerbaijan signed up for the project. This agreement was eventually ratified by 13 countries — India, Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine.
- The ambitious trade corridor seeks to link Russia’s Baltic Sea coast to India’s western ports in the Arabian Sea through Azerbaijan and Iran.
- The corridor encompasses sea, road and rail routes.
- The main purpose of the corridor was to reduce carriage costs and transit time between India and Russia. The transit time is expected to reduce to almost half, once the corridor becomes fully functional.



India’s Interest

- India’s interest in the development of the INSTC is manifested by its \$2.1 billion investments, including the construction of the port of Chabahar in Iran and the construction of a 500 km Chabahar-Zahedan railway line.
- Chabahar is now capable of processing ultra-large container ships.
- For India, the INSTC opens the way for trading with Iran and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.
- This, naturally, has implications in terms of reaching out to both Afghanistan and Central Asia, significant corners in our extended neighbourhood.
- The corridor will also provide access to potential markets in the wider Eurasia region.

MUST READ: [Chabahar Port \(UPSC Prelims\)](#)

SOURCE: [The Hindu](#)

G7

Context: The 49th G7 summit was held from 19 to 21 May 2023 in Hiroshima, Japan.

About G7;

Image Source: BBC

- G7 stands for “Group of Seven” industrialized nations.
- This intergovernmental organisation was formed in 1975.




G7 in numbers

- 7** member countries
- 1975** first meeting of the group of six
- 40%** of global GDP
- 1/10** of world’s population
- 2014** Russia suspended over annexation of Crimea

Source: BBC research

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security and energy policy. • Headquarters: The G-7 does not have a formal constitution or a fixed headquarters. The decisions taken by leaders during annual summits are non-binding. • G-7 countries include United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom. • Members share common values like democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, free markets, and respect for international law. • Origin: The G7 draws its roots from a meeting between the current G7 members, excluding Canada that took place in 1975. At the time, the global economy was in a state of recession due to the OPEC oil embargo. As the energy crisis was escalating, US decided that it would be beneficial for the large players on the world stage to coordinate with each other on macroeconomic initiatives. • Nature of working: While G7 initially focused on international economic policy, in the 1980s, the G7 extended its mandate to include issues related to foreign policy and security as well. In recent years, G7 leaders have met to formulate common responses to challenges encompassing counterterrorism, development, education, health, human rights and climate change. <p>MUST READ: G7 (UPSC Mains) SOURCE: The Indian Express</p>
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<p>India-Australia Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement</p>	<p>Context: India and Australia signed a migration and mobility pact to open up opportunities for students and business people.</p> <p>About India- Australia Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement:</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India and Australia signed the Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement. • Aim: The agreement is aimed at making it easier for students, academics and professionals to live study and work in each other's countries. • India has similar mobility agreements with Austria, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Finland. • It will regulate multiple entry visas for professionals and student exchange programs. • These programs will be reviewed regularly by a Joint Working Group (JWG) to ensure that they are meeting their objectives and delivering the desired outcomes. <p>MUST READ: India Australia Relations (UPSC Mains: India Australia Relations) SOURCE: Hindustan Times</p>
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<p>Spratly Islands</p>	<p>Context: China Deploys 3 navigation beacons in the South China Sea to Counter Philippines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China deployed three navigation beacons around the contested Spratly islands of the South China Sea. • It was followed by similar marker placements by the Philippines earlier this month.
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- Through this both sides are trying to fortify their claims to the area.
- Tensions have heightened recently in contested parts of the South China Sea, one of the world's most important trade routes.



- Chinese dredging vessels are purportedly seen in the waters around Mischief Reef in the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea in this still image from video taken by a P-8A Poseidon surveillance aircraft.

South China Sea:

- **Location:** South China Sea is a marginal sea of the Western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia.

- **Straits:** It is connected by Taiwan Strait with the East China Sea and by Luzon Strait with the Philippine Sea.
- **Bordering states & territories:** the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.
- **Nine Dash Line** is a set of line segments on various maps that accompanied the claims of



of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China in the South China Sea.

- **Strategic Importance:** This Sea holds tremendous strategic importance for its location as it is the connecting link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean (Strait of Malacca).

- **Dispute:** Southeast Asian countries like China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan have disputes over the contentious South China Sea region for centuries.

- The two primary points of contention are the **Spratly Islands** and the **Paracel Islands** in the sea.

The Spratly Islands

- The Spratly Islands consist of **more than 100 small islands or reefs** surrounded by rich fishing grounds - and potentially by **gas and oil deposits**.
- They are claimed in their entirety by **China, Taiwan, and Vietnam**, while portions are claimed by **Malaysia** and the **Philippines**.
- About 45 islands are occupied by relatively small numbers of military forces from China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

- Since 1985 **Brunei** has claimed a continental shelf that overlaps a southern reef but has not made any formal claim to the reef. Brunei claims an exclusive economic zone over this area.

MUST READ: [Senkaku-Diaoyu Islands Dispute \(UPSC Prelims\)](#)

SOURCE: [Hindustan Times](#)

Leipzig Transport Summit

Context: Transport ministers from 64 member countries of **the International Transport Forum (ITF)** have gathered for a summit at Leipzig, Germany, from May 24-26, 2023.

- At the event themed '**Transport Enabling Sustainable Economies**'.
- The Summit will discuss themes ranging from climate change to Ukraine and supply chain resilience to active mobility.
- Over 1,300 delegates from around 80 countries are likely to participate.
- The UK holds the Presidency.
- The summit is administratively integrated with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

About International Transport Forum:

- The International Transport Forum at the OECD is an **intergovernmental organisation** which **acts as a think tank** for transport policy and organises the Annual Summit of **transport ministers**.
- ITF is the only global body that covers all transport modes. The ITF is **administratively integrated** with the OECD, yet **politically autonomous**.
- **Secretariat:** The International Transport Forum's secretariats based at the OECD in Paris (France).
- **Members:** The International Transport Forum (ITF) at the OECD is an intergovernmental organisation with 64 member countries.
- **Mandate:** International Transport Forum (ITF) aims to foster a deeper understanding of the role of transport in economic growth, environmental sustainability and social inclusion and to raise the public profile of transport policy.
- **Administrative Structure:** The Forum is administratively integrated into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), but it is politically independent, and many of its member countries are not OECD members..

MUST READ: [OECD](#)

SOURCE: [Down to Earth](#)



ECONOMY

**Business Ready (B-READY) rankings**

Context: Recently, the World Bank released the **Business Ready (B-READY)** rankings.

About Business Ready (B-READY) rankings: -

- The **World Bank Group** is implementing a **new corporate flagship, Business Ready (B-READY)**.
- **Objective:** to assess the business and investment environment worldwide annually.
- In September 2021, the World Bank Group (WBG) Senior Management decided to **discontinue the Doing Business (DB) report** and data and announced a new approach for assessing the business and investment climate. ([UPSC CSE: World Bank Stops 'Ease of Doing Business Report'](#))
- **B-READY improves upon and replaces Doing Business.** ([UPSC MAINS: Criticism of WB's Ease of Doing Business Report](#))
- The new approach is informed by advice from **experts in the WBG** and **recommendations from qualified academics and practitioners outside the institution, including the External Panel Review** on DB methodology.
- The new benchmarking exercise is being developed in the **Development Economics (DEC) Global Indicators Group (DECIG)**.
 - This Group will **design, pilot, and implement the new benchmarking exercise.**
 - It will be under the guidance of the **WBG Chief Economist** and **DEC Senior Vice President.**
- The **data collection and reporting process** will be governed by the **highest possible standards**, including sound data gathering

The key features of the new project are as follows:-

- **Working Title.** The working title of the new project is **Business Enabling Environment**, with the acronym '**BEE**'.
- The title will be refined after due consideration for branding impact.
- The objective of this benchmarking exercise is to provide a quantitative assessment of the business environment for private sector development.
- **Scope:** BEE will **assess the economy's business environment** by focusing on the regulatory framework and the provision of related public services for firms and markets, as well as the efficiency with which they are combined in practice.

MUST READ: [India and World Bank](#)

SOURCE: [WORLD BANK](#)

De dollarization

Context: Recently, **De-dollarization** picked up pace in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

About De-dollarization: -

- De-dollarization refers to the **replacement of the U.S. dollar with other currencies as the global reserve currency.**
 - **Reserve currency:** refers to any currency that is widely used in cross-border transactions and is commonly held as reserves by central banks.
- De-dollarization is a process of **substituting the US dollar** as the currency used for:

- **Trading oil** and/ or other commodities
- Buying US dollars for the **forex reserves**
- **Bilateral trade agreements**
- **Dollar-denominated assets**

History of Global Currency: -

- The **British pound** was the primary reserve currency during the **19th and early 20th centuries**.
- After World War II, and the **U.S. dollar** became the dominant reserve currency.
 - It has held this position since then, with over **60% of global foreign exchange reserves** held in dollars as of 2021.

Reasons for the popularity of the US Dollar: -

- **High Level of Trust:** The global acceptability of the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency is primarily due to the **popularity of U.S. assets among investors**.
- **Rule of Law:** This trust may be due to the '**rule of law**' in the **U.S.**

Need for De- Dollarization: -

- **Diversification of Risk:** Holding a basket of currencies instead of just one currency (i.e., the US dollar) can help **reduce the potential negative impact of a sudden currency devaluation** or other economic shocks/political changes in the US. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Currency manipulation](#))
- **Increasing Trade and Investment:** By using other currencies, countries can increase trade and investment with other countries that may not have a strong relationship with the US, which can **open up new markets and opportunities for growth**.
- **Reducing US Monetary Policy Influence:** By reducing the use of the US dollar, countries can **increase their economic autonomy**.
- **Geopolitical Benefits:** By reducing dependence on the US dollar, countries may be able to improve their geopolitical standing. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Hyper globalisation](#))

Challenges of De dollarization: -

- **Market Volatility and Global Financial Crisis:** A sudden shift away from the dollar could create market volatility and instability, as **many countries and businesses are heavily reliant on the dollar for trade and investment** and any change would lead to a potential **global financial crisis**.
- **Trade Disruptions:** A move away from the dollar could also disrupt international trade, as businesses and governments adjust to new currencies and exchange rate regimes.
- **Exchange Rate Risk:** De-dollarization can expose countries to exchange rate risk, as they may have to convert their reserves into other currencies that are subject to volatility.
- **Geopolitical Risks:** A shift away from the dollar can be seen as a challenge to US economic and geopolitical power, which could lead to political tensions and even conflict.

International Efforts so far: -

- **Bilateral currency swaps** among countries, promotion of trade in national currencies, and the establishment of alternative payment systems.
- **The BRICS's New Development Bank** encourages trade and investment in national currencies by disbursing up to 50% of its loans in national currencies since 2015.
- Russian banks have started using the China-based **Cross-Border Interbank Payment System** for international payments as they are debarred from the SWIFT international system.

- Some countries are also exploring the possibility of **using cryptocurrencies for international trade** and payments, as they offer a decentralized alternative to traditional payment systems.

National Efforts: -

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently unveiled a rupee settlement system** for international trade by allowing special vostro accounts in designated Indian banks, a step towards internationalizing the rupee.
- Similarly, India and Russia are considering the use of a third currency or the **inclusion of a third country** like the UAE to facilitate oil trade between the two countries.

MUST READ: [India's Digital rupee: CBDC](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

US Federal Reserve

Context: Recently, the **US Federal Reserve** raised interest rates by 25 basis points.

About US Federal Reserve:-

- The Federal Reserve System is the **central bank of the United States**.
- **The role of the Federal Reserve:-**
 - **Conducting the US monetary policy** to promote maximum employment and stable prices ([UPSC PRELIMS: Fed tapering](#))
 - **Promoting the stability of the financial system** and seeking to minimise and contain systemic risks through active monitoring and engagement in America and overseas
 - **Promoting the safety and soundness of individual financial institutions**.
 - **Monitoring** the financial system.
 - Promoting **consumer protection**

Impact of the Fed on the global market and their economy:-

- A **high rate signal by the Fed** means a **lower impetus to growth** in the US
- **Currency markets:** Rate hikes by the Federal Reserve affect not only the US economy but also shape the macroeconomic outlook and exert a certain degree of **influence on the monetary policies in other emerging economies**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Exchange Rate](#))

Impact of Increased Interest Rates on India:-

- Emerging economies such as India tend to **have higher inflation and higher interest rates** than those in developed countries such as the US.
 - As a result, financial institutions, particularly **Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs)** would want to borrow money in the US at low-interest rates in dollar terms and then **invest that money in government bonds of emerging countries such as India** in local currency terms to earn a higher rate of interest.
 - However, when **the US Federal raises its domestic interest rates**, the difference between the interest rates of the two countries decreases.
 - This **makes India less attractive for the currency carry trade**.
 - As a consequence, some of the **money may be expected to move out of the Indian markets** and flow back to the US. ([UPSC PRELIMS: US Fed Reserve Hike](#))
- **On Equity Market: -**
 - **Bond yields will rise** due to the growing dollar shortage in the global market.
- **On Export and Forex: -**
 - India is one of the largest crude oil importers in the world.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A weaker rupee vis-à-vis a dollar result in more expensive imports of crude oil that may put a cost-driven inflationary push across the whole economy. ○ India's exports on the other hand will benefit to some extent from a stronger dollar with respect to the rupee. <p>MUST READ: Rupee Depreciation</p> <p>SOURCE: THE INDIAN EXPRESS</p>
Currency & Finance report 2022-23	<p>Context: The report on Currency & Finance 2022-23 was released recently.</p> <p>About Currency & Finance 2022-23: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is released by the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Department of Economic and Policy Research (DEPR). (UPSC PRELIMS: RBI's Monetary Policy Committee) ● The theme of the report is 'Towards a Greener Cleaner India'. <p>Key findings: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Net zero target: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ India aims to achieve the net zero target by 2070. ○ This would require an accelerated reduction in the energy intensity of GDP by around 5% annually and a significant improvement in its energy mix in favour of renewables to around 80% by 2070-71. ○ The cumulative total expenditure for adapting to this climate change in India is estimated to be Rs 85.6 lakh crore (at 2011-12 prices) by the year 2030. ● Implications for Financial Stability: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The financial sector faces the dual challenge of recalibrating its operations and business strategies to support the green transition process while also strengthening resilience to rising vulnerability to adverse climate events so as to safeguard financial stability. ○ On the first challenge, estimates suggest that the green financing requirement in India could be at least 2.5% of GDP annually to address the infrastructure gap caused by climate events. ○ On the second challenge, the results of a climate stress test reveal that public sector banks may be more vulnerable than private sector banks in India. <p>Measures suggested: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introducing an Emissions Trading System (ETS) linked to green taxonomy, covering all sectors of the economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This can partly balance subsidies and taxes. ● Ramping up domestic capacity to mine rare earth elements or procure them through long-term contracts and outward FDI (UPSC PRELIMS: FDI Inflow) ● Complementing green building standards with IoT-based monitoring and AI and ML to manage and reduce energy demand ● Boosting climate-resilient agriculture ● Production of green hydrogen using renewable energy ● Investment in carbon capture and storage technologies. <p>MUST READ: RBI- Integrated Ombudsman Scheme</p>
G20 TechSprint	<p>Context: Recently, the RBI and Bank for International Settlements (BIS) launched the G20 TechSprint.</p>

About G20 TechSprint:-

- G20 TechSprint is a **global technology competition**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: India and G20 Presidency](#))
- **The fourth and 2023 TechSprint is a joint initiative between the BIS Innovation Hub and the Reserve Bank of India.**
- It will focus on **three problem statements on cross-border payments** formulated by the RBI and the BIS Innovation Hub. ([UPSC CSE: Restoring Cross Border Mobility by WEF's Common Trust Network](#))
 - **Technology solutions:** to reduce illicit finance risk around anti-money laundering, countering the financing of terrorism and sanctions.
 - **Foreign exchange and liquidity technology solutions:** to enable settlement in emerging markets and developing economy currencies.
 - **Technology solutions for multilateral cross-border central bank digital currency platforms.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Central Bank Digital Currency \(CBDC\)](#))
- The **competition is open for developers around the world.**
- The **shortlisted teams will be invited to develop their solutions over a six-week period.**
- Each team will be eligible for a **stipend of eight lakh rupees** approximately 10,000 US dollars.
- **An independent panel of experts will select** the most promising solution to each problem statement from the shortlisted solutions.
- **The winners for each problem statement will receive an award of forty lakh rupees** approximately 50,000 US dollars.

MUST READ: [Unified Payments Interface](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

Voluntary insolvency proceedings

Context: Recently, the cash-strapped no-frills carrier Go Airlines (India) Ltd (Go First), said that it was filing for **voluntary insolvency proceedings** with the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)

About Voluntary insolvency proceedings:-

- The Process of Voluntary Winding up of a solvent company is **now shifted from the Companies Act,**
- **2013 to Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016** w.e.f. 1st April 2017.
- The **shifting of Jurisdictional Authority from the High Court to NCLT** will result in faster execution.
- The settlement of cases since **Insolvency Professionals** have been bestowed with powers for completing the winding-up process and **reporting to NCLT.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: National Company Law Tribunal \(NCLT\)](#))
- With the passing of a **special resolution** at the Member's meeting and declaration of solvency.
- An applicant can commence with the winding up proceedings
- **Section 59 (3) (c)** of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 says:- ([UPSC MAINS: Insolvency & Bankruptcy: Issues & Way forward](#))
 - Within 4 weeks of the Declaration of Solvency Voluntary Winding up of the Company and
 - **Appointment** of an Insolvency Professional to act as Liquidator subject to the approval of the

- **Members** in General Meetings through Special
- **Resolution:** -
 - To pass the Special Resolution for Voluntary
 - Winding up and Appointment of Insolvency
 - Professional to act as a Liquidator.

MUST READ: [Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code \(Amendment\) Bill, 2020](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA)

Context: Recently, the **European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA)**, has de-recognised six Indian clearing houses.

About European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA): -

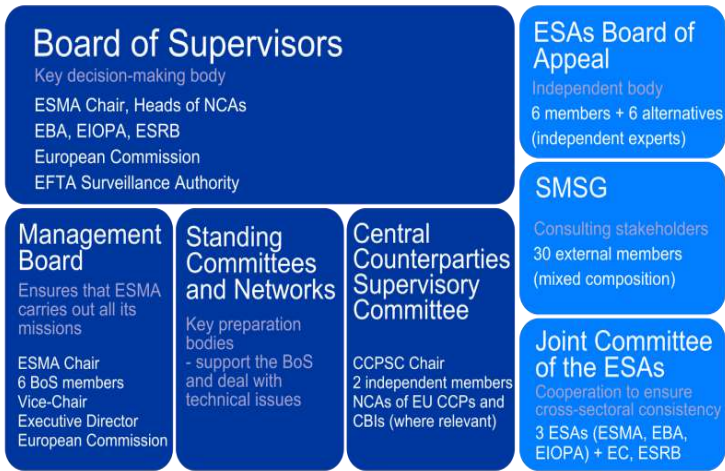


IMAGE SOURCE: [Governance Structure \(Europa.eu\)](#)

- The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) is an **independent European Union (EU) Authority**.
- It contributes to **safeguarding the stability of the EU's financial system** by enhancing the protection of investors and promoting stable and orderly financial markets.

- It is the **direct supervisor** of specific financial entities:
 - Credit Rating Agencies (CRAs)
 - Securitisation repositories (SRs)
 - Trade Repositories (TRs)
- These entities form essential parts of the EU's market infrastructure.

About European Market Infrastructure Regulation:-

- It was **adopted by the EU in August 2012**.
- It is an implementation of the **G20 commitment to reduce systemic, counterparty and operational risk**, and increase transparency in the OTC derivatives market. ([UPSC PRELIMS: India and G20 Presidency](#))
- It was also designed as a **preventative measure** to avoid fallout during possible future financial crises similar to the collapse that followed the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy in 2008.
- Its focus is the **regulation of over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives**, central counterparties and trade repositories.
- It **provides guidance** on reporting of derivative contracts, implementation of risk management standards and common rules for central counterparties and trade repositories.
- It **establishes common rules** for central counterparties.
- It also **outlines three sets of obligations**, including the clearing, reporting and risk mitigation of applicable products.
- It **requires mandatory clearing obligations for specific OTC derivative contracts**.

- The obligations require that over-the-counter derivatives trades are cleared through central counterparties.
- EMIR requires that all entities entering into derivative contracts must submit reports to their corresponding trade repositories, outlining each over-the-counter trade.
- EMIR **covers entities that qualify for derivative contracts** to interest rate, equity, foreign exchange, or credit and commodity derivatives.
- The **risk mitigation standards** outlined in EMIR's Article 11 impose risk management regulation on bilateral derivatives, as these derivatives are not appropriate for standard central counterparty clearing
- **Article 25 of EMIR** requires CCPs in other global jurisdictions providing services to European banks to be approved by ESMA.
- **India signed the pact in 2017, which lapsed in March 2022.**

MUST READ: [India-EU](#)

SOURCE: [FINANCIAL EXPRESS](#)

Gold rush

Context: Recently, the phenomenon of the **gold rush** by central banks was observed.

About Gold Rush:-

- The Adding gold to its reserves at an unusual pace is commonly called the 'gold Rush'.
([PSC PRELIMS: Gold Reserve](#))
- **Objective:** to safeguard its returns amid global uncertainty and a rising inflation scenario.
 - adding gold to its reserves, is considered a **more safe, secure, liquid asset.**
- Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) gold reserves showed an increase of nearly **5 per cent** over fiscal 2022 when it held 760.42 metric tonnes of gold. ([UPSC MAINS: Factors to maintain a healthy foreign exchange reserve](#))
- **Global Scenario:-**
 - Many **other central banks**, including the **Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS)**, the People's Bank of China (PBoC) and the **Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey** have been buying gold.
 - In the calendar year 2022, central banks around the world purchased 1,136 tonnes of gold, which was a **record high.**
 - During 2022, the central banks from the **Middle East, including Egypt, Qatar, Iraq, the UAE, and Oman** significantly boosted their gold reserves.
 - The **Central Bank of Uzbekistan** ended 2022 as a net purchaser of gold, with its gold reserves rising by 34 tonnes.
 - In January-March 2023, **the Monetary Authority of Singapore** was the **largest single buyer of gold** after it added 69 tonnes to its gold reserves
- The two key drivers of central banks' decisions to hold gold are:-
 - its **performance during times of crisis**, and
 - its role as a **long-term store of value**

MUST READ: [RBI relaxed norms to stem rupee slide and to Forex inflows](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

U.S. Debt ceiling standoff

Context: The United States hit its debt ceiling of \$31.4 trillion forcing the Treasury Department to initiate “extraordinary measures” to ensure that the federal government keeps paying its bills and can stave off default until June — when it will run out of funds.

About U.S. Debt ceiling:

- The debt ceiling is the maximum amount the U.S. government can borrow to fulfil its financial obligations. The US Federal Government borrows money due to the budget deficit where expenditure is greater than revenue.
- It was introduced in 1917 during World War I.
- The Government borrows by issuing debt securities like bonds to investors and a large part of the money is kept by the US government for social security schemes, Medicare, federal pensions, etc.
- The government will default on debt if it runs out of cash, extraordinary measures are exhausted and the debt ceiling is not raised.
- The standoff is recurring because Congress does not have the entire amount of funding when it approves programmes and there is a limit on borrowing by the treasury to pay for already borrowed programmes.
 - For example, if Congress approves \$100 of spending, then \$70 comes in taxes and for the rest of the amount due to the debt ceiling the government can only borrow \$15.

What will happen if the debt ceiling is breached?

- If the Congress failed to raise the debt limit by June, the government would default on its debt, which might trigger an economic catastrophe.
- Once the debt default happens, the dollar would weaken, the stock markets would collapse, and thousands of people might lose their jobs. T
- This would also make investors demand much higher interest rates in the future to loan money to the government.

Has the US breached the debt ceiling earlier?

- No, the US has never breached the debt ceiling so far. However, experts suggest that even approaching debt default might severely affect the economy in the longer run.
- The US government has faced the threat of breaching the debt limit multiple times and Congress has always acted to either permanently raise, temporarily extend, or revise the definition of the debt limit.

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Unique Economic Offender Code

Context: The government plans to introduce a new mechanism whereby companies and individuals accused of economic offences will be assigned a unique code called the ‘Unique Economic Offender Code’.

About Unique Economic Offender Code:

- The code will be **alpha-numeric and system-generated**.
- It will be issued once the police or central investigative agency sends the data about an offender to the **National Economic Offence Records (NEOR)**.
- It will be **specific to each offender** and will be **linked with his/her Aadhaar number** in the case of an individual **or PAN** in the case of a company.

- Under NEOR, this codification will **provide a 360-degree profile of the economic offender and their record.**

What is the benefit from such a classification?

- With this mechanism, multi-agency probes will be launched against individuals or companies swiftly.
- **Authorities from different agencies won't have to wait for chargesheets to be filed by one agency before starting a probe.**

What is the National Economic Offence Records (NEOR)?

- NEOR is a central repository of all economic offences.
- It will share data related to each economic offender with all central and state intelligence and enforcement agencies.
- The Central Economic Intelligence Bureau has been given the task of coordinating and completing the NEOR project with the help of the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- Once completed, all data from central and state agencies will be migrated to the national repository using the API (application programming interface) software, reducing any scope for manual interference.
- The NEOR will be a showcase project for India to be displayed at its forthcoming Financial Action Task Force (FATF) review.

Source: [Times now](#)

London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked banks and financial institutions to adopt the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR), to complete the transition from the scandal-hit London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) and Mumbai Interbank Forward Outright Rate (MIFOR).

About LIBOR

- LIBOR, the acronym for **London Interbank Offer Rate**, is the global reference rate for **unsecured short-term borrowing in the interbank market.**
- It acts as a **benchmark** for short-term interest rates.
- It is used for pricing of **interest rate swaps, currency rate swaps as well as mortgages.**
- It is an **indicator of the health of the financial system** and provides an idea of the trajectory of impending policy rates of central banks.
- LIBOR is administered by the **Intercontinental Exchange** or ICE. It is computed for five currencies with seven different maturities ranging from overnight to a year.
- The **five currencies** for which LIBOR is computed are **Swiss Franc, Euro, Pound Sterling, Japanese Yen and US Dollar.**
- The London Interbank Offered Rate and **the Mumbai Interbank Forward Outright Rate** would cease to be a representative benchmark from June 30, 2023.
- In 2017, the U.S. Federal Reserve announced the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) as a preferred alternative.
- Accordingly, in India, new transactions were to be undertaken using the SOFR and the Modified Mumbai Interbank Forward Outright Rate (MMIFOR), replacing MIFOR.

Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR)

- SOFR is the main replacement for LIBOR in the **United States.**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This benchmark is based on the rates U.S. financial institutions pay each other for overnight loans. • These transactions take the form of Treasury bond repurchase agreements, otherwise known as repos agreements. • SOFR comprises the weighted averages of the rates charged in these repo transactions. <p>SOURCE: INDIAN EXPRESS</p>
Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit	<p>Context: The government has set up the Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit (C-PACE) to ensure timely and process-bound deregistering of companies from records as well as provide more meaningful data to the stakeholders. The center has been set up by the corporate affairs ministry.</p> <p>About C-PACE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective: It has been formed with the objective to reduce the burden on the registry and provide a convenient process for stakeholders to remove their company’s name from the register. • It is located at the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs in Gurgaon. The C-PACE office will work under the supervision/administration of Director General of Corporate Affairs. (DGCoA), New Delhi. • C-PACE will be in operation through the Registrar of Companies (RoC) for the purposes of exercising functional jurisdiction of processing and disposal of applications. <p>Significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a step forward by centralizing the strike off process of companies with the establishment of the Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit (C-PACE). • The establishment of the C-PACE will help to reduce the stress on the Registry along with keeping the registry clean besides availability of more meaningful data to the stakeholders. • The C-PACE will also benefit the stakeholders by providing a hassle-free filing, timely and process-bound striking off their company’s names from the Register. • The setting up of the C-PACE is part of the several measures taken by MCA in the recent past towards Ease of Doing Business and ease of exit for the Companies. <p>MUST READ : Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code</p> <p>SOURCE: The Business Line</p>
Nutrient Based Subsidy Scheme	<p>Context: Cabinet has approved revision in Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for RABI Season, 2022-23 and for KHARIF Season, 2023 on Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilizers</p> <p>About Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nutrient Based Subsidy Scheme provides subsidies for all non-urea-based fertilizers. Under the NBS regime – fertilizers are provided to the farmers at the subsidized rates based on the nutrients (N, P, K & S) contained in these fertilizers. • In addition, the fertilizers which are fortified with secondary and micronutrients such as molybdenum (Mo) and zinc are given additional subsidy. • The subsidy on P&K fertilizers is announced by the Government on an annual basis for each nutrient on a per kg basis for Rabi and Kharif seasons. • The subsidy on P&K fertilizers is being governed by NBS Scheme since 2010.

- It is being implemented by the Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.

Significance of the NBS Scheme

- It will have the two-fold benefit of ensuring availability of DAP and other P&K fertilizers to farmers at subsidized, affordable and reasonable prices and will ensure rationalization of subsidy on P&K fertilizers.
- Balanced nutrient availability will improve soil health, which in turn enhances yield of crops resulting in increased income to the farmers.

Concerns Related with NBS Scheme

- **Imbalanced Price and Deteriorating Soil Health:** All Non-Urea based fertilizers are regulated under NBS Scheme however, on the other hand the prices of other on regulated fertilizers have gone up. This led to the more application of subsidized urea fertilizers on soil lead to soil nutrient imbalance.
- **Costs of Subsidies:** Fertilizer subsidies are the second-largest subsidy after food subsidies. Thus it leads to fiscal imbalances of budgets
- **Diversion:** Subsidized urea is being diverted to large purchasers, traders, or even non-agricultural consumers like plywood manufacturers and producers of animal feed. The government loses around Rs 6,000 crore annually due to illegal diversion of highly subsidized urea for industrial use.
- It has also been diverted to neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal that leads to enhanced border related crimes such as black marketing.
- **Environmental Pollution:** The compounded harmful effects of imbalanced fertilizer use are not only intensifying soil and atmospheric pollution but also affecting water bodies (eutrophication) and causing threat to biodiversity and human health.

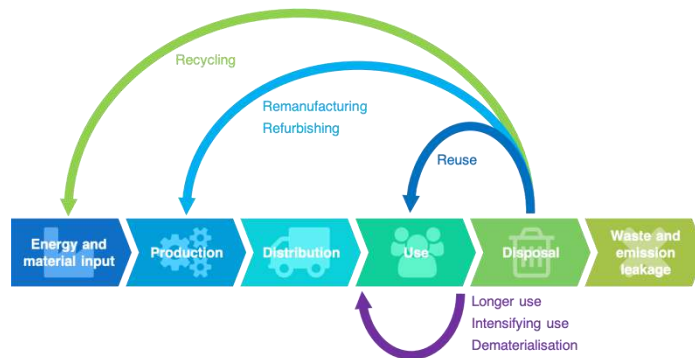
MUST READ: Soil Health <https://iasbaba.com/2022/12/soil-health/>

SOURCE: PIB <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1924767>

Circular Economy

Context: UN roadmap outlines solutions to cut global plastic pollution
About Circular Economy

- A circular economy reduces material use, redesigns materials, products, and services to be less resource intensive, and recaptures “waste” as a resource to manufacture new materials and products.



- A circular economy is based on three clear principles that bring multiple benefits, including benefits for our climate. These are:

- Eliminating waste and pollution, in turn reducing and avoiding emissions across the value chain.
- Circulating products and materials, in turn enabling embodied emissions to be retained.
- Regenerating nature, thereby also improving carbon sequestration.

Significance of Circular Economy

- **Reduces waste generation:** Practicing circular economic practices will reduce the daily waste generation associated with various consumption pattern.
- **Enhances mindful consumption pattern:** A more mindful consumption will change the attitude of users and will enhance reuse and reduce waste associated with daily life.
- **Reduces carbon footprint:** A circular economy will have lower carbon emissions than a linear economy. Producing new materials results in carbon emissions; circular economies minimize the need for producing new materials by maximizing the re-use of resources,
- **Shifts use to durable products:** A circular economy favours activities that preserve value in the form of energy, labour, and materials. This means designing for durability, reuse, remanufacturing, and recycling to keep products, components, and materials circulating in the economy.

India’s Efforts to promote Circular Economy

- **Plastic Waste Management (Second Amendment) Rules, 2022:** The Union Environment Ministry has launched this policy to mandate to increase in the thickness of plastic carry bags to over 120 microns starting on December 31, 2022, and the phase-out of some single-use plastic products starting on July 1, 2022.
- **E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022:** No Entity shall carry out any business without registration and the registered entity shall not deal with any unregistered manufacturer, producer recycler and refurbisher. For registration, registration fee and annual maintenance charges shall be based on the capacity of e -waste generated, recycled or handled
- **FAME India Scheme:** The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme was launched in April 2015 under the National Electric Mobility Mission, to encourage electric and hybrid vehicle purchase by providing financial support.

Challenges of Circular Economy:

- **Consumer Convince:** Industries and Shopping malls are using more plastic products due to single use and much convinces for producers for packaging and carrying and transportation for consumers

- **Disruption of linear economy:** Current economic model has produced industries and services based on linear economic model thus a shift to circular economic model eliminates some of the products and services which in turn leads to sudden disruptions.
- **Lack of infrastructure and management for waste treatment:** India is grossly inadequate in its infrastructure and services relating to waste management. Thus it will hamper the circular economic activities.
- **Lack of recycling technology:** There are materials that need higher recycling technology such as textile and the beverage cartons that we use to contain milk or juice. In order for the circular economy implementation to succeed, we need to make sure that the technologies needed to recycle the materials are enough to cover all the industries' requirements – both in numbers and quality
- **Poor Economic Models:** The current economic models that proposes circular economy does not matches with the demand and supply of current economic forces in play.

MUST READ: [Plastic Waste Management](https://iasbaba.com/2021/10/plastic-waste-management/) <https://iasbaba.com/2021/10/plastic-waste-management/>

[Extended Producer Responsibility](https://iasbaba.com/2023/02/extended-producer-responsibility/#:~:text=EPR%20responsibility%20makes%20it%20the,the%20amount%20of%20waste%20generated.) <https://iasbaba.com/2023/02/extended-producer-responsibility/#:~:text=EPR%20responsibility%20makes%20it%20the,the%20amount%20of%20waste%20generated.>

SOURCE: [The Financial Express](https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/how-circular-economy-is-revolutionising-plastics-packaging-industry/3092329/) <https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/how-circular-economy-is-revolutionising-plastics-packaging-industry/3092329/>

Green Deposits and the Regulatory Framework

Context: Recently, the Reserve Bank of India came up with a regulatory framework for banks to accept green deposits from customers.

About Green Deposits

- A green deposit is a fixed-term deposit for investors looking to invest their surplus cash reserves in environmentally friendly projects.
- This new offering in the market indicates the increased awareness of the importance of ESG (Environmental, social and governance) and sustainable investing.
- Green deposits are not very different from the regular deposits that banks accept from their customers.
- The only major difference is that banks promise to earmark the money that they receive as green deposits towards environment-friendly projects.
- For example, a bank may promise that green deposits will be used towards financing renewable energy projects that fight climate change.
- A green deposit is just one product in a wide array of other financial products such as green bonds that help investors put money into environmentally sustainable projects.

Regulatory Framework

- The RBI's framework for the acceptance of green deposits lays down certain conditions that banks must fulfil to accept green deposits from customers.

- Banks will have to come up with a set of rules or policies approved by their respective Boards that need to be followed while investing green deposits from customers.
- The RBI has come up with a list of sectors that can be classified as sustainable and thus eligible to receive green deposits. These include renewable energy, waste management, clean transportation, energy efficiency, and afforestation.
- Banks will be barred from investing green deposits in business projects involving fossil fuels, nuclear power, tobacco, gambling, palm oil and hydropower generation.
- The new rules are aimed at preventing greenwashing, which refers to making misleading claims about the positive environmental impact of an activity.
- The framework applies to all scheduled commercial banks and small finance banks (except for regional rural banks and local area banks) and non-banking finance companies (including housing finance companies). Both corporate and individual customers can invest in green deposits.

MUST READ: Green Washing <https://iasbaba.com/2022/11/greenwashing/>

SOURCE: The Hindu <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/explained-what-are-rbi-regulations-on-green-deposits/article66866265.ece>

Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS)

Context: The Central Government, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India amended rules under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, bringing in international credit card spends outside India under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS).

About Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS)

- In 2004, the Committee on Procedures and Performance Audit on Public Services ('CPPAPS') recommended a scheme for liberalising personal outward remittances in India.
- The same year, RBI introduced the Liberalised Remittance Scheme ('LRS'), allowing Indian residents to make individual foreign exchange transactions with relative ease.
- LRS allows Indian residents to freely remit up to USD \$250,000 per financial year for current or capital account transactions or a combination of both. Any remittance exceeding this limit requires prior permission from the RBI.
- Only individual Indian residents are permitted to remit funds under LRS. Corporates, partnership firms, HUF, trusts, etc are excluded from its ambit. However, it is available to minors, provided that Form A2 is countersigned by the minor's natural guardian.

Types of transactions permitted under LRS

Capital account transactions:

- Opening of foreign currency account abroad with a bank;
- Acquisition of immovable property abroad,
- overseas direct investment (ODI) and overseas portfolio investment (OPI), in accordance with the Foreign Exchange Management (Overseas Investment) Rules, 2022, Foreign Exchange Management (Overseas Investment) Regulations, 2022 and Foreign Exchange Management (Overseas Investment) Directions, 2022;

- Extending loans, including loans in Indian Rupees to non-resident Indians (NRIs) who are relatives as defined in the Companies Act, 2013.

Current account transactions:

- Private visits abroad (excluding Nepal and Bhutan)
- Gifts/donations
- Going abroad on employment
- Emigration
- Maintenance of relatives abroad
- Business trips
- Medical treatment abroad
- Pursuing studies abroad
- Other permissible transactions include purchasing objects of art subject to the provisions of other applicable laws such as the extant Foreign Trade Policy of the Government of India.

Types of transactions prohibited under LRS

- Transactions not permissible under Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999
- Remittance for margins or margin calls to overseas exchanges or overseas counterparty
- Remittances for any purpose specifically prohibited under Schedule I or any item restricted under Schedule II of Foreign Exchange Management (Current Account Transaction) Rules, 2000.
- Capital account remittances to countries identified by Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as non-co-operative countries and territories or as notified by RBI
- Remittances directly or indirectly to those individuals and entities identified as posing significant risk of committing acts of terrorism as advised separately by RBI to the banks

MUST READ: Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 <https://iasbaba.com/2022/12/foreign-exchange-management-act/>

SOURCE: Economic Times (LRS)

Corporate Debt Market Development Fund

Context: SEBI has introduced the Corporate Debt Market Development Fund, a backstop facility for specified debt funds during market dislocations.

About Corporate Debt Market Development Fund

- Corporate Debt Market Development Fund is a form of an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF).
- It will be backstop facility for the purchase of investment grade corporate debt securities in times of stress or in case of market dislocation. The purpose of this fund is to bring about confidence in corporate bond market and boost secondary market liquidity.
- The fund will have a corpus of ₹3,000 crore, of which ₹2,700 crore will come from mutual fund debt schemes. The corporate bond backstop fund will have 10 times advantage and a sovereign guarantee.
- The contribution will also be made by the specified debt-oriented mutual fund schemes and asset management companies of mutual funds towards building the initial corpus of the CD MDF.
- Access to the fund will be limited to specified mutual fund schemes in proportion to the contribution made to the fund at a mutual fund level. The SEBI board has approved the framework for triggering CD MDF's asset purchases during market dislocation.

- CDMDf, based on a guarantee to be provided by the National Credit Guarantee Trust Company (NCGTC) may raise funds, for the purchase of corporate debt securities during market dislocation.
- The move will instil confidence among corporate bond market participants and generally enhance secondary market liquidity.

Backstop facility

- A backstop is an act of providing last-resort support or security in a securities offering for the unsubscribed portion of shares.
- When a company is trying to raise capital through an issuance, it may get a backstop from an underwriter or a major shareholder, such as an investment bank, to buy any of its unsubscribed shares.

MUST READ: [Alternate Investment Fund](#)

SOURCE: [The Hindu Businessline https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/new-backstop-fund-mooted-to-bail-out-mf-debt-schemes-in-distress/article66676446.ece](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/new-backstop-fund-mooted-to-bail-out-mf-debt-schemes-in-distress/article66676446.ece)

Institute Of Cost Accountants of India

Context: The Delhi High Court has restrained the Institute of Cost Accountants of India from using the acronym ICAI after the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India moved a trademark infringement lawsuit.

About Institute of Cost Accountants of India.

- The Institute of Cost Accountants of India was established by an Act of Parliament, the Cost and Works Accountant Act, 1959.
- The institute was formed with the objectives of promoting, regulating and developing profession of cost accountancy in India
- It is under the administrative control of Ministry of Cooperate Affairs.
- The Institute is a founder member of International Federation of Accountants, Confederation of Asian and Pacific Accountants and South Asian Federation of Accountants.

Objectives of the Institute

- To develop the Cost and Management Accountancy function as a powerful tool of management control in all spheres of economic activities. e
- To promote and develop the adoption of scientific methods in cost and management accountancy.
- To develop the professional body of members and equip them fully to discharge their functions and fulfil the objectives of the Institute in the context of the developing economy.
- To keep abreast of the latest developments in the cost and management accounting principles and practices, to incorporate such changes are essential for sustained vitality of the industry and other economic activities.
- To exercise supervision for the entrants to the profession and to ensure strict adherence to the best ethical standards by the profession.
- To organise seminars and conferences on subjects of professional interest in different parts of the country for cross-fertilisation of ideas for professional growth.
- To carry out research and publication activities covering various economic spheres and the publishing of books and booklets for spreading information of professional interest to members in industrial, education and commercial units in India and abroad.

About Institute of Chartered Accountants of India

- It is a statutory body established under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949 for the regulation of the profession of Chartered Accountancy in India.
- It is the only licensing cum regulating body of the financial audit and accountancy profession in India.
- It recommends the accounting standards to be followed by companies in India to National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards (NACAS).
- The institute has achieved recognition as a premier accounting body in the fields of education, professional development, maintenance of high accounting, auditing and ethical standards.
- In India, accounting standards and auditing standards are recommended by the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) to the Government of India which sets the Standards on Auditing (SAs) to be followed in the audit of financial statements in India.
- Membership: Members of the Institute are known as Chartered Accountants (CA). Becoming a member requires passing the prescribed examinations, three years of practical training and meeting other requirements under the Act and Regulations.

MUST READ: Intellectual Property Rights <https://iasbaba.com/2020/05/mind-maps-intellectual-rights-property-general-studies-3/>

SOURCE: The Indian Express <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhi-hc-restrains-institute-cost-accountants-india-icai-acronym-8523151/>

The Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB)

Context: Recently, the Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB) approached Cyberabad police stating that hackers from Russia encrypted their data through ransomware attack and demanded bitcoins to undo the damage.

About the Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB);

- The Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB), an **independent body that maintains a repository of insurance-related information in the country.**
- Insurance Information Bureau (IIB) was **promoted by IRDA** as a single platform to meet the needs of the insurance industry, in 2009.
- IIB is backed by a directive of IRDA, which in turn derives authority to obtain data from the insurers, as enunciated in Section 14 (2) (1) (e) of the IRDA Act, 1999.
- The [then] Honorable Finance Minister, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, formally inaugurated IIB in July 2010.
- IIB was **registered as an independent nonprofit earning society** on 21 November 2012 under the Andhra Pradesh Societies Registration Act 2001.
- IIB was mandated to be market neutral and provide independent and non-judgmental analysis to all stakeholders.
- The Bureau operates through its Insurance Domain Verticals Life, Health, Motor, Property/Fire/Engineering with dedicated support from IT and Analytics Verticals.
- The Bureau provides a bundle of services related to motor insurance to multiple stakeholders such as public, police, transport departments and insurers through its service package titled V- Seva.
- The services are call centre-, SMS- and web-based and provide information regarding insurance status of the vehicle, stolen vehicles, ownership of recovered vehicles, accident record etc.

- IIB also spearheads the Mortality and Morbidity Investigation Centre (MMIC) Operations with the support of Actuarial Oversight Committee and Operational Oversight Committee - Members have been nominated from the Life Insurance Industry.
- IIB handles the Central Index Server, which acts as a nodal point between different Insurance Repositories, and helps in de-duplication of demat accounts at the stage of creation of a new account.
- The Central Index Server also acts as an exchange for transmission/routing of information pertaining to transactions on each policy between an insurer and the insurance repository.
- The Bureau also maintains a Registry of all Hospitals in the network of Insurance (ROHINI). A portal on "Health Portability" for use of the Insurers is also under production stage.
- The Bureau has also been entrusted by IRDAI, the responsibility of building a repository of all Insurance Sales Persons. De-duplication is also facilitated to ensure that the Applicant is not engaged with any other insurer or insurer intermediary.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI);

- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), is a statutory body formed under an Act of Parliament, i.e., Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 (IRDAI Act 1999) for overall supervision and development of the Insurance sector in India.
- The powers and functions of the Authority are laid down in the IRDAI Act, 1999 and Insurance Act, 1938.
- The key objectives of the IRDAI include promotion of competition to enhance customer satisfaction through increased consumer choice and fair premiums, while ensuring the financial security of the Insurance market.
- **Entities regulated by IRDAI:**
 - **Life Insurance Companies** - Both public and private sector Companies
 - **General Insurance Companies** - Both public and private sector Companies. Among them, there are some standalone Health Insurance Companies that offer health Insurance policies.
 - **Re-Insurance Companies**
 - **Agency Channel**
 - **Intermediaries**

MUST READ: [Cyber Attacks \(UPSC Mains – Cyber Attacks\)](#)

SOURCE: [Times of India](#)

Tampon Tax and Period Poverty

Context: Millions of women and girls face 'period poverty'. Tax on pads and tampons make the matter worse. Currently, such taxes have been scrapped or cut in 48 nations, with supporters saying that access to hygiene products is a rights issue.

About Tampon Tax:

- Tampon Tax or Period Tax is VAT or GST imposed on menstrual products.
- Due to the Tampon Tax, which their prices increase further and for women or girls from poor or backward sections, it is goes out of reach.
- The tampon tax makes it difficult for many girls around the world to afford menstrual products.

- Due to which problems arise in the everyday work or education of these girls or women.
- Since Kenya became the first country to scrap VAT on sanitary pads and tampons in 2004, at least 17 countries have followed suit.
- The Indian government in 2018 decided to abolish the tampon tax and decided to revoke the 12 percent tax levied on sanitary pads in an effort to make them accessible to menstrual hygiene products accessible to all.
- Among the latest countries to pass laws to abolish the tampon tax are Mexico, Britain and Namibia.
- In 2022, Scotland became the first nation to make tampons and sanitary pads free and available at designated public places such as community centers, youth clubs and pharmacies.

Period Poverty;

- Period poverty is a lack of access to menstrual products, education, hygiene facilities, waste management, or a combination of these.
- It affects an estimated 500 million people worldwide.

SOURCE: [Indian Express](#)



GEOGRAPHY

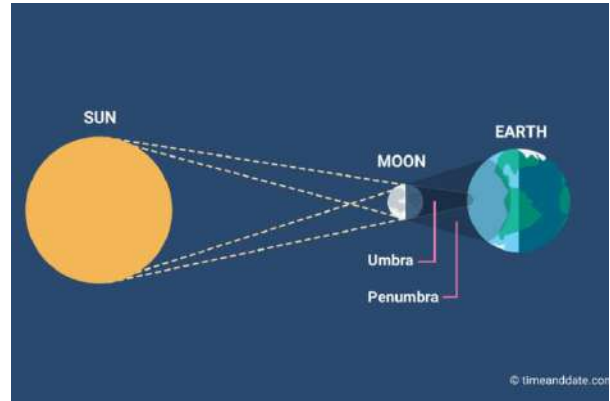
**Penumbral lunar eclipse**

Context: The **penumbral lunar eclipse** was observed recently.

About the Penumbral lunar eclipse: -

IMAGE SOURCE: [Eclipse Shadow: What Is the Penumbra? \(timeanddate.com\)](https://www.timeanddate.com/learn/eclipse-shadow-what-is-the-penumbra/)

- An eclipse happens **when a planet or a moon gets in the way of the sun's light.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Eclipses](#))
- The lunar eclipse is a celestial phenomenon where **the sun, moon, and earth come in a straight line.**
 - In the Lunar Eclipse, **the Earth arrives in between the sun and the moon.**
 - In this way, **the shadow of the earth falls on the moon.**
- The lunar eclipse **can only happen during the Full Moon.**
 - But, the orbits of the moon and earth are different.
- That's why the lunar eclipse **happens only up to 3-4 times a year.**
- There are **three types of lunar eclipses:-**
 - **Total lunar eclipses, partial lunar eclipses, and penumbral lunar eclipses.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Beaver blood moon](#))
- A penumbral lunar eclipse happens **when the moon moves through the outermost region of the Earth's shadow** known as the penumbra.
 - **Penumbra:** the lighter outer part of a shadow.
- The **Moon's penumbra causes partial solar eclipses**, and the Earth's penumbra is involved in penumbral lunar eclipses.
- During this event, **the moon appears slightly darker than usual.**
- Since the penumbral lunar eclipse occurs when the moon stands in the penumbral shadow. Thus, **it is not very visible.**



MUST READ: [Supermoon](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

Galapagos Islands

Context: Ecuador's government recently pledged to spend about \$18 million annually for two decades on conservation in the **Galapagos Islands.**

About Galapagos Islands:-

- The Galápagos Islands are a **chain of islands in the Pacific Ocean.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Galapagos Islands](#))
- They are part of the country of **Ecuador, in South America.**
- There are **thirteen major islands** and a handful of smaller islands that make up the Galápagos archipelago.
 - The largest of the islands is called **Isabela.**

- **Repeated volcanic eruptions** helped to form the rugged mountain landscape of the Galápagos Islands.
- The Galápagos Islands are located near the equator, yet they receive **cool ocean currents**.
(UPSC PRELIMS: Ocean Currents)
 - This makes for a strange **mix of tropical and temperate climates**.
- British naturalist **Charles Darwin** came to the Galápagos in 1835, on a ship called the **HMS Beagle**.
 - His observations of wildlife on the island inspired his **theory of evolution by natural selection**.



Wildlife:-

- It contains aquatic species such as **manta rays and sharks** which have been **endangered** by commercial fishing.
- It also hosts a wide array of aquatic wildlife, including **marine iguanas, and waved albatrosses**. **(UPSC CSE: Wildlife Protection)**
- Also, the **giant tortoises** found here – 'Galápagos' in old Spanish – give the islands their name.
- Many species are **endemic**.
 - **Endemic:** they are **not found anywhere else** in the world.
 - These include the giant **Galápagos tortoise** (*Chelonoidis nigra*), **the marine iguana** (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*), **the flightless cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax harris*), and the **Galápagos penguin**.
 - Galápagos penguin, Galápagos fur seal and Galápagos sea lion are **critically endangered**.
 - The Galápagos penguin (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) is the **only penguin species** to live in the Northern Hemisphere.

Protection Status:-

- Ecuador made a part of the Galapagos a **wildlife sanctuary** in 1935.
 - The sanctuary became the **Galapagos National Park in 1959**.
- In 1978, the islands became **UNESCO's first World Heritage Site**.

MUST READ: [Islands](#)

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

Coco Islands

Context: Indian Navy drones are keeping an eye on China-linked **Coco Islands** after a top Myanmar military official's recent visit.

About Coco Islands:-



IMAGE SOURCE: [Sri Lanka the heart of the Indian Ocean](https://www.heartofindianocean.blogspot.com) ([heartofindianocean.blogspot.com](https://www.heartofindianocean.blogspot.com))

- Coco Islands are a small group of islands located in the **Bay of Bengal**.
- They are part of the **Yangon Region of Myanmar**.
- **Historical Background:-**
 - In the early 19th century, **the British government** in India established a penal colony in the Andaman for the convicts in the Indian subcontinent, and the Coco Islands were a **source of food for it**.
 - The British government had reportedly **leased out the islands to the Jadwet family of Burma**.
 - The leasing of control of the Coco Islands resulted in poor governance of the islands, which made the British government in India **transfer its control to the government of Lower Burma in Rangoon**.
 - **In 1882**, the islands **officially became part of British Burma**. ([UPSC MAINS: Political Crisis in Myanmar](#))
 - The islands became a **self-governing crown colony** even after Burma was separated from British India **in 1937**.
- **Great Coco Island**, the **largest** in the group, lies just 55 km from India's strategic **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- Coco Islands are geologically an **extended division of the Arakan Mountains or Rakhine Mountains**.
- They **submerge as a chain of islands in the Bay of Bengal** for a long stretch and **emerge again in the form of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**. ([UPSC MAINS: Plate tectonics theory](#))
- They are part of the **same topography as India's Andaman & Nicobar Islands**.

MUST READ: [Andaman and Nicobar Gets Large Area Certification](#)

SOURCE: [INDIA TODAY](#)

Gajapati irrigation project

Context: Recently, the Odisha Government announced the move to start the **Gajapati irrigation project**.

About the Gajapati irrigation project:-

- It is a **multipurpose irrigation project** at **Chheligada in the Gajapati district of Odisha**.
- It is being undertaken across the **river Badjhore**.
 - **Badjhore**: is a tributary of **river Vansadhara** near the village Chheligada in the **Gajapati District of Odisha**.
- The Project envisages the **construction of a 250m long & 30m high dam across the river Badjhore** with a central spillway.

- After this Project, 5201 hectares metres of **water can be preserved and water can be supplied for irrigation** of 5760 hectares of land in Ganjam and 500 hectares of land in Gajapati districts.
- This Project will also **provide drinking water to Brahampur City.**
- Additionally, **36 MW of electricity can be produced** through a mini hydel project in three places **Shiali Loti, Kankata and Dekili in the Gajapati district.**

Salient features of the Project are:-

- 90m long centrally located **Ogee-type gated Spillway**
- 1.13 km long **tunnel to connect Chheligada reservoir with Ghodahada river** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Linking Rivers](#))
- **Canal system** directly from the dam to irrigate in the Gajapati district ([UPSC MAINS: Decentralised irrigation techniques](#))
- Laying of the **pipeline for drinking water supply to Berhampur** (Distt. Ganjam)

MUST READ: [Cabinet approves Ken-Betwa Interlinking of Rivers Project](#)

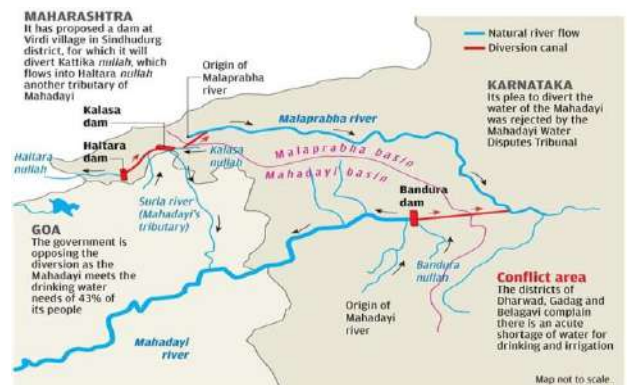
SOURCE: [THE TIMES OF INDIA](#)

River Mandovi/Mahadaya Water Dispute

Context: Goans are worried after the Central Water Commission (CWC) approved the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Karnataka’s Kalasa Bhandura canal to divert water from the upper reaches of Mahadaya to the Malaprabha basin.

About Mahadaya river:

- Origin: Mahadaya river rises in the **Western Ghats, from the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary** in Belagavi district, Karnataka.
- The river travels 35 km in Karnataka; 82 km in Goa before joining the Arabian Sea at Panji (North-Goa).
- Also called **Mandovi in Goa**, Mahadaya is a **rain-fed river** that is shared between Karnataka and Goa for their water needs.
- The **Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary** is located on the island of Choroa in the Mandovi river.
- Major Tributaries: Kalasa Nala, Banduri Nala, Surla Nala, Haltar Nala, Poti Nala, Mahadaya Nala, Pansheer Nala, Bail Nala, Andher Nala.



What is the Kalasa-Banduri project and Mandovi river dispute?

- The project involves the construction of dams and a canal system to divert water from the Mahadaya River, located in Goa, to the Malaprabha River (a tributary of Krishna River) basin in Karnataka.
- The main goal of the project is to meet the drinking water needs of the districts of Belagavi, Dharwad, Bagalkot, and Gadag in Karnataka.
- The project was proposed by the Karnataka Government in the 1980s, but faced opposition from the state of Goa.
- This project on the Mahadaya river has been a source of dispute between Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra.

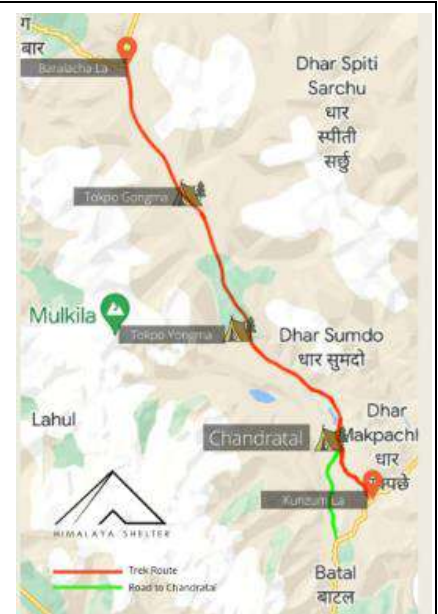
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2018, the Tribunal awarded 13.42 TMC water from Mahadayi river basin to Karnataka, 1.33 TMC to Maharashtra and 24 TMC to Goa. But all the parties challenged this verdict. <p>Importance of Mandovi to Goa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mandovi and the Zuari are the two primary rivers in the state of Goa. 79% of the total catchment area of Mandovi lies in the state of Goa. Mandovi sustains agriculture, fisheries and tourism, the latter two being the mainstay of Goa's economy. <p>Source: Indian Express</p>
<p>Kiru Hydro-Electric Power Project</p>	<p>Context: The Central Bureau of Investigation searched 12 locations in Delhi and Rajasthan in connection with a case alleging corruption in the award of civil works related to the Kiru hydro-electric power project in Jammu and Kashmir.</p> <p>About Kiru Hydro-Electric Power Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kiru Hydro Electric Project is proposed on River Chenab, located in Kishtwar district of the Jammu & Kashmir. The project is envisaged as a Run of River Scheme & designed complying with the requirements of Indus Water Treaty 1960. The project is being developed by Chenab Valley Power Projects, a joint venture between National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation and Power Trading Corporation. The project will address the energy deficiency in the Northern region of India. It will simultaneously improve the transportation, education, medical, and road transportation network in the region. The power plant will bring electricity to the rural area, which will reduce the dependency of the locals on alternative sources of energy. Increased power supply in the region will enhance the development of small-scale and cottage industries in the region, which will in turn, provide jobs and revenue to the locals. <p>MUST READ: Hydro Electric Projects in India</p> <p>SOURCE: The Hindu https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/insurance-scam-case-cbi-searches-at-nine-locations-in-jammu-and-kashmir-delhi/article66860030.ece</p>
<p>Baralacha La Pass</p>	<p>Context: Border Roads Organisation rescued over 70 people stranded at Baralacha La Pass.</p> <p>About Baralacha La Pass;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bara-lacha la, also known as Bara-lacha Pass is a high mountain pass in Zaskar range.

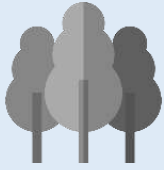


- It is at an elevation of 4.890m (16,043ft) above the sea level, located in the **Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh**, in India.
- It connects **Lahaul district in Himachal Pradesh** to **Leh district in Ladakh**, situated along the **Leh–Manali Highway**.
- The two headwaters of the Chenab River, **Chandra and Bhaga**, originate near the Baralacha Pass.
- **The Bhaga River** originates from **Surya taal lake**, which is situated a few of kilometres from the pass.
- The **Chandra River** originates from glacier in this region. The native name of Chenab, "Chandrabhaga", represents the union of Chandra and Bhaga rivers downstream.

MUST READ: [Atal Tunnel \(UPSC Prelims\)](#)

SOURCE: [The Print](#)





ENVIRONMENT



Red Pandas

Context: Recent studies point out that transboundary conservation is essential to save the endangered **Red Pandas**.

About Red Pandas:-

- **Red Pandas** usually live in **chilly, cold, mountainous mixed deciduous and coniferous forests** of the eastern Himalayas. ([UPSC MAINS: Re-wilding programme of red pandas](#))
- **Habitat:** In the eastern part of the Himalayas, this type of suitable habitat is available **only** in the **Singalila and Neora Valley national parks** in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of West Bengal.
- **Red Panda** belongs to the order Carnivora as per the taxonomic classification, but they have **adapted to a vegetarian diet**.
- There are only **two different panda species** in the world, the **Giant Pandas** and the **Red Pandas**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Red Panda species in India](#))

**Conservation Status:-**

- **Red Pandas**
 - IUCN Red List: **Endangered**
 - CITES: **Appendix I**
 - Wildlife Protection Act 1972: **Schedule I**
- **Giant Pandas**
 - IUCN Red List: **Vulnerable**
 - CITES: **Appendix I**
- India is home to both the **(sub) species**:
 - **Himalayan red panda** (*Ailurus fulgens*)
 - They are present in **Sikkim, Darjeeling-Kalimpong districts of West Bengal, Nepal, Bhutan and Southern Tibet**.
 - **Chinese red panda** (*Ailurus styani*)
 - They are distributed in **southeastern Tibet, Northern Myanmar and the Sichuan and Yunnan provinces of China**.
 - The **zygomatic (cheekbone) breadth and skull size** of the Chinese Red Panda are larger than the Himalayan Red Panda.
 - The **facial colour** of the Chinese Red Panda is redder than the Himalayan Red Panda.
 - In the Chinese Red Panda, **tail rings** are more prominent, with dark rings being darker red and the pale rings being whitish than the Himalayan Red Panda.

Singalila National Park:-

- Singalila National Park is located on the Singalila Ridge at an altitude of more than 7000 feet above sea level, in the **Darjeeling district of West Bengal**.
- It is well known for the trekking route to Sandakphu that runs through it.
- The Singalila area in Darjeeling was purchased by the British Government from Sikkim Durbar in 1882.
- It was notified as a **Reserve Forest** under the **Indian Forest Act of 1878**.
- It was **notified as a National Park in 1992** and was also officially opened up for tourism.

Neora Valley National Park:-

- It is situated in the **Kalimpong District of West Bengal.**
- One of the **richest biological zones** in entire Eastern India
- Neora Valley National Park is the **Natural Habitat of Red panda**
- It borders Sikkim and Bhutan.
- **Flora:** rhododendron, bamboo, oak, ferns, sal, etc.
- **Fauna:** Indian leopard, Red panda, Sloth bear, Asiatic golden cat, goral, sambar deer etc.

MUST READ: [Kanchenjunga Biosphere](#)

SOURCE: [DOWN TO EARTH](#)

Similipal Tiger Reserve

Context: Recently, a rare melanistic tiger was found dead in the core area of **Similipal Tiger Reserve.**

About Similipal Tiger Reserve:-

- Similipal derives its name from the '**Simul'** (silk cotton) tree.
- It was formally **designated a tiger reserve in 1956.** ([UPSC CSE: Global Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards \(CA | TS\)](#))
- It was brought under **Project Tiger in the year 1973.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Saving the Tiger](#))
- It was **declared a biosphere reserve** by the Government of India in June **1994.**
- It has been **part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves since 2009.**
- It is part of the Similipal-Kuldiha-Hadgarh Elephant Reserve popularly known as **Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve**, which includes 3 protected areas i.e. Similipal Tiger Reserve, Hadagarh Wildlife Sanctuary and Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary. ([UPSC MAINS: Similipal National Park](#))



MUST READ: [Simlipal Forest Fires](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

Painted storks

Context: Recently, close to 4,000 **painted storks** were found nesting in two Andhra Pradesh villages.

About Painted Storks:-

- The painted stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) is a large wader in the **stork family.**
- It is found in the **wetlands of the plains of tropical Asia, south of the Himalayas, in the Indian Subcontinent** and extending into **Southeast Asia.**
- Their **distinctive pink tertiary feathers** of the adults give them their name.
- They **forage in flocks in shallow waters along rivers or lakes.**
- They are **not migratory** and only make short-distance movements in some parts of their range in response to changes in weather or food availability or for breeding. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Conservation of Migratory Species](#))

Distribution:-

- Painted storks are widely distributed over the **plains of Asia.**
- They are found **south of the Himalayan ranges** and are bounded on the west by the Indus River system where they are rare and extend **eastwards into Southeast Asia.**
- Painted storks are **absent from very dry or desert regions, dense forests, and higher hill regions.**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They prefer freshwater wetlands in all seasons but also use irrigation canals and crop fields, particularly flooded rice fields during the monsoon. (UPSC PRELIMS: COP14 of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands) <p>Conservation Status:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IUCN Red List: Near Threatened• Wildlife Protection Act: Schedule-IV <p>MUST READ: Spot-Billed Pelicans</p> <p>SOURCE: THE HINDU</p>
Petersberg Dialogue on Climate Change	<p>Context: Recently, the Petersberg Dialogue on Climate Change was held in Berlin.</p> <p>About Petersberg Dialogue on Climate Change:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 14th Petersberg Dialogue on Climate Change was hosted by Germany and the United Arab Emirates.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ UAE would be hosting the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (UPSC PRELIMS: UNFCCC – COP27)• Objective: to discuss the way forward towards COP28• The Climate Dialogue was initiated by Germany’s former Chancellor Angela Merkel.• It was first held in 2010• United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres emphasised the need for “cleaning up economies of the developed countries by breaking their fossil fuel addiction and driving decarbonisation in every sector to achieve a 1.5-degree global warming pathway.”<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ He reiterated his earlier call for an Acceleration Agenda, where “all countries hit fast-forward on their Net Zero deadlines”. <p>Key takeaways:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global renewables target:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Discussions around a potential global target for renewables at the next climate conference.○ Possibility of an agreement on a global target for renewables and energy efficiency among the G7 countries. (UPSC PRELIMS: G7)• \$100 billion climate finance:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ It was stated that developed countries are “on a good track” to deliver the \$100 billion per year as promised to mobilise by 2020 during the COP15 in 2009.○ However, a recent estimate pegs climate finance needs at \$1 trillion per year by 2030 for emerging markets alone.○ This means that climate finance needs are more than 10 times the amount that developed countries have been able to mobilise, 14 years after committing to the \$100 billion figure.○ This underlines the urgent need for financial reparations.• Global Stocktake:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 2023 is the year for the Global Stocktake.○ Global Stocktake: a periodic review of global climate action.○ It aims to assess whether current efforts will enable us to reach the objectives set out in the Paris Agreement.○ This is the first Global Stocktake year since the Paris Agreement was signed in 2015.○ The report is set to be released in September of 2023. <p>MUST READ: India’s Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy</p> <p>SOURCE: DOWN TO EARTH</p>

The Innovative Finance Facility for Climate in Asia and the Pacific Financing Partnership Facility (IF-CAP)

Context: Recently a new funding mechanism '**the Innovative Finance Facility for Climate in Asia and the Pacific Financing Partnership Facility (IF-CAP)**' was launched.

About the Innovative Finance Facility for Climate in Asia and the Pacific Financing Partnership Facility (IF-CAP):-

- In line with climate change financing requirements, **ADB (Asian Development Bank)** announced its newest climate finance program: **the Innovative Finance Facility for Climate in Asia and the Pacific (IF-CAP)**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: ADB](#))
- **Objective:** use guarantees from partners for leverage to accelerate billions of dollars in much-needed climate change investment
- IF-CAP's initial partners are **Denmark, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.**

Intended Benefits of IF-CAP:-

- With a model of '\$1 in, \$5 out', the initial ambition of \$3 billion in guarantees could **create up to \$15 billion in new loans** for much-needed climate projects across Asia and the Pacific.
- Financing will **help vulnerable countries in Asia and the Pacific region meet their mitigation and adaptation goals.**
- It will **support ADB's raised ambition for \$100 billion in climate finance** from 2019-2030.
- IF-CAP will pilot a guarantee mechanism, where every US\$1 guarantee from financing partners can generate up to US\$5 in new loans for climate adaptation and mitigation projects across Asia.
- IF-CAP operates as an **umbrella mechanism** for mobilizing resources for climate adaptation and mitigation projects.
- Under this umbrella is the **IF-CAP Guarantee Trust Fund**, which will provide guarantees to ADB covering payment defaults.
- The facility will **finance projects over a five-year investment period**, but guarantees will remain effective for 25 years.
- In addition, ADB will establish **donor trust funds**, framework arrangements, and other forms of financing partnerships, such as grants, guarantees, and similar arrangements that support IF-CAP's objectives and scope.
- Most contributions to the **facility will be in the form of guarantees or grants.** ([UPSC MAINS: Significance of ADB, NDB and AIIB](#))

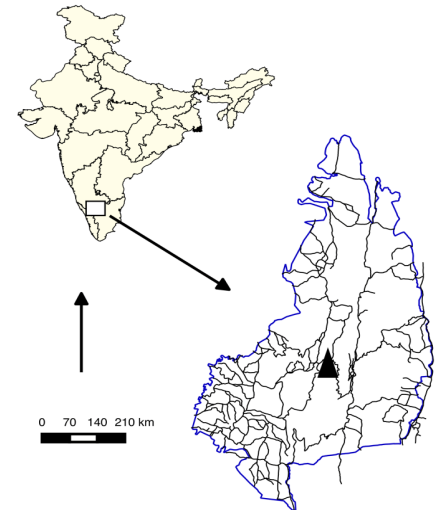
Structure and working mechanism:-

- **Eligibility:** **All developing countries that are eligible to receive assistance from ADB** are also eligible for support from IF-CAP.
- **Selection process:** ADB will select project proposals **based on criteria agreed with the Donor Committee.**
 - **Donor Committee:** a committee of financial contributors which will take decisions on matters including specific guarantee and grant fund considerations,
 - In general, **projects will be aligned with the Paris Agreement.**
 - **Both sovereign and non-sovereign projects** will have access to IF-CAP funding unless otherwise decided by the Donor Committee.
 - IF-CAP support can be combined with other ADB resources and forms of bilateral or multilateral assistance and made available to central and **sub-national governments, government agencies, the private sector, and other entities** eligible to receive assistance from ADB.
- A **Strategic Partners Forum** will gather representatives of developing countries, financing partners and other stakeholders on an annual basis **to provide strategic guidance** on IF-CAP operations with a view **to aligning climate and development needs with available funding.**

MUST READ: [ADB Financing to Support Urban Development in Nagaland](#)

	<p>SOURCE: OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION</p>
<p>River-Cities Alliance</p>	<p>Context: Recently, National Mission For Clean Ganga Organizes River-Cities Alliance Global Seminar.</p> <p>About River-Cities Alliance:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Cities Alliance (RCA) was launched in 2021. (UPSC PRELIMS: River Cities Alliance) • It is organized by National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) in association with the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA). • It is a joint initiative of the Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation under the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) & the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). • Objective: to provide a platform for officials of member cities and international stakeholders to discuss and learn good practices for managing urban rivers. • Vision: to connect river cities and focus on sustainable river-centric development. • Membership: Beginning with 30 member cities in November 2021, the Alliance has expanded to 109 river cities across India and one international member city from Denmark(the city of Aarhus from Denmark). • It is a dedicated platform for river cities across India to discuss & exchange information for sustainable management of urban rivers. • It includes cities from both the Ganga basin and non-Ganga basin states.(UPSC CSE: Linking Rivers) • The RCA Global Seminar witnessed participation from Embassies/High Commissions of select countries along with funding agencies like the World Bank, ADB, JICA & KfW. • In it was noted that the theme of RCA resonated in the UN Water Conference 2023 held in New York in March 2023. ‘ <p>DHARA 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first annual meeting of the RCA - DHARA 2023 (Driving Holistic Action for Urban Rivers) was held in 2023, in Pune. • It featured key sessions on international best practices and examples for urban river management. • It was aimed to inspire members of the RCA to engage in progressive actions for urban river management in their cities. • The event shone a light on the unaddressed issues and challenges for river management in cities, which helped NIUA and its partners formulate an effective work plan. • The event also helped in developing a compendium of technological solutions that cities may adopt for enhancing the management of their local rivers. <p>MUST READ: The International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA)</p> <p>SOURCE: PIB</p>
<p>Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Tiger Reserve</p>	<p>Context: Recently, NTCA wrote to the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State to initiate action against illegal resorts and homestays in enclosures of BRT Tiger Reserve.</p> <p>About Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Tiger Reserve:-</p>

- It derives its name 'BILIGIRI' from the **white rocky cliff** on the top of which is a temple of Lord VISHNU locally known as **Rangaswamy**.
- It is situated in the middle of the bridge **between the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats** in South India.
- It was constituted as a **Wildlife Sanctuary in 1974**. ([UPSC CSE: Wildlife Protection](#))
- BRT Wildlife Sanctuary was **declared a Tiger Reserve in 2011**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Global Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards \(CA | TS\)](#))
- **Flora:-**
 - The forests are principally of **dry deciduous type** and are interspersed with moist deciduous, semi-evergreen, evergreen and shola patches occurring at varying altitudes.
- **Fauna:-**
 - Animals found here include tiger, elephant, leopard, wild dog, bison, sambar, spotted deer, barking deer, four-horned antelope, sloth bear, wild boar, common langur, bonnet macaque, varieties of reptiles, birds, etc.



MUST READ: [Kali Tiger Reserve](#)
SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

Context: Discussions on integrated policies on sustainable forest management (SFM) and energy to meet the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) took centre stage at the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF18).

About UNFF:

- The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was **established in 2000** with the primary goal of promoting "the management, conservation, and sustainable development of **all types of forests** and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end" based on the Rio Declaration, the Forest Principles, Chapter 11 of Agenda 21, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) report.
- It is a subsidiary body created by the UN **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**.
- Every Member State of the United Nations as well as specialized agencies make up the Forum's **universal membership**.
- **The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)**, a grouping of 15 forest-related international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats, was established in April 2001, to support the work of the UNFF.
- Because of UNFF, in 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted the '**Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests**', updating it to the '**United Nations Forest Instrument**' in 2015.

Source: [DTE](#)


Hammerhead sharks

Context: As per study, Hammerhead sharks can hold their breath to survive almost freezing-cold waters during deep dives.

About Hammer Shark heads:

- A flattened hammer- or shovel-shaped head characterizes hammerhead Sharks.
- These distinctive heads serve multiple purposes, including granting the sharks 360-degree vision as well as better hunting abilities.
- **Distribution:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ They are widely distributed in tropical and temperate marine waters near the coasts and above the continental shelves. ○ They may migrate seasonally, moving equatorward during the winter and poleward during the summer. ● Features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ They have very impressive triangular, serrated teeth—like the edge of a saw's blade. ○ The hammerhead also has special sensors across its head that helps it scan for food in the ocean. ○ Unlike many fish, hammerheads do not lay eggs. They are viviparous i.e. the female gives birth to young ones. <p>Source: The New York Times</p>
<p>Milkweed butterflies</p>	<p>Context: A recent study by a team of researchers has shed light on the migration patterns of Milkweed butterflies in southern India.</p> <p>About Milkweed butterflies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Milkweed butterflies are a diverse group of butterflies belonging to the brush-footed butterfly family. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brush-footed butterfly: Their forelegs are reduced in size and covered in fine hairs, giving them a brush-like appearance. These specialized legs are used for various functions, including perching and tasting. ● Diversity: There are approximately 300 species of milkweed butterflies, including the well-known and iconic Monarch butterfly. ● Distribution: Most milkweed butterfly species are found in the tropical regions of both the Old World (Europe, Africa, and Asia) and the New World (North America, South America, and the Caribbean). However, some species, such as the monarch butterfly and the queen butterfly, can also be found in temperate regions. ● Adult milkweed butterflies are typically large and exhibit vibrant colours. Their wings are usually long, with brownish or orange hues and distinctive black-and-white patterns. ● Flight and Migration: Milkweed butterflies have a slow flight pattern. Some species, like the monarch butterfly, undertake remarkable long-distance migrations to reach their breeding or overwintering grounds. Milkweed butterflies migrate westward from the Eastern Ghats and plains to the Western Ghats. When the summer rain cools southern India, the butterflies migrate eastwards into the Eastern Ghats and the plains. ● Feeding and defence mechanisms: Milkweed butterflies primarily feed on milkweed plants, hence the name. Milkweed plants contain acrid and milky juices that make the larvae and subsequent stages of milkweed butterflies unappetizing to predators. The combination of these distasteful characteristics and their conspicuous colouration serves as a defence mechanism to protect them. <p>Source: The Hindu</p>
<p>Eretmoptera murphyi</p>	<p>Context: Eretmoptera murphyi, a tiny flightless insect has come to be an invasive species in Antarctica and is now changing the soil composition and ecosystem there.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Animals and plants that are unintentionally or purposefully brought into a natural setting where they are not typically present and have severe negative effects on their new ecosystem are referred to as invasive alien species. <p>About Eretmoptera murphyi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is a native of South Georgia, a sub-Antarctic Island. ● It is a midge i.e., small insects which bite ● It was accidentally introduced to Signy Island in the 1960s during a botany experiment. It is believed that people might have carried the insects on their shoes accidentally. Given the favorable conditions, it flourished there later.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eretmoptera murphyi feasts on dead organic matter. This has led to faster decomposition of plant materials which led to increase in the soil nitrate levels by three-five times compared to places on the island where it is absent and only native invertebrate species live. • High levels of nitrate can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be toxic for other plant species, ○ contaminate groundwater. ○ lead to excessive algae growth, which can deplete oxygen levels and harm aquatic life. (eutrophication) • Concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The midge invasion highlights that even harsh conditions can no longer protect Antarctica from the threat of invasive species. ○ The midge can also survive in water, which raises concerns that it could spread to other islands. ○ The activity of the midges, along with climate change, may also create conditions for other invasive species to become established and accelerate the effects of climate change. <p>Source: DTE</p>
<p>Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary</p>	<p>Context: The Assam government successfully conducted an eviction drive at Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary</p> <p>About Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is located in the Sonitpur district of Assam. • It forms an integral part of the Laokhowa-Burachapori eco-system and is a notified buffer of the Kaziranga Tiger reserve. • Vegetation: It comprises of a mosaic of wet alluvial grassland, riparian and semi-evergreen forests dotted by wetland and river systems. • Brahmaputra River flows through the sanctuary. • It is considered to be an ideal habitat for the Bengal florican (IUCN, Critically Endangered). • Important fauna: Indian-one horned rhinoceros, Asiatic water buffalo and Bengal tiger. <p>Source: The Print</p>
<p>Geko Mizoramensis</p>	<p>Context: A team of biologists has recorded the Gekko Mizoramensis as a new species of parachute gecko, so named because of skin flaps along the body and tail enabling it to glide.</p> <p>About Gekko mizoramensis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution: The species is found in Southeast Asia. It is specifically found in Mizoram, a region in India, as well as parts of Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia. • Gekko Mizoramensis is arboreal, meaning it primarily inhabits trees. It is nocturnal, being most active during the night. The gecko has the ability to glide from one tree to another, aided by its webbed limbs and flat tail. However, it does not possess the capability to fly.  <p>SOURCE: The Hindu</p>
<p>Kishtwar National Park</p>	<p>Context: snow Leopards spotted in Jammu & Kashmir's Kishtwar National Park.</p>

- The presence of the elusive **snow leopards in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar High Altitude National Park** has been confirmed by a research team of Department of Wildlife Protection through camera trap.
- Attributed as one of the seven snow leopard reserves under a project launched by Central Government, the **Kishtwar High Altitude National Park lies in Doda District, about 40km north-east of Kishtwar Town.**
- The **park was established to conserve the snow leopard species**, its prey populations and its fragile mountain habitat.
- Spread over an area of 400 sq km the park was declared a national park on 4 February 1981.
- With **Rinnay River in the north, KibarNala catchment in the south, the Great Himalayas in the east and Marwa River in the west**, the area lies in the Central Crystalline belt of the Great Himalayas. The altitude of the park ranges from **1700m to 4800m.**

Snow leopards in India

- Snow leopards are distributed across the 100,146 sq. km of snowy forests in five Himalayan states - Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim & Arunachal Pradesh.
- Hemis National Park, Gangotri National Park, Khangchendzonga National park and Great Himalayan National Park are some protected areas where snow leopards are known to be found.
- It is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List because the global population is estimated to number fewer than 10,000 mature individuals and is expected to decline about 10% by 2040.

SOURCE: [Indian Express](#)

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency

Context: Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) emphasized the need for avoided carbon emissions via reduced generation and utilization of power from conventional sources at CEO Round Table in Bangkok, Thailand.

About Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency

- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) is a Mini Ratna (Category – I) Government of India Enterprise under the administrative control of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- IREDA is a Public Limited Government Company established as a Non-Banking Financial Institution in 1987 engaged in promoting, developing and extending financial assistance for setting up projects relating to new and renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency/conservation.
- The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) offers a credit enhancement guarantee scheme to support the issuance of bonds by wind and solar energy project developers.
- By providing unconditional and irrevocable partial credit guarantees, IREDA aims to enhance the credit rating of bonds for renewable energy projects, thereby improving their marketability and liquidity, and attracting lower-cost and longer-term funding for project developers. The amount raised by credit enhanced bonds shall only serve to repay existing debt partially or fully.

- IREDA’s long-term objective is to contribute to the development of a bond market for renewable energy projects in India.

MUST READ: One Sun One World One Grid initiative

SOURCE: PIB <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1925552>

Green Hydrogen

Context: Gujarat has set the ball rolling to become the country’s green hydrogen manufacturing hub and retain its dominance over the industrial sector.

Types of Hydrogen Fuels

The sources and processes by which hydrogen is derived, are categorized by colour tabs

- **Grey Hydrogen** - Hydrogen produced from fossil fuels is called grey hydrogen; this constitutes the bulk of the hydrogen produced today.
- **Brown Hydrogen** - Brown hydrogen is produced using coal where the emissions are released to the air.
- **Blue Hydrogen** - Hydrogen generated from fossil fuels with carbon capture and storage options is called blue hydrogen.
- **Green Hydrogen** - Hydrogen generated entirely from renewable power sources is called green hydrogen. In the last process, electricity generated from renewable energy is used to split water into hydrogen and oxygen.

Significance of Green Hydrogen in India’s Energy Transition

- India has set its sight on becoming **energy independent by 2047** and achieving **Net Zero by 2070**.
- To achieve this target, increasing renewable energy use across all economic spheres is central to India's Energy Transition. Green Hydrogen is considered a promising alternative for enabling this transition

National Hydrogen Mission

On August 15, 2021, Prime Minister Modi announced a National Hydrogen Mission to make India a Global Hub for Green Hydrogen Production and Export.

- Government is targeting production of **5 million tonnes** of green hydrogen **by 2030**.
- The policy allows free inter-state wheeling of **renewable energy used in the production of green hydrogen and ammonia** as it seeks to boost usage of the carbon-free fuel, and make India an export hub.
 - It offers 25 years of free power transmission for any new renewable energy plants set up to supply power for green hydrogen production before July 2025.
 - This means that a green hydrogen producer will be able to set up a solar power plant in Rajasthan to supply renewable energy to a green hydrogen plant in Assam and would not be required to pay any inter-state transmission charges.
- There will also be a **single portal** for all clearances required for **setting up green hydrogen production as well as a facility for producers** to bank any surplus renewable energy generated with discoms for upto 30 days and use it as required.
- Energy plants set up to produce green hydrogen/ammonia would be **given connectivity to the grid** on a priority basis.
- **Power distribution companies** may also procure renewable energy to supply green hydrogen producers but will be required to do so at a concessional rate.

- Such procurement would also count towards a state’s **Renewable Purchase Obligation** (RPO) under which it is required to procure a certain proportion of its requirements from renewable energy sources.
- Under the policy, port authorities will also provide land at applicable charges to green hydrogen and green ammonia producers to set up bunkers near ports for storage prior to export.
 - Germany and Japan could be key markets for green hydrogen produced in India
- The move is likely going to make it more economical for key users of hydrogen and ammonia such as the oil refining, fertilizer and steel sectors to produce green hydrogen for their own use. These sectors currently use grey hydrogen or grey ammonia produced using natural gas or naphtha.

MUST READ: <https://iasbaba.com/2021/10/indias-renewable-energy/>

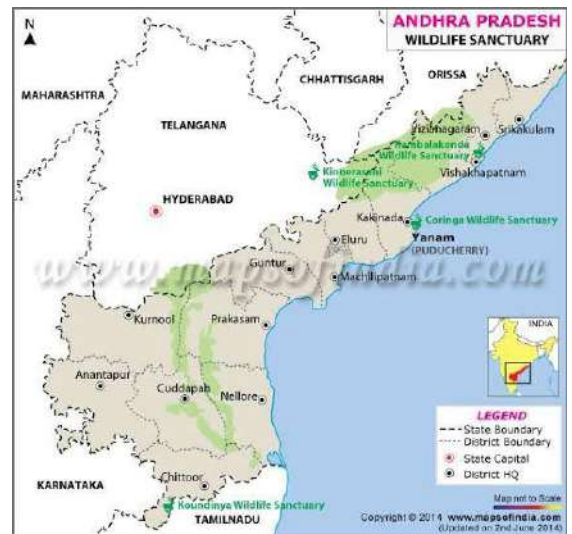
SOURCE: The Hindu <https://www.google.com/search?q=Gujarat+green+hydrogen+hub&oq=Gujarat+green+hydrogen+hub&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i60.11798j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary

Context: A three days Jumbo census in Seshachalam hills, Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary hints at sizeable presence of Jumbos in the region.


About Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary

- Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary is a wildlife sanctuary and an elephant reserve situated in Andhra Pradesh, India.
- It is the only sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh with a population of Asian elephants, which migrated after 200 years from neighboring regions.
- This Sanctuary comes under Project elephant - a Country wide Elephant Conservation Project taken up by Government of India.
- The Sanctuary also has many places of attraction around it.
- **Forest Type:** Southern tropical dry deciduous forest, with patches of thorn, scrub and grassy plains.
- **Flora:** Plants like Albizzia amara, Ficus glomerata, Zizyphus xylocarpus, Gymnosporia Montana, etc; make this a green panoramic place with a breathtaking floral diversity.
- **Fauna:** Insects like Gongylus praying mantis, Painted grasshopper, Plain tiger butterfly, Common grass yellow butterfly, etc; abound this elephant land. Reptiles like Common cobra, Rat snake, Indian rock python, Forest calotes, Skinks, etc; make this place their abode. Birds like Partidges, quails, storks, Cotton teal, etc; make this Sanctuary their domicile. A further balance in the food-web is maintained by mammals like Indian Elephant, Panther, Sloth bear, Wild boar, Chowsingha, Nilgai, Hyena, Jackal, etc.



MUST READ: Asian Elephants

SOURCE : The Hindu <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/jumbo-census-in-seshachalam-hills-koundinya-wildlife-sanctuary-hints-at-sizeable-presence/article66870607.ece>.

<p>Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary</p>	<p>Context: The first-ever sighting of Barkudia limbless skink (Barkudiamelanostica), a small reptile has been reported at the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary.</p> <p>About Barkudia limbless skink</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barkudia limbless skink is a small reptile. • It is fossorial in nature, is characterised by its elongated body, muddy brown colouration, and absence of limbs, a unique adaptation to its environment. • This species is listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <p>Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary is an important protected area located near Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. • The sanctuary is named after the local hillock, Kambalakonda, and is home to a number of rare and endangered species, including the Indian leopard. • The Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary is a dry deciduous forest with meadows and scrub. • The forest is surrounded by the Gambheeram reservoir on the northeast and the Simhachalam hill range on the west. These unique physical features create a unique microclimate that supports the survival and growth of various species of plants and animals. <p>SOURCE: The Hindu</p> 
<p>World Meteorological Organisation</p>	<p>Context: Every year since 2020, the WMO has been issuing forecasts for the following year and the average outlook for the next five years.</p> <p>About World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a specialized agency of the United Nations. • It was established in 1950, WMO became the specialized agency of the UN for meteorology (weather and climate), operational hydrology and related geophysical sciences. • Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland • WMO is dedicated to international cooperation and coordination on the state and behaviour of the Earth’s atmosphere, its interaction with the land and oceans, the weather and climate it produces, and the resulting distribution of water resources. • Through its Technical Commissions, Programmes, Projects and Regional Offices, as well as its synergistic and public-private partnerships, WMO facilitates and coordinates an Earth system approach to the gathering and free exchange of observations, promotion and integration of research and the development and delivery of services in the areas of weather, climate and water. • Currently it has a membership of 187 countries. India is a member of WMO since 1949 <p>Governance Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its supreme body is the World Meteorological Congress, which consists of representatives of all members. It meets at least every four years to set general policy and adopt regulations. • A 36-member Executive Council meets annually and implements policy. • The Secretariat, headed by a secretary-general appointed by the congress for a four-year term, serves as the administrative centre of the organization. • Six regional associations address problems peculiar to their regions.

- Eight technical commissions.

Major Programmes

- **World Weather Watch:** A system of satellites and telecommunication networks connecting land and sea sites for monitoring weather conditions.
- **World Climate Programme:** It monitors climate change, including global warming.
- **Atmospheric Research and Environment Programme:** Designed to promote research on issues such as ozone depletion.

MUST READ: [IPCC Climate Report](#)

SOURCE: [The Hindu](#)

People's Biodiversity Register (PBR)

Context: National Campaign for Updating and Verification of People's Biodiversity Register was recently launched in Goa.

About People's Biodiversity Register:

- The program of People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) is designed as a **tool for the formal maintenance of the local knowledge of biodiversity.**
- PBR is a **record of knowledge, perception and attitude of people about natural resources, plants and animals, their utilization and conservation** in a village or a panchayat.
- PBR is also a mechanism to **create awareness among the people** about the condition of plants and animals and their conservation and sustainable utilization.
- This mechanism can bring the people to participate in development planning which would be ecologically sustainable and socially justifiable.
- As per the [Biological Diversity Act 2002](#), **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC)** are created for "promoting conservation, sustainable use and documentation of biological diversity" by **local bodies** across the country.
- BMCs have been **constituted by the local bodies** in the States and Union Territories and are entrusted with **preparation of the People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)**, in consultation with local communities.

Biological Diversity (BD) Act, 2002;

- The Biological Diversity (BD) Act, 2002 was **legislated pursuant to India's obligation under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).**
- The Biological Diversity (BD) Act, 2002 was enacted by the Parliament of India to conserve biological diversity, sustainably use its components and ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources.

Salient Features of the Act:

- The Act prohibits the following activities without the prior approval from the **National Biodiversity Authority:**
 - Any person or organization (either based in India or not) obtaining any biological resource occurring in India for its research or commercial utilization.
 - The transfer of the results of any research relating to any biological resources occurring in, or obtained from, India.

- The claim of any intellectual property rights on any invention based on the research made on the biological resources obtained from India.
- The act envisaged a three-tier structure to regulate the access to biological resources:
 - The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)
 - The State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)
 - The Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) (at local level)
- The Act provides these authorities with special funds and a separate budget in order to carry out any research project dealing with the biological natural resources of the country.
- It shall supervise any use of biological resources and the sustainable use of them and shall take control over the financial investments and their return and dispose of those capitals as correct.
- Under this act, the Central Government in consultation with the NBA:
 - Shall notify threatened species and prohibit or regulate their collection, rehabilitation and conservation
 - Designate institutions as repositories for different categories of biological resources
 - The act stipulates all offences under it as cognizable and non-bailable.
- Any grievances related to the determination of benefit sharing or order of the National Biodiversity Authority or a State Biodiversity Board under this Act, shall be taken to the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

National Biodiversity Authority (NBA);

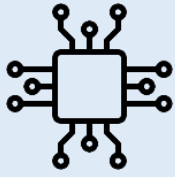
- NBA is a **statutory, autonomous body** and it performs facilitative, regulatory and advisory functions.
- NBA is headquartered at **Chennai**.
- NBA has an **advisory and regulatory role** to perform.
- NBA advises Central Government on Biodiversity Conservation Issues.
- It performs a regulatory role by granting approvals to Foreign Nationals and Companies for access to Bio-resources of India for commercial use.
- It also Grants approvals for **intellectual property rights** of Bio resources and associated Traditional Knowledge to Indians and Non-Indians.

Structure of the NBA:

- The National Biodiversity Authority consists of the following members to be appointed by the central government, namely:
 - **A Chairperson.**
 - **Three ex officio members**, one representing the Ministry dealing with Tribal Affairs and two representing the Ministry dealing with Environment and Forests.
 - **Seven ex-officio members** to represent the Ministries of the Central Government.
 - **Five non-official members** to be appointed from amongst specialists and scientists having special knowledge and experience in the required matters.

Must Read: [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



Neurotoxins

Context: Neurotoxins released in the recent Ludhiana gas leak tragedy might have caused the deaths.

About Neurotoxins:-

MEET THE NEUROTOXINS



Manganese



Fluoride



Chlorpyrifos



DDT/DDE



Tetrachloro-ethylene (PERC)



Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDEs)



Arsenic



Lead



Mercury



Toluene



Ethanol



Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

- Neurotoxins are **synthetic or naturally occurring substances** that damage, destroy, or **impair the functioning of the central and/or peripheral nervous system.**
- Neurotoxins may damage neurons, axons, and/or glia resulting in loss of specific nuclei and/or axonal tracts or demyelination.
- They may also **cause metabolic imbalances** that can secondarily affect the central nervous system (CNS).
- Many neurotoxins are of **external origin**, entering the body from environmental sources.
 - Others, however, are **endogenous**, being produced and existing within the body.

- **Examples of endogenous neurotoxins** include the neurotransmitters **nitric oxide and glutamate.** ([UPSC CSE: Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention \(BTWC\)](#))

Physiological effects:-

- Neurotoxins are **absorbed through inhalation, ingestion, skin contact, or injection** and can have immediate or long-lasting impacts by causing neurons to malfunction or by disrupting interneuron communication.
- Certain neurotoxins are highly potent and have been developed into **chemical weapons.**
 - **Sarin** is an organophosphorus compound that is **classified as a weapon of mass destruction** ([UPSC Prelims: Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants \(POPs\)](#))
- Neurotoxins such as **arsenic, chlorpyrifos, DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), ethyl alcohol, fluoride, lead, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), manganese, mercury, and toluene** are major contributors to the prevalence of **neurobehavioral disorders.**
- The impact of some neurotoxins, such as **lead and ethyl alcohol**, is well-documented.

MUST READ: [Safeguards against chemical disasters in India](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

Bluebugging

Context: Recently, Andhra Pradesh police cautioned smartphone users to be wary of “bluebugging”.

About Bluebugging:-

RELATED CONCEPTS

BLUEBUGGING

- Bluebugging is a technique that allows skilled hackers to access mobile commands on Bluetooth-enabled devices that are in discoverable mode.
- BlueBug is the name of a Bluetooth security loophole on some Bluetooth-enabled cell phones. Exploiting this loophole allows the unauthorized downloading of phone books and call lists, the sending and reading of SMS messages from the attacked phone and many more things.

BLUESNARFING

- Bluesnarfing is the unauthorized access of information from a wireless device through a Bluetooth connection, often between phones, desktops, laptops, and PDAs.
- This allows access to a calendar, contact list, emails and text messages and on some phones users can steal pictures and private videos. Currently available programs must allow connection and to be 'paired' to another phone to steal content.

- Bluebugging is a form of hacking that **lets attackers access a device** through its discoverable Bluetooth connection. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Understanding Bluebugging](#))
- A hacker can gain **unauthorized access to these apps and devices and control** them as per their wish through bluebugging. ([UPSC MAINS:](#)

[Cyber Attacks in India](#))

- **Any Bluetooth-enabled device** including True Wireless Stereo (TWS) devices or earbuds susceptible to bluebugging.

Preventive Measures:

- **Turning off Bluetooth and disconnecting paired Bluetooth devices** when not in use.
- Making Bluetooth devices **undiscoverable** from Bluetooth settings.
- **Updating the device's system software** to the latest version.
- Limited use of **public Wi-Fi**.
- **Watch out for suspicious activities** on your device.
- Monitoring of **sudden spikes in data usage**.
- Usage of modern **anti-virus software**.

MUST READ: [India's cyber infrastructure](#)

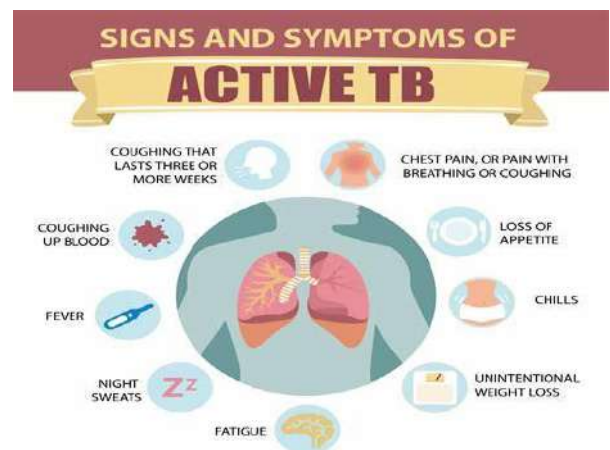
SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

Bedaquiline

Context: Recently, the Indian Patent Office rejected Johnson & Johnson's claim for a secondary patent on its tuberculosis drug **bedaquiline**.

About Bedaquiline:-

- Bedaquiline is an oral medication used to treat active **tuberculosis**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Tuberculosis](#))
- It is particularly used to treat **multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)**.
- It has a **unique mechanism of action**.
 - It targets the **adenosine triphosphate (ATP) synthase enzyme** of the TB mycobacteria.
- Bedaquiline is central to **WHO -recommended TB treatment regimens** ([UPSC PRELIMS: WHO and its funding](#))
 - Johnson and Johnson holds the patent for it.
- India is also the country with the second highest number (after South Africa) of estimated HIV-associated TB cases. ([UPSC CSE: 2021 Global TB report: WHO](#))



MUST READ: [India's TB Elimination Programme](#)

SOURCE: [DOWN TO EARTH](#)

Listeria contamination

Context: Recently, Cadbury recalls chocolates in the UK over **listeria contamination** fears.

About Listeria contamination:-



Who has a higher risk of getting Listeria food poisoning?

Lessons from Listeria outbreaks: Food poisoning can happen to anyone. Each year, about 48 million people in the US (1 in 6) get sick from eating contaminated food. It can be especially dangerous for pregnant women and their newborns; older adults; and people with immune systems weakened by cancer, cancer treatments, or other serious conditions (like diabetes, kidney failure, liver disease, and HIV/AIDS). Listeria is a prime example of how germs that contaminate food can cause sickness and death in these groups.

Pregnant women, fetuses, and newborn infants
Listeria can pass from pregnant women to their fetuses and newborns. It can cause miscarriages, stillbirths, and newborn deaths.
Chancy cheese
LISTERIA OUTBREAK: Quark cheese (a type of soft cheese) sickened 142 people, killed 20 newborns and 38 adults, and caused 20 miscarriages.

People with weakened immune systems
Listeria can spread through the bloodstream to cause meningitis, and often kills. The weaker your immune system, the greater the risk.
Contaminated celery
LISTERIA OUTBREAK: Pre-cut celery in chicken salad served at hospitals sickened 10 people who had other serious health problems. Five of them died as a result.

Adults 65 or older
Listeria can spread through the bloodstream to cause meningitis, and often kills. The older you are, the greater the risk.
Tainted cantaloupes
LISTERIA OUTBREAK: Contaminated whole cantaloupes sickened 247 people in 28 states and caused one of the deadliest foodborne outbreaks in the US. There were 33 deaths, mostly in adults over 65, reported during the outbreak.
SOURCE: CDC, 2013

What foods are risky?
When it comes to Listeria, some foods are more risky than others. Meet some of the other foods where Listeria is known to hide.
Raw Sprouts, Soft Cheeses, Raw Milk (unpasteurized), Deli Meats and Hot Dogs (cold, not heated), Smoked Seafood

- Listeria infection is a **foodborne bacterial illness**.
- It is typically caused by foods infected with the **Listeria monocytogenes bacteria**.
 - The bacteria exist in the environment.
 - It is found in water, soil and some animals' intestines.
 - Listeria bacteria can survive **refrigeration** and even freezing.

Symptoms:-

- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
- Diarrhea

Causes:-

- Listeria bacteria can be found in **soil, water and animal faeces**.
- People can get infected by eating the following:
 - **Raw vegetables** that have been contaminated from the soil or from contaminated manure used as fertilizer
 - **Contaminated meat**
 - **Unpasteurized milk or foods** made with unpasteurized milk
 - **Certain processed foods** such as soft cheeses, hot dogs and deli meats that have been contaminated after processing
 - Unborn babies can contract a listeria **infection from the mother**.

Risk factors-

- **Pregnant women and people who have weak immune systems** are at highest risk of contracting a listeria infection. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Immune Imprinting](#))
- People older than 65
- People who have AIDS ([UPSC PRELIMS: World AIDS Day](#))
- People who are receiving chemotherapy
- People who have diabetes or kidney disease
- People who take high-dose prednisone or certain rheumatoid arthritis drugs
- People who take medications to block rejection of a transplanted organ

Prevention:-

- **Keeping things clean**

- **Washing hands thoroughly** with warm, soapy water before and after handling or preparing food.
- After cooking, use hot, soapy water to wash the utensils, cutting boards and other food preparation surfaces.
- Scrubbing raw vegetables.
- Cooking the food thoroughly.

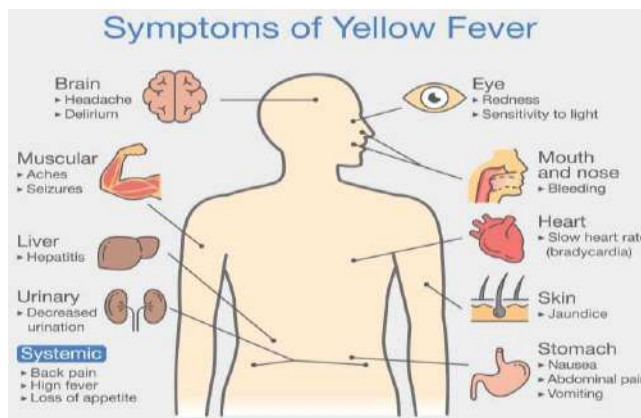
MUST READ: [American Foulbrood \(AFB\) disease](#)

SOURCE: [DOWN TO EARTH](#)

Yellow Fever

Context: Recently, Quarantine facilities being set up for those arriving from Sudan to prevent the spread of **Yellow Fever**.

About Yellow Fever:-



severe symptoms and approximately half of those die within 7 to 10 days.

- **Yellow Fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic disease transmitted by infected mosquitoes.**
- The yellow in the name refers to the **jaundice that affects some patients.**
- **Symptoms:** Fever, headache, jaundice, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting and fatigue.
- A small proportion of patients who contract the virus develop severe symptoms and approximately half of those die within 7 to 10 days.
- **Endemic:** The virus is endemic in tropical areas of **Africa and Central and South America.** [\(UPSC PRELIMS: African swine fever\)](#)
- **Prevention:** Yellow fever is prevented by an extremely effective **vaccine** which is safe and affordable. [\(UPSC PRELIMS: Dengue and DNA vaccines \)](#)
- **Eliminate yellow fever epidemics(EYE) 2017-2026:** It has been developed by a coalition of partners (Gavi, UNICEF and WHO) that aims at ending yellow fever epidemics by 2026.
- It is usually **compulsory to get vaccinated before travelling to any** of the yellow fever-endemic countries in parts of **Africa, and Central and South America.**
- **Yellow fever vaccine** is known as **17D.** [\(UPSC PRELIMS: Malaria Vaccine\)](#)
 - According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)** it is **safe and affordable.**
 - However, there are reports of multisystem organ failure following vaccination.

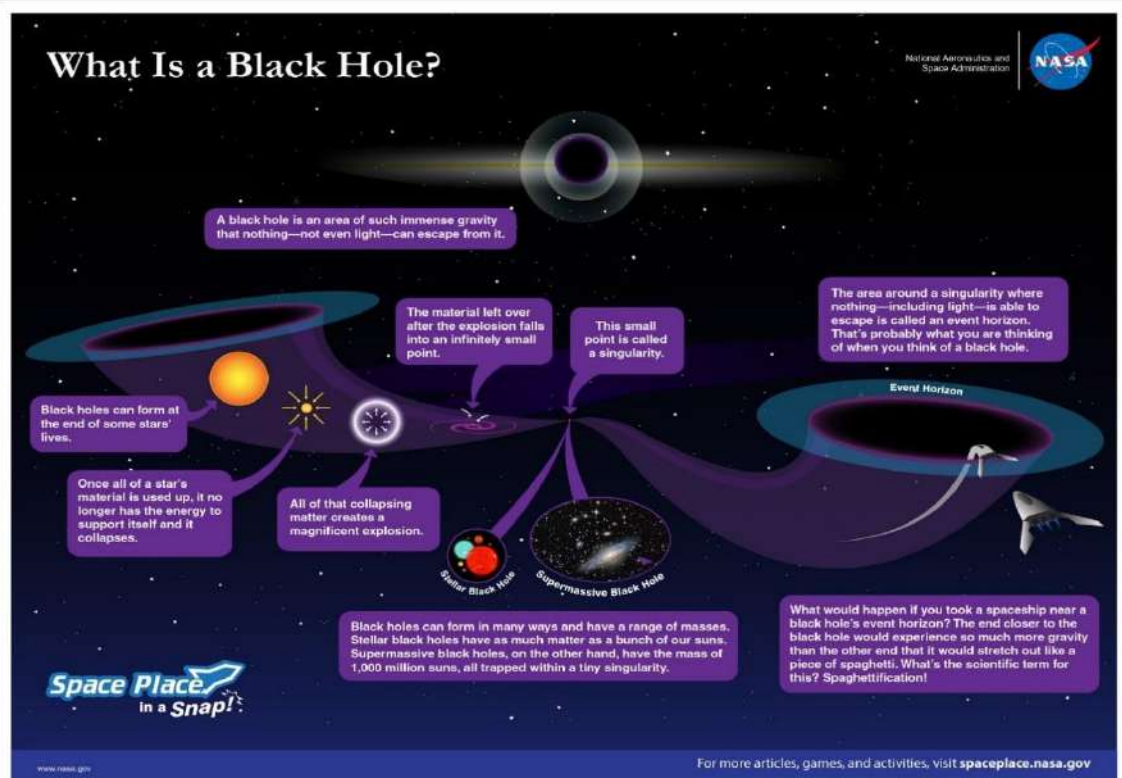
MUST READ: [Lassa Fever](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

Scary Barbie

Context: Scientists named the recently discovered black hole “**Scary Barbie,**” after a beloved children’s character.

About Scary Barbie:-



- Scary Barbie is a **supermassive black hole** that is devouring a star with a thousand times the brightness of a supernova. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Black Hole](#))
- It was **first observed in 2020**.
 - It was named ZTF20abrbeie.
- It is **one of the most luminous, energetic, long-lasting** transient objects in the sky.
- It is also **extremely far away** and in a somewhat neglected corner of the sky. ([UPSC MAINS: Can outer space be considered a resource](#))
- The researchers discovered it using an AI engine called **REFITT (Recommender Engine For Intelligent Transient Tracking)**.
 - The AI engine looks through observations from many different telescopes around the World.

MUST READ: [IN-SPACE](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

Donanemab

Context: Recently, the pharmaceutical company, Eli Lilly, released the drug **donanemab** for Alzheimer's treatment.

About Donanemab:-

- Donanemab is a drug developed for Alzheimer's by a **US pharma company 'Eli Lilly'**.
- It is **yet to be approved** in the USA.
- Donanemab is **not a cure for Alzheimer's**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Alzheimer](#))
- The drug **aims to remove the plaques from the brain** and slow the progression of the disease.
- It **slows cognitive decline by 35%**

- Mechanism: It has **antibodies that target different forms of amyloid-beta (A β) proteins** that can clump together to form amyloid plaques in people's brains, resulting in their cognitive decline.
- It has similar **antibody-based therapy** like lecanemab, but targets different forms of amyloid-beta (A β) proteins.
 - **Lecanemab:-**
 - It is a drug developed for Alzheimer's.
 - It is **approved in the US**.
 - It is **still under evaluation by the FDA's counterpart in Europe**, the European Medicines Agency (EMA).
 - Lecanemab trial results showed it **slowed cognitive decline by 27%**.
- Both donanemab and lecanemab are given **intravenously**.
- Both donanemab and lecanemab have a **high risk of side effects** like 'amyloid-related imaging abnormalities' (ARIA) which include swelling or bleeding in the brain.

About Alzheimer's Disease:-

- Alzheimer's disease is a **neurological disorder** which causes brain cells to degenerate and die.
 - This leads to **loss of memory, problems** with words in speaking or writing, poor judgment, changes in mood and personality, confusion with time or place, etc.
- It is a **brain disorder** that gets worse over time.
- Alzheimer's is the **most common cause of dementia among older adults**. ([UPSC CSE: Drug Addiction](#))
- **Causes:-**
 - Alzheimer's disease is thought to be caused by the **abnormal build-up of proteins** in and around brain cells.
 - One of the proteins involved is called amyloid, deposits of which form **plaques around brain cells** and the other protein is called **tau**.
 - **Tau** is a protein that when it occurs in tangled formations in the brain of Alzheimer patients, disrupts the ability of neurons to communicate with one another in the brain.
- Alzheimer's is an **incurable disease**, as the death of brain cells cannot be reversed.
- **Women have a higher risk** of having Alzheimer's disease than men.

MUST READ: [Mental Health](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START)

Context: Recently, ISRO announced a new introductory-level online training programme called **Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START)**.

About Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START):-

- Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START), is launched by **the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**. ([UPSC MAINS: Achievements of ISRO](#))
- It is an **introductory-level training program for students**.
- **Objective:-**
 - To provide students with **introductory-level training** in Space Science and Technology.

- Giving students an **overview of different facets of the field, research opportunities, and career options.**
- The programme will cover various domains of space science, including **Astronomy & Astrophysics, Heliophysics & Sun-Earth interaction, Instrumentation, and Aeronomy.**
- It will be delivered **by scientists from Indian academia and ISRO centres.** ([UPSC MAINS: Latest advances made by ISRO in satellite technology.](#))
- The programme will **cover various domains of Space Science, including Astronomy and Astrophysics, Heliophysics and Sun-Earth interaction, Instrumentation, and Aeronomy.**
- The training will also emphasize the **cross-disciplinary nature of Space Science**, giving students insights into how individual aptitudes can be applied to the field.
- The lectures will also cover topics on the **Indian Space Science exploration program** and research opportunities in Space Science and technologies.

MUST READ: [IN-SPACE](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

Thalassaemia

Context: Recently, World **Thalassaemia** Day was observed.

About Thalassaemia:-

- Thalassaemia is a **genetic blood disorder** affecting the **production of red blood cells.** ([UPSC MAINS: Awareness and Cure of Thalassaemia](#))
 - **Genetic Disorder:** disorder which is inherited and can be passed down from one generation to the next.
- It is a genetic blood disorder that **causes the body to have less haemoglobin than normal.**
 - **Hemoglobin:** it enables red blood cells to carry oxygen.
- Thalassaemia can **cause anaemia, leading to fatigue.**
- Abnormal production of blood means that affected **individuals do not make adequate amounts of functional red blood cells.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Rare Diseases](#))

Symptoms:-

- Fatigue, weakness, or shortness of breath
- A pale appearance or yellow colour to the skin (jaundice)
- Irritability
- Deformities of the facial bones
- Slow growth
- A swollen abdomen
- Dark urine

Treatment:-

- **Bone marrow transplant (BMT)**
 - In BMT, **high-dose chemotherapy eliminates thalassaemia-producing cells** in the marrow and replaces them with healthy donor cells from bone marrow or umbilical cord blood.
- **Supplements and Medications**
- **Blood transfusions**

MUST READ: [Genetic Information and Right to Privacy](#)

SOURCE: [THE TIMES OF INDIA](#)

LIGO-India

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently, laid down the foundation stone of **LIGO-India** on the occasion of National Technology Day.

About LIGO-India:-



WHAT IS LIGO?
The advanced Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (or LIGO) is at the centre of the path-breaking find:
The LIGO experiment is an example of extreme engineering chasing an impossible dream
The twin LIGO installations — one in Livingston, Louisiana, and the other in Hanford, Washington — are located 3,000km apart

Two "blind" L-shaped detectors with 4km long vacuum chambers that can accommodate 11 Boeing 747-400 commercial airliners

When a gravitational wave comes through, it stretches space in one direction, and squeezes space in the other direction

By measuring the interference of the laser as they bounce between the different point, physicists can measure very precisely whether the space in between has stretched or compressed

- Built 3,000km apart, operating in unison
- To make the smallest measurement ever attempted by science — a motion 10,000 times smaller than an atomic nucleus
- Caused by the most violent and cataclysmic events in the Universe occurring millions of light years away
- Can detect gravitational waves in a volume of 1 billion cubic light years — covering about 1 million Milky Way type galaxies
- To detect a gravitational wave we should be able to tell when something changes in length by a few parts in 10 to the power 25
- LIGO makes the smallest measurement ever attempted — a motion 10,000 times smaller than an atomic nucleus
- It's like trying to hear a song being hummed in a very, very noisy party

- LIGO is the world's most powerful observatory.
- It exploits the physical properties of light and space to detect and understand the origins of gravitational waves.
- At the moment, there are two such observatories in the US.
 - These are separated by a distance of 3000 kilometres that work in tandem to pick up these gravitational waves.
- Each LIGO detector consists of two arms.

- LIGO-India will be the fifth node of this international network of gravitational wave observatories.
- It will be located in Maharashtra, India.
- It is envisaged as a collaborative project between a consortium of Indian research institutions and the LIGO Laboratory in the USA, along with its international partners.
- It will be built by the Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Science and Technology, with a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Science Foundation, the US, along with several national and international research and academic institutions.
- LIGO-India is a collaboration between the LIGO Laboratory (operated by Caltech and MIT in the US) and three Institutes in India namely:-
 - the Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology (RRCAT, in Indore),
 - the Institute for Plasma Research (IPR in Ahmedabad), and
 - the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA, in Pune).
- When LIGO-India is completed, it will join a global network of gravitational-wave observatories that includes Virgo in Italy and KAGRA in Japan.

Significance:-

- LIGO-India will provide opportunities for Indian youth to pursue research careers in cutting-edge areas of science and technology.
- It will lead to advancement in gravitational-wave astronomy and astrophysics.
- It will lead to the development of cutting-edge technologies. [\(UPSC MAINS: Privatisation in Space Sector\)](#)

Gravitational Waves:-

- A gravitational wave is **an invisible** (yet incredibly fast) ripple in space. ([UPSC MAINS: Gravitational waves](#))
- They **travel at the speed of light** (186,000 miles per second).
- These waves **squeeze and stretch anything in their path as they pass by.**
- **Einstein predicted that when two bodies such as planets or stars orbit each other it causes ripples in space.**
 - These **ripples would spread out** like the ripples in a pond when a stone is tossed in.
 - Scientists call these ripples of **space gravitational waves.**

MUST READ: [India's Space Economy](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

Hydrogen sulphide

Context: Preliminary evidence, from post-mortem and clinical features of the survivors of the recent Gaspura tragedy, suspect **hydrogen sulphide** gas as the cause.

About Hydrogen sulphide:-

- Hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) is a **colourless chalcogen hydride gas** with a characteristic **foul odour.**
- It is very **poisonous, corrosive, and flammable.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: India's first pure green hydrogen plant commissioned](#))
- It **dissolves in water and oil.**
- It may be **released when these liquids are heated, depressurized, or agitated.**
- It occurs in **volcanic gases, natural gas, and some sources of well water.** ([UPSC CSE: Electronic nose to detect hydrogen sulphide developed](#))

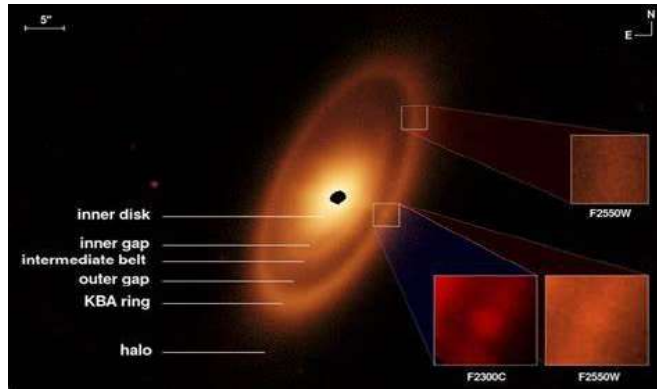
Health Hazards Associated with Hydrogen Sulphide:-

- The health effects of hydrogen sulfide range from **mild, headaches or eye irritation, to very serious, unconsciousness and death.**
- Too much H₂S can **halt the breathing centre in the brain, which can cause death.**
- The gas can **irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs.**
- Because it is heavier than air, hydrogen sulfide **can collect in low-lying and enclosed spaces, such as manholes, sewers, and underground telephone vaults.**
 - Its presence makes **work in confined spaces potentially very dangerous.**

Uses:-

- Hydrogen sulphide is **used primarily to produce sulfuric acid and sulphur.**
- It is **also used to create a variety of inorganic sulphides.**
- It is used to create **pesticides, leather, dyes, and pharmaceuticals.**
- It is used to **produce heavy water** for nuclear power plants.
- It is also used or is a by-product in many **industrial processes.**
- Hydrogen sulfide is **produced naturally from decaying organic matter.**
- It **occurs naturally in sewers, manure pits, well water, oil and gas wells, and volcanoes.**
- It can be **released from** sewage sludge, liquid manure, sulfur hot springs, and natural gas.

	<p>MUST READ: Bhopal Gas Tragedy SOURCE: DOWN TO EARTH</p>
<p>iDrone initiative</p>	<p>Context: ICMR successfully conducted a trial run of delivery of blood bags by drones under its 'iDrone initiative' recently.</p> <p>About the drone initiative:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The iDrone initiative is an innovative of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). (UPSC PRELIMS: i-Drone) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The ICMR introduced the i-DRONE during the COVID-19 pandemic. ○ It is now being used to deliver blood and blood-related products which are supposed to be kept at a low temperature. • The inaugural trial flight carried ten units of whole blood samples from the Government Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) and Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC) in a visual line of sight. • This initiative aims to transport essential medical resources to remote areas within the country. • The medical supplies delivered under iDrone project included COVID-19 vaccines, vaccines used in routine immunisation programs, antenatal care medicines, multi-vitamins, syringes and gloves. • The drone delivery system focused on an end-to-end ecosystem for drone-based logistic transportation within the states. • It was the first successful example of delivering vaccines through drones from land to islands in South Asia. • The longest drone flight under this project carried 3525 units of medical supplies from Mokokchung to the district Tuensang in Nagaland (approx. 40 km). • Significance: it will revolutionize the healthcare industry, especially in remote areas where access to medical facilities is limited. (UPSC CSE: Ministry of Civil Aviation notifies liberalized Drone Rules, 2021) <p>Objectives:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver medical supplies using drones. • To distribute vaccines to inaccessible regions. • To ensure the safe delivery of temperature-sensitive blood products to distant locations in the country. <p>MUST READ: Import Ban on Drones SOURCE: THE HINDU</p>
<p>Fomalhaut</p>	<p>Context: Recently, NASA's James Webb Space Telescope uncovered a complex and fascinating dusty structure around the young star Fomalhaut.</p>



About Fomalhaut: -

- Fomalhaut is **located 25 light-years from Earth**
- It was **one of the first exoplanets ever discovered** in visible light by **NASA's Hubble Space Telescope in 2004.** ([UPSC PRELIMS: Exoplanets](#))
- **Exoplanets:** are the planets that orbit around stars other than the

Sun.

- It is **used in navigation** because of its conspicuous place in a sky region otherwise lacking in bright stars.
- It is a **white star**; it has an apparent magnitude of 1.16.
- It lies in the **southern constellation Piscis Austrinus**, 25 light-years from Earth.
 - It is the **brightest star** in the southern constellation **Piscis Austrinus.** ([UPSC CSE: A star with a heartbeat & without a magnetic field discovered](#))
- It is **surrounded by debris disks** that are remnants of collisions between larger bodies, similar to asteroids and comets.
- Astronomers proposed that **Fomalhaut b was not a real planet but rather an expanding dust cloud** left behind by a collision between two cometlike bodies.

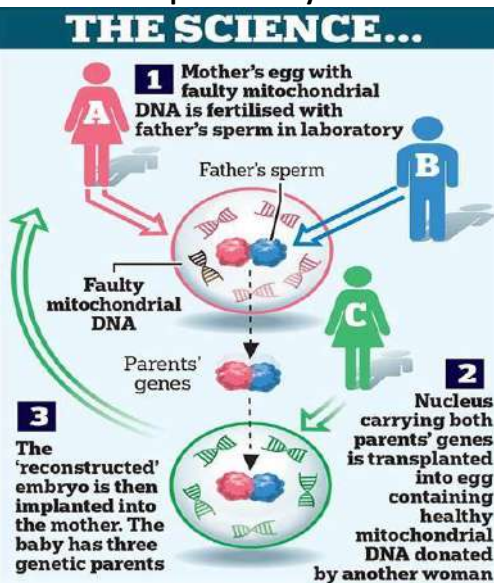
MUST READ: [James Webb Space Telescope](#)

SOURCE: [TIMES NOW](#)

Three-parent baby

Context: Recently, a **three-parent baby** was born in the UK using IVF.

About Three-parent Baby:-



- It is a technique to create to **have a child without passing on Mitochondrial diseases** caused by **faulty mitochondria of the mother.**
 - **Mitochondrial diseases:** are long-term, genetic, often inherited disorders that occur when mitochondria fail to produce enough energy for the body to function properly.
 - **Mitochondria:** the cellular structures that provide energy to cells.
- **Mechanism:-**
 - Researchers do this by **exchanging the diseased mitochondria of a prospective mother with those of a healthy, unrelated donor:** the 'third parent'.

- The procedure **replaces a small amount of faulty DNA** in a mother's egg with healthy DNA from a second woman, so that the baby would inherit genes from two mothers and one father.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The idea is to prevent certain genetic diseases from being passed on to children. ○ The technique used is called 'Maternal Spindle transfer' in which maternal DNA is put into the egg of a donor woman, which is then fertilized using the father's sperm. (UPSC CSE: Test Tube Babies) ● The procedure was developed to help existing IVF treatments in which mothers have mitochondrial diseases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In Vitro Fertilization (IVF): a medical procedure in which mature egg cells are removed from a woman, fertilized with male sperm outside the body, and inserted into the uterus of the same or another woman for normal gestation. (UPSC CSE: Surrogacy in India) ● Britain became the first country to allow for a three-parent baby and in 2017. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The first 3-parent baby was born. <p>MUST READ: ART and surrogacy SOURCE: HINDUSTAN TIMES</p>
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<p>Nutraceuticals</p>	<p>Context: India may soon have mandatory standards for nutritional supplements since the FSSAI is working on benchmarks.</p> <p>About Nutraceuticals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India may soon have mandatory standards for nutritional supplements since the Food Safety Standards Authority of India is working on benchmarks, even as demand for nutraceuticals increases rapidly in the country, according to people familiar with the matter. ● Earlier this month, the newly constituted scientific committee of FSSAI met for the first time since it was established in March to focus on sustainable food standards, new areas and challenges. ● Nutraceutical is a broad term which encompasses foods/products obtained from foods with beneficial health effects. Nutraceuticals focus on prevention rather than cure. ● This category of products has gained much attention due to their safe therapeutic effects other than their nutritional benefits. They may be used to prevent the onset of many life-threatening diseases like diabetes, cancer, neurodegenerative disorders, etc ● Nutraceuticals range from dietary supplements (proteins, vitamins, and minerals), pure compounds to components derived from natural sources. <p>Potential Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prevent chronic diseases: they are used to prevent and treat cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, obesity, and inflammatory-based diseases. ● Treat Inflammation: They are used for the treatment of inflammation. They can decrease oxidative stress in chronic inflammatory diseases such as osteoarthritis, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, cancer, and autoimmune diseases. ● Relieve Anxiety: Certain vitamins like vitamin D have a very major role in establishing our mood. Vitamin B definitely is also associated with an increased risk of depression and anxiety. Vitamin B2 or riboflavin is a very important vitamin mostly found in meat. Therefore, vegetarians can consume supplements for it.
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- **Improve overall health:** Nutraceuticals aid in improving our overall health. As a balanced diet helps improve our health. It adds nutritional value to our bodies and helps in improving both mental and physical health.

SOURCE: [The Hindustan Times](#)

MUST READ: [Food Fortification](#)

Generative AI

Context: ChatGPT, Stable Diffusion, MidJourney and Google Bard are rapidly changing the way we live, work and engage with each other. Those platforms are themselves evolving at an exponential rate based on what they learn from users. The costs involved are enormous, as are the stakes.

About Generative AI

- Generative AI is a set of algorithms, capable of generating seemingly new, realistic content—such as text, images, or audio—from the training data.
- Generative AI models can take inputs such as text, image, audio, video, and code and generate new content into any of the modalities mentioned. For example, it can turn text inputs into an image, turn an image into a song, or turn video into text.
- The most powerful generative AI algorithms are built on top of foundation models that are trained on a vast quantity of unlabeled data in a self-supervised way to identify underlying patterns for a wide range of tasks.
- For example, GPT-3.5, a foundation model trained on large volumes of text, can be adapted for answering questions, text summarization, or sentiment analysis. DALL-E, a multimodal (text-to-image) foundation model, can be adapted to create images, expand images beyond their original size, or create variations of existing paintings.
- The capabilities that generative AI supports can be summarized into three categories: (a) Generating Content and Ideas : Creating new, unique outputs across a range of modalities, such as a video advertisement or even a new protein with antimicrobial properties (b) Improving Efficiency : Accelerating manual or repetitive tasks, such as writing emails, coding, or summarizing large documents (c) Personalizing Experiences : Creating content and information tailored to a specific audience, such as chatbots for a personalized customer experiences or targeted advertisements based on patterns in a specific customer's behavior.
- Today, some generative AI models have been trained on large of amounts of data found on the internet, including copyrighted materials. For this reason, responsible AI practices have become an organizational imperative.
- Generative AI systems are democratizing AI capabilities that were previously inaccessible due to the lack of training data and computing power required to make them work in each organization's context. The wider adoption of AI is a good thing, but it can become problematic when organizations do not have appropriate governance structures in place.

MUST READ: Risks and dangers of Artificial Intelligence <https://builtin.com/artificial-intelligence/risks-of-artificial-intelligence>

	<p>SOURCE: Economic Times https://m.economictimes.com/tech/technology/ai-at-warp-speed-disruption-innovation-and-whats-at-stake/articleshow/100381948.cms</p>
<p>The International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN)</p>	<p>Context: WHO launched the International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN) recently.</p> <p>About Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN) is a global network launched by the World Health Organization and partners. • IPSN will help to protect people from infectious disease threats through the power of pathogen genomics. • IPSN will provide a platform to connect countries and regions, improving systems for collecting and analyzing samples, using these data to drive public health decision-making, and sharing that information more broadly. • Pathogen genomics analyzes the genetic code of viruses, bacteria and other disease-causing organisms to understand how infectious they are, how deadly they are, and how they spread. With this information, scientists and public health officials can identify and track diseases to prevent and respond to outbreaks as part of a broader disease surveillance system, and to develop treatments and vaccines. • By connecting countries, regions, and wider stakeholders, the IPSN will help to increase critical capacity, amplify regional and country-level voices, and strengthen their priorities. <p>SOURCE : WHO https://www.who.int/news/item/20-05-2023-who-launches-global-network-to-detect-and-prevent-infectious-disease-threats</p>
<p>Fortified Rice</p>	<p>Context: Government will supply 35 million tonne (MT) of iron fortified rice to the 800 million beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) by March 31, 2024. Additionally 3.4 MT of fortified rice will be supplied to 83 million beneficiaries under the social sector programme such as Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and PM Poshan by the end of current fiscal.</p> <p>Food Fortification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) defines fortification as "deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients in a food so as to improve the nutritional quality of food and to provide public health benefit with minimal risk to health". For example, adding iodine and iron to edible salt. • During the rice fortification process, essential vitamins and minerals are added to the grain, enhancing its nutritious value. Essential components like vitamin A, vitamin B12, vitamin B1, iron, zinc, and folic acid are added during the fortification process. <p>Need for Rice Fortification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India has very high levels of malnutrition among women and children. According to the Food Ministry, every second woman in the country is anemic and every third child is stunted. • Malnutrition costs India at least ₹77,000 crore annually in terms of lost productivity, illness and death.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The country loses about 1 per cent of GDP (₹2.03 lakh crore) due to iron deficiency • One rupee spent on nutritional interventions in India could generate ₹34.1-Rs 38.6 in public economic returns • Rice is one of India’s staple foods, consumed by about two-thirds of the population. Per capita rice consumption in India is 6.8 kg per month. Therefore, fortifying rice with micronutrients is an option to supplement the diet of the poor. <p>SOURCE: Financial Express</p>
<p>Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)</p>	<p>Context : India's Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh has said the country is working on new technologies to help make the transition to clean energy using Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) which can be factory-built.</p> <p>About Small Modular Reactors (SMRs);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small modular reactors (SMRs) are advanced nuclear reactors that have a power capacity of up to 300 MW (e) per unit, which is about one-third of the generating capacity of traditional nuclear power reactors. • SMRs, which can produce a large amount of low-carbon electricity, are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Small – physically a fraction of the size of a conventional nuclear power reactor. ○ Modular – making it possible for systems and components to be factory-assembled and transported as a unit to a location for installation. ○ Reactors – harnessing nuclear fission to generate heat to produce energy. <p>Advantages of Small modular reactors (SMRs);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of the benefits of SMRs are inherently linked to the nature of their design – small and modular. • Given their smaller size, SMRs can be sited on locations not suitable for larger nuclear power plants. • SMRs offer savings in cost and construction time, and they can be deployed incrementally to match increasing energy demand. • In areas lacking sufficient lines of transmission and grid capacity, SMRs can be installed into an existing grid or remotely off-grid, as a function of its smaller electrical output, providing low-carbon power for industry and the population. • SMRs have reduced fuel requirements. Power plants based on SMRs require less frequent refuelling, every 3 to 7 years, in comparison to between 1 and 2 years for conventional plants. • Some SMRs are designed to operate for up to 30 years without refueling. <p>MUST READ: India’s nuclear energy SOURCE: Economic Times</p>
<p>ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter</p>	<p>Context: An alien signal has been beamed to the planet from Mars for the first time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The European Space Agency's ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter (TGO) flashed an encoded message to Earth from its orbit around Mars. • It was aimed to simulate a situation when a real signal from another civilisation is received by us. <p>About ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter:</p>

- ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter (TGO) is the first in a series of joint missions between the **European Space Agency (ESA) and Roscosmos**, the Russian space agency.
- **Goal:** To gain a better understanding of **methane and other atmospheric gases** that are present in small concentrations (less than 1% of the atmosphere) in the **Martian atmosphere**.
- The orbiter's sensitivity to hydrogen has also allowed it to search for **water buried underneath** shallow layers of Martian soil.
- It's also meant to test technology for future missions.
- **Launched:** It was launched in **March 2016** and began operations after **entering Mars orbit on October 19, 2016**.
- **Lander:** TGO carried the Schiaparelli lander with it to Mars. However, it was crashed during landing.
- **Communication:** The spacecraft itself is a 3.2 meter by 2 meter by 2 meter box, fitted with one antenna to communicate with Earth and another to communicate with spacecraft on the surface of Mars.



MUST READ: [Water in Mars](#)

SOURCE: [India Today](#)



HISTORY AND ART & CULTURE

Shilabhattacharika

Context: Recent decoding of Copper plates sheds light on the celebrated ancient Sanskrit poetess **Shilabhattacharika**.

About Shilabhattacharika:-

- Shilabhattacharika was a Sanskrit poetess who lived in the **9th century**.
- M. B. Padma, a scholar of the University of Mysore, speculates that she may be the same as Shila-maha Devi, the **queen of the 8th-century Rashtrakuta ruler Dhruva**.
 - His theory is based on the fact that the **suffix "Bhattacharika"** attached to the poet's name indicates her high social status and that the queen is known to have made generous grants to scholars.
- The 10th-century poet **Rajashekhara** praises Shilabhattacharika as a **leading figure of the Panchali literary style** (one of the four major contemporary literary styles)
 - The other three are **Vaidharbhi, Gaudi, and Lati**.
 - According to **Rajashekhara**, the Panchali style can be traced to the works of Shilabhattacharika, and possibly to some of the works of the 7th-century poet Bana.
- Shilabhattacharika has been **quoted by several classical Sanskrit literary critics**, and her verses appear in most major Sanskrit anthologies. ([UPSC CSE: Central Sanskrit University Bill](#))
- She is known to have **written at least 46 poems** on topics such as "love, morality, politics, nature, beauty, the seasons, insects, anger, indignation, codes of conduct, and the characteristic features of various kinds of heroines."
- However, **most of her works are now lost**.
 - **Only six** of her short poems are extant.
- **Sharngadhara-paddhati**, a 14th-century anthology, **praises her and three other female poets** in the following words.
 - **Shilabhattacharika, Vijja, Marula, and Morika** are poetesses of renown with great poetic genius and erudition. ([UPSC CSE: Examining the contribution of women poets towards India's Bhakti literature.](#))

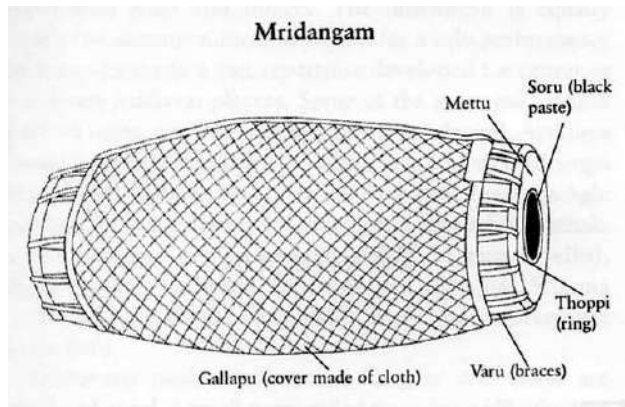
MUST READ: [The Sant Tukaram temple](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

Mridangam

Context: Recently, **Mridangam** artist, Karaikudi Mani, passed away.

About Mridangam:- The mridangam is the **classical drum of South Indian music.**



- It is also known by the name of **medal or maddalam.**
- It is **one of the oldest Indian percussion instruments**, originating **2,000 years ago.**
- This traditional instrument is found in **various parts of South India.**
- The body of the mridangam is **scooped out of a single block of wood.**
- **Jackwood or redwood** is the ideal

choice of mridangam makers, but the wood of the morogosa tree or the core of the coconut tree and the palm tree is also used for this purpose.

- It is a popular bifacial drum of **Carnatic music** and is used as an accompaniment in **South Indian Classical music.** ([UPSC MAINS: Most recurring themes of Indian music](#))
- A similar instrument, the **pakhavaj**, is played in the **Hindustani tradition** of northern India, as well as in Pakistan and Bangladesh. ([UPSC MAINS: gharana tradition' in Hindustani music](#))

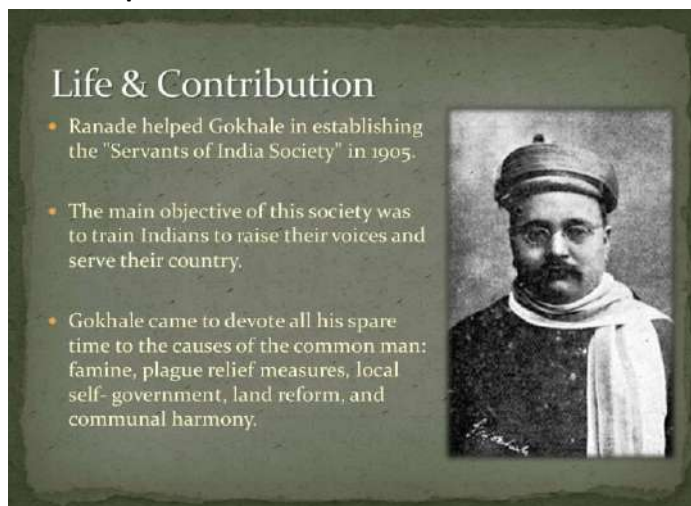
MUST READ: [Thirukokarnam Ranganayaki Ammal](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister paid homage to **Gopal Krishna Gokhale** on his birth anniversary.

About Gopal Krishna Gokhale:-

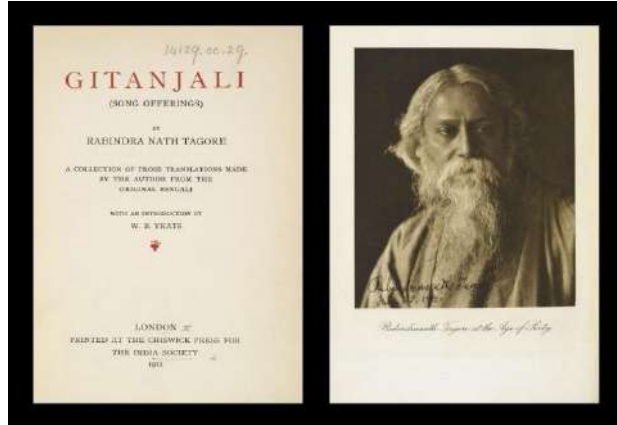


- Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a great **social reformer and educationist** who provided exemplary leadership to **India's freedom movement.**
- **Ideology:-**
 - He worked towards **social empowerment, expansion of education, and struggle for freedom in India** for three decades and rejected the use of reactionary or revolutionary ways.
- He **joined Indian National**

Congress in 1889.

- He was associated with the **Moderate Group of Indian National Congress.** ([UPSC MAINS: Key achievements of the moderates](#))
- He became president of INC in **1905 in Banaras's session.**
- **Societies and Other Works:-**
 - Gokhale with the aid of M.G. Ranade established the **Servants of India Society** in 1905 for the **expansion of Indian education.**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ He was also associated with the Sarvajanik Sabha journal started by Govind Ranade.○ In 1908, Gokhale founded the Ranade Institute of Economics.○ He started an English weekly newspaper, The Hitavada (The People's Paper).● Role in Colonial Legislatures:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Between 1899 and 1902, he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council followed by work at the Imperial Legislative Council from 1902 till his death (1915).● Mahatma Gandhi was regarded as his political master. (UPSC MAINS: Non-Cooperation Movement)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Gandhi wrote a book in Gujarati dedicated to the leader titled 'Dharmatma Gokhale'. <p>MUST READ: Mahatma Gandhi</p> <p>SOURCE: PIB</p>
Saint Samarth Ramdas	<p>Context: Recently, a controversy arose pertaining to Saint Samarth Ramdas's alleged connection to Marathi icon Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.</p> <p>About Saint Samarth Ramdas:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Saint Samarth Ramdas was an Indian Marathi Hindu saint, poet, philosopher, writer and spiritual master. (UPSC CSE: Swami Vivekananda)● He was a devotee of Hindu deities Rama and Hanuman.● He was previously famous as Narayan.● He was born in Jamb, a village in the present-day Jalna district of Maharashtra.● He was born on the occasion of Rama Navami, in 1608.● His Works:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ His literary works include Karunashtakas, Dasbodh, Yuddhakand, Sunderkand, Poorvarambh, Antarbhav, Chaturthman, Aatmaaram, Panchman, Panchsamasi, Manpanchak, Janaswabhawgosavi, etc.○ Ramdas is not deemed a pacifist.○ His writings include strong expressions encouraging nationalism to counter aggressive Muslim invaders.● His Legacy:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ramdas served as an inspiration for several Indian thinkers, historians and social reformers from the 19th and 20th-century, including Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rajwade, Keshav Hedgewar, and Ramchandra Ranade. (UPSC MAINS: Contribution did Swami Vivekananda)○ A spiritual guru, Nana Dharmadhikari, promoted the views of Ramdas through his spiritual discourses. <p>MUST READ: Dayanand Saraswati</p> <p>SOURCE: THE INDIAN EXPRESS</p>
Rabindranath Tagore	<p>Context: Recently, a political row erupted following Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remark that Rabindranath Tagore had composed "national songs" of two countries.</p>

**About Rabindranath Tagore:-**

- Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet, novelist, artist, painter and educational theorist.
- He is credited with **composing the National Anthem of India**.
- Tagore won the **Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913** for his collection **Gitanjali**.
 - He was the **first Indian and non-European** to receive a Nobel Prize.

- He received the **British Knighthood** in 1915.
 - However, he **renounced it in protest against the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in 1919**. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Jallianwala Bagh](#))
- **Social Philosophy:-**
 - He fought against the evils of his society such as **poverty, superstition, and untouchability**.
 - He **welcomed Western science and Western beliefs** in individual **worth, freedom, and democracy**.
- **Independence movement:-**
 - He **believed that nationalism deteriorated from patriotism to chauvinism**.
 - He is **credited for giving the Mahatma title to Mahatma Gandhi**. ([UPSC MAINS: Gandhi as a Political thinker and a Social Reformer](#))
 - He strongly **protested against the partition of Bengal in 1905**.
 - He **wrote many national songs** and attended protest meetings against the decision to partition Bengal.
- **Religion:-**
 - Tagore advocated the **religion of humanity**.
- **Education:-**
 - In his view, **traditional schools imprison children**.
 - Hence, he **started a model school** after the ancient hermitage schools of India named **Santiniketan** (the abode of peace).
 - **Santiniketan** engaged many scholars from across the world, including his English friends, Oxford professor **E J Thompson**, missionary **C F Andrews** and **Lord Elmhirst**.
 - He also widened his educational commitment by **founding a university – Visva Bharati**
 - **Visva Bharati**: promoted an **international culture** of unity in diversity.
- **Literary Contributions:-**
 - **Poems**: Manasi (The Ideal One,1890)
 - Sonar Tari (The Golden Boat,1894)
 - Gitanjali (Song Offerings,1910)
 - Gitimalya (Wreath of Songs,1914)
 - Balaka (The Flight of Cranes,1916)
 - **Plays**: Raja (1910) [The King of the Dark Chamber],
 - Dakghar (The Post Office,1912)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achalayatan (The Immovable,1912) ▪ Muktadhara (The Waterfall,1922) ▪ Raktakaravi (Red Oleanders,1926) ○ Short stories and Novels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gora (1910), ▪ Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World, 1916) and ▪ Yogayog (Crosscurrents, 1929) <p>MUST READ: (Book Review – Gitanjali by Rabindranath Tagore)</p> <p>SOURCE: THE HINDU</p>
Monlam Chenmo	<p>Context: The annual five-day-long ‘Monlam Chenmo’ Festival, began recently in Ladakh.</p> <p>About Monlam Chenmo:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monlam Chenmo is an annual five-day-long Great Prayer Festival of Ladakh. (UPSC PRELIMS: Ladakh) • It is a mass prayer camp by Buddhist monks and nuns for world peace and happiness. • The annual Mass Prayer is resuming this year after three years of discontinuation due to Covid. • The event is being organized by the All Ladakh Gonpa Association. • It is a major annual prayer of the Sangha Community of Ladakh gathered at one platform. • The Festival falls on the 21st to 25th days of the third month of the Tibetan lunar calendar. • It is being held since 1991. <p>Seva for Sangha:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a special camp for Sangha Community. • Objective: to help the Sangha Community avail benefits of different government schemes. • It is led by the Member of Parliament for Ladakh Constituency Jamyang Tsering Namgyal in collaboration with district administration Leh. (UPSC CSE: Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh) • The camp is being organized for the first time for Sanga Community. • Different government departments, including banks, will come forward and offer the benefits of about 20 schemes of the government to the monks and nuns. • The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has also joined hands with the organizers to set up medical camps during the camp. <p>MUST READ: India’s first-ever night sky sanctuary in Ladakh</p> <p>SOURCE: AIR</p>
Satavahanas	<p>Context: Explorers in Telangana have recovered artefacts which link Cherial village in Siddipet district to Satavahana period</p> <p>About the news:</p> <p>Field researchers have retrieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • several terracotta figurines of dolls, yakshini puppets, etc. • pottery shreds of different designs,

- Colourful stone beads and terracotta beads which were part of ornaments during the Satavahana period.
- Coin from the Satavahana period. The coin bears the insignia of Ujjain on one side and Brahmi script on the other.
- Large bricks measuring 14 X 12 X 4 inches and figures of goddesses belong to the Ikshvaku as well as Satavahana periods.

About Satavahanas:

- The Satavahanas came to power in the **Deccan area after the decline of Mauryans** in the region.
- The first king of the Satavahana dynasty was **Simuka**. Most glorious period under Gautamiputra Satkarni.



- **Territorial spread:** The Satavahana kingdom majorly comprised present Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana. At times, their rule also included parts of Gujarat, Karnataka as well as Madhya Pradesh.
- **Matronyms:** The Satavahana kings used matronyms like **Gautamiputra** and **Vaishishthiputra**. This is a **unique feature of Satavahana** dynasty. But this **does not indicate that they were matriarchal or matrilineal** in any sense.
- **Multiple capitals:** Two of the capitals were **Amaravati** and **Pratishthana (Paithan)**.
- They assumed the title of **Dakshinapatha Pati (Lord of Dakshinapatha)**.
- **Grants:** The **Satavahanas started the**

practice of giving royal grants of land to Brahmans and Buddhist monks.

- For instance, the **Karle inscription** mentions the grant of Karajika village, near Pune, Maharashtra.
- **Coins:** The Satavahanas were the **first native Indian kings to have issued their own coins**.
 - **Gautamiputra Satakarni** started this practice.
 - They **mostly issued coins of lead**, which is found on the Deccan and also coins of silver, copper and bronze.
 - The coins had the **portraits of rulers on them**.
 - These coins sometimes had **bilingual legends**, one side Prakrit and the other side in Tamil, Telugu or Kannada.
- **Language:** They **patronised Prakrit more than Sanskrit**. Sanskrit was rarely used. They used the Brahmi script.
- **Religion:** Even though the **rulers were Hindus** and claimed Brahmanical status, they **supported Buddhism** also. They **revived Vedic Brahmanism** and the corresponding rituals like the Ashvamedha yajna.
- **Polity:**

- The king was at the apex of the administrative hierarchy and considered the guardian of the established social order.
- The state was divided into aharas, each being governed by a minister called Amatya.
- The Satavahana kingdom had three grades of feudatories – Raja (who had the right to strike coins), Mahabhoja and Senapati.
- **Art and architecture: Amravati Stupa** was constructed by them. Paintings at Ajanta caves 9 and 10 are from Satavahana period.
- **Major inscriptions:**
 - The earliest inscriptions of the Satavahans belong to the first century BCE when they defeated the Kanvas and established their power in parts of Central India.
 - **Nashik prashasti inscription by Gautami Balashri:** It states that the horses of Gautamiputra drank waters of the "three oceans"(Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean). It gives detailed account of Satavahana administration.
 - **Karle inscription:** It mentions about donation of land to Buddhist monks.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Adopt A Heritage

- The ‘Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan’ scheme is an **initiative of the Ministry of Tourism**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Culture** and the **Archaeological Survey of India** along with the State/UT governments.
- **Private firms, corporates, NGOs and public sector units** can enter into agreements with the Union Ministry of Culture to adopt and maintain State-owned archaeological sites or monuments.
- It aims to develop synergy among all partners to effectively promote ‘responsible and sustainable tourism’.
- **Agencies/Companies would become ‘Monument Mitras’** through the innovative concept of ‘Vision Bidding’, where the agency with the best vision for the heritage site will be given an opportunity to **maintain the monument through their CSR activities**.
- The project **primarily focusses on providing basic amenities** like cleanliness, public conveniences, drinking water, ease of access for differently abled and senior citizens, and **enhanced facilities** like surveillance system, night viewing facilities, etc., to provide an enhanced tourism experience.
- The project began with 93 ASI monuments and has extended to **heritage, natural and tourist sites** across India, some of which are not protected under ASI currently.

Rationale Behind ‘Adopt a Heritage’

- **Need for amenities:** There is a need to develop a robust mechanism for the provision of basic amenities on an immediate basis. Advanced amenities are needed for sustaining the interest of tourists on a long-term basis.
- **Government doesn’t have resources for all monuments:** Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) protects 3,686 ancient monuments and archaeological sites, including 36 world heritage sites. The government needs more resources for maintenance of heritage.
- **CSR fund:** The private entities anyways have their CSR funds which lie unutilized. Such a scheme would be useful in putting the CSR funds to some purpose.
- **Sustainable tourism creates employment:** The scheme aims at harnessing the tourism potential of heritage for its effects in employment generation and economic development, especially through the active involvement of local communities.
- **Global experience:** Italy has the largest number of UNESCO Heritage Sites in the world. The cash-strapped government has been successfully collaborating with corporates since 2014 for heritage maintenance after shunning them for decades.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

National Gallery of Modern Art	<p>Context: Prime Minister visited the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi for viewing the exhibition 'Jana Shakti: A Collective Power' which celebrates the artistic diversity of India and is inspired by the themes highlighted in Prime Minister's popular radio programme Mann ki Baat.</p> <p>About NGMA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) is the premier art gallery which aims to acquire and preserve works of modern art from 1850s onward. • It is run and administered as a subordinate office to the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. • Its collection includes works by artists such as Raja Ravi Verma, Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil as well as foreign artists like Thomas Daniell. • The main museum in New Delhi was established in 1954 by the Government of India. • NGMA has two other branches, one at Mumbai and another at Bangalore. <p>Source: PIB</p>
Thirukkural	<p>Context: PM Modi releases Tamil classic 'Thirukkural' in Tok Pisin language. Tok Pisin is the official language of Papua New Guinea.</p> <p>About Thirukkural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tirukkural, (Tamil: "Sacred Couplets") also called Kural. • It is the most celebrated of the Patiren-kirkkanakku ("Eighteen Ethical Works") in Tamil literature and a work that has had an immense influence on Tamil culture and life. • It is usually attributed to the poet Tiruvalluvar, who is thought to have lived in India in the 6th century. • The traditional accounts describe it as the last work of the third Sangam, but linguistic analysis suggests a later date of 450 to 500 CE and that it was composed after the Sangam period. • It has 133 sections of 10 couplets each are divided into three books: aram (virtue), porul (government and society), and kamam (love). <p>Important Messages of Thirukural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is considered one of the greatest works on ethics and morality, it is known for its universality and secular nature. • The first section opens with praise of God, rain, renunciation, and a life of virtue. It then presents a world-affirming vision, the wisdom of human sympathy that expands from one's family and friends to one's clan, village, and country. • The porul section projects a vision of an ideal state and relates good citizenship to virtuous private life. The kamam section addresses both "secret love" and married love; • The section on married love is written as a dialogue between husband and wife. • It emphasizes non-violence and moral vegetarianism as virtues for an individual. • It highlights truthfulness, self-restraint, gratitude, hospitality, kindness, goodness of wife, duty, giving, and so forth. • Besides covering a wide range of social and political topics such as king, ministers, taxes, justice, forts, war, greatness of army and soldier's honor, death sentence for the wicked, agriculture, education, abstinence from alcohol and intoxicants.

- It also includes chapters on friendship, love, sexual union, and domestic life

MUST READ: [Sangam Age \(UPSC Mains – Sangam Age\)](#)

SOURCE: [The Hindu](#)

Mohenjo-Daro's Dancing Girl

Context: On International Museum Day, the Prime Minister unveiled the International Museum Expo's mascot – a “contemporised” version of the famous **Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-Daro**.

About International Museum Day:

- International Museum Day is an international day held annually on or around 18 May, coordinated by the International Council of Museums.
- The event highlights a specific theme, which changes every year reflecting a relevant theme or issue facing museums internationally.

About the International Museum Expo 2023 Mascot:

- The International Museum Expo 2023 **Mascot was a life size (5 ft as compared to the original 10 cm) figure inspired from the Dancing Girl of the Indus Valley Civilization.**
- **The traditional craft of Channapatna toys** was used to create this mascot.

Mohenjo-Daro's Dancing Girl figurine;



- The Indus Civilization (3300-1300 BC with its **mature stage** dated to 2600-1900 BC), also known as the **Harappa-Mohenjo-Daro Civilization**, had been long forgotten until its discovery was announced in 1924.
- After the initial recognition as an ancient civilisation, a spate of excavations were conducted in the two major sites that were known until then – Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.
- The Dancing Girl was **discovered** in one such excavation in 1926, by British **archaeologist Ernest McKay** in **Mohenjo-Daro's citadel**.
- **Dancing Girl** is a prehistoric **bronze sculpture** made in [lost-wax casting](#) during c. 2300–1750 BC.
- **It is 10.5 cm in height, 5 cm in width and 2.5 cm in depth.**
- Even though Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa became part of Pakistani territory after the Partition, the Dancing Girl remained in India as part of an agreement.
- Presently, the bronze figurine is on display in the **Indus valley Civilization gallery** in the National Museum of India, New Delhi.

MUST READ: [Channapattana toy makers \(UPSC Prelims -Channapattana toy makers \)](#)

SOURCE: [Indian Express](#)

The Chola Sengol Tradition

Context: The 'Sengol', received in 1947 by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to represent the transfer of power from the British and kept in a museum in Allahabad, will be installed in the new Parliament building.

About the news:



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will install the 'Sengol', a historical sceptre from Tamil Nadu, in the new Parliament building during inauguration.

- The 'Sengol' was received by Independent India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to symbolically represent the transfer of

power from the British.

- Thereafter, it was kept in the **Nehru Gallery of the Allahabad Museum**.
- It originated from the [Chola dynasty](#) which was one of the most important and powerful dynasties in the history of India.
- It was used as a symbol of **power transfer from one king to his successor**.

About Sengol:

- It is a scepter made of **gold and silver** and is **decorated with many precious stones**.
- The Sengol is 5 feet long and carries a **golden orb at the top**. The orb has a carving of **Nandi**, the bull that is precious to Lord Shiva.
- The Sengol is a powerful symbol of the Chola Kings authority and their commitment to justice.
- The 'Sengol' represents the value of fair and equitable governance.
- The sceptre is a reminder of India's rich history and the culture.

MUST READ: [The Chola Dynasty \(UPSC Prelims – The Chola Dynasty\)](#)

SOURCE: [The Hindu](#)



MISCELLANEOUS



Golden Globe Race

Context: Recently, Abhilash Tomy created history as the first Indian to complete the **Golden Globe Race**.

About Golden Globe Race:-

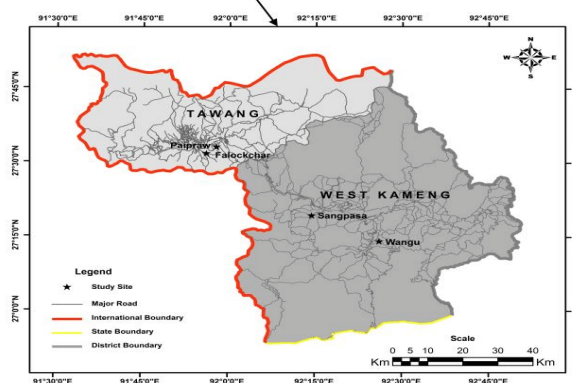
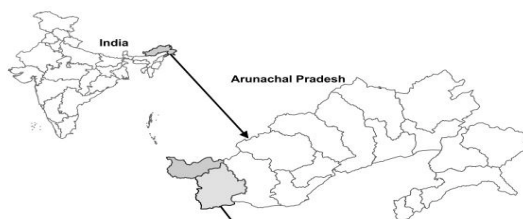
- The Golden Globe Race is being conducted by the **Sir Robin Knox Johnston**.
- **Objective:** to commemorate the world's first solo non-stop circumnavigation undertaken by him in 1968, onboard the Indian-built boat **Suhaili**.
- Participants in the GGR are required to **sail around the world, alone and non-stop**.
- The uniqueness of the race is that **boat designs and technology newer than 1968 are not permitted**.
- In addition, the **use of the Global Positioning System (GPS), satellite communication and navigational aids are forbidden** in the 30,000-mile journey. ([UPSC PRELIMS: Understanding NavIC](#))
- The sailors each have a **satellite phone** and **emergency locator beacons** to be used for medical emergencies only. ([UPSC CSE: Maritime Security of India](#))
- Entrants are limited to sailing similar yachts, between 32 ft and 36 ft, **designed prior to 1988** with a full-length keel with a rudder.
- **Equipment similar** to what was available to Sir Robin in that first race was to be used.
- 16 sailors from 11 countries depart from **Les Sables-d'Olonne, France**.

MUST READ: [An Indian Sail to Navigate the maritime environment](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

Buland Bharat exercise

Context: Recently, the Army held a '**Buland Bharat**' exercise in Arunachal to test synergy in simulated war conditions.

About Buland Bharat exercise:-

- Buland Bharat is an **integrated surveillance and firepower training exercise**.
- **Objective:** to test the simulated war conditions in high altitude areas at the Mandala High Altitude Firing Ranges in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The month-long training culminated in the test exercise in which **troops and equipment were tested in simulated war conditions**, in high altitude areas and in extreme weather conditions.
- During the exercise, **synergised surveillance and firepower from infantry and artillery radars, weapon systems and direction of fire from the air** were practised.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uninterrupted communication on multiple media was also tested at long distances. • The exercise validated plans for bringing down integrated firepower by orchestrating synchronised firing by artillery guns and fire support components of the infantry, aimed toward the destruction of designated targets. • It involved the synergized application of surveillance and firepower capabilities of the artillery and the infantry in close coordination with Special Forces, Aviation and Central Armed Police Forces deployed in West Kameng and Tawang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. (UPSC PRELIMS: Arunachal-Assam border dispute) • The Gajraj Corps, under which the exercise was held, handles major responsibilities which span from counterinsurgency to the Line of Actual Control in West Arunachal Pradesh including the Tawang area. (UPSC PRELIMS: India-China Tawang clash) <p>MUST READ: Kaiser-i-Hind: Arunachal's State butterfly</p> <p>SOURCE: TIMES OF INDIA</p>
<p>Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT)</p>	<p>Context: The Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT) is to create technical and scientific terminology in 10 Indian languages.</p> <p>About Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It works under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Education. • It was established in December 1960 by the Government of India resolution under provision Article 344(4) of the Constitution. • Its headquarters are in New Delhi. • Objective: to evolve standard terminology, propagate its use, and distribute it widely. • The commission is mandated to collaborate with State governments, universities, regional textbook Boards, and State 'Granth Academies', which are nodal bodies in charge of providing translations of English textbooks in local languages for institutions of higher education. • CSTT has standardized the terminology of about Nine lakh technical terms in different subjects and in different languages. (UPSC CSE: Languages of India) • CSTT has published a large number of Definitional Dictionaries, Glossaries, Text-Books, Reference Materials and Monographs, Quarterly Journals named 'Vigyan Garima Sindhu' and 'Gyan Garima Sindhu' and many more works of similar nature. • CSTT has also taken care of Administrative and various Departmental Glossaries that are widely used by various Government Departments, Institutions, Research Laboratories, Autonomous Organizations, PSUs etc. • CSTT regularly organizes workshops, seminars, symposiums, conferences, orientation and training programmes to increase the use and popularize the standard terminology of Hindi and other Indian languages. (UPSC CSE: Three-language formula) <p>Functions of the Commission:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To evolve and define scientific and technical terms in Hindi and all Indian Languages and publish technical glossaries, definitional dictionaries, encyclopaedia etc. • To see that the evolved terms and their definitions reach students, teachers, scholars, scientists, officers etc. • To ensure proper usage/necessary updation/correction/improvement on the work done by obtaining feedback (through Workshops/Training programmes/Orientation programmes/Seminars).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage technical writings in Hindi and other Indian Languages by sponsoring Seminars/Conferences/Symposia on scientific and technical subjects. <p>MUST READ: Language Panel Recommendations SOURCE: THE HINDU</p>
Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)	<p>Context: DGCA recently, suspended an Air India pilot’s license for three months after he violated safety norms.</p> <p>About Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is a statutory body of the Government of India. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was formed under the Aircraft (Amendment) Act, of 2020. It comes under the Ministry of Civil Aviation. (UPSC CSE: New Director General of Bureau Of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) appointed) It aims to regulate civil aviation in India. It primarily deals with safety issues in civil aviation. Its headquarters are located in New Delhi. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has regional offices in various parts of India. Mandate: DGCA is responsible for the regulation of air transport services to/from/within India and for enforcement of civil air regulations, air safety, and airworthiness standards. (UPSC MAINS: Reforms In Civil Aviation Industry) Functions:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration of civil aircraft. Formulation of standards of airworthiness for civil aircraft registered in India and grant of certificates of airworthiness to such aircraft. Licensing of pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers and flight engineers, and conducting examinations and checks for that purpose. Licensing of air traffic controllers. Investigating accidents/incidents. Taking accident prevention measures. Coordination at the national level for flexible use of air space by civil and military air traffic agencies Interaction with ICAO for the provision of more air routes for civil use through Indian air space. Promoting indigenous design and manufacture of aircraft. <p>MUST READ: International Air Connectivity Scheme (IACS) scheme SOURCE: HINDUSTAN TIMES</p>
Storm Shadow cruise missiles	<p>Context: The United Kingdom will provide long-range Storm Shadow cruise missiles to Ukraine to push back invading Russian forces.</p> <p>About Storm Shadow cruise missile:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storm Shadow is a long-ranged, air-launched, conventionally armed, deep-strike cruise missile. It is manufactured by the France-based MBDA Missile Systems. Range: More than 250 km. It is capable of being operated day and night in all weathers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is designed to destroy high-valued stationary targets. • The combination of its long-range, low altitude and supersonic speed makes it a stealthy weapon. • It offers high precision deep strike capability as it features a sophisticated navigation system that includes inertial navigation (INS), global positioning system (GPS) and terrain reference navigation for better control over the path. • The missile features the BROACH (Bomb Royal Ordnance Augmented Charge) warhead — a high-technology warhead, which first cuts the surface of the target, penetrates into it and then explodes. <p>Source: Indian Express</p>
Positive Indigenization List	<p>Context: The Union Ministry of Defense (MoD) has approved the fourth and the largest positive indigenization list of 928 strategically-important Line Replacement Units (LRUs), sub-systems, spares and components, including high-end materials and spares.</p> <p>About Positive Indigenization List:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The list means that defense PSUs cannot import the specified items beyond the timelines indicated against them. • These items will be purchased only from domestic manufacturers. • The DPSUs will undertake indigenization of these items through different routes under ‘Make’ category and in-house development through the capabilities of MSMEs and private Indian industry. • In the last two years, the defense ministry has brought in three positive indigenization lists of 351, 107 and 780 items which will have to be procured only from indigenous sources after the timelines mentioned against each item. <p>What is the need for such a list?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fundamental idea is to promote self-reliance in defense while reducing imports of defense items and equipment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is important as India is one of the largest defense importers globally and the demand for better defense equipment is going to increase in the future given the rising security threats. • The DPSUs, MSMEs and private sector would get more opportunities to grow in this sector thereby providing impetus to the growth in economy. • Enhanced investment in defense, especially from the private sector would lead to more research in defense technology. • The design capabilities of the domestic defense industry would be enhanced by involving academia and research institutions. <p>Source: Indian Express</p>
Samudra Shakti-23	<p>Context: The 4th edition of INDIA-INDONESIA BILATERAL EXERCISE SAMUDRA SHAKTI – 23 commenced recently.</p> <p>About Exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pursuance of India’s Act East Policy, Exercise ‘Samudra Shakti’ was conceived in 2018 as a bilateral Indian Navy-Indonesian Navy exercise. • The exercise aims to strengthen the bilateral relationship, enhance mutual understanding and interoperability in maritime operations between the two navies. • India’s Participation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ INS Kavaratti: India’s indigenously designed & built Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) stealth corvette is the main highlight. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is one of the 4 corvettes built under Project 28 (Kamorta class). The other three are INS Kamorta, INS Kadmatt and INS Kiltan.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An Indian Navy Dornier Maritime Patrol aircraft and Chetak helicopter is also participating <p>Other Exercises with Indonesia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Garuda Shakti (Military Exercise) ● IND-INDO CORPAT (Maritime Exercise) <p>Source: PIB</p>
PLI Scheme for IT Hardware	<p>Context: The Union Government launched Production Linked Incentive Scheme for IT hardware with an allocation of Rs.17, 000 crore.</p> <p>About Production Linked Incentive Scheme for IT Hardware</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An updated production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for IT hardware, nearly doubling the overall outlay for the scheme to around Rs 17,000 crore. The tenure of the programme will be applicable for six years and the government expects investments worth Rs 2,430 crore in the scheme. ● The first version of the scheme was a laggard with only two companies – Dell and Bhagwati. PLI 2.0 scheme for the IT hardware sector that aims to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments and jobs over the coming years. <p>About Production Linked Incentive Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Objective: The objective is to make domestic manufacturing globally competitive and to create global Champions in manufacturing. ○ The strategy behind scheme is to offer companies incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in India, over the base year. They have been specifically designed to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ boost domestic manufacturing in sunrise and strategic sectors ○ curb cheaper imports and reduce import bills, ○ improve cost competitiveness of domestically manufactured goods, and ○ enhance domestic capacity and exports. ● The Union Budget 2021-22 announced an outlay of INR 1.97 Lakh Crores for the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes for 13 key sectors, to create national manufacturing champions and generate employment opportunities for the country's youth. ● It was launched in April 2020, for the Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing sector, but later towards the end of 2020 was introduced for 10 other sectors. This scheme was introduced in line with India's Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign <p>MUST READ: https://iasbaba.com/2022/04/production-linked-incentive-pli-scheme-for-textiles/#:~:text=Key%20features%20of%20the%20scheme,additional%207.5%20lakh%20direct%20jobs.</p> <p>SOURCE: The Indian Express https://indianexpress.com/article/india/cabinet-rs-17000-cr-it-hardware-pli-scheme-2-0-8614534/</p>
Telecom Analytics for Fraud Management	<p>Context: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) launched TAF COP (Telecom Analytics for Fraud Management and Consumer Protection) module facilitates a mobile subscriber to check the number of mobile connections taken in his/her name</p>

**t and
Consumer
Protection
(TAF COP)**
About TAF COP Portal

- The Indian Government has developed Tafcop portal gov.in for Telecom Analytics for Fraud Management and Consumer Protection.
- It has been developed to help subscribers and consumers, to check the number of mobile connections working in their name and to take the appropriate action to regularize any additional mobile connections they may have.

About Sanchar Saathi Portal

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) launched the Sanchar Saathi portal, which enables people across India to track and block their lost or stolen mobile phones.
- Through this portal, people can also verify the authenticity of used devices before making a purchase, and track how many numbers are associated with their identity without their knowledge.
- Key sections of the portal include the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) regarding blocking and tracking of phones, 'Know Your Mobile' feature that allows users to verify the authenticity of second-hand mobile phones, and the TAF COP (Telecom Analytics for Fraud Management and Consumer Protection) facility to check numbers associated with an identity.

SOURCE: The Financial Express <https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/lost-your-phone-a-portal-to-help-track-your-device/3090403/>

**The 76th
World Health
Assembly**

Context: Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya delivered the keynote address at a side event session on “**Heal in India & Heal by India**” at the 76th **World Health Assembly**, in Geneva.

About World Health Assembly;

- The World Health Assembly is the **main decision-making body of WHO.**
- **Article 19 of the WHO Constitution provides the World Health Assembly with the authority to adopt conventions or agreements on any matter within WHO’s competence.**
- **The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.**
- **The Health Assembly is held annually in Geneva, Switzerland.**
- **The sole instrument established under Article 19 till date is the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which has made a significant and rapid contribution to protecting people from tobacco since its entry into force in 2005.**

About the 76th World Health Assembly;

- The Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly is being held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 21–30 May 2023.
- **The theme of this year Health Assembly- WHO at 75: Saving lives, driving health for all.**
- In 76th World Health Assembly, the World Health Organization is pushing for nations to sign a **global pandemic treaty** to improve the world's collective response to future pandemics.
- Pandemic Treaty is a legally binding agreement to be adopted by the World Health Organization’s 194 member countries.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiations on new rules for dealing with pandemics are underway at the World Health Organization (WHO), with a target date of May 2024. • It seeks to shore up the world’s defences against new pathogens following the COVID 19 pandemic that has killed nearly 7 million people. <p>MUST READ: WHO (UPSC Prelims – WHO) SOURCE: PIB</p>
<p>INS Sindhuratna</p>	<p>Context: Kilo-class submarine INS Sindhuratna reaches India after major refit in Russia.</p> <p>About INS Sindhuratna;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INS Sindhuratna (S59) (Jewel of the Sea) is a Sindhughosh-class diesel-electric submarine of the Indian Navy. • Eight of the Navy’s diesel-electric submarines are Kilo class or Sindhughosh class from Russia, sourced between 1984 and 2000 and INS Sindhuratna is among the oldest Kilo-class submarines in the fleet. • It was commissioned into the Indian Navy in December 1988. <p>Sindhughosh-class submarines;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sindhughosh-class submarines are Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines in active service with the Indian Navy. • The Kilo Class is the NATO designation for a naval diesel-electric submarine made in Russia. • The Kilo Class submarines are mainly intended for anti-shipping and anti-submarine operations in relatively shallow waters. • The Kilo-class submarines have a displacement of 2,300 tonnes, a maximum diving depth of 300 metres and a top speed of 18 knots. They are able to operate solo for 45 days with a crew of over 50. <p>MUST READ: Project 75I SOURCE: The Hindu</p>
<p>UDAN 5.1</p>	<p>Context: The Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched UDAN 5.1 to further enhance the connectivity to remote areas of the country and achieve last mile connectivity through helicopters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following four successful rounds of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) and the version 5.0 of the fifth round is underway. <p>About UDAN 5.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UDAN 5.1 is designed specifically for helicopter routes. • Priority Area: An increase in the scope of operations for operators wherein the scheme will now allow routes where one of the origin or destination locations is in a priority area. (Earlier both points had to be in priority areas.) • Airfare caps have been reduced by as much as 25% to make flying in helicopters more affordable for passengers. • Viability Gap Funding (VGF) caps for the operators have been increased substantially for both single and twin-engine helicopters to enhance financial viability for operating the awarded routes. • Till date 46 helicopter routes have been operationalized under previous rounds of the scheme benefitting a number of hilly and North East states. <p>About UDAAN:</p>

- Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) was formulated based on the review of the **National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016**.
- The UDAN scheme was initiated on **21st October 2016** to fulfill the aspirations of the common citizen by following the vision of 'Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik', with **enhanced aviation infrastructure and air connectivity in tier II and tier III cities**.
- It has a **self-financing mechanism** with the development of the **Regional Connectivity Fund (RCF)**.
- Under this Scheme, RCF was created, which funds the **VGF (viability gap funding) requirements** of the scheme through a **levy on certain domestic flights**. This way, funds generated from the sector themselves stimulate the growth and development of the sector.
- UDAN created a framework based on the need and led to the formulation of:
 - **Lifeline UDAN** - for transportation of medical cargo during a pandemic.
 - **Krishi UDAN** - value realization of agriculture products especially in Northeastern Region and tribal districts.
 - **International UDAN routes** for Northeastern Region to explore International Connectivity from/to Guwahati and Imphal.
- **UDAN 1.0:**
 - Under this phase, **5 airlines companies** were awarded **128 flight routes to 70 airports**
 - This was including 36 newly made operational airports.
- **UDAN 2.0:**
 - In 2018, the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced **73 underserved and unserved airports**.
 - For the first time, **helipads** were also connected under phase 2 of the UDAN scheme.
- **UDAN 3.0:**
 - It included Tourism Routes under UDAN 3 in coordination with the **Ministry of Tourism**.
 - Included **Seaplanes** for connecting **Water Aerodromes**.
 - Brought in several **routes in the North-East Region** under the ambit of UDAN.
- **UDAN 4.0:**
 - In 2020, **78 new routes** were approved under the 4th round of RCS-UDAN to further enhance the connectivity to remote & regional areas of the country.
 - **Kavaratti, Agatti, and Minicoy islands of Lakshadweep** will be connected by the new routes of UDAN 4.0.
- **UDAN 4.1:**
 - The UDAN 4.1 focuses on connecting **smaller airports**, along with a **special helicopter and seaplane routes**.
 - Some new routes have been proposed under the **Sagarmala Seaplane services**.
 - **Sagarmala Seaplane Services** is an ambitious project under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways with potential airline operators.

MUST READ: [Krishi UDAN](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

**SAMARTH
Campaign**

SAMARTH Campaign

Syllabus

Prelims –Governance

Context: Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj launches SAMARTH campaign to promote digital transactions at Gram Panchayat Level

About SAMARTH campaign:

- The SAMARTH campaign, which stands for **Sashakt Mahila, Aatmanirbhar Rashtra**.
- It is a **joint initiative** of the **Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)**, and **Common Service Centres (CSCs)**.
- **Coverage:** The campaign will **cover all the 2.6 lakh Gram Panchayats** across the country and will involve various activities such as training, workshops, competitions, and awards.
- Targets to reach **2.5 crore rural households**, including **1.25 crore women** members of self-help groups (SHGs).

Features of SAMARTH campaign:

- It seeks to **empower rural communities** by enabling them to participate in the digital economy and access the benefits of digital transactions.
- **Provides** training and awareness on various digital payment modes such as the **Aadhaar-enabled payment system (AePS), Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app, Bharat QR code**, etc.
- Facilitates opening of **bank accounts and linking of Aadhaar and mobile numbers** for seamless transactions.
- Encourages **adoption of digital transactions** for various purposes such as savings, credit, remittances, social security benefits, government subsidies, etc.
- **Monitors and rewards** the performance of gram panchayats, SHGs, community resource persons (CRPs), bank mitras, etc. based on predefined indicators.

MUST READ: [Samarth Scheme of Ministry of Textiles](#)
[SAMARTH initiative for women](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

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Switching on India's smart electricity future

Context: India will soon have a smart transmission system incorporating features that can improve efficiency, disaster preparedness, etc.

About Smart Meters:

- Smart meters are **next-generation digital electricity meters** that measure energy consumption and communicate this information back to the utility company in near real-time.

- Unlike traditional electric meters that require manual reading, smart meters automatically send readings to the utility company, enabling a two-way communication between the meter and the utility.

SWITCHING ON INDIA'S SMART ELECTRICITY FUTURE**India's Vision:**

- India is striving hard to implement this vision by installing **more than 5.5 million smart meters, with over 100 million sanctioned for installation.**
- The country aims to replace 250 million conventional electric meters with prepaid smart meters by 2025-26.
- To support this initiative, India is providing a results-linked **grant-cum-financing to power distribution companies (discoms)** to become financially sound and efficient in providing better services to consumers.

Benefits of Smart Meters over traditional electric meters: A recent study by the [Council on Energy, Environment and Water \(CEEW\)](#) found that the majority of smart meter users have already begun to experience some of the technology benefits.

- **Accurate billing:** Smart meters enable accurate billing as they eliminate the need for estimated bills, providing customers with accurate and transparent information about their energy usage.
- **Near real-time data:** Smart meters provide near real-time data on energy consumption, enabling customers to monitor their usage and make informed decisions about their energy consumption.
- **Dynamic pricing:** Smart meters have the potential to enable dynamic pricing, where electricity tariffs vary depending on the time of day, season or other factors, incentivizing customers to use energy when it's cheaper and reducing demand during peak hours.
- **Improved energy management:** Smart meters allow utilities to better manage energy supply and demand, reduce power outages, and integrate renewable energy sources more effectively.
- **Energy theft detection:** Smart meters can help detect and respond to energy theft, reducing losses for utilities and ensuring a fair distribution of energy costs.
- **Customer control:** Smart meters provide customers with more control over their energy consumption, allowing them to better manage their energy usage and reduce their bills.

Challenges:

- **High Capital Costs:** A full scale deployment of smart meters requires expenditures on all hardware and software components, network infrastructure and network management software, along with costs associated with the installation and maintenance and information technology systems.

- **Integration:** Smart Meter must be integrated with utilities' information technology systems, including Customer Information Systems (CIS), Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Outage Management Systems (OMS), Mobile Workforce Management (MWM), Distribution Automation System (DAS), etc.
- **Standardisation:** Interoperability standards need to be defined, which set uniform requirements for technology, deployment and general operations.
- **Release of Radiation:** Unlike the electronic meter, the smart meter allows 'communication' among the consumer and the meter, hence there is probability of release of radiation.

Way Forward:

India is on a unique journey of meeting its growing electricity demand while decarbonizing its generation sources. Smart meters comprise a critical part of the transition toolbox, by way of enabling responsible consumption, efficient energy management, and cost-effective integration of distributed energy resources.

Therefore, with the effective implementation, India can improve smart meter deployment and user satisfaction, making the smart-meter revolution a reality.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Drug Recall Law in India

Context: Recent failures of Indian manufactured drugs overseas (like the Gambia incident) have brought attention to the issue of absence of a drug recall law in the pharmaceutical industry in India.

About Drug Recall:

- Drug recall refers to the **action of removing or withdrawing a batch of product from distribution or use, to be returned to the manufacturer.**
- This action is generally done in cases where deficiencies are discovered in the safety, quality, or efficacy of drugs.
- The **Organization of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI)** defines recall as,
- "An action is taken to resolve a problem with therapeutic goods for which there are established deficiencies in quality, efficacy or safety."

Status of Drug Recall Law in India:

- India has been considering the creation of a mandatory recall law for substandard drugs since 1976, but still no law exists that mandates such medicine be removed from the market.
- In 1976, **the Drugs Consultative Committee (DCC)**, discussed the issue of drug recalls with the various state regulators, however, none of them resulted in amendments to **the Drugs & Cosmetics Act** to create a mandatory recall mechanism.
- In 2012, the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** proposed a set of draft recall guidelines but the national regulator lacks the power to convert guidelines into a binding law.
- The issue of recalls resurfaced in 2016 at meetings of the DCC and at another committee, called the **Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)**.
 - Nothing changed on the ground. The same issue came up again in 2018 and 2019 at the meetings of the DCC, but India still lacks a recall law, 46 years on.

Reasons for Absence of Drug Recall Law in India:

- **Incompetence of authorities:** The Drug Regulation Section of the Union Health Ministry is unable to tackle complex drug regulatory issues due to a combination of factors including apathy, lack of expertise etc.

- **Vested interests:** There have been indications that Ministry of Health has greater interest in enabling the growth of the pharmaceutical industry than protecting public health.
 - It is believed that tighter regulation could slow the growth of the pharmaceutical industry.
- **Fragmented regulatory structure:** India has one of the most fragmented regulatory structures with each State having its own drug regulator.
 - One regulator cannot inspect facilities in another jurisdiction.
- **Opposition to centralized authority:** There must be a central authority that has legal powers to hold companies liable for failures to recall drugs.
 - However, pharmaceutical industry and state drug regulators have opposed centralization of regulatory powers.
- **Bad publicity to pharma companies:** A drug recall will mandate companies to publicize the product in media, which will generate bad publicity for pharma companies.
 - This will not only harm them individually but will dent India's image on the global scale.

Present Laws Regulating the Drugs and Pharmaceutical Sector in India:

- **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation:** It is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.
- **The Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940 and rules 1945** have entrusted various responsibilities to central & state regulators for regulation of drugs & cosmetics.
 - It envisages uniform implementation of the provisions of the Act & Rules made there under for ensuring the safety, rights and wellbeing of the patients by regulating the drugs and cosmetics.
- **CDSKO along with state regulators,** is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.
- **The Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940:** It regulates the import, manufacture, distribution and sale of drugs in India.
- **The Pharmacy Act, 1948:** It is meant to regulate the profession of Pharmacy in India.
- **The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisement) Act, 1954:** It provides to control the advertisements regarding drugs; it prohibits the advertising of remedies alleged to possess magic qualities.
- **The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985:** It is an act concerned with control and regulation of operations relating to Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.
- **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority:** It is an organization of the Government of India which was established, inter alia, to fix/ revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations and to enforce prices and availability of the medicines in the country, under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995.
 - The organization is also entrusted with the task of recovering amounts overcharged by manufacturers for the controlled drugs from the consumers. It also monitors the prices of decontrolled drugs in order to keep them at reasonable levels.

Suggestive Measures

A national drug recall law:

- It is crucial for India to have a national drug recall law to guarantee that once a drug is known to be Not of Standard Quality (NSQ), the entire batch is withdrawn from the market.

A central drug regulator:

- There needs to be a central drug regulator who can execute and coordinate national recall.

Inspections of manufacturing facilities:

- Drug inspectors are required to carry out inspections of manufacturing facilities on an annual basis to ensure compliance with the **Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) code**.
- It is possible that in many states, there is a lack of capacity and training to do so.
- But the larger problem, is a reluctance to actually enforce the GMP standards because it would put several SME pharma companies out of business.

Health Activism

- As with any other aspect of Indian society, activism can help move the needle on any policy issues.
- Health activists need to accept there is a problem with drug regulation and ask for systemic reform.
- Right now, there appears to be a reluctance to even accept there is a problem with drug quality in India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Governor's Power to Assent Bills

Context: Recently the Supreme Court has given a reminder to Governors that the Constitution expects that a decision to return a Bill to the State Assembly for reconsideration should be made "as soon as possible".

About the office of Governor:

- **Article 153 of the Constitution** provides the provision that there shall be a Governor for each State.
 - This Article also provides that it is not necessary for every State to have a different Governor and thus a person can be appointed as the Governor of more than one State.
- **Article 154:** The Governor's position in the State is identical to the position of the President of India and just like the President, **the Governor is the Executive Head of the State**.
 - This authority is conferred on him under Article 154 of the Constitution which provides that the **Executive power of the State is vested in the Governor**.

The Constitutional power of the Governor related to State Bills:

- **Article 200 of the Indian Constitution** deals with the Governor's powers in relation to assenting to legislation enacted by the State legislature and other functions of the Governor such as **reserving the bill for consideration by the President**.
- **Article 201 relates to "Bills Reserved for Consideration":** Governors have **absolute veto power, suspensive veto power (except on money bills), but no pocket veto power**.
- **Absolute Veto:** This refers to the Governor's power to refuse to sign a bill passed by the Assembly.
- **Suspensive Veto:** A suspensive veto is used by the Governor when he returns a bill to the State Assembly for reconsideration.
 - If the Assembly resends the bill to the Governor, with or without alteration, he must approve it without using any of his veto powers.
 - The Governor may not use his suspensive veto in connection to the Money Bill
- **Pocket Veto:** Power of the President, in pocket veto, the bill is held pending indefinitely. He **neither rejects nor sends the measure back for review**.

Sending for reconsideration:

- The Governor can send the bill back to the House for reconsideration but if the bill is sent back by the House without any change, the Governor has to give his assent to that bill.
- He cannot send the bill back to the State Legislature **if it is a Money Bill**.

Reserving the bill for the president's consideration:

- The Governor also has the right to reserve some bills for the consideration of the President.
- when a governor reserves bill for the president's consideration, he is no longer involved in the bill's enactment.
- **Even if the President refers it to the Assembly for reconsideration, the Bill will still be brought before the President and not the Governor following the reconsideration.**

Withhold assent:

- The Governor also has power to withhold assent to a Bill

Pending bill in the legislature:

- If any Bill is pending in the House(s), the governor can send a message to such House(s) for reminding them about the same.

Supreme Court's Observation:

- While referring to the first proviso to **Article 200 of the Constitution**, the SC mandated that **Governors should not delay over Bills** sent to them for assent after they had been passed by Legislative Assemblies.
- They should be returned "**as soon as possible**" and **not sit over them**.
 - The expression "as soon as possible" in this article has significant constitutional intent and that constitutional authorities should keep this in mind.

Recent Instances of Gubernatorial Procrastination:

- Chhattisgarh chief recently questioned the governor over the delayed assent to the **state's amended reservation bill** that was passed in the Chhattisgarh assembly last year which is since waiting for the governor's assent.
- Tamil Nadu Assembly passed a resolution urging the President of India, among other things, to fix a timeline for assent to be given to Bills passed by the Assembly.
 - For instance, in the TN Governor forwarded the Bill for exemption from the **National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET)** to the President after considerable delay.

Legal Arguments against Delaying Assent:**States' Constitutional Obligation:**

- The Governor's inaction on bills passed by the Assembly creates a situation where the state government is unable to function in accordance with the Constitution.
- If the Governor continues to fail to act in accordance with the Constitution, the State government has a **constitutional obligation to invoke Article 355** and notify the President, requesting that appropriate instructions be issued to the Governor to ensure that the **process of government is conducted in accordance with the Constitution**.

Role of Apex Court:

- The framers of the Constitution would never have imagined that **Governors would sit on Bills indefinitely without exercising any of the options** given in **Article 200**.
- This is a new development that needs new solutions within the framework of the Constitution.
- So, it falls to the **Supreme Court to fix a reasonable time frame for Governors** to take a decision on a Bill passed by the Assembly in the larger interest of federalism in the country.

Way Forward:

In order to establish cordial relations between the Governor and the state legislature, the recommendations of Sarkaria Commission, Punchi Commission and Justice V.Chelliah Commission must be implemented.

Supreme Court in the **Nabam Rebia judgement (2016)** ruled that the exercise of **Governor's discretion Article 163** is limited and his choice of action should not be arbitrary or fanciful. It must be a choice dictated by reason, actuated by good faith and tempered by caution - the same should be implemented in letter and spirit.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Anti-Conversion Legislation in India

Context: The Uttar Pradesh government has released figures regarding the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act Amid the ongoing controversy over The Kerala Story movie.

- The government said 427 conversion-related cases were reported between January 1, 2021, and April 30, 2023.

Status of the anti-conversion law in India:

- There are several anti-conversion laws in India that regulate the conversion of one religion to another. These laws vary from state to state, and the specific provisions of the laws can differ significantly.
- **Constitutional Provision:** Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the freedom to practice, profess, and propagate any religion.
 - It also grants all religious groups the right to control their own religious affairs, subject to public morality, health, and order.
- **Existing Laws:** Religious conversions have not been subject to any national restrictions or regulations.
 - Private Member Bills to control religious conversions, however, have repeatedly been introduced in the Parliament since 1954 (but never passed by it).
- **Additionally, the Union Law Ministry stated in 2015** that Parliament lacks the legislative authority to enact legislation prohibiting conversion.
 - Several states have passed "Freedom of Religion" laws over the years to prohibit forced, fraudulent, or coerced conversions to another religion.
- In general, however, **anti-conversion laws in India require that individuals** seeking to convert to another religion must obtain permission from the government before doing so.
 - Some states have more stringent anti conversion laws than others, and some states have provisions that specifically target certain religious groups or activities.
- **In recent years**, there has been significant controversy and debate over the use of anti-conversion laws in India.
 - Some people argue that these laws are necessary to protect the cultural and social cohesion of the country,
 - while others believe that they are used to suppress minority religions and violate the right to freedom of religion.
- **The Supreme Court of India** has ruled that anti conversion laws are constitutional as long as they are not used to interfere with an individual's right to freedom of religion.
 - However, there have been cases in which these laws have been used to target and persecute minority religious groups.

Supreme Court's Observations:

- The **Supreme Court verdict in Rev. Stanislaus vs. State of Madhya Pradesh** in the 1960s is frequently cited in matters involving religious freedom.

- Then **Chief Justice of India A.N. Ray dissected Article 25** to hold that “the Article does not grant the right to convert other persons to one’s own religion but to transmit or spread one’s religion by an exposition of its tenets.”
- Recently, the Supreme Court emphasised that Forced religious conversions are “dangerous” and they affect the security of the nation.
- It urged the Union government to “step in” and apprise the court of the measures being taken to prevent such occurrences.

Arguments in Favor of anti-conversion:

- These laws only ban and punish forceful religious conversion.
- Fundamental rights under **Article 25 ‘Right to propagate a religion’** did not extend to forced conversions.
- There is no fundamental right to convert another person to one's own religion.

Arguments against anti-conversion:

- According to some activists “**Such laws are used to target religious minorities and interfaith couples**”.
- These laws would be used to target even voluntary conversions, and curb the fundamental rights “**Freedom of conscience**” under **Article 25**.
- These Acts do not satisfy the test of reasonableness and fairness, and also go against the Fundamental rights under **Article 14 and Article 21” of the Constitution**.

Right to Freedom of religion in India

- The Indian Constitution allows individuals the freedom to live by their religious beliefs and practices as they interpret these.
- In keeping with this idea of religious freedom for all, India also adopted a strategy of separating the power of religion and the power of the State

Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 25:** Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion
- **Article 26:** Freedom to manage religious affairs
- **Article 27:** Freedom to pay taxes for promotion of any particular religion
- **Article 28:** Freedom to attend religious instruction or worship in certain educational institutions.

Way Forward:

The right to religion did not include the right to convert other people to a particular religion, especially through fraud, deception, coercion, allurements, and other means. The conversion laws must be strengthened and rightly so to stop the use of lures and force but they should not discriminate among religions while identifying the perpetrators.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Should India consider phasing out nuclear power?**Syllabus**

- **Mains – GS 2 (Governance)**

Context: There are questions on whether nuclear power, with its attendant concerns on cost and safety, remains a relevant option for a future that is fossil-free, particularly in India.

About Nuclear Energy:

- Nuclear energy is the **energy source found in an atom’s nucleus, or core**. Once extracted, this energy can be used to produce electricity by creating nuclear fission in a reactor through **two kinds of atomic reaction:**

- [nuclear fusion and nuclear fission](#).

The Global Outlook for Nuclear Power:

- There has been a renaissance of sorts for nuclear power in the last two years, with even Europe and the US looking at it again, especially after the Ukraine war.
- China has been surging ahead on nuclear power, and South Korea's new president has changed energy policy to increase the **share of nuclear power in the country's energy mix to 30% by 2030**.
- Japan, despite having faced the **Fukushima accident**, has restarted reactors and plans to start ten more.
 - This is because Japan would have had to depend on expensive **imported coal or natural gas (LNG) otherwise**.
- Even the UK has said that scaling up nuclear power is essential for decarbonizing the electricity sector.

India's Nuclear Power:

- India currently has **22 nuclear reactors** with over a dozen more projects planned.
- All the existing reactors are operated by the **state-owned [Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited \(NPCIL\)](#)**.
- Nuclear power currently comprises **3% of India's total electricity generation** and the current policy targets a three-fold rise in **nuclear-installed capacity by 2032**.
- The present installed nuclear power capacity is set to **increase from 6,780 MW to 22,480 MW by 2031** on progressive completion of projects under construction and accorded sanction.

Law governing nuclear liability

[Convention on Supplementary Compensation \(CSC\)](#):

- The umbrella **Convention on Supplementary Compensation (CSC)** was adopted in 1997 with the aim of establishing a minimum national compensation amount.
- The amount can further be increased through public funds, (to be made available by the contracting parties), should the national amount be insufficient to compensate for the damage caused by a nuclear incident.

[India's Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act \(CLNDA\)](#):

- Even though India was a signatory to the CSC, **Parliament ratified the convention only in 2016**.
- To keep in line with the international convention, India enacted the **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA) in 2010**, to put in place a speedy compensation mechanism for victims of a nuclear accident.
- The CLNDA provides for strict and no-fault liability on the operator of the nuclear plant, where it will be held liable for damage regardless of any fault on its part.

Advantages of Nuclear Power:

Efficient power supplier:

- Nuclear power has higher energy density as it requires a lesser quantity of fuel than other sources of power like coal or natural gas based power plants.
- It is especially suitable for space missions which must not have bulky cargo, making it difficult for them to escape the earth's gravity.

Co-existence with other power sources:

- A lot of countries claim that nuclear power would be good to have in the mix because it is firm, dispatchable power, while wind and solar are intermittent or variable.
- Firm power is the power that can be sent to the electric grid to be supplied whenever needed.

Efficiency of newer machines:

- Older designs required active cooling pumps, but the world now has systems which, even if the power fails, will gradually and gracefully control temperature, waste-heat, etc.
- The worst sort of accident in history, **Chernobyl**, was a design that will never get repeated again.

Challenges Associated with Nuclear Power:

Safety Concerns:

- The safety of nuclear power plants is a significant concern, mainly due to the catastrophic consequences of nuclear accidents.
- The accidents at **Chernobyl and Fukushima** are still fresh in people's minds.
- Even though nuclear safety has improved since then, the potential for human error, natural disasters, or other incidents leading to nuclear accidents cannot be ignored.

Nuclear Proliferation:

- The enrichment of uranium for nuclear fuel production can also be used to develop nuclear weapons.
- Therefore, countries that have nuclear power plants must be extremely cautious about the safety and security of their nuclear facilities to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Liability Issues:

- Nuclear liability is a significant sticking point for many countries. In the event of a nuclear accident, the question of liability arises.
- This issue has been a stumbling block for India's deal with **France to install European Pressurized Reactors at Jaitapur, Maharashtra**.

Cost Overruns:

- The cost of building and operating nuclear power plants is another significant challenge.
- The cost of nuclear power plants is higher than the cost of alternative sources of energy such as solar and wind power.

Radioactive Waste:

- Nuclear power plants generate radioactive waste that needs to be safely disposed of to avoid environmental contamination.
- The disposal of nuclear waste is a contentious issue, with no satisfactory solution found yet.

Way Forward:

While there are concerns about the safety, cost, and waste associated with nuclear power, it remains a low-carbon source of base-load power. India's energy mix is dominated by coal, which has significant environmental and health impacts. Phasing out nuclear power could result in an increased reliance on coal, which would have severe environmental and health consequences.

Therefore, nuclear power should remain a part of India's energy mix, at least in the short to medium term. However, India should continue to invest in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels in the long term.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Model Prisons Act 2023

Context: The Ministry of Home Affairs has prepared the 'Model Prisons Act 2023' on the recommendations of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD).

About Model Prisons Act 2023:

- Model Prisons Act 2023 has assimilated the relevant provisions of ‘**The Prisons Act, 1894**’, ‘**The Prisoners Act, 1900**’ and ‘**The Transfer of Prisoners Act, 1950**’.
 - These three acts will be replaced by the Model Prisons Act 2023.
- It will serve as a “**guiding document**” for the States, and for adoption in their jurisdiction.
- It aims to overhaul the prison administration, with focus on the reformation and rehabilitation of inmates.

Some salient features of the new Model Prisons Act are as follows:

- **Security:** Provision for security assessment and segregation of prisoners, individual sentence planning, grievance redressal, prison development board, attitudinal change towards prisoners.
- **Accommodation:** Provision of separate accommodation for women prisoners, transgender, etc.
- **Technology:** Provision for use of technology in prison administration with a view to bring transparency in prison administration.
 - Provision for video conferencing with courts, scientific and technological interventions in prisons, etc.
 - Provision of punishment for prisoners and jail stay for use of prohibited items like mobile phones etc. in jails.
- **Open jail:** Provision regarding establishment and management of high security jail, open jail (open and semi open), etc.
- **Protection for society:** Provision for protecting the society from the criminal activities of hardened criminals and habitual offenders, etc.
- **Legal aid:** Provision for legal aid to prisoners, provision of parole, furlough and premature release etc. to incentivize good conduct.
- **Skill development:** Focus on vocational training and skill development of prisoners and their reintegration into the society.

Present Legal Status:

- **Constitution:** ‘Prisons’/‘persons detained therein’ is a “**State-List**” subject under Entry 4 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India.
 - Administration and management of prisons and prisoners is the responsibility of respective **State Governments**.
- **Laws:** The **Prisons Act of 1894** is a pre-independence era Act and is almost 130-years-old.
 - Two other related laws — The Prisoners Act, 1900 and The Transfer of Prisoners Act, 1950 are also decades-old.
 - There is also the Repatriation of Prisoners Act, 2003.
- **Types of Jails:** The number of jail establishments in India stood over 1,000 which are categorized as Central Jails, District Jails, Sub-Jails, Juvenile and Women Jails as well as open Jails/Camps.

Present issues with Prisons in India:

- **Issues with existing laws:** The existing Act mainly focuses on keeping the criminals in custody and enforcement of discipline and order in prisons.
 - There is no provision for reform and rehabilitation of prisoners in the existing Act.
- **Under trial:** Bulk of the inmates comprises under trial prisoners. These are often people from disadvantaged backgrounds involved in minor and technical violations of the law who are incarcerated due to their inability to pay for bail and/or for good legal representation.

- **Overcrowding:** Jails India suffer from serious overcrowding. India's prison population stood at 331,391 as on 31.12.2004 reflecting a jail population of 30 per hundred thousand Indians and jail occupancy levels stood at 139% of capacity.
- **Poor conditions:** The situation in many prisons is appalling enough to be considered a violation of human dignity as well as the basic human rights of the inmates.
 - Convicts are imprisoned for long periods in crumbling buildings with inadequate accommodation and sanitary facilities.
- **Privileges for powerful people:** Paradoxically, a few individuals, who are powerful are allowed to enjoy extraordinary facilities not permitted under the rules.
- **Misuse of Parole:** The issue of misuse of the provisions for parole and for remission of sentences has significant implications for public order because indiscriminate and reckless grant of parole or remission of sentences can impact public order adversely.

Suggestive Measures:

- **Addressing the issue of prison overcrowding** by exploring alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders, such as diversion programs and community-based sentencing.
- **Legal Aid and Access to Justice:** Ensuring that prisoners have access to legal aid and representation to protect their rights and facilitate fair trials.
 - Promoting awareness among inmates about their legal rights and avenues for seeking redress.
- **Prison Healthcare:** Enhancing healthcare services within prisons, including mental health support and substance abuse treatment programs.
- **Women and Children in Prisons:** Creating gender-responsive policies and separate accommodations for women prisoners, ensuring their safety, privacy, and access to reproductive health services.
- **Community Reintegration:** Collaborating with community-based organizations, NGOs, and vocational training institutes to support the reintegration of released prisoners into society.
- **Technology and Digital Solutions:** Leveraging technology to improve prison management, record-keeping, and communication systems.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

How has the Supreme Court validated Tamil Nadu's stand on Jallikattu?

The story so far: Jallikattu, the traditional rural sport involving bulls, has received judicial approval.

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has ruled that the amendment made in 2017 by the Tamil Nadu Assembly to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, facilitating the smooth conduct of the sport with stringent regulations, is valid.
- The court has, thus, settled the question whether the sport should be disallowed on the ground that it involves unnecessary cruelty to animals and violates animal rights.
- The verdict is also applicable to other sports involving bovines such as Kambala (buffalo race) in Karnataka and bullock-cart racing in Maharashtra.

About Jallikattu:

- It is an ancient 'sport' or **bull taming event** typically practiced in **Tamil Nadu** as a part of **Pongal** celebrations on Mattu Pongal day, **third day** of the four-day Pongal festival.
- Jalli refers to gold or silver coins and Kattu means 'tied'.

- Therefore, combined it refers to **coins being tied to the bulls' horns**, which is considered the prize for whoever tames the bull.
- The bull that wins is used to service numerous cows **preserving the native breed**.
- It is believed to have been practised some **2500 years ago**.
- It is controversial because the sport often results in **major injuries and even deaths**.

Is there any historical evidence of Jallikattu being conducted since ancient times?

- Jallikattu has been known to be practiced during the Tamil classical period (400-100 BC).
- It was common among the **Ayyar people** who lived in the 'Mullai' geographical division of the ancient Tamil country.
- Later, it became a platform for display of bravery and prize money was introduced for participation encouragement.
- A seal from the **Indus Valley Civilization** depicting the practice is preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi.
- A cave painting in **white kaolin discovered near Madurai** depicting a lone man trying to control a bull is estimated to be about 1,500 years old.

Why is Jallikattu important in Tamil culture?

- **Preservation of Native Breeds:** Jallikattu is considered a traditional way for the peasant community to preserve their pure-breed native bulls.
- **Prevents Slaughtering:** At a time when cattle breeding is often an artificial process, conservationists and peasants argue that Jallikattu is a way to protect these male animals which are otherwise used only for meat if not for ploughing.
- **Pride associated with rearing premium breeds:** Kangayam, Pulikulam, Umbalachery, Barugur and Malai Maadu are among the popular native cattle breeds used for Jallikattu. The owners of these premium breeds command respect locally.
- **Agrarian Economy:** The political economy of such games is about showcasing the quality of cattle, the breeding skills of cattle rearers, the centrality of cattle in an agrarian economy, and the power and pride they bring to farmers.
- **Symbol of Tamil Culture:** Jallikattu's linkages with Pongal has lifted it above its regional and community origins and transformed it into a symbol of Tamil culture and pride. Such games are a cultural manifestation of this political economy. As a tradition, it links an agrarian people to the elemental aspect of their vocation.
- **Shapes Political Discourse:** Pride in Tamil culture is central to Dravidian nationalism, which continues to shape the political discourse in Tamil Nadu.
- **Cultural Representation & Continuity:** There exists tangible evidence to show that this battle between man and beast is a cultural representation.

What are the controversies over Jallikattu?

- **Ethical issues:** An investigation by the Animal Welfare Board of India concluded that "Jallikattu is inherently cruel to animals".
- **Human deaths:** The event has caused several human deaths and injuries and there are several instances of fatalities to the bulls.

- **Cruelty to animal:** A report submitted by the AWBI before the Supreme Court in this case highlighted unimaginable torture inflicted- tails twisted and fractured, chemicals poured into eyes, ears mutilated, sharp-edged weapons used to poke the animal.
- **Manhandling of animals:** Animal welfare concerns are related to the handling of the bulls before they are released and also during the competitor's attempts to subdue the bull.

Why did the Supreme Court ban the sport?

In a landmark verdict that established a rights jurisprudence for animals under the Constitution, the Supreme Court imposed a ban on jallikattu and similar sports involving animals in 2014.

- It held the Tamil Nadu law regulating the sport as repugnant to the Central legislation on preventing cruelty to animals.
- It said the Act was “anthropocentric” in the sense that it sought to protect the interests of organisers, spectators and participants and not the animals.
- On the other hand, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (PCA) was an “ecocentric” law. The Bench ruled that the provisions of the State law were contrary to provisions of the Central Act in three ways:
 - It went against the statutory duty of anyone with the care or charge of any animal to ensure its well-being and prevent infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering
 - The bar on using animals solely for entertainment and inciting them to fight
 - The restrictions on the training and exhibition of performing animals.
- The court cited the ‘Five Freedoms’ recognised for animals by the World Health Organization for Animal Health and said that these freedoms should be read into the provisions favouring animal rights found in the PCA—
 - Freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition;
 - Freedom from fear and distress;
 - Freedom from physical and thermal discomfort;
 - Freedom from pain, injury and disease;
 - Freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour
- In addition, these rights and freedoms flow from the Fundamental Duties in the Constitution, viz., **Art. 51A(g)**, which imposes a duty on citizens to protect and improve the natural environment and to have compassion for living creatures.

What was Tamil Nadu's response?

- A massive agitation broke out in January 2017 against the government's failure to facilitate the conduct of jallikattu for successive years, with tens of thousands of people, especially youngsters, occupying the sands of the Marina in Chennai for days. This led to a surge of support for jallikattu.
- The government of then Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam agreed to take legislative measures. With the Union government's cooperation, it obtained the President's prior instruction to issue an ordinance that sought to remove the basis for the 2014 Supreme Court judgment.
- To avoid repugnancy with the Central law, the ordinance, which was replaced by an Act within a few days, was adopted as a State-specific amendment to the PCA itself.
 - It was framed in a way that would define jallikattu as an event organised to promote and follow tradition and culture and to preserve the native breeds of bulls.
 - Its clauses were worded to remove the applicability of the PCA provisions to jallikattu.

- It added the sport as another exception to the list of acts the PCA itself allows as those that do not amount to cruelty (other exceptions include dehorning, castration and destruction of stray dogs and other animals).
- It made the restriction on use of animals for performances inapplicable to jallikattu, besides including the sport to the list of 'exemptions' from the rule against using some animals as performing animals.
- With the President giving his assent, the amendment became law in Tamil Nadu.

What does the SC ruling now say?

In its latest ruling, a Constitution Bench has **accepted the basic argument that jallikattu is part of the cultural heritage** of Tamils.

- It observed that the judiciary cannot examine the question whether something was part of tradition and culture, and that it would defer to the legislature's view in this regard.
- On this point, it differed from the 2014 verdict which had rejected the claim that the sport had cultural and traditional value. It upheld the Amendment Act, saying it has now **legitimized the bovine sport** and that it cannot be termed a piece of colorable legislation.
- The court recalled that the 2014 judgment had banned the sport by citing acts that amounted to cruelty then. However, the situation was now different, the Constitution Bench said, as the State amendment has been followed up with stringent regulations for conducting jallikattu.
- It ruled that the **State legislation should be read along with the rules framed** for holding these events. Therefore, there are no statutory violations now that warrant a ban on jallikattu.
- In particular, it said the stringent rules made by Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra have eliminated the "offending elements" of jallikattu, Kambala and bullock-cart racing in the respective States. These changes minimise the potential for cruelty, and address the concerns about animal rights violations, it said.

SOURCE: [The Hindu](#)



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**The problem with India's multi-alignment stand**

Context: India's strategic autonomy and policy of non-alignment have evolved into a multi-alignment approach.

About India's multi-alignment stand**Origin of India's non-alignment stand:**

- There has been a progressive evolution in Indian thinking on forming and joining regional economic and security groupings, since the days New Delhi declared itself as "Non-Aligned" in the 1950s.
- India, thereafter, remained a leading player in the "Non-Aligned Movement" (NAM).
- The 120 members of NAM professed that they would not get drawn into "Great Power" rivalries between the US and USSR.

India's current multi-alignment stand:**With Russia:**

- The disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s led to new groupings and alliances.
- But we are now happily in a position where we are partners, in different ways, with all major global power centres. Economics and economic integration play a far more central role as bridges of cooperation today.

West Asia:

- The most notable decision taken in recent days was after the first summit meeting of the recently established I2U2 grouping, comprising India, Israel, the US and the UAE.
- This was the first time when India and the US partnered two West Asian countries to focus cooperation on use of water resources, food security, health, transportation and space.

USA and QUAD:

- India finds itself linked with the US and Japan far more closely than in the past, in a world order which is becoming more China-centric than in the past.
- This has been the rationale of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or QUAD, comprising Australia, India, Japan and the US.

Southeast Asian Nations:

- While India has a free trade agreement (FTA) with ASEAN, New Delhi has chosen, for understandable reasons, not to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), containing 15 East Asian and Pacific nations, including ASEAN members, Australia, New Zealand and China.

Eurasia:

- India holds membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation of Eurasian Nations with a secretariat in Beijing.

India's view on Ukraine-Russia Conflict:

- India has been actively engaging with Ukraine and expressing solidarity with the Nation in the face of the ongoing conflict with Russia.
 - This is in contrast to China's move with Moscow in order to cement China's relationship with Russia.
- India has been committed to supporting peace efforts in Ukraine and sees itself as a mediator in the conflict.

- The United States sees this engagement as important because it aligns with its own response to the conflict and helps to bring the two countries' positions into closer alignment.

Reasons for India's ambiguity:

- India's position on the Ukraine war is nuanced and reflects a balancing act between its traditional ties with Russia and its democratic values.
- While India has expressed disapproval of Russia's military actions in Ukraine.
 - it has avoided taking a clear position on the issue in many UN resolutions, which may be due to India's military and geopolitical dependence on Russia.
- However, India's views on sovereignty align with universally acceptable Westphalian notions and clash with China's political philosophy of 'might is right,' which has led to China's support for Russia in the conflict.

Problem with India's multi-alignment stand

- India lacks hard power. It has been recently argued that had India been adequately powerful it could have stopped the Ukraine conflict.
- While India has expressed disapproval of the Ukraine war but it has avoided taking any clear positions in several UN resolutions.
- This is understandable that India has often taken an evasive position on conflicts that involve traditional allies.
 - However, critics argue that India's ambiguity does not behove a nation aspiring to become a permanent member of the UNSC, which implies a commitment to speak as a global voice against territorial aggression and human rights violations like the case of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- This is based on the military dependence of India as it is on the anti-colonial standard of India's strategic autonomy doctrine.

Way Forward:

A pursuit of 'multi-alignment' may have given New Delhi some diplomatic space in the ongoing war in Ukraine. However, it may not be sufficient for India to play the role of a mediator between Russia and Ukraine. India currently lacks the material resources to match the extent of China's economic and military potential.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

G-7, 2023 Meet

In News: The meeting of the "G-7" was recently held in Hiroshima, sending out a message of global solidarity for peace.

The symbolism: Bringing leaders of all G-7 members with the EU leadership to the peace memorial for the victims of the 1945 atomic bombing. As well as the grouping issued a special "Hiroshima Vision Statement on Nuclear Disarmament".

Significance of Presence:

- The U.S. President, Joseph Biden, only the second sitting American President to visit the city, made a particular point of attending the summit.
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's surprise arrival also enhanced the message by turning the spotlight on the horrors of Russia's invasion
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that the crisis was one of "humanity" was significant.

Overall G7 Meet: What went well and what could have been better outcomes?**A. On Russia:**

- The G-7 members issued a separate statement on Ukraine, hitting Russia with more sanctions [\[UPSC Mains – Russia-Ukraine War\]](#)
- They would “starve Russia of G7 technology, industrial equipment and services that support its war machine” + Would step up efforts to prevent circumvention of their existing sanctions regime, “including targeting entities transporting material to the front”
- **Criticism:** Failed to highlight a path towards dialogue and ending the war.

B. On wanting 'stable' China relations, warning on 'militarisation':

- United in voicing concerns about human rights in China, including in Tibet, in Hong Kong and in the far western region of Xinjiang, where the issue of forced labour is a perennial issue.
- The leaders expressed “serious concern” about the situation in the East and South China seas, where Beijing has been expanding its military presence and threatening to use force to exert its control over self-governed Taiwan. They called for a “peaceful resolution” of China’s claim to Taiwan, which has remained unresolved since the communists gained power on the Chinese mainland in 1949.
- To press Russia to end its war in Ukraine
- Cooperation with China is needed given its global role and economic size, in appealing for working together on challenges such as climate change, biodiversity, debts and financing needs of vulnerable countries, global health concerns and economic stability.
- G7 members vowed to take a stand against various types of “economic coercion,” saying they will counter malign practices, such as illegitimate technology transfer or data disclosure, while also avoiding unduly limiting trade and investment.

China responded by accusing the U.S. and other members of hypocrisy.

C. On Nuclear Status:

- Britain, France and the United States alone possess thousands of warheads, and the bloc’s remaining members — including Japan — are covered by Washington’s “nuclear umbrella”.
- There appears to be little appetite to reduce stockpiles elsewhere, with Moscow making thinly veiled threats to use the weapons, China expanding its arsenal and North Korea stoking fears of a new nuclear test with a barrage of missile launches.

D. Climate Wishlist:

- The G7 stressed on the need for a global peak in emissions by 2025.
- The G7 — the US, the UK, Germany, Italy, Japan, France and Canada — claimed that their emissions had already “peaked”, and asked all “major economies” to ensure that their individual emissions do not continue to rise beyond 2025.
 - “Major economies” is not defined, but in the context of climate change, it usually includes countries like India, China, Brazil, South Africa, and Russia, each of which is a significant emitter.
 - China has said it would turn net-zero only in 2060, while India has set 2070 as the target.
 - Some other countries, including big emitters like Russia and Saudi Arabia, have 2060 as their net-zero targets.
 - If these countries do not become net-zero by 2050, it would mean that the other major emitters, mainly the US and the European Union, would have to reach there much earlier.
 - As of now, only Germany has said it would attain net-zero status by 2045.
- The G7 reiterated its commitment to turn net-zero by 2050, and asked all ‘major economies’ to attain net-zero status by that year and to come up with detailed road maps to reach the target.
- **Criticisms:**

- The G7 countries put no deadline to ending the use of fossil fuels, only saying that they were committed to accelerating the phase-out of “unabated fossil fuels” in line with 1.5 degree Celsius trajectories.
 - “Unabated” is not clearly defined
 - They also said they would eliminate “inefficient fossil fuel subsidies” by 2025 or earlier, without defining “inefficient subsidies”.
- The G7 also claimed they had stopped financing new fossil fuel-based energy projects “except in limited circumstances”.
 - These circumstances include the need to end the dependence on Russian gas, because of which new investments in the gas sector would be considered legitimate.

E. View of the world: Still polarised; despite presence of countries such as India, Brazil, Indonesia and Vietnam with a less black-and-white view of the world

- If the G-7 grouping wishes to broaden its prism, it must recognise that it is grossly unrepresentative of the world today.
- While members together represent more than half the world’s net wealth, the G-7 accounts for less than a third of the global GDP, and just over a tenth of the world’s population.
- Apart from Japan, the G-7 membership comprises an essentially Euro-American worldview.
- It is also hard to justify an economic grouping that does not include some of the world’s largest economies (China and India), the fastest-growing GDPs, or the biggest global energy providers.

Points raised by India

- **Rights of the transgender individuals:** Raised the need to safeguard the rights of transgender individuals.
- **Removal of hurdles in fertilizer supply chain:** There is an urgent need to remove the political obstacles that have emerged in the global fertilizer supply chains.
 - Should support natural farming as an alternative to fertilizers.
 - An attempt to address the fallout of the crisis in Ukraine which has affected fertilizer supplies across the world.
- **Building inclusive food system:** Millets help in addressing nutrition requirements, climate change, water conservation and food security. Building an inclusive food system will focus on the welfare of the most vulnerable people and marginal farmers.
- **Called for raising voice against “unilateral attempts to change the status quo”.**
- **On UN:** The institutions created in the last century are not in line with the system of the twenty-first century. They do not reflect the realities of the present. That is why it is necessary that reforms should be given concrete shape in big institutions like the UN. It will also have to become the voice of the Global South.

Conclusion

- While some efforts were made in Hiroshima to recognize the G-7’s role in, for example, promoting transparent financing and debt sustainability for the developing world, or in compensating for the developed world’s contribution to global warming and greenhouse gas emissions, the summit failed to propose concrete measures to help defray these responsibilities.
- There is a need for the grouping to work towards a more inclusive outlook and help in building a more comprehensive global consensus on some of the bigger challenges the world faces today.

Global agency affiliated to UN rights body defers NHRC accreditation

In News: For the second time in a row, an organization affiliated to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and representing more than a hundred national human rights institutions, has **deferred re-accreditation of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India** for a year.

The current Situation

- The Sub Committee on Accreditation (SCA) to the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) had granted 'A' status of accreditation to NHRC in 2017, after deferring it the year before — the first such instance since NHRC was established in 1993.
 - The subcommittee has recommended advocating with the government and parliamentarians for certain legislative amendments to improve compliance with the Paris Principles.
 - Without the accreditation, NHRC will be unable to represent India at the UN Human Rights Council.
 - In 2016, the GANHRI had cited the following issues:
 - Appointment of political representatives
 - Failure in ensuring gender balance and pluralism in NHRC staff among the reasons for the deferment.
- The GANHRI is responsible for reviewing and accrediting National Human Rights Institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles every five years.
 - Adopted in 1991, the Paris Principles are a crucial step in developing standards for national human rights institutions worldwide.
 - The six principles require a country's human rights agency to be independent from the government in its structure, composition, decision-making and method of operation.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India

- **Headed by** Justice Arun Mishra, former judge of the Supreme Court.
- NHRC was established in **1993**.
- It is in conformity with the Paris Principles, adopted at the first international workshop on national institutions to protect human rights in Paris in 1991.
- **Status:** It is a statutory organization established under the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Functions:**
 - To investigate the violation of human rights/ the failures of the states/other to prevent a human rights violation
 - Research about human rights, create awareness campaigns through various mediums, and encourage the work of NGOs.
- **Composition:**
 - Chairperson, four full-time Members and four deemed Members.
 - A Chairperson, should be retired Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court.
- **Appointment:** The Chairperson and members of the NHRC are appointed by the President of India, on the recommendation of a committee consisting of:
 - The Prime Minister (Chairperson)
 - The Home Minister
 - The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha
 - The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha
 - The Speaker of the Lok Sabha

- The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha
- **Tenure:** They hold office for a term of **three years or until they attain the age of 70** years, whichever is earlier.
- **Removal:** The **President** can remove them from the office under specific circumstances.

The success of NHRC:

- NHRC issued guidelines where death in police custody has to be reported to NHRC within 48 hrs.
- Vocal in the opinion of laws such as TADA (Terrorist and disruptive activities prevention act) and POTA (prevention of terrorism act)
- Suo Moto took cognizance of the deportation of Rohingya refugees –the commission was of the opinion that Rohingya have a fear of persecution. Back in 1994 had taken about the issue of the safety of the Chakma community in Arunachal Pradesh
- Had taken up the issue of death of kids due to malnutrition in Odisha-The recommendations were accepted by the state government
- Had worked for improving the conditions of denotified tribes.
- Strengthening of women's and children rights and improving their condition

Issues with respect to NHRC:

- **Recommendations of NHRC are not binding:** NHRC has had very little success in getting the victims financial compensation
- **Has limited power over armed forces:** Can only ask for a report from concerned department –This has handicapped NHRC with respect to involvement of violation of human rights by armed forces
- Non-compliance by the states with the directions for compensation issued by the commission
- Shortage of adequate number of trained staff to handle the growing number of complaints.
- Large expenditure on office expenses, leaving small amounts for research and rights awareness programmes.
- Private bodies are out of ambit of NHRC
- The NHRC does not have fair and equal means of representation in terms of gender, religious minority groups and disabled populations.

Recommendations which can make NHRC more effective

- The effectiveness of commissions will be greatly enhanced if the government immediately makes its **decisions enforceable.**
- Can include civil society human rights activist's members for better understanding of the situation at hand.
- Staff should be **recruited independently** rather than deputation from the government.
- Should **remove the barrier of not taking complaints** older than a year.
- Bring armed forces and private parties under the ambit of commission -> with certain limitations where unity and integrity of the nation is of utmost importance
- Increase in budget allocation will lead to ample space for the commission to expand
- Culture of human rights be inculcated in students through an updated curriculum
- Remove ambiguity in language for member's qualifications. Non-judiciary members must not be filled at center discretion but on the recommendation of a body comprising the PM, CJI, and former members.

Human Rights

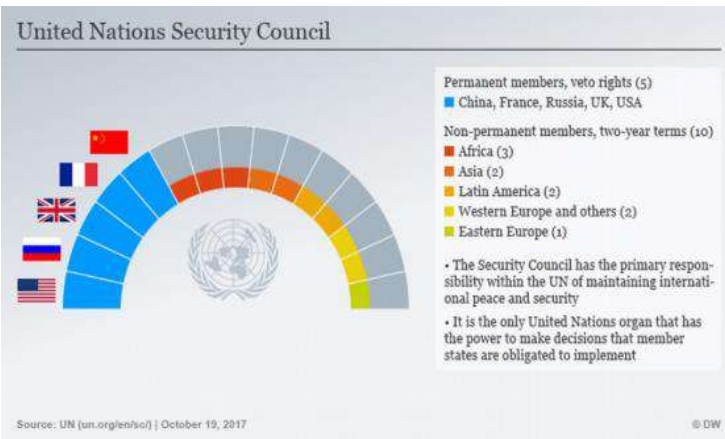
- According to Section 2 of the act -“Human Rights” means the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International covenants and enforceable by courts in India.
- Human Rights Day is celebrated on the **10th December** every year to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.

SOURCE: [Indian Express](https://www.indianexpress.com)

UN Security Council Reforms

Context: China has maintained its stance on the UN Security Council reforms, saying there should be more representation for developing countries, but avoided a direct response to India and other countries' call for its expansion and their inclusion.

About United Nations Security Council:



- The UNSC was established by the UN Charter in 1945.
- It is one of the **6 principal organs of the United Nations**.
- UNSC has 15 members: **5 permanent members (P5) and 10 non-permanent members elected for 2-year terms**.
- The 5 permanent members are: **United States, Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom**.
- India has served seven times in the UNSC as a non-permanent member and in January 2021, India entered the UNSC for the eighth time.

UNSC elections:

- Each year the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of 10 in total) for a two-year term.
- The **10 non-permanent seats** are distributed on a regional basis as follows:
 - Five for African and Asian States.
 - One for the Eastern European States.
 - Two for the Latin American and Caribbean States;
 - Two for Western European and other States
- To be elected to the Council, candidate countries need a **two-thirds majority of ballots of the Member States** that are present and voting in the Assembly.
- The UNSC elections were traditionally held in the General Assembly hall with each of the 193 member states casting its vote in a secret ballot.

Need:

Changing world order:

- In the 77-year-old history of the UN, the composition of the Security Council has been altered only once.
- I.e., In 1963 when the General Assembly decided to expand the Council from 11 to 15 members, with the addition of four non-permanent seats.

- Since then, the world has changed. The geopolitical relations in the world have altered, the economic responsibilities in the world in countries have also changed.

Equitable World Order:

- There is a need for a more equitable world in order to uphold the principles of democracy at the global level.
- Developing countries like the African countries, need to be made stakeholders in the multilateral institutions and involved in the decision-making process.

Mitigation of New Threats:

- With rising protectionism, increased incidents of terrorism and the threat of climate change, the multilateral system must become more resilient and responsive.

Issues with regard to UNSC:**Lack of Adequate Representation:**

- The UN Security Council is less effective because it is less representative, the most pertinent absence being that of Africa, a continent of 54 countries.
- Current global issues are complex, and interconnected.
- Lack of representation of geopolitical and geo-economically important countries is leaving out a large segment of global opinion to have a voice in the highest security summit.

Misuse of Veto Power:

- Veto power has been always criticized by many experts as well as by most States calling it a” **self-chosen club of the privileged**” and non-democratic and not allowing the Council to make necessary decisions whenever it displeases any one of the P-5.
- It is also not appropriate for the current global security environment to be guided by elite decision-making structures.

Geopolitical Rivalry within P5:

- The geopolitical rivalry among the permanent members has prevented the UNSC from coming up with effective mechanisms to deal with global issues.
- **Taking the current world order as an example, the P5 members:** United States, Russia, and China are three poles on the periphery of the globe having several geopolitical issues revolving around them (Taiwan Issue and Russia-Ukraine War).

Threat to State's Sovereignty:

- As the principal organ of international peacekeeping and conflict resolution, the UNSC is responsible for **keeping peace and managing conflict**.
- Its decisions (referred to as resolutions) are **binding on all member countries**, unlike the General Assembly's.
- This means that any state's sovereignty can be encroached upon, if necessary, by acting, such as imposing sanctions.

Significance of India as a permanent UNSC member:

- **Global decision-making:** As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), India would have a more significant role in shaping global decision-making and playing a prominent role in maintaining international peace and security.
- **Representation of the global south:** It would address the issue of under-representation of developing countries in the Council.

- As the world's largest democracy, with a population of over 1.3 billion people and a growing economy, India's permanent membership would ensure that the voices and interests of the global South are better represented in the UNSC.
- **Larger role in dealing with the new age challenges:** India's permanent membership would give it greater leverage in dealing with regional and international issues.
 - India could play a more active role in addressing challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and nuclear disarmament.
- **Peace Keeping efforts:** India has consistently contributed to the UN peacekeeping efforts. Despite this, it has no say in how the peace-making forces will be deployed and how the mandate will be exercised.
 - India's inclusion in the UNSC would also give India more say in decisions regarding peacekeeping operations and interventions in conflict zones.
- **Recognition as an emerging power:** India's permanent membership would also be a recognition of its growing global importance and its commitment to multilateralism.
 - India's permanent membership in the UNSC would be an affirmation of its place as a key player in shaping the future of the world.

Suggestive Measures:

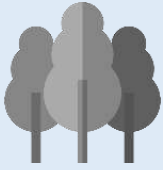
- The Security Council should better reflect on the **current global realities and incorporate more geographically diverse perspectives**.
 - It must demonstrate flexibility and willingness to compromise in the name of greater credibility and legitimacy.
- Developing countries **vision of development for the South** and the role on the UN in promoting and achieving such vision needs to be strongly and consistently articulated.
- The UN's role as the **core global governance institution should not be undermined by the UN reform**. Rather, such process should result in a strengthened mandate for the UN as the primary global governance institution to be able to exercise coordinative functions over the work of the major multilateral economic policymaking institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO.
- India should continue to push hard for UNSC reforms. Foreign Policy experts suggest that a pragmatic approach should be to accept a permanent status without the power to veto.

Way Forward:

India's claim for permanent membership is a genuine demand in the changed geo politics of 21st century as we have discussed before. India is possibly the most obvious and least controversial option to add as a permanent member, and probably long overdue for a seat.

However, it is under constant criticism for its plans and actions. It is said to be performing in unilateral way with unquestioned authority, working only for stakes and not making non-permanent members inclusive in their decision-making.

Source: [Times of India](#)



ENVIRONMENT



Action plan to reduce Air Pollution

Context: Delhi Chief Minister announced a 14-point action plan to reduce air pollution during the summer months with a focus on controlling dust pollution.

Highlights of the action plan:

- The Delhi government will conduct a real-time apportionment study of 13 identified hotspots to find sources of pollution and solutions to curb them.
- People will have to register to carry out construction work on land measuring more than 500 square meters.
- The government will increase green cover by planting 59 lakh saplings.
- Urban farming will also be increased and 400 workshops will be conducted and free training kits will be given to people.
- The government is preparing a new policy to deal with industrial waste management and techniques to collect and scientifically dispose of industrial waste to curb industrial pollution.

About Air Pollution:

- Air pollution refers to the release of pollutants into the air that is detrimental to human health and the planet as a whole.

Source of Air Pollution

- **Nitrogen dioxide:** It is one of the major pollutants and major sources of NO_x include emissions from motor vehicle exhaust, industrial facilities, and chemical solvents.
- **Agriculture & Allied Sources:** Ammonia (NH₃) -It is another gaseous pollutant that is monitored.
 - It occurs naturally in air, soil and water, and is used as an agricultural fertiliser and in cleaning products.
 - Short-term inhalation of high levels of ammonia can cause irritation and serious burns in the mouth, lungs and eyes.
- **Stubble burning:** It is also one of the major sources of air pollution in northern India, especially in winters.
- **Sulphur dioxide (SO₂):** They emitted from the combustion of fossil fuels have, historically, been the main component of air pollution in many parts of the world.
 - The largest source of SO₂ in the atmosphere is burning fossil fuels by power plants and other industrial facilities.
 - Short-term exposure to SO₂ can harm the respiratory system, making breathing more difficult.
- **Particulate Matter:** Particulate matter (PM) are inhalable and respirable particles composed of sulphate, nitrates, ammonia, sodium chloride, black carbon, mineral dust and water.
 - **Both PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀** are capable of penetrating deep into the lungs but PM_{2.5} can even enter the bloodstream, primarily resulting in cardiovascular and respiratory impacts, and also affecting other organs.
 - In 2013, outdoor air pollution and particulate matter were classified as carcinogenic by **WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)**.
- **Carbon monoxide (CO):** It is a toxic, colourless and odourless gas, given off when fuel containing carbon, such as wood, coal and petrol, are burned.

- Major sources of methane include waste and fossil fuel and agricultural industry.
- **Ozone (O₃):** It occurs both in the Earth's upper atmosphere and at ground level. At the ground, O₃ is created by the chemical reaction between **oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds**.
 - It is formed when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, refineries and other sources chemically react in presence of sunlight.
 - It can trigger a variety of health problems, including chest pain, throat irritation and airway inflammation.

Associated risks

- Air pollution is a threat to health in all countries, but it hits people in low- and middle-income countries the hardest.
- Every year, exposure to air pollution is estimated to cause **7 million premature deaths** and result in the loss of millions more healthy years of life.
- In children, this could include **reduced lung growth and function, respiratory infections and aggravated asthma**.
- In adults, ischaemic heart disease and stroke are the most common causes of premature death attributable to outdoor air pollution, and evidence is also emerging of other effects such as diabetes and neurodegenerative conditions.
- This puts the burden of disease attributable to air pollution on a par with other major global health risks such as unhealthy diet and tobacco smoking.
- There is a body of scientific evidence to prove that air pollution is leading to severe health impacts and **90% of the entire global population is breathing polluted air**.

Steps taken by the government:

- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)** is a set of emergency measures that kick in to take required steps such as banning construction activities, implementing an odd-even scheme etc.
- Based on an initiative by the supreme court, legislation has been brought in to form the **Commission for Air Quality Management** to implement measures like GRAP and ensure inter-state coordination with a vast range of powers.
- **National Clean Air Program (NCAP)** to reduce pollution in non-attainment cities by 2024 compared to 2017 levels.
- Efforts to distribute turbo happy Seeder machines, expanding area under bio decomposers for in situ stubble management
- **Development of safe fewer polluting crackers** such as STAR (safe thermite cracker) and SWAS(Safe water releaser) by the Council of scientific and industrial research.

Way Forward:

The air does not belong to any one State therefore all have to work in close coordination with neighbouring States to curb air pollution. Policies to reduce air pollution offer a win-win strategy for both climate and health, lowering the burden of disease attributable to air pollution, as well as contributing to the near- and long-term mitigation of climate change.

The WHO also prescribed some steps to be taken by governments to improve the air quality and health. It urged countries to implement national air quality standards in line with the WHO's guidelines, usage of clean household energy, and implementation of stricter vehicle emissions and efficiency standards among other measures.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Greenwashing

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will join 12 international regulators in **the Global Financial Innovation Network (GFIN)**'s first-ever **Greenwashing TechSprint** to develop a tool to help regulators and the market effectively tackle the risks of greenwashing in financial services.

About Greenwashing:

- Greenwashing refers to **misleading the general public into believing that companies,**
 - sovereigns or civic administrators are doing more for the environment than they actually are.
- This may involve making a product or policy seem more environmentally friendly or less damaging than it is in reality.
- The term was coined by environmentalist **Jay Westervelt in 1986.**
- The phenomenon came into practice as consumers and regulators increasingly sought to explore **planet-friendly, recyclable and sustainable 'green' products.**
- By 2015, 66% of consumers were willing to shell out more for a product that was environmentally sustainable.
- **Examples:**
 - In April 2022, the **U.S. Federal Trade Commission** penalised **retailers Kohl and Walmart \$5.5 million** for misleading customers about their home **furnishing products being made of bamboo.**
 - In reality, **they were made of rayon** — a fibre made from cellulose whose manufacturing entails the use of harmful chemicals such as **sodium hydroxide that are hazardous to the environment.**

Why does greenwashing happen?

- Greenwashing is done primarily for a company to either present itself as an 'environment-friendly' entity or for profit maximisation.
- It is achieved by introducing a product, catering to the inherent demand for environment-friendly products.
- In certain instances, it is done using the larger idea as a premise to cut down on certain operational logistics and providing consumer essentials.

Criticism against green washing:

- **At the [COP27 conference](#),** Secretary-General of the United Nations (U.N.), António Guterres said, **"We must have zero tolerance for net-zero greenwashing."**
 - Although several companies, cities, states and regions have committed to reaching net-zero, in the absence of regulation, a lot of these pledges are not aligned with the science to achieve the same and do not have enough detail to be credible.
- Additionally, the inconsistent use of terms **'net-zero', 'net-zero aligned', 'eco-friendly', 'green' and 'ecological'** among others are not accompanied with satisfactory evidence to substantiate their claims.
- If greenwash premised upon low-quality net zero pledges is not addressed, it will undermine the efforts of genuine leaders, creating both confusion, cynicism and a failure to deliver urgent climate action.

Green washing and financial sector:

- **Ethical investing:** Sustainable investing has become increasingly popular among millennials and impact investors concerned with 'ethical investing'.
- **Role of ESG credentials:** Financial services providers expect increased scrutiny of a company's **Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)** credentials from regulators, shareholders, customers as well as other stakeholders.

- **Transition funding:** Financial institutions are expected to fund the transition towards renewable energy and discourage investments in further harnessing of conventional energy sources as coal, oil and gas.

Policy moves in India

- If the financial sector is to respond effectively to the demand for products that endeavour to introduce positive changes into the economy, it is imperative that 'greenwashing' is averted.
- In May 2022, market regulator [Securities and Exchange Board of India \(SEBI\)](#) constituted an advisory committee to look into **all ESG-related matters**.

Suggestive measures to combat 'greenwashing':

- Non-state actors cannot claim to be net-zero while they continue to build or invest in new fossil fuel supply.
 - Thus, companies must work towards reducing emissions across their entire value chain and not limit the endeavour to only one part of the chain.
- Companies must not invest, through any means, in harnessing fossil fuels or engage in deforestation and other environmentally destructive activities.
- In addition to this, companies cannot compensate for this investment by means of cheap credits, which **"often lack integrity"**.
 - For perspective, carbon credits work as a permit allowing the holder to emit a stipulated amount of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases.
- The committee also recommends a transition from **voluntary disclosures (pertaining to net emissions) to regulatory norms**.
 - Verification and enforcement in a voluntary space can be particularly challenging.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Why women must have a seat at the climate change decision-making table

Context: Climate change impacts everyone, but its harshest consequences are felt by the most vulnerable i.e., women and children and people from the sections of society who have almost no say in the decision-making process.

- In times of crisis, women are often left behind and face increased health and safety risks due to **inadequate infrastructure and the unequal burden of domestic care**.
- An intersectional lens that looks at the barriers and challenges faced by vulnerable populations is needed as we design adaptation and mitigation strategies to deal with the crisis.

"When there are more women in boardrooms and in high-level positions in institutions, you get decisions that are wiser... there is a tendency for women to be more collaborative... (Women) have the first duty of care of our newborn children and hence, biologically, we're geared towards that stewardship. But it is just plain stupid, frankly, not to use 50 per cent of human potential."

- *The Costa Rican diplomat Christiana Figueres*

[Christiana Figueres successfully steered the global diplomatic effort that culminated in the 2015 Paris Agreement that made most of the world's governments commit to limiting global temperature rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius]

Why Women Should Get to Sit at the Decision-making Table?

A. Lack of Access: Women rely heavily on natural resources yet face major obstacles in accessing them.

- In low and middle-income countries especially, women work harder to secure food, fodder, and water during extreme weather events, often leading to **girls dropping out of school** to support their mothers.
- If women in developing countries had the same access to resources as men, they could increase agricultural yields.
 - However, due to legal and cultural constraints, less than 20 per cent of landholders are women
 - With even fewer in North Africa and West Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Women are also less likely to survive during crises due to **long-standing inequalities** vis-a-vis information-access and mobility creating a **vicious cycle of vulnerability to future disasters**.

B. Health Concerns: Climate disasters worsen women's health by **limiting access** to healthcare and **increasing risks related to maternal and child health**.

- Emergent research reveals that women are more likely to experience deaths from heatwaves in France, China, and India, and from tropical cyclones in Bangladesh and the Philippines.
- According to the UN, 60 per cent of the world's hungry and malnourished are women.
- The International Food Policy Research Institute estimates that climate change could lead to an additional 1.2 million stunted children by 2050.
- Girls are expected to be disproportionately affected due to gender disparities in access to food, health care, and education.
- Extreme heat increases the incidences of stillbirth
- The rampant spread of vector-borne diseases worsens maternal and neonatal outcomes.
- Therefore, to ensure effective and equitable solutions to climate change, it's essential to **recognise the disproportionate impact on women and provide them with a seat at the decision-making table**.

C. Women as Farmers have proved their excellence time and again:

- Women farmers play an important role in the protection of environment and biodiversity as well as in taking care of the health and nutrition needs of their families.
- So, it is important for women's voices to be included, and those from indigenous communities who have practical experience of living in harmony with nature.
- However, women are not in decision-making positions as they have **limited land-owning rights** and almost **no financial resources**.

D. The challenge of excluding women from Wildlife Conservation: The connections between gender and wildlife use are diverse and depend on particular economic, cultural and ethnic contexts. But women may not participate in conservation activities either because they are excluded from doing so by vested interests or because they do not feel empowered to speak out in their cultural contexts. This lack of understanding is highly problematic for conservation projects.

Also, women's productive and reproductive unpaid work and their participation in decision-making have a direct impact in wildlife use by:

- Making male labor available to hunt or fish at times when seasonal demand for labour in agriculture peaks

- Reducing monetary cost of family reproduction and generating alternative sources of income and supporting food production, all of which might reduce pressure on wildlife.

Women's particular roles and responsibilities within the household, community, and society lead women to develop unique knowledge related to biodiversity, shaped by their specific needs and priorities. They are thereby in a unique position to bring different perspectives and new solutions to addressing biodiversity concerns.

E. Women and Leadership Position: Unfortunately, women continue to face barriers that impede their advancement into leadership positions. But when women are involved in decision-making, it positively impacts the environment.

- Countries with higher female representation in parliament are more likely to **endorse international environmental agreements**, and have **more stringent climate policies**.
- At workplaces too, women's leadership has shown a **positive correlation with greater transparency regarding environmental footprints and disclosure of emissions**.

Successful Cases-in-Point

Women have played a major role in the conservation of agrobiodiversity.

- **The Equator initiative award** was won by **Komala Pujari in 2003**, a tribal woman from Odisha, for **conserving local land races of paddy** and getting farmers in Jeypore in Koraput district to **shift to natural farming methods**.

The Way Forward: It is not just about Gender Equality anymore!

A gender-intentional response to the climate crisis will result in **sustainable economic growth**, taking care of climate spillovers. However, elevating women leaders is not just about gender equality.

What is it exactly then?

- It's about **deploying our full resources to an urgent crisis**.
- In addition, we must also invest in infrastructure that is sensitive to gender concerns to cope with the climate crisis.
- At the workplace particularly, women's leadership has shown a positive correlation with increased transparency regarding environmental footprints and the disclosure of emissions.
- One-fifth of major corporations have pledged to go net-zero by 2050 but do not proactively include women at the board level.

Measures are necessary to increase the representation of women in decision-making roles related to biodiversity and environmental governance at all levels.

- **We need to mitigate both cultural and logistical barriers to allow women to voice** their needs, knowledge, priorities, and solutions in relation to sustainable development – at the same level as men.
 - We need to spread awareness among women and girls of proposed biodiversity-related actions that affect them.
 - We must build their knowledge about their rights and about their options for contributing to shaping those actions.

- **Equal rights and access to ownership and control over land** are also critically important for women across the world, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (targets 1.4, 2.3, 5.a).
- **Provide more learning opportunities for girls to support their future participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related jobs.**
 - The IPCC reports call for a faster shift to renewable energy, which can only happen with women's skills, participation, and leadership in the energy transition.
 - This will require handholding support apart from creating an education system that provides opportunities to willing women to choose careers in STEM fields.
 - An education regime encouraging women in STEM will help in creating a sizeable number of women leaders, managers, engineers, and technical workforce in green jobs associated with renewable energy solutions.
- **Among the actions with the most significant potential for reducing land-use emissions are reduced deforestation and forest degradation**, a shift to plant-based diets, and reduced food and agricultural waste.
 - Some of the solutions with the most significant potential for CO2 removal are afforestation and sequestration of soil carbon in croplands and grasslands.
 - These are all actions where women play a critical role, including influencing shifting diets and participating in community-led nature-based solutions such as afforestation or mangrove restoration.
 - Women's involvement in nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation offers a cost-effective way of protecting, sustainably managing, and restoring ecosystems.
 - With women leading these efforts, we stand a chance to address societal challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and poverty and inequality.
- **To support these actions, we need to scale up climate financing for women.**
 - Women have less access to financial resources to prepare for and adapt to climate change.
 - For example, restrictions on women's land ownership mean that many women do not have access to productive land to farm.
 - A lack of financial capital and access to technologies means they cannot quickly diversify their livelihoods.
 - If women are disproportionately affected by climate change, then resources need to prioritize strengthening their resilience.
- **We also have to ignite the full engagement and support of men and boys** to enable empowered participation of women and girls in biodiversity conservation. It is critical that men and boys understand and support measures for women's empowerment, to ensure that these measures will be accepted in the community.

Climate experts say we are at the tipping point, but through women's leadership in climate action, we might be able to tip the scales in our favor. An inclusive approach would also contribute to addressing the root causes of inequalities, through creating awareness and promoting long-term beneficial action.

SOURCE: [Indian Express](#)



ECONOMY

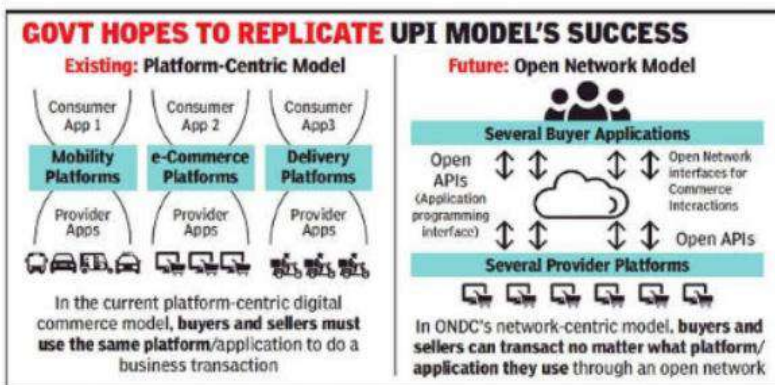


Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

Context: The ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) is gradually challenging the dominance of Zomato and Swiggy by offering users cheaper prices for the same food items.

About ONDC Project:

- Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is an initiative aiming at promoting open networks for **all aspects of exchange of goods and services over digital or electronic networks.**



- ONDC is to be based on **open-sourced methodology**, using open specifications and open network protocols independent of any specific platform.

- It is a non-profit initiative of the **Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce.**

- Currently, **grocery and food items merchants are mostly part of it**, but beauty,

fashion, personal care products, and electronics, among others, are gradually joining in

- Currently, there are partners like **Paytm, Meesho, Magicpin, Mystore, Craftsvilla, and Spice Money**, which act as online storefronts, allowing users to order food or any other product from a business listed on the ONDC platform.

Significance of ONDC:

- On ONDC, **buyers and sellers may transact irrespective of the fact** that they are attached to one specific e-commerce portal.
 - This could give a huge booster shot to smaller online retailers and new entrants.
- However, if mandated, this could be problematic for larger e-commerce companies, which have their own processes and technology deployed for these segments of operations.
- ONDC is expected to digitise the entire value chain, standardise operations, promote inclusion of suppliers, derive efficiency in logistics and enhance value for consumers.
- The platform envisages equal-opportunity participation and is expected to make e-commerce more inclusive and accessible for consumers as they can potentially discover any seller, product or service by using any compatible application/platform, thus increasing their freedom of choice.
- It will enable transactions of any denomination, thus making ONDC a truly 'open network for democratic commerce'.
- Over the next five years, the ONDC expects to bring on board 90 crore users and 12 lakh sellers on the network, enabling 730 crore additional purchases.

Challenges with ONDC:

- Threat to Local businesses in the long run:** The local business will find it extremely challenging to compete with the discounts, sales and other lucrative offers, being offered by prominent e-commerce players which may result in local business being squeezed out of the network in the long run.

- **Silent on liability for a bad product:** The strategy paper is silent on the issues regarding liability on the network in case consumers faced issues regarding transactions, delivery of substandard products and service.
- **No clarity on how existing laws will apply:** There is also a lack of clarity on the applicability of the existing e-commerce laws to the network.

Indian e-commerce Industry:

- **Growth:** The Indian e-commerce industry has been on an upward growth trajectory. The Indian e-commerce market was estimated to be worth over \$55 Bn in Gross Merchandise Value in 2021.
 - By 2030, it is expected to have an annual gross merchandise value of \$350 Bn.
- **Factors of Growth:** Fuelling e-commerce growth, India is expected to have over 907 million internet users by 2023, which accounts for ~64% of the total population of the country.
 - The e-commerce industry in India is growing on levers such as increased smartphone penetration, increased affluence and low data prices, providing impetus for e-retail growth.
 - India is the **2nd largest internet market in the world with ~62 billion UPI transactions in 2022.**
 - Electronics and apparel make up nearly 70 per cent of the e-commerce market, when evaluated against transaction value.
 - Other new upcoming categories within e-commerce include ed-tech, hyperlocal and food-tech.
- **Gaining Popularity in tier-2 and tier-3 cities:** The e-commerce trend is gaining major popularity even in tier-2 and tier-3 cities as they now make up nearly half of all shoppers and contribute three of every five orders for leading e-retail platforms.
 - The average selling price (ASP) in tier-2 and smaller towns is only marginally lower than in tier-1/metro cities.

Way Forward:

ONDC must create consumer trust through robust mechanisms for ensuring redressal of grievances of consumers and enforcing transparent policies for returns, refunds and cancellations.

There needs to be a paradigm shift from an operator-driven monolithic platform-centric model to a facilitator-driven, interoperable decentralized network. The policies should be implemented at the network level.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

MUST READ: [\(UPSC CSE: E-Commerce\)](#)

India's Aviation Industry

Context: The carrier Go Airlines (India) Ltd (Go First), filed for voluntary insolvency proceedings with the [National Company Law Tribunal \(NCLT\)](#).

About Voluntary Insolvency Proceedings:

- The voluntary insolvency means that the **company has accepted its business is insolvent.**
- It is a process in which the company says **it cannot pay debts and needs help from someone to sort it out.**
 - When the company goes insolvent, it can proceed to voluntary liquidation.
- This process refers to the **dissolution of a company with approval from shareholders and creditors of the company.**
 - It is a time-bound process which needs to be completed in 270 days from the date of commencement of Voluntary Liquidation.

Sequence of Steps under [Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code \(IBC\)](#):

Procedure of Voluntary Liquidation under IBC:



14.5%, while international passenger traffic has increased by a CAGR of around 6.5%.

- India’s domestic passenger traffic is likely to rise to 16 crores in the 2023-24 fiscal year from an estimated 13.75 crore from the previous fiscal.
 - By 2029-30, India’s domestic passenger traffic is likely to touch 35 crore.
- **Infrastructure:** The number of airports with civilian flights in India has grown from 74 in 2014 to 148 in 2023.
 - **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** and other airport operators have targeted a capital outlay of around Rs 98,000 crore in the airport sector across India by 2025 for constructing greenfield airports and new terminals, expanding and modernizing existing terminals.

Challenges faced by the Aviation Sector?

- **Safety Concerns:** Last couple of months have witnessed several instances of malfunctions before/during flights resulting in diversions/delays.
 - The malfunctions are being attributed to lower turnaround times by airlines to maximize profits after a pandemic-induced slowdown.
 - Experts have argued that low-cost airlines (which dominate the sector) give low priority to maintenance in order to save costs e.g., many snag rectifications are being undertaken by technicians rather than qualified engineers.
 - Moreover, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has created shortage of spare parts, especially those containing titanium.
- **Profitability of the Sector:** Most airline operators have poor financial health. The situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic due to lockdowns and flight restrictions.
 - Consistent losses drive down number of operators impacting competition and efficiency.
 - To reduce losses, operators increase turnaround times of aircraft and cut-down on maintenance/safety aspects.
- **Absence of robust competition:** While the policy is being liberalized; still, there are stiff regulations which act as barrier to the expansion of the sector.
 - According to **Mr. GR Gopinath (founder of Air Deccan)** tough entry barriers for new entrants reduce competition, high fuel prices on account of taxes reduce profitability of airlines which prohibit the sector from operating at full efficiency.
 - Public sector airports are inefficient and still have a monopoly in the airport segment.
- **Poor rural connectivity:** With mega airports controlling air and ground space, it is almost impossible to connect rural and small towns from the large metros.
 - Although UDAN has showed some positive impact, regional connectivity still remain poor.
- **Policy Lacunae:** There are many policy gaps that remain to be addressed e.g., **the Aircraft Act, 1934 and Aircraft Rules, 1937** have not kept pace with modern technology in aerospace.
 - This has increased costs to the industry and ultimately affected passenger growth.

Govt of India Initiatives to support growth of the Aviation Sector:

- **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS):** It is a part of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan to support eligible **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** and business enterprises in meeting their operational liabilities and restarting their businesses in the context of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Digi Yatra:** Digi Yatra policy is Union Government's initiative for providing passengers seamless and hassle-free experience at airports without the need for verification of ticket and ID at multiple touch points.
- **UDAN:** Union Government's flagship program **Regional Connectivity Scheme UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik)** has the objective to fulfil the aspirations of the common citizen with an enhanced aviation infrastructure and air connectivity in tier II and tier III cities.
 - The government has also planned to develop 100 airports by 2024 under this scheme.
- **Greenfield Airport Policy:** Government of India had accorded 'In-Principle' approval for setting up of 21 Greenfield Airports.
- **Better Policies:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation in India has been encouraging States to reduce their VAT on (aviation turbine fuel) ATF and vouched for ATF to be brought under GST.
- **Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) Policy:** The Union Government had in 2021 introduced an MRO policy that aims to turn India into a global hub for aircraft maintenance and overhaul, which now largely happens abroad.
- **NABH (Nextgen Airports For Bharat):** This scheme was launched in 2018 to increase the number of Airports and their capacity to handle traffic in India.
 - It aims to expand airport capacity more than five times to handle a billion trips a year through investments to be made in airport upgrade by both the private sector and the state-owned Airports Authority of India (AAI).

Source: [The Hindu](#)



ETHICS

**Recusal by Judges**

Context: Recently, there have been various instances of judges recusing themselves from hearing cases.

About Judge Recusal:

- When there is a **conflict of interest**, a judge can withdraw from hearing a case to prevent creating a perception that she carried a bias while deciding the case.
- The conflict of interest can be in many ways — from holding shares in a company that is a litigant to having a prior or personal association with a party involved in the case.
- Another instance for recusal is when an appeal is filed in the **Supreme Court against a judgement of a High Court** that may have been delivered by the SC judge when she was in the HC.
- The practice stems from the cardinal principle of due process of law that nobody can be a judge in her own case.

Rule for Recusal:

- There are no formal rules governing recusals, although several SC judgments have dealt with the issue.
- In **Ranjit Thakur v Union of India (1987)**, the SC held that the test of the likelihood of bias is the reasonableness of the apprehension in the mind of the party.
- The judge needs to look at the mind of the party before him, and decide that he is biased or not.

Causes of Recusal:

- The decision to recuse generally comes from the judge himself or herself as it rests on the conscience and discretion of the judge to disclose any potential conflict of interest.
- Conflict of interest could be:
 - Judge's Interest in the subject matter, or relationship with someone who is interested in it;
 - Judge's Background or experience, such as the judge's prior work as a lawyer;
 - Judge's Personal knowledge about the parties or the facts of the case;
 - Judge's Ex parte communications with lawyers or non-lawyers;
 - Judge's Rulings, comments or conduct;
- In some circumstances, lawyers or parties in the case bring it up before the judge.
 - If a judge recuses, the case is listed before the Chief Justice for allotment to a fresh Bench.

Process of Recusal:

- The decision to recuse generally comes from the judge himself as it rests on the conscience and discretion of the judge to disclose any potential conflict of interest.
 - Some judges orally convey to the lawyers involved in the case their reasons for recusal, many do not. Some explain the reasons in their order.
- In some circumstances, lawyers or parties in the case bring it up before the judge. Once a request is made for recusal, the decision to recuse or not rests with the judge.
 - While there are some instances where judges have recused even if they do not see a conflict but only because such an apprehension was cast, there have also been several cases where judges have refused to withdraw from a case.
- If a judge recuses, the case is listed before the Chief Justice for allotment to a fresh Bench.

Concerns:

- **Undermining Judicial Independence:** It allows litigants to cherry-pick a bench of their choice, which impairs judicial fairness.
 - In addition, the purpose of recusal in these cases undermines both independence and impartiality of the judges.

- **Different Interpretations:** As there are no rules to determine when the judges could recuse themselves in these cases, there are different interpretations of the same situation.
- **Delays the Process:** Some requests for recusal are made with the intent to intimidate the court or to get better of an 'inconvenient' judge or to obfuscate the issues or to cause obstruction and delay the proceedings or in any other way frustrate or obstruct the course of justice.

Way Forward:

Recusal is also regarded as the abdication of duty. Maintaining institutional civilities are distinct from the fiercely independent role of the judge as an adjudicator. It is the **constitutional duty**, as reflected in **one's oath, to be transparent and accountable**, and hence, a judge is required to indicate reasons for his recusal from a particular case.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Code of conduct for civil servants: A review

Background

- There are three All India Services – the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Police Service and the Indian Forest Service – which are selected by the central government with officers allotted to various state cadres.
 - The Centre then gets a certain percentage of officers from each state on central deputation.
 - These bureaucrats work directly for the Centre.
 - All India Services are governed by **Article 312** of the Constitution of India.
- Other services are called Central Civil Services. These services are under the central government itself with no state cadre system.
- They include services such as the Indian Foreign Service, the Indian Revenue Service, Customs and Central Excise Service and several others.

Who are civil servants and what is their expected role?

- In a modern democracy, a civil servant is an official in the service of the people and is recruited based on predetermined qualifications.
- They are responsible for managing the resources given to them by the government and making use of them efficiently and effectively.
- A sound parliamentary system of government requires civil servants to maintain their integrity, fearlessness, and independence. One of the most important functions of the civil service, as stated by the head of the Canadian Public Service, is to “speak truth to power.”
- The crisis of ethics and accountability in civil servants exposes many issues related to the structure of the code of conduct, constitutional protection, the politician-bureaucratic nexus, and their political victimisation.
- To address these issues and maintain integrity and discipline amongst civil servants, various reform committees such as the Santhanam Committee (1964), Hota Committee (2004), and the most recent Second Administrative Reform Committee Report (2005) have been formed.

Rules for Civil Servants

There are two sets of rules for civil servants – one for All India Services and the other for Central Civil Services.

- Specially designed Conduct Rules govern an officer's behaviour and conduct.
- The AIS Conduct Rules, 1968 and CCS Conduct Rules, 1964 are mostly similar. These were framed based on recommendations from a committee constituted by then **Minister of Home Affairs Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1962**. This Committee on Prevention of Corruption was headed by **K Santhanam**, Member of Rajya Sabha (who also happened to be a former editor of The Indian Express).
- Some rules are vague, some more specific.

The Conduct Rules

- Cover a wide range of issues, from the ambiguous idea of **personal integrity** to more specific actions.
 - For instance, Rule 3(1) states that “Every member of the Service shall at all times maintain absolute integrity and devotion to duty and shall do nothing which is unbecoming of a member of the Service.”
 - This rule is purposefully vague and can be applied to individuals in cases of any kind of wrongdoing, even if the allegations are not covered under any more specific rules.
 - For example, while promotion of casteism is not covered under any specific Conduct Rules, casteist behavior can be interpreted as “unbecoming of a member of the Service” under Rule 3(1).
- On the other hand, Rule 4(1) of the **AIS Conduct Rules** is more specific.
 - It states, “No member of the Service shall use his position or influence directly or indirectly to secure employment for any member of his family with any private undertaking or Non- Government Organisation.”
 - Members not allowed to be part of, assist political parties.
 - **No participation in politics:** Rule 5(1) states, “No member of the Service shall be a member of, or be otherwise associated with, any political party or any organization which takes part in politics, nor shall he take part in, or subscribe in aid of, or assist in any other manner, any political movement or political activity.”
 - 5(4) states, “No member of the Service shall canvas or otherwise interfere with, or use his influence in connection with, or take part in, an election to any legislature or local authority.”
 - While members can hold personal political beliefs, these rules restrict the degree to which they can act on them.
 - Similar restrictions also there on expressing personal opinion.
- **Expression of Opinions:** Rule 7 of AIS Rules states, “No member of the Service shall, in any radio broadcast or communication over any public media or in any document published anonymously, pseudonymously or in his own name or in the name of any other person or in any communication to the press or in any public utterance, make any statement of fact or opinion,— Which has the effect of an adverse criticism of any current or recent policy or action of the Central Government or a State Government; or which is capable of embarrassing the relations between the Central Government and any State Government; or which is capable of embarrassing the relations between the Central Government and the Government of any Foreign State.”
 - However, civil servants are allowed to express their opinion on official files and other official documents and can even talk to the media during field postings. What they can tell the media, though, is restricted to their job or some specific event/issue. Personal beliefs on wider issues are not to be aired.
- **Taking dowry is banned** but seemingly common.
 - But as far as rules are concerned, both giving and receiving dowry is strictly prohibited.
 - Rule 11 (1-A) of the AIS Rules on “Giving or taking of dowry” states, “No member of the Service shall— (i) give or take or abet the giving or taking of dowry; or (ii) demand, directly or indirectly, from the parents or guardian of a bride or bridegroom, as the case may be, any dowry.”
 - In fact, any “big” gift a civil servant receives needs to be reported.
 - Rule 11(1) states, “A member of the service may accept gifts from his near relatives or from his personal friends having no official dealings with them, on occasions such as wedding, anniversaries, funerals and religious functions when the making of gifts is in conformity with the prevailing religious and social practice, but he shall make a report to the Government if the value of such gift exceeds Rs.25,000.”
 - The threshold of Rs 25,000 was last fixed in 2015.

Rules amended and added from time to time.

While Conduct Rules penned in the 1960s are still being followed, these are never static, with updates made from time to time.

- For instance, with regard to Rule 5(1), the government, from time to time, determines whether a particular organisation is political or not.
- The following was added to the Conduct Rules: “Every member of the Service shall maintain:- high ethical standards, integrity and honesty; political neutrality; accountability and transparency; responsiveness to the public, particularly to the weaker section; courtesy and good behavior with the public” among other things.
- “Every member of the Service shall maintain integrity in public service; take decisions solely in public interest and use or cause to use public resources efficiently, effectively and economically; declare any private interests relating to his public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts in a way that protects the public interest; not place himself under any financial or other obligations to any individual or organisation which may influence him in the performance of his official duties; not misuse his position as civil servant and not take decisions in order to derive financial or material benefits for himself, his family or his friends; act with fairness and impartiality and not discriminate against anyone, particularly the poor and the under-privileged sections of society; perform and discharge his duties with the highest degree of professionalism and dedication to the best of his abilities”.
- Similarly, when allegations were made that only orally orders were being issued to subordinate officials, in 1979, the Janata Party government added that, “The direction of the official superior shall ordinarily be in writing. Where the issue of oral direction becomes unavoidable, the official superior shall confirm it in writing immediately thereafter.”
- “No member of the Service shall employ to work any child below the age of 14 years.”

The Cost of Not Following Rules

As soon as candidates are allotted a particular service and join training which is part of their probation period, they become members of that service and are thus covered by these rules. There are also certain rules which continue to apply post-retirement as well.

- Provisions for heavy penalties there, but difficult to police.
 - Transgressions can attract two kinds of penalties — major and minor.
 - Major penalties can include “dismissal” from the service as well.
- Besides these conduct rules, there is also the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA). However, action on corruption in India is based less on intelligence and more on complaints.
- While anonymous complaints are not entertained, complaints with name and details of complainants too hardly ever reach the proper forum.
- Fora, where such complaints can be made, include the Central Vigilance Commission, Lokpal and other investigation agencies.

Challenges For Civil Servants In Maintaining High Ethical Standards-

- **Balancing individual obligations and disorganization obligations:** Conflict between an individual’s privately held convictions and obligations as determined by her organization.
- **Dealing with conflict of opinions:** It is challenging when a public servant to resolve stark conflicts between what he/she is required (by her senior officials) to do and what he/she really thinks is right.
- **Dilemmas in information sharing:** Dealing with situations when a public servant has to decide whether to keep information secret that might be embarrassing to the government of the day or reveal it in the public interest.
- **Balancing service obligation and accountability towards the public:** It’s challenging when a public servant finds certain indications of deliberate inefficiency, protection of incompetence, extravagant and

unreasonable use of public funds, deployment of government equipment and machinery for personal use, subjective criteria used in recruitment or in the award of government grants or licenses.

- **Resolving conflict in conscience and prevailing political ideology:** It is challenging to decide to what extent should a public servant support the political ideology practised by the current government.
- **Balancing private life and public life:** When a person accepts public service employment, it's challenging to determine how much should he/she subordinate or abdicate his/her claims to private life, property, and values.

The Way Forward – To Improve the Role of Civil Services

- **Encouraging Public Engagement:** Encouraging civil servants to engage with the public and actively seek out public input in policy and program development, to ensure that government services are responsive to citizens' needs and expectations.
- **Fostering a Culture of Service:** Promoting a culture of service within the civil service, encouraging civil servants to view their role as serving the public, rather than just following orders.
- **Ensuring Diversity and Inclusiveness:** Encouraging diversity and inclusiveness within the civil service, and ensuring that all citizens, regardless of background or beliefs, are treated fairly and equitably.
- **Professional Development and Training:** Providing ongoing professional development and training programs to civil servants, including training in democratic values and practices, to ensure they are equipped to serve the public effectively.
- **Encouraging Political Neutrality:** Implementing measures to ensure that civil servants maintain political neutrality and impartiality, including strict codes of conduct and measures to prevent political interference in their work.
- **Strengthening Transparency and Accountability:** Implementing measures to increase transparency and accountability in government operations, including regular reporting and monitoring mechanisms, and providing citizens with access to information and opportunities to provide feedback.
- **Protecting Whistleblowers:** Providing protection for whistleblowers and ensuring that civil servants are able to report unethical or illegal behavior without fear of retaliation.

SOURCE: [Indian Express](#)

Using Buddhism as a tool of soft power

Context: India's cultural and historical ties with Buddhism can help strengthen its soft power diplomacy with neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, China etc and other Southeast Asian countries.

About soft power:

- Soft power is the **ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction rather than coercion or payment.**
- Soft power diplomacy refers to **the use of cultural, social, and economic means** to influence the attitudes and behaviours of other countries, rather than relying solely on military or economic coercion.
 - The concept of soft power was **coined by Joseph Nye in the 1990s.**
- soft power diplomacy include **cultural exchanges, educational programs, humanitarian aid, and public diplomacy campaigns.**

Buddhist diplomacy in India:

- For India, **Buddhism provided an identity of peace and tranquillity** after independence when there was intense violence and division between Hinduism and Islam.
- There has been **usage of Buddhist symbolism** as a means of escaping difficult times.
 - Due to such usage and evidence, India likes to claim Buddhism as its own.
- It convened the **Global Buddhist Summit** in April to promote Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama.
 - There were no Nepal and Bhutan representatives present.
- The **India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage** is coming up in **Lumbini, Nepal.**

- Prime Minister laid the foundation stone in May 2022.
- This could be seen as an attempt to counter the opening of the Gautam Buddha International Airport in Bhairahawa, Nepal.

- **India's overtures of Buddhism in Nepal began only after 'Buddha is Born in Nepal' became a populist slogan of sovereignty in Nepal.**

Importance of Buddhism for India's soft power diplomacy:

- The Indian government has been actively investing in its **Buddhist diplomacy efforts**, with a focus on promoting tourism through the development of the **"Buddhist tourist circuit"**.
- By hosting high-profile events, the Indian government hopes to demonstrate its commitment to preserving and promoting Buddhist culture and heritage, as well as **strengthening ties with the global Buddhist community**.
- With its strong historical and cultural ties to Buddhism, India is well-positioned to play a leading role in shaping the discourse around Buddhist issues on the global stage.
 - Against the backdrop of the **Russia-Ukraine crisis**, the PM said, **"India has not given 'Yuddha' to the world but 'Buddha'."**
 - This resonates with his earlier statement of his telling the Russian President that 'this is not the era of war'.
- The Delhi summit's theme, **"Responses to Contemporary Challenges: Philosophy to Praxis"**, also highlights India's attempts to provide an alternative to contested global politics, with morality as the guiding principle.
- Buddhist diplomacy has the **potential to promote regional cohesion**, given that **nearly 97% of the global Buddhist population is based in Asia**.
- However, despite being home to a number of key Buddhist sites, such as **Bodhgaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagar**, India has struggled to attract Buddhist tourists, who tend to favour sites in **Thailand and Cambodia**.



Buddhist diplomacy of China:

- China is home to around 245 million Buddhists, 28,000 Buddhist monasteries, 16,000 temples, and 2,40,000 Buddhist monks and nuns.
 - This makes Buddhism an **important soft power for China**.
- China has added religious overtones to **China's existing portfolio of cultural and linguistic diplomacy**.
 - The state religious system is supporting the growing political and economic power of China abroad.
- Beijing pursues a multifaceted and flexible approach to promote Chinese Buddhism abroad. Its approach varies depending on whether the **target country is Buddhist-majority, Western, or one of China's Asian competitors**.

Factors that make Buddhism bridge between ASEAN and South-East Asia:

- **India's historical link with Buddhism:** Buddhism originated in India and spread to South East Asia and other Asian countries.
 - Spirituality, art, culture and faith that found their way across other regions, earned India a considerable amount of soft power.
- **Mutual cultural experience:** The Buddhist aspect of soft power relies not on the export of a cultural product, but on promoting certain shared religious and cultural associations, thereby creating a mutually erected platform upon which further relations are based.
- **Large Buddhist population:** Today, **97 percent of the world's Buddhist population** lives in the Asian continent.

- It is within this context that one can understand the efforts of the Indian government at incorporating Buddhist heritage in order to form a basis for further **diplomatic, economic, cultural, and strategic associations** within its foreign policy and building bridges with ASEAN.
- **Buddhist sites:** India has numerous sites of importance to the Buddhist faith, such as **Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Nalanda which provides cultural bonds** with Buddhist communities in South-East Asia.
- **Protection to Tibetan Buddhist community:** India has nurtured an image of being a protector of the persecuted because of the presence of the **Dalai Lama and the Tibetan parliament-in-exile in the city of Dharamshala** following their failed insurrection against China.

Way Forward:

As Buddha was the first diplomat of peace, his teachings of peace and cooperation can become the guiding light of Indian diplomacy on the world stage. By promoting Buddhism, India can reinforce its image as a responsible global power committed to peaceful cooperation and regional stability while also strengthening ties with the global Buddhist community.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

MUST READ: [NEO BUDDHISM](#)



PRACTICE QUESTIONS



1. It derives its name from the 'Simul' (silk cotton) tree. It was formally designated a tiger reserve in 1956. It was declared a biosphere reserve by the Government of India in June 1994. It has been part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves since 2009. It is part of the Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve.

Which of the following Tiger Reserve (TR) described above?

- Satkosia TR
- Simlipal TR
- Sathyamangalam TR
- Kanha TR

2. Consider the following statements regarding the National SC-ST Hub Scheme:

- The National SC-ST Hub (NSSH) is under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- It has been set up to provide professional support to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Entrepreneurs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

3. Consider the following statements regarding the Coal India Limited (CIL):

- Coal India Limited is the world's largest coal producer and one of the largest corporate employer.
- CIL is a Navratna Company.
- CIL headquartered at Ranchi, Jharkhand.
- CIL has an overseas subsidiary, Coal India Africana Limitada (CIAL), in Mozambique.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 and 4 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 4 only

4. Which of the following statements is incorrect regarding the Shanghai Organisation Corporation (SCO)?

- SCO is a permanent intergovernmental international organization,
- India and Pakistan are members of SCO
- SCO has observer status in the United Nations General Assembly
- The SCO's official languages are Russian, English and Chinese.

5. Kali Tiger Reserve is located in

- West Bengal
- Kerala
- Karnataka
- Gujrat

6. Consider the following statements regarding the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO):

- CDSCO comes under the Department of Pharmaceuticals
- It is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India for Drugs.
- Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO is responsible for approval of Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1 2 and 3

7. He was a great social reformer and educationist who provided exemplary leadership to India's freedom movement. He became president of INC in 1905 in Banaras's session. With the aid of M.G. Ranade, He established the Servants of India Society in 1905 for the expansion of Indian education. Between 1899 and 1902, he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council.

Which of the following freedom fighters described in the above paragraph?

- Lala Lajpat Rai
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- Gopal Ganesh Agharkar

d. Gopal Krishna Gokhale

d. All of the above

8. Consider the following statements regarding the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC):

1. It is a statutory apex council.
2. It works under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
3. It aims to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 3 only
- d. 1 and 3 only

9. Consider the following statements regarding the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) India:

1. It exploits the physical properties of light and space to detect and understand the origins of gravitational waves.
2. It will be located in Karnataka, India.
3. It is envisaged as a collaborative project between a consortium of Indian research institutions and the LIGO Laboratory in the USA, along with its international partners.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1 2 and 3

10. The health effects of hydrogen sulphide range from mild, headaches or eye irritation, to very serious, unconsciousness and death. In this context, which of the following are sources of Hydrogen Sulphide?

1. Fertilizer Industry
2. Leather Industry
3. Textile Industries
4. Pharmaceuticals Industry

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a. 1 2 and 4 only
- b. 1 2 and 3 only
- c. 2 3 and 4 only

11. Consider the following statements regarding the Central Electricity Authority (CEA):

1. It is a non-statutory organization.
2. It advises the government on matters relating to the National Electricity Policy (NEP).
3. The CEA is headed by a chairperson who, is the Chief Executive of the authority.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1 2 and 3

12. Consider the following statements regarding the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA):

1. It is a statutory body of the Government of India.
2. It comes under the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
3. Its headquarters are located in Hyderabad.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1 2 and 3

13. Consider the following statements regarding the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC):

1. It is a statutory body.
2. It comes under the ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 and 2

14. The palak lake often mentioned in the news located in

- a. Manipur
- b. Mizoram
- c. Assam
- d. Jharkhand

15. In the context of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), consider the following statements:

1. India is not a member of IFAD.
2. IFAD was created in 1977.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

16. In the context of Aceclofenac, consider the following statements:

1. It is a pain killer.
2. Indigestion and diarrhoea are one of its side effects.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

17. In the context of Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) consider the following statements:

1. It works under the Ministry of Power.
2. Its headquarters are in Mumbai.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

18. With reference to International North-South Transport Corridor, consider the following statements:

1. The ambitious trade corridor seeks to link Russia's Baltic Sea coast to India's eastern ports.
2. The main purpose of the corridor was to reduce carriage costs and transit time between India and Russia.
3. For India, the INSTC opens the way for trading with Iran and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.

Which of the statements give above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only

- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 1,2 and 3

19. Barkudiamelanostica, recently seen in news is a

- (a) Bird
- (b) Reptile
- (c) Ant
- (d) Plant

20. The World Climate Programme is an initiative of

- (a) World Bank.
- (b) United Nations Development Program
- (c) United Nations Environment Program.
- (d) World Meteorological Organisation.

21. With reference to ordinance making power of president; Consider the following statements:

1. Ordinances have the same force and effect as an Act of Parliament.
2. The ordinance can only be promulgated on those subjects on which Parliament is empowered to legislate.
3. Every ordinance issued must be laid before both the Houses of Parliament within six months from the reassembly of Parliament.
4. The Ordinances may have retrospective effect and may modify or repeal any act of parliament or other ordinances.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1,2 and 4 only
- (c) 2,3 and 4 only
- (d) 1,2,3 and 4

22. With reference to World Health Assembly, Consider the following statements:

1. The World Health Assembly is the main decision-making body of WHO.
2. World Health Assembly has the authority to adopt conventions or agreements on any matter within WHO's competence.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

23. In which one of the following groups are all the four countries members of G7?

- (a) Canada, Italy, Germany and France.
- (b) Australia, Canada, India and New Zealand.
- (c) China, Japan, Malaysia and South Korea.
- (d) Russia, China, Japan and United States

24. Which of the following countries involved in the South China Sea Dispute?

- 1. China
- 2. Vietnam
- 3. Malaysia
- 4. Indonesia

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 and 4
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) 2, 3 and 4

25. With reference to UDAN Scheme, which of the following statements is correct?

- (a) To promote port-led development in the country through harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline
- (b) It is a highway development scheme to improve the movement of freight and passengers.
- (c) It is a regional connectivity scheme for upgrading the under-serviced air routes.
- (d) To facilitate Skill Development Training for upgradation of technical and entrepreneurial skills.

26. Consider the following statements:

- 1. The Governing Council of NITI Aayog is chaired by the Prime of India.
- 2. Chief Ministers of all the States and Union Territories with legislatures and Lt Governors of other Union Territories are members of the governing council.

Which of the statements give above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

27. With reference to X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat), consider the following statements:

- 1. X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) is the world's first polarimetry mission that is meant to study various dynamics of bright astronomical X-ray sources in extreme conditions.
- 2. The spacecraft will carry two scientific payloads in a low earth orbit.
- 3. The primary payload POLIX will measure degree and angle of polarization.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

28. Consider the following statements:

- 1. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), recently exempted foreign central banks, pension funds, sovereign wealth funds and endowment funds from 21 countries from the levy of Angel Tax.
- 2. The Finance Act, 2023 amended the Angel Tax provision of the Income Tax Act to bring the foreign investment under its ambit.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement- I and Statement- II are correct and Statement- II is the correct explanation for Statement – I.
- (b) Both Statement- I and Statement- II are correct and Statement- II is not the correct explanation for Statement – I.
- (c) Statement- I is correct but Statement- II is incorrect.
- (d) Statement- I is incorrect but Statement- II is correct.

29. With reference to Public interest Litigation (PIL), consider the following statements;

1. Any matter where the interest of public at large is affected can be redressed by filing a Public Interest Litigation in a court of law.
2. Any citizen can file a public case by filing a petition under Article 32 of the Indian Constitution in the High Court.
3. Justice Krishna Iyer laid the groundwork for the concept of Public Interest Litigation in India in the case of Mumbai Kamagar Sabha vs. Abdul Thai case, 1976.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two

- (c) All three
- (d) None

30. Consider the following statements regarding the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT):

1. It aims to create and foster a learning environment that enables participants to be leaders in international business with sensitivity towards society.
2. It works under the Ministry of Finance

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Key Answers

1	B	16	D
2	C	17	A
3	A	18	C
4	D	19	B
5	C	20	D
6	B	21	B
7	D	22	C
8	C	23	A
9	C	24	C
10	D	25	C
11	C	26	C
12	A	27	B
13	A	28	A
14	B	29	B
15	B	30	A



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