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PRELIMS



POLITY & GOVERNANCE



ELECTRONIC SUPREME COURT REPORTS (E-SCR) PROJECT

Context: Recently, CJI announced the launch of the **electronic Supreme Court Reports (e-SCR) project**.

About the electronic Supreme Court Reports (e-SCR) project:-

- It's an initiative that will **provide the digital version of the Supreme Court's judgments** in the manner as they are reported in the official law report - 'Supreme Court Reports'.
- **Objective:** to bring in a positive change for the benefit of all the stakeholders of justice, primarily litigants and members of the Bar as well as the High Courts, National Law University, Judicial Academies, etc.
- The e-SCR project will **showcase replica soft copies of SCRS** by utilizing the verifiable authentic soft copies as available in the PF format.
- The Supreme Court has developed a **search engine** with the help of the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**, which uses elastic search techniques in the database of e-SCR.
- With this **all judgments of the Supreme Court will be made available online within 24 hours**.
- These **judgments will be accessible on the Supreme Court's mobile app** and on the **National Judicial Data Grid's judgment portal**.

MUST READ: [Delegated Legislation](#)

SOURCE: [THE ECONOMIC TIMES](#)

NEW LAW AGAINST HIT-AND-RUN

Context: Recently, the truck driver's strike was called off after the government assured to keep the **new law against hit and run** on hold.

Background:-

- Truck drivers' associations have called off the three-day strike after the government assured to hold the new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) replacing the Indian Penal Code.

About the New law against hit-and-run:-

- The new law in **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) under Section 106(2)** replaces **IPC Section 304A (causing death by negligence)**.
- The **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)** was passed by Parliament in **December 2023**.
- Under it, if a driver causes a **serious road accident due to careless driving** and then leaves without informing the police or any official, they could be punished with **up to 10 years in jail and a fine of Rs 7 lakh**.
- The BNS has established **two distinct categories** under the umbrella of "**causing death by negligence**."
- **First category:** addresses causing death through any rash or negligent act that does not amount to culpable homicide.
 - Offenders may face **imprisonment for up to five years and a fine**.
- **Second category:** deals with causing death through rash and negligent driving, not amounting to culpable homicide.

- Offenders could be subjected to up to **10 years of imprisonment and a fine.**

- **Argument against it:** Transport operators argue that the law may unfairly penalize drivers and could expose them to mob violence, especially when attempting to transport the injured to hospitals.

MUST READ:[Road to Safety](#)

SOURCE:[BUSINESS STANDARD](#)

HATTEE COMMUNITY

Context: Recently, the Himachal Pradesh state government finally issued the notification to give Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the **Hattee community.**

Background:-

- The implementation of the decision was delayed in Himachal Pradesh as the state government had sought some clarification on some points of the August 4, 2023, notification of the Constitution (Schedule Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Act, 2023, in the gazette after consulting the law department.

About Hattee community:-

- The Hattis are a close-knit community that **got their name from their tradition of selling homegrown vegetables, crops, meat, wool, etc. at small markets called 'haat' in towns.**
- They follow a **Rigid Caste System.**
- The **Bhat and Khash are upper castes**, and the Badhois are below them, and they discouraged inter-caste marriages.
- The [Hattis](#) are **governed by a traditional council** called **Khumbli**, which like the Khaps of Haryana, decide community matters.
- The Khumbli's **power has remained unchallenged** despite the establishment of the Panchayati Raj System.
- **Hatti men traditionally do have a distinctive white headgear** on ceremonial occasions.

MUST READ:[Addition of Tribes in ST List](#)

SOURCE:[THE TIMES OF INDIA](#)

CYBER KIDNAPPING

Context: Recently, a Chinese student who was a victim of '**cyber kidnapping**' has been found in rural Utah, unharmed.

Background:-

- The 17-year-old, Kai Zhuang, was reported missing on December 28. By the time the police traced him, his parents back in China had paid \$80,000 in ransom.

About cyber kidnapping:-

- It refers to a **crime where the 'kidnappers' convince their victim to hide, and then contact their loved ones for ransom.**
- The **victim is also made to send pictures** that make it look like they are being held captive and showing them bound or gagged.

- The ‘kidnappers’, though not physically present, monitor the victim online through video-call platforms.
- Unlike traditional kidnaps **virtual kidnappers have not actually kidnapped the victim.**
- **Prevention:-**Limit Online Sharing, caller Vigilance, emergency Contacts, Law Enforcement Involvement.

MUST READ:[Cyberattacks](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

GRIEVANCE REDRESS AND MONITORING SYSTEM (CPGRAMS)

Context: Recently, the 17th Report on States/Union Territories performance on **Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)** for the month of December 2023 was released.

Background:-

- 58,016 PG cases were received by States/UTs in December 2023.

About CPGRAMS:-

- The CPGRAMS is an **online platform available to the citizens 24x7 to lodge their grievances** to the public authorities on any subject related to service delivery.
- It is an **online web-enabled system developed by the National Informatics Centre (Ministry of Electronics & IT [MeitY])**, in association with **Directorate of Public Grievances (DPG) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).**
- It was launched by the **Department DARPG under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.**
- It is **also accessible to the citizens through a standalone mobile application** downloadable through the Google Play store and a **mobile application integrated with UMANG.**
- It **also provides an appeal facility to the citizens** if they are not satisfied with the resolution by the Grievance Officer.
- The status of the Appeal can also be **tracked by the petitioner with the grievance registration number.**
- Issues which are not taken up for redress :RTI Matters, court-related / Subjudice matters, religious matters etc

MUST READ:[AI Powered Grievance Management Application](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION REGULATION ACT (FCRA)

Context: Recently, the Home Ministry cancelled the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)** registration of the Centre for Policy Research.

Background:-

- One of the reasons cited is that the institute published reports on “current affairs programmes”, which is a violation of the Act.

About the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA):-

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** is responsible for regulating FCRA in India.
- It was **enacted during the Emergency in 1976** amid apprehensions that foreign powers were

interfering in India's affairs.

- The law sought to **regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations**.
- The FCRA was **amended in 2010 and 2020** to give tighter control and scrutiny over the receipt and utilization of foreign funds by NGOs.

Definition of foreign contribution:-

- It defines the term 'foreign contribution' to include **currency, articles other than gifts for personal use and securities received** from foreign sources.
- While **foreign hospitality refers to** any offer from a foreign source to provide foreign travel, boarding, lodging, transportation or medical treatment cost.

FCRA Registration:-

- NGOs that want to receive foreign funds **must apply online**.
- FCRA registrations are **granted to individuals or associations that have definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programs**.
- Following the application by the **NGO, the MHA makes inquiries through the Intelligence Bureau** into the antecedents of the applicant and accordingly processes the application.

FCRA Exceptions and Prohibitions:-

- **Prohibited Categories:** Foreign donations are not permitted for candidates during elections, journalists, media broadcast companies, judges, government servants, members of the legislature, political parties or their office-bearers, and organizations of a political nature.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Applicants must not be fictitious, prosecuted for conversion activities, involved in creating communal tension or disharmony, or engaged in the propagation of sedition.

Significance:-

- The FCRA plays a crucial role in **regulating foreign donations in India**.
- It **ensures the utilization of foreign funds** for legitimate purposes.

MUST READ: [FCRA Changes: Ease of Monitoring vs Crippling Curbs](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

NATIONAL ESSENTIAL DIAGNOSTICS LIST

Context: Recently, ICMR started revising current **National Essential Diagnostics List** for the first time.

Background:-

- The list contains the minimum diagnostic tests that should be available at healthcare facilities; ICMR asked stakeholders to submit suggestions on addition, deletion of tests by the end of February.

About National Essential Diagnostics List (NEDL) :-

- It is a list that would **provide guidance to the government for deciding the kind of diagnostic tests** that different healthcare facilities in villages and remote areas require.
- The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** released the **first edition of the Essential Diagnostics List (EDL) in May 2018**. Even though **WHO's EDL acts as a reference point** for the development of NEDL, India's diagnostics list has been customised and prepared **as per the landscape of India's health**

care priorities.

- In India, diagnostics are regulated under the regulatory provisions of the **Medical Device Rules, 2017**.
- Diagnostics (medical devices and in vitro diagnostics) follow a regulatory framework based on the drug regulations under **the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945**.
- The ICMR released the **first NEDL in 2019** to make the availability of diagnostics an essential component of the health care system.
- NEDL has been developed for all levels of health care – **village level, primary, secondary and tertiary care**.

Significance:-

- This NEDL aims to **bridge the current regulatory system's gap** that does not cover all medical devices and in-vitro diagnostic devices (IVD).

MUST READ: [National Institute of Biologicals \(NIB\)](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

POST OFFICE ACT, 2023

Context: The **Post Office Act, 2023** was enacted recently.

Background:-

- On December 24, 2023, the President of India gave assent to the Post Office Bill, 2023 which will replace the colonial-era Indian Post Office Act, 1898, as and when a notification to this effect is issued by the central government.

About Post Office Act, 2023:-

- **Enacted: December 2023.**
- **Objectives:-**
 - To **modernize** and enhance the efficiency of the Postal Department and addresses the **evolving role of post offices**, transforming them into service-delivery institutions and expanding their functions to include banking facilities.
 - To **broaden the authority** of the Director General of Postal Services beyond mail services.

Salient Features:-

- The Bill **replaces the Indian Post Office Act, 1898**.
- The **government will not have exclusive privilege** over conveying letters.
- The **Director General of Postal Services** will be appointed to head India Post.
 - He will have **powers to make regulations** on various matters including tariffs for services and supply of postage stamps.
- India Post **will not incur any liability with regard to its services**, except any liability prescribed through Rules.

Key Issues:-

- The Bill **does not specify procedural safeguards** for interception of articles transmitted through India Post which violates freedom of speech and expression, and **right to privacy of individuals**.

- The grounds for interception include 'emergency', which may be beyond reasonable restrictions under the Constitution.
- The Bill exempts India Post from liability for lapses in postal services.
- The Bill does not specify any offences and penalties.

MUST READ:[Small savings schemes](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

SWACHH SURVEKSHAN AWARDS 2023

Context: Recently, the Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023 were released.

Background:-

- 24 National, 20 Zonal and 54 State level awards announced.

About Swachh Survekshan 2023:-

- **13 awardees** received felicitations under the categories of Clean Cities, Cleanest Cantonment, Safai Mitra Suraksha, Ganga Towns and Best Performing State were given away.
- Port City Surat bagged the top honours, alongside Indore, who had conquered the top spot alone for 6 consecutive years.
- In the category of cities with a population of less than 1 lakh, Sasvad, Patan and Lonavala secured the top three spots.
- Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh was adjudged the Cleanest Cantonment Board.
- Varanasi and Prayagraj won the top two awards among the Cleanest Ganga Towns.
- Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh won the top three awards for Best Performing State.
- Chandigarh walked away with the award for the Best Safai Mitra Surakshit Sheher.

About Swachh Survekshan:-

- Swachh Survekshan, conducted by MoHUA since 2016.
- It is the world's largest urban sanitation and cleanliness survey.
- It has been instrumental in fostering a spirit of healthy competition among towns and cities to improve their service delivery to citizens and towards creating cleaner cities.
- It is conducted under the ambit of the [Swachh Bharat Mission \(Urban\)](#).

MUST READ:[Swachh Bharat 2.0](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

PM GATISHAKTI

Context: Recently, PM GatiShakti spurred project planning and implementation of Ayodhya Bypass Project.

Background:-

- Ayodhya Bypass Project to facilitate economic, social and logistics connectivity across multiple districts

About PM GatiShakti:-

- **Launched :October 13, 2021.**
- It envisages a centralised portal to unite the infrastructural initiatives planned and initiated by as

many as 16 central ministries and departments.

- It will facilitate the last mile connectivity of infrastructure and **reduce logistics costs**.
- It will incorporate the infrastructure schemes of various Ministries and State Governments like [Bharatmala](#), [Sagarmala](#), [inland waterways](#), [dry/land ports](#), [UDAN](#) etc.
- **Significance:-** enhances Supply Chain Efficiency, coordinated Governance, improves Connectivity.

MUST READ: [National Logistics Policy](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

IDATE COMMISSION

Context: Recently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) emphasised the importance of executing the recommendations of the **Idate Commission** report.

Background:-

- NHRC organized an open house discussion on the Protection of Nomadic, Semi Nomadic and De-Notified Tribes in India and forward trajectory.

About IdateCommission:-

- **Established: 2014 and headed by: Bhiku Ramji Idate.**
- **Objective:** to compile a statewide catalogue of Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs).
- In May 2018, the National Commission for Denotified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, submitted its report and was **constituted** for a three-year temporary term.
- It had to submit its report identifying these communities state-wise, **assessing their development status, and recommending ways to uplift them.**

Important Recommendations:-

- The report has called **Denotified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes** poorest of the **poor, most marginalised and most downtrodden communities** who are subject to social stigma, atrocity and exclusion.
- The Commission has recommended a **Constitutional amendment** so that Scheduled NT/ DNT/ SNT can be added as a third category after Scheduled Castes and [Scheduled Tribes](#) in the Act.
- Assign individuals not identified in the SCs/STs/OBCs list to the OBC category.
- Create a **permanent commission** with legal standing for the DNTs, SNTs, and NTs.
- Form a **distinct department** to address the welfare of these communities in states with significant populations.

Major Committees/Commissions for NTs, SNTs, and DNTs Communities:-

- The Criminal Tribes Inquiry Committee, 1947.
- AnanthasayanamAyyangar Committee, 1949.
- Kaka Kalelkar Commission (also called first OBC Commission), 1953.
- The B P Mandal Commission, 1980.

MUST READ: [Giving Human Rights Commissions more teeth](#)

SOURCE: [NHRC](#)



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY (UNRWA)

Context: Recently, India has donated \$2.5 million to the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)** for humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

Background:-

- In a social media post, the Prime Minister asked the people to share their feedback directly with him using the hashtag #JanManSurvey.

About United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA):-

- **Establishment:1950 and** was originally headquartered in Beirut, Lebanon, but was moved to **Vienna, Austria**, in 1978.
- Following the 1948 War, UNRWA was established by **UNGA Resolution 302 (IV)** of 8 December 1949.
- In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the UNGA Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate, **most recently extending it until 30 June 2023.**
- The Agency's services encompass **education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance**, including in times of armed conflict.
- It provides services in its **five fields of operations: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including the East of Jerusalem.**
- The UNRWA for Palestine Refugees is **funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions** from UN Member States and also **receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations.**

MUST READ:[India, Israel and Palestine](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

THE BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON PROHIBITION OF ATTACK ON NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS AND FACILITIES

Context: India and Pakistan exchange a list of nuclear installations as per the **Bilateral Agreement on Prohibition of Attack on Nuclear Installations and Facilities** recently.

Background:-

- It was done simultaneously through diplomatic channels in New Delhi and Islamabad.

About Bilateral Agreement on Prohibition of Attack on Nuclear Installations and Facilities:-

- The agreement was signed on December 31, 1988, and **came into force on January 27, 1991.**
- The pact **mandates the two countries to inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities** to be covered under the agreement on January 1 of **every calendar year.**
- This is the **33rd consecutive exchange** of such lists between the two countries.
- The **agreement's definition of 'nuclear installation or facility'** is comprehensive, encompassing a broad range of facilities, including nuclear power and research reactors, fuel fabrication, uranium enrichment, isotope separation, reprocessing facilities, and establishments storing significant quantities of radioactive materials in various forms.

Significance:-

- It's a **pivotal diplomatic tool**, fostering transparency, confidence, and a secure environment in the realm of nuclear capabilities between India and Pakistan.
- It **reinforces stability and trust** between the two nations.

MUST READ: [The status of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION

Context: Recently, India started its four-year term as a member of the **United Nations Statistical Commission**.

Background:-

- The country had won the election to the global statistics body in April after a gap of nearly two decades.

About UN Statistical Commission:-

- **Established: 1946 and HQ: New York.**
- It is the **highest body of the global statistical system** bringing together the Chief Statisticians from member states from around the world.
- It is the **highest decision-making body for international statistical activities** and is responsible for **setting statistical standards**.
- The Statistical Commission **oversees the work of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)**.
- It is a **Functional Commission** of the **UN Economic and Social Council**.
- The **55th session** of is scheduled to be held in **New York from 27 February - 1 March 2024**.
- **Composition:-**the officers of the Commission, also referred to as the Bureau, are the Chairman, 3 Vice-chairmen and the Rapporteur.

Membership:-

- The Commission consists of **24 member countries** of the United Nations elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on the basis of an equitable geographical distribution according to the following pattern:
 - Five members from African States
 - Four members from Asia-Pacific States
 - Four members from the Eastern European States
 - Four members from Latin American and Caribbean States
 - Seven members from Western Europe and other States
- The **term of office of members is four years**.
- India was a member **last in 2004** and is returning after a gap of two decades.

MUST READ: [National Statistical Commission \(NSC\)](#)

SOURCE: [THE ECONOMIC TIMES](#)

MALDIVIAN

Context: Recently, the **Maldivian** delegation proposed the removal of Indian troops by March 15, 2024, at the first India-Maldives High-Level Core Group meeting.

Background:-

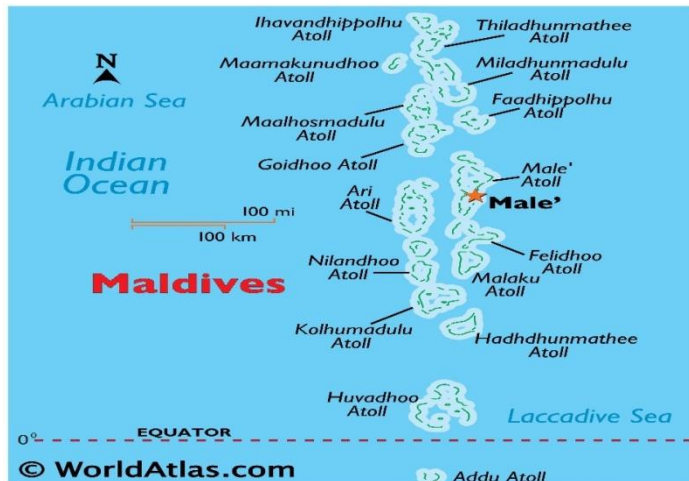
- The deadline was not found a mention in the official statements by the foreign offices of the two

countries.

About India-Maldives Bilateral Relation:-

IMAGE SOURCE: worldatlas.com

- India and Maldives **share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links** steeped in antiquity.



- The relations have been **close, cordial and multi-dimensional**.

- India was among the **first to recognize Maldives after its independence in 1965** and to establish diplomatic relations with the country.
- India has a **pre-eminent position in the Maldives**, with relations extending to virtually most areas.
- The importance of India's strategic role in Maldives is well-recognized, with India being seen as a net security provider.
- '**India First**' has been a stated **policy of the**

Government of Maldives (GoM).

Recent high-level exchanges:-

- Prime Minister Modi attended the **inauguration ceremony of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih** on 17 Nov 2018 as the only HoS/HoG.
- Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid paid an **Official Visit to India in Nov 2018**.

Trade:-

- India and Maldives signed a **trade agreement in 1981**, which provides for the export of essential commodities.
- Growing from **modest beginnings**, India-Maldives bilateral trade in 2020 stood at US\$ 213.91 million with trade balance **heavily in favour of India**.

Defence Cooperation:-

- India **provides the largest number of training opportunities for the Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF)**, meeting around 70% of their defence training requirements. ([India-Maldives Defence Relation](#))
- A **Comprehensive Action Plan for Defence** was also signed in April 2016.

Tourism:-

- India remained the **top market for Maldives tourism in 2022** dominating over 14% with 240,000 arrivals.

Operations in Maldives:-

- Operation Cactus 1988:** Indian Armed Forces have helped the government of Maldives in the neutralization of the coup attempt.

- **Operation Neer 2014:** Under India supplied drinking water to Maldives to deal with the drinking water crisis.
- **Operation Sanjeevani:** India supplied 6.2 tonnes of essential medicines to Maldives, under Operation Sanjeevani as assistance in the fight against COVID-19.

MUST READ:[India-Maldives relations](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR GLOBAL GOOD - GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY

Context: Recently, India established a "Global Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality" to promote women's empowerment and gender equality at the 54th annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos.

Background:-

- Union ministers Smriti Irani Hardeep Puri were present.

About Global Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality:-

- **Ministry: Ministry of Women and Child Development.**
- The idea of this alliance emerged from the **G20 Leaders' Declaration** and India's abiding commitment to the cause of women-led development as propounded by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
- The primary and stated objective of this **new Alliance is to bring together global best practices, knowledge sharing and investments** in the identified areas of women's health, education, and enterprise.
- The Alliance will be **taking forward the commitments of the G20 leaders for the benefit of the larger global community** as a follow-up to the activities of the Engagement Group and initiatives under the G20 framework, inter alia, the Business 20, Women 20 and G20 EMPOWER.
- The Alliance has **garnered support from industry leaders**, including Mastercard, Uber, Tata, TVS, Bayer, Godrej, Serum Institute of India, IMD Lausanne, and over 10,000 partners from the industry.

Significance:-

- This initiative marks a significant stride toward achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality and Empowerment), 17 (Global Partnership for Development) and more.

MUST READ:[FireAid initiative](#)

SOURCE:[TIMES OF INDIA](#)

INDIA AND FRANCE

Context: Recently, the President of **India** received the President of the **French Republic** at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Background:-

- Welcoming President Macron at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the President said that the leaders of two countries being guests of honour in each other's successive National Day parade and celebrations is a historic moment, and a symbol of the depth of our friendship and the strength of our partnership.

About India and France Relations:-

- [India and France](#) are long-standing **strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific**.
- The diplomatic relations were established in **1947** and upgraded to the **strategic level in 1998**.

Defence:-

- France is one **of India's key partners** in the development of a self-reliant defence industrial and technological base.
- India and France are committed to cooperating in the co-development and **co-production of advanced defence technologies, including for the benefit of third countries**.
- An agreement for building **six Scorpène submarines** in India with French help was signed in 2005.
- The government-to-government **agreement for 36 Rafale aircraft** has taken place.

Economic:-

- Bilateral trade of over **USD 12 billion in 2021-22**.
- France is the **11th largest foreign investor** in India.

Science and Technology:-

- For the first time, the two countries concluded a **Joint Vision for Space Cooperation in 2018**.
- As for nuclear energy, the two leaders must review progress in the joint construction of the **world's largest nuclear park in Jaitapur, Maharashtra**.
- An agreement was signed **About** a decade ago for building six EPR (European Pressurized Reactors) nuclear power reactors with a total capacity of 9.6 GW for which negotiations have been on-going between the Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) and Areva.

Environment:-

- The **International Solar Alliance** is set in motion jointly by India and France.
- France offered an extra \$861.5 million by 2022 for solar projects in developing countries.

Bilateral military exercises:-

- Exercise Shakti (Army)
- Exercise Varuna (Navy)
- Exercise Garuda (Air Force)
- IMEX 22

MUST READ:[Exercise 'Varuna' 2023](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)



Economy



SMALL FINANCE BANK (SFB)

Context: Recently, Small finance bank (SFB) campaigns were launched.

Background:-

- The campaign seeks to highlight the success of SFBs' business models to all stakeholders.

About Small finance bank (SFB):-

- They are the financial institutions, which **provide financial services to the unserved and unbanked region of the country.**
- They are **registered** as a public limited company **under the Companies Act, 2013 with minimum paid-up capital– 100 cr.**
- Capital adequacy ratio – **15% of risk-weighted assets.**
- **Foreign shareholding capped at 74% of paid capital.**
- **Foreign Portfolio investment (FPIs) cannot be more than 24%.**
- **Priority sector lending requirement of 75% of total adjusted net bank credit.**

Eligibility Criteria:-

- **Resident individuals/professionals, having at least 10 years of experience** in banking and finance can start Small Finance Banks with the approval of RBI.
- **Existing Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), and Local Area Banks (LABs)** in the private sector.
- Indian residents and have a successful record of accomplishment of running their businesses for at least a period of five years must control these.
- **Joint ventures** for setting up small finance banks are **not permitted.**

Functions:-

- Take **small deposits** and **disburse loans.**
- Distribute **mutual funds, insurance products** and other simple third-party financial products.
- **Lend 75%** of their total adjusted net bank credit to **priority sector.**
- **Maximum loan size would be 10% of capital funds** to single borrower, **15% to a group.**
- **Minimum 50%** of loans should be **up to 25 lakhs.**

MUST READ: [Inclusive Growth](#)

SOURCE: [BUSINESS LINE](#)

INCOME TAX RETURNS

Context: A Record 8.18 crore Income Tax Returns filed so far in current financial year according to **Central Board of Direct Taxes.**

Background:-

- Around 7.5 crore ITRs were filed last year during the same period.

About Income Tax Returns (ITR's):-

- The **Income Tax Act of 1961** mandates that the federal government collect this tax for the state.

- ITR's are **forms used to declare net tax liabilities**, claim tax deductions, and report gross taxable income.
- Individuals who make a specific amount of money are required to **file IT returns**.
- Income Tax Return Forms are **notified by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)**.

About Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT):-

- **Establishment: 1963 with Administered by: Department of Revenue.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Finance and Administered by: Department of Revenue.**
- It is a **statutory authority** functioning under the **Central Board of Revenue Act, of 1963**.
- The Central Board of Revenue is the **apex body of the Department of Revenue**.
- It is charged with the **administration of taxes**.
- It came into existence as a result of the Central Board of Revenue Act, of 1924.
- It is India's official **financial action task force unit**.

Historical Background of CBDT:-

- Initially the Board was in charge of **both direct and indirect taxes**.
- However, when the administration of taxes became too unwieldy for one Board to handle, **the Board was split up into two**, namely the **Central Board of Direct Taxes and Central Board of Excise and Customs** with effect from 1964.

Functions of CBDT:-

- Making Policies regarding the discharge of statutory functions of the Board and of the Union Govt. under the **various laws relating to direct taxes**.
- **General Policy relating to:-**
 - Organization of the set-up and structure of the Income-tax Department.
 - **Methods and procedures** of work of the Board.
 - **Measures for disposal of assessments**, collection of taxes, prevention, and detection of tax evasion and tax avoidance.
- **Recruitment, training**, and all other matters relating to service conditions and career prospects of the personnel of the Income-tax Department.
- **Laying down targets** and fixing priorities for disposal of assessments and collection of taxes and other related matters.
- **Write off of tax demands** exceeding Rs. 25 lakhs in each case.
- **Making Policy** regarding grant of rewards and appreciation certificates.
- Any other matter which the Chairman or any Member of the Board, with the approval of the Chairman, may refer for joint consideration of the Board.

MUST READ: [One Nation, One ITR Form](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA (SEBI)

Context: Recently, **SEBI** has ordered the attachment of bank accounts as well as shares and mutual fund holdings of Arun Panchariya to recover dues totalling over ₹26 crore.

Background:-

- In an attachment notice, the markets watchdog has ordered attachment of bank as well as demat accounts of Panchariya to recover the pending dues.

About SEBI:-

- **Establishment: 1992 and HQ: Mumbai, Maharashtra.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Finance.**
- **Historical Background:-**It was established as a **statutory body** under the provisions of the **Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.**

Structure of SEBI:-

- The **chairman is nominated** by the Union Government of India.
- **Two members, i.e** Officers from the Union Finance Ministry.
- **One member** from the Reserve Bank of India.
- **The remaining five members** are nominated by the Union Government of India, out of them at least three shall be whole-time members.

Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)

- A **Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)** has been constituted to protect the interest of entities that feel aggrieved by SEBI's decision.
- It is a **statutory body** established under the provisions of the **SEBI Act, 1992.**

Powers and Functions of SEBI:-

- [SEBI](#) can draft regulations, **conduct inquiries, pass rulings and impose penalties.**
- It functions to fulfil the **requirements of three categories** –
 - **Issuers:** By providing a marketplace in which the issuers can increase their finance.
 - **Investors:** By ensuring the safety and supply of precise and accurate information.
 - **Intermediaries:** By enabling a competitive professional market for intermediaries.
- By the **Securities Laws (Amendment) Act, 2014**, SEBI is now able to **regulate any money pooling scheme worth Rs. 100 cr. or more** and **attach assets** in cases of non-compliance.
- SEBI Chairman has the authority to order **“search and seizure operations”**.
- The board can also **seek information, such as telephone call data records**, from any persons or entities with respect to any securities transaction being investigated by it.
- It will perform the function of **registration and regulation** of the working of **venture capital funds and collective investment schemes including mutual funds.**
- It also works for **promoting and regulating self-regulatory organizations** and works to prohibit **fraudulent and unfair trade practices.**

MUST READ:[Sweat Equity Rules: SEBI](#)

SOURCE:[BUSINESS LINE](#)

EPFO (EMPLOYEES' PROVIDENT FUND ORGANISATION)

Context: Recently, **EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation)** extended deadline to upload wage details for higher pension options till May 31, 2024.

Background:-

- Earlier, the deadline for employers to upload wage details for those opting for higher pension on higher contribution was December 31, 2023.

About EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation):-

- **Establishment: 1952.**

- **Ministry: Ministry of Labour & Employment.**
- **HQ: New Delhi.**
- It is a **government organization** that manages the **provident fund (PF) and pension accounts** of member employees.
- **Provident fund (PF):** it is an investment fund contributed to by employees, employers, and (sometimes) the state, out of which a lump sum is provided to each employee on retirement.
- **Functions:** It implements the **EPF and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.**

Historical Background:-

- The EPF came into existence with the promulgation of the **EPF Ordinance in 1951.**
- It was later **replaced** by the **EPF Act, 1952** and managed by the **EPFO.**
- **Objectives:-**
 - To meet the evolving needs of **comprehensive social security** in a transparent, contactless, faceless and paperless manner.
 - To ensure **ease of living for members and pensioners and ease of doing business for employers** by leveraging the Government of India's technology platforms for reaching out to millions.

EPF Scheme of 1952

- It is a mandatory savings scheme under the **EPF and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.**
- It **covers every establishment in which 20 or more persons** are employed and also **other establishments** which may be **notified by the Central Government even if they employ less than 20 persons each.**
- The **employee has to pay a certain contribution towards** the provident fund (PF) and the **employer on a monthly basis pays the same amount.**
- **The employee and the employer contribute to the EPF India scheme on monthly basis in equal proportions of 12% of the basic salary and dearness allowance.**
- At the end of **retirement** or during the service (under some circumstances), **the employee gets the lump sum amount including the interest** on the PF contributed.
- EPF is a tax-saving instrument that offers relatively higher interest rates on investments.
- **Partial withdrawals:** allowed for education, marriage, illness and house construction.

MUST READ: [National Pension System \(NPS\)](#)

SOURCE: [BUSINESS LINE](#)

NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICE (NSO)

Context: Recently, the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** said that the Indian economy will grow by a robust 7.3 per cent in the Financial Year 2023-24 over.

Background:-

- The growth is above the provisional growth rate of 7.2 per cent during the last financial year.

About National Statistical Office (NSO):-

- **Establishment: 2019.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.**
- The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) was merged with the Central Statistical Office to form the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** in 2019.
 - National Sample Survey Organization was the **largest organization in India conducting**

periodic socio-economic surveys.

- **Central Statistics Organization of India:** was responsible for the **coordination of statistical activities** in India, and evolving and maintaining statistical standards.
- NSO was first envisaged by the **Rangarajan Commission** to implement and maintain statistical standards and coordinate statistical activities of Central and State agencies as laid down by the National Statistical Commission (NSC).

Functions:-

- It acts as the **nodal agency for the planned development of the statistical system** in the country.
- It prepares **national accounts** as well as **publishes annual estimates of national product**, government and private consumption expenditure, capital formation, savings, estimates of capital stock and consumption of fixed capital.
- It **Compiles and releases the [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\)](#).**
- It also releases the **[Index of Industrial Production \(IIP\)](#) every month.**
- It conducts the **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)**.
- It organizes and conducts periodic **all-India Economic Censuses** and follow-up enterprise surveys.

MUST READ:[Growth & fiscal consolidation](#)**SOURCE:**[AIR](#)**POLITICALLY EXPOSED PERSONS (PEPs)****Context:** Recently, The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has updated Know Your Customer (KYC) **norms for politically exposed persons (PEPs)**.**Background:-**

- This change was to comply with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). ([FATF & Pakistan](#))

About New norms for politically exposed persons (PEPs):-

- PEPs are individuals entrusted with **prominent public functions** by a foreign country, including the **heads of states/governments, senior politicians, senior government or judicial or military officers, senior executives of state-owned corporations and important political party officials.**
- Regulated entities (REs) have the **option of establishing a relationship with PEPs** (whether as customers or beneficial owners).
- REs have to **perform regular customer due diligence** and also **follow additional conditions prescribed by the RBI** to transact with PEPs.
- It includes establishing an **appropriate risk management system** to determine whether the customer or the beneficial owner is a PEP.
- REs have to take reasonable **measures to establish the source of funds/ wealth.**
- They also **need to get approval** from senior management to open an account for a PEP.
- **Significance:-** This change is expected to provide **more clarity to undertake Customer Due Diligence (CDD)**.

MUST READ:[Terrorism & its financing](#)**SOURCE:**[BUSINESS STANDARD](#)

CENTRAL CONSUMER PROTECTION AUTHORITY(CCPA)

Context: The **Central Consumer Protection Authority(CCPA)** has issued notices to 31 coaching institutes for misleading advertisements recently.

Background:-

- The CCPA has observed that some of the coaching institutes mislead consumers by deliberately concealing important information with respect to course opted by successful candidates, duration of the course and the fees paid by the candidates.
- The authority has also observed that some of the coaching Institutes also indulge in making claims like **100 per cent selection** and job guarantees without providing verifiable evidence.

About Central Consumer Protection Authority(CCPA):-

- **Establishment: 2020.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Consumer Affairs.**
- **HQ: Delhi.**
- The authority is being constituted under **Section 10(1) of The Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**
- The Act replaced [The Consumer Protection Act, 1986](#), and seeks to widen its scope in addressing consumer concerns.

Composition:-

- **Chief Commissioner** as head, and only two other commissioners as members one of whom will deal with matters relating to goods while the other will look into cases relating to services.
- **Investigation Wing** that will be headed by a **Director General**.
- **District Collectors** will have the power to investigate complaints of violations of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and false or misleading advertisements.

Functions:-

- To conduct investigations into **violations of consumer rights and institute complaints/prosecution.**
- Order **recall of unsafe goods** and services and **discontinuation of unfair trade practices.**
- Impose **penalties** on manufacturers/ endorsers/ publishers of **misleading advertisements.**

MUST READ: [CCPA: Advertisement Rules & Service Charge](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

ZERO EFFECT, ZERO DEFECT SCHEME (ZED)

Context: Recently, the **Zero Effect, Zero Defect scheme (ZED)** for MSMEs hit 1 lakh certification milestone.

Background:-

- At the time of filing this report, 1,02,642 [MSMEs](#) were certified, of which 1,01,962 were bronze-level certified, 339 units received silver certification and 341 had gold certification, as per data from the scheme's portal.
- The cumulative financial support extended to MSMEs under the scheme stood at Rs 134.57 crore.

About Zero Effect, Zero Defect scheme (ZED):-

- **Launched: October 2016.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises.**

- **Objective:** to achieve a twin goal of production of high quality products with clean technology.

Salient Features:-

- The ZED Scheme aims to **rate and handhold all MSMEs to deliver top-quality products using clean technology with sector-specific parameters** for each industry.
- **Zero defects** will provide with high-quality products for consumers and **zero effect** provides with minimal pollution of the environment.
- Currently, the scheme is **applicable for manufacturing MSMEs only**.

Benefits of ZED:-

- It will act as a catalyst to **accomplish the goals under Make in India**.
- Also **enhances the productivity** and efficiency of MSMEs and aid the **attracting investments**.
- Enhancing the **global and domestic competitiveness** of the manufacturing sector.

MUST READ: [MSME Sustainable \(ZED\) Certification Scheme](#)

SOURCE: [THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS](#)

ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE

Context: Recently, the **Enforcement Directorate** raided several premises linked to an arrested TMC leader and his associates in connection with its probe into the alleged ration distribution scam in West Bengal.

Background:-

- ED teams went to four premises in central Kolkata and the office of a chartered accountant in Salk Lake on the eastern fringes of the city to carry out search operations, officials of the central agency said.
- According to them, all these locations where searches were being conducted were linked to TMC leader and Bongaon Municipality's former chairman Shankar Adhya.

About Enforcement Directorate (ED):-

- It is a **multi-disciplinary organization founded in 1956** and HQ: New Delhi.
- It works under the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**.
- It is a law enforcement organization tasked with **enforcing economic laws and combating economic crime in India, such as money laundering and foreign exchange irregularities**.
- The functions of the Directorate include the enforcement of the following Acts:-
 - **The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**.
 - **The Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA):** A civil law under which ED conducts an investigation into suspected contraventions of foreign exchange laws and regulations.
 - **The Foreign Exchange Regulation Act 1973**
 - **Sponsoring Organizations under the 1974 Foreign Exchange Conservation and Smuggling Activity Prevention Act**
 - **The Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 (FEOA):** A law whereby the Directorate is mandated to **attach the properties of the fugitive economic offenders who have escaped from India** warranting arrest and providing for the confiscation of their properties to the Central Government.
- **Director of Enforcement:-**
 - **Appointed by the central government** on the recommendation of a committee chaired by the **Central Vigilance Commissioner** and **members comprising of Vigilance Commissioners,**

Home Secretary, Secretary DOPT and Revenue Secretary.

- **Tenure:** up to 5 years.

MUST READ:[CBI and ED](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

NAMMA YATRI

Context: Recently, **Namma Yatri** debuted in Delhi with 10,000 auto drivers.

Background:-

- This comes at a time when mobility has emerged as a significant contributor to transactions done through the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

About NammaYatri:-

- It was launched in **Kochi as “Yatri” in 2020.**
- It is **the first open network mobility application** built with the idea **to provide multi-modal service** to commuters **without the involvement of any middlemen.**
 - **Open mobility** is an open network where any mode of transport can contribute to providing services to commuters thereby removing the dependency on any third-party organizations.
- **Auto rickshaws are the first** of the many service providers to join this mobility network.
- Namma Yatri family of apps **currently operates in seven cities** in the ONDC network.
- It is **backed by Juspay**, and it **serves over 1.7 lakh drivers** and over 40 lakh customers.
- The app **claims drivers have earned ₹350 crore commission-free** till date.

MUST READ:[Urban Mobility Expansion](#)

SOURCE:[BUSINESS LINE](#)

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

Context: Recent **World Economic Forum (WEF)** survey expect global economy to weaken in 2024.

Background:-

- As the top leaders from across the world gather here for their annual congregation, a survey of chief economists forecasted a weakening of the global economy in 2024 and accelerated geo-economic fragmentation.

About the World Economic Forum (WEF):-

- **Establishment: 1971 and HQ: Geneva, Switzerland.**
- **Mission:** WEF is committed to improving the situation of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.
- It was established as a **not-for-profit foundation** and is **independent, impartial.**
- It **demonstrates entrepreneurship in the global public interest** while upholding the highest standards of governance.
- **It provides a global, impartial and not-for-profit platform** for meaningful connection between stakeholders to establish trust, and build initiatives for cooperation and progress.
- The Forum **engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society** to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- **Working:-**
 - The Forum holds **four major annual meetings:** **The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, The Annual Meeting of the New Champions, The Annual Meeting of the Global Future**

Councils

- **The Industry Strategy Meeting:** brings together Industry Strategy Officers to shape industry agendas and explore how industries can shift from managing change to pioneering change.
- In addition, **regional meetings and national strategy** days provide focused engagement on the issues dominating regional and local agendas.
- **Major reports published by WEF:**-Energy Transition Index, Global Competitiveness Report, Global IT Report, WEF along with INSEAD, and Cornell University publishes this report, Global Gender Gap Report, Global Risk Report, Global Travel and Tourism Report.

MUST READ:[IMF and World Economic Outlook](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

OIL PRICES

Context: Recently, **Oil Prices** dropped by 0.93% Amid Geopolitical Tensions in West Asia.

Background:-

- In intra-day trade, Brent crude was trading 0.93 per cent lower at 77 dollars and 56 cents per barrel, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was also trading three per cent lower at 71 dollars and 91 cents per barrel when reports last came in.

About Oil Prices and India:-

- India is the **third-largest oil consumer** and **imports more than 80% of its total crude oil** requirement.
- India imports roughly 70% of its crude from the OPEC members.
- On a decadal comparison, the imports have reduced drastically from 87% to 70% in 2021-22. However, OPEC still accounts for the majority of India's oil imports.
- OPEC is a **permanent, intergovernmental organization**, which aims to manage the supply of oil in an effort to set the price of oil in the world market.
- **Factors that affect Oil Prices:**-Supply and Consumption, Government regulation, Geo-Politics, Financial Markets.
- **Impacts of Oil Prices drop on India:**-Decreased Imported Inflation, Higher Economic Growth, Lower Fiscal Deficit, Lower External Vulnerability

MUST READ:[Oil Market meltdown](#)

SOURCE:[AIR](#)

KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION (KVIC)

Context: Recently, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) launched a new range of '**Sanatan Khadi Vastra**'.

Background:-

- KVIC Chairman Manoj Kumar launched Sanatan Vastra made from Khadi clothes at the flagship Khadi Bhawan in Connaught Place in Delhi.

About Sanatan Khadi Vastra:-

- **By: Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).**
- The design of clothing has been **prepared at the Khadi Centre of Excellence located at NIFT.**

- To celebrate the launch, **KVIC offered a special 20% discount** on 'Sanatan Vastra' and 10% to 60% on other Khadi and village industry products **from January 17 to 25, 2024.**

Significance:-

- 'Sanatan Vastra' embodies **a fusion of India's rich heritage and contemporary fashion trends** along with it contributes significantly to the **economic empowerment of these communities.**

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

- Ministry: Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.**
- It is a **statutory body** established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, of 1956.
- Objectives of KVIC:-To boost employment** in the country, promotion and **sale of Khadi articles**, cater to **the self-reliance doctrine** and empower **underprivileged and rural sections of society.**
- Function:** The KVIC is charged with the planning, promotion, organization and implementation of programmes for the development of Khadi and other village industries in the rural areas.

MUST READ:[Gramodyog Vikas Yojna](#)

SOURCE:[AIR](#)

PURPLE REVOLUTION

Context: Recently, CSIR's Republic Day Tableau highlights the **Purple Revolution** through Lavender Cultivation in Jammu & Kashmir.

Background:-

- Under the Viksit Bharat theme, Tableau highlights the Lab-to-Market success story of CSIR.

About Lavender Cultivation:-

- The **Ministry of Science and Technology** initiated the [Purple Revolution](#) or Lavender Revolution in **2016.**
- The **Aroma Mission of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research** led the Purple Revolution.

Objectives:-

- To promote the cultivation of aromatic crops for essential oils and enable Indian farmers and the aroma industry to become global leaders.
- To provide benefits to the farmers in achieving higher profits, utilization of waste lands and protection of their crops from wild and grazing animals.
- It aims to **promote lavender crops by incentivising farmers** to shift to the indigenous aromatic crop from other foreign alternatives.
- The nodal laboratory is the **CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CSIR-CIMAP), Lucknow.**
- Farmers who produced lavender for the first time were **provided free lavender seedlings as part of the goal.**

Significance:-

- It has **employed About 5,000 farmers and young entrepreneurs** in remote areas of J&K.
- It will **promote the cultivation of aromatic crops** for essential oils.
- This will help in the production of an additional 700 tonnes of **essential oil for perfumery, cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries.**

MUST READ: [Accelerating the Green Revolution](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

'K-SHAPED' RECOVERY

Context: Recently, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman challenged the narrative that India's economy has seen a '**K-shaped**' recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Background:-

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently said that a narrative is being built that the Indian economy is not in good shape.

About 'K-shaped' recovery:-

- It occurs **when, following a recession, different parts of the economy recover at different rates, times, or magnitudes.**
- This is in contrast to an even, uniform recovery across sectors, industries, or groups of people.
- Economic Recovery is the **business cycle stage following a recession that is characterized by a sustained period of improving business activity.**
- Economic recovery can take many forms, which is depicted using alphabetic notations.
 - For example, a **Z-shaped recovery, V-shaped recovery, U-shaped recovery, elongated U-shaped recovery, W-shaped recovery, L-shaped recovery and K-shaped recovery.**
- It **leads to changes in the structure of the economy or the broader society** as economic outcomes and relations are fundamentally changed before and after the recession.
- This type of recovery is called K-shaped because **the path of different parts of the economy when charted together may diverge, resembling the two arms of the Roman letter "K."**

MUST READ: [Expected Economic Recovery](#)

SOURCE: [INDIA TODAY](#)

MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP)

Context: Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** for Copra for the 2024 season.

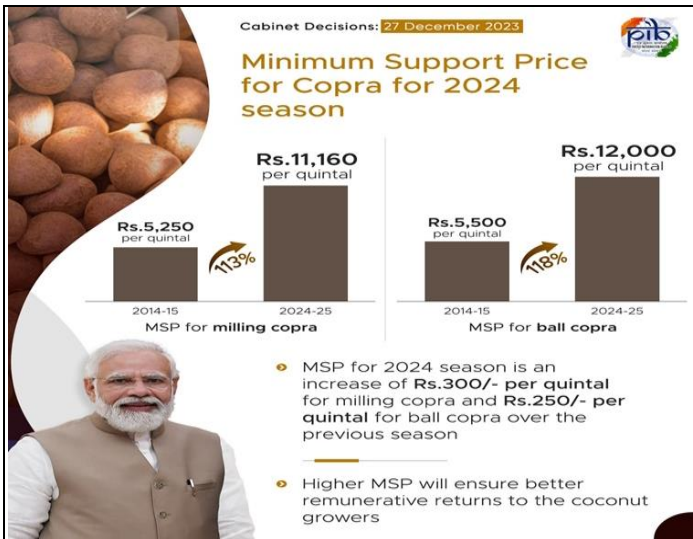
Background:-

- Briefing media in New Delhi yesterday, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur said, the MSP for the coming season is an increase of 300 rupees per quintal for milling copra and 250 rupees per quintal for ball copra over the previous season.

About Minimum Support Price (MSP):-

IMAGE SOURCE: [AIR](#)

- It is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices.
- **The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs** announces the MSP at the start of each sowing season, considering the recommendations of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).**
 - CACP is an **attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**
- **The Food Corporation of India (FCI)**, along with state government agencies (SGAs), procures food grains under MSP.



- The **CACP recommends MSPs** for 22 mandated crops and fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane.
- The mandated crops include **14 crops of the kharif season, 6 rabi crops and 2 other commercial crops.**
- The Centre currently **fixes MSPs for 23 farm commodities** based on the CACP’s recommendations

- **7 cereals** – paddy, wheat, maize, bajra, jowar, ragi and barley
- **5 pulses** – chana, arhar/tur, urad, moong and masur
- **7 oilseeds** – rapeseed-mustard, groundnut, soyabean, sunflower, sesamum, safflower and nigerseed

- **4 commercial crops** – cotton, sugarcane, copra and raw jute
- **Significance of MSP:** For Better price for their crops, Promotion to grow oilseeds, Crop Diversification, Differential Remuneration and protection to farmers, boost pulses and oilseeds production and reduce the country’s dependence on imports.
- **Issues -with India’s MSP Regime:-Middlemen-Dependent**, more of a Procurement Price, makes Agriculture Wheat and Paddy Dominated.

MUST READ: [Minimum Support Prices \(MSP\) for copra season 2023](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

FOREIGN EXCHANGE MANAGEMENT ACT (FEMA)

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) today released a draft 'Licensing Framework for Authorised Persons (APs)' under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999 recently..

Background:-

- According to RBI release, the focus of the draft norms is on rationalising the authorisation framework for money changers in view of the widespread availability of banking services to public, to look at alternate models for facilitating foreign exchange related services and improve the scope of services being offered by AD-Category II entities.
- It added that it will also review the regulatory framework for APs.

About Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA):-FEMA, is responsible for **managing and regulating foreign exchange.**

Historical Background:-

- It came in 1999 as a **successor to the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, or FERA, of 1973**, with changing economic conditions in post-liberalisation India.
- **Objective:** to facilitate external trade and payments and promote the orderly development and maintenance of the foreign exchange market in India.
- With effect from 1st June 2000, all transactions involving foreign exchange have been **classified either as capital or current account transactions.**
- **Current Account Transactions:** All transactions undertaken by a resident that do not alter his / her assets or liabilities, including contingent liabilities, outside India are current account transactions.
- **Capital Account Transactions:** These includes those transactions which are undertaken by a resident of India such that his/her assets or liabilities outside India are altered (either increased or

decreased).

- It offers provisions for the **gradual liberalization of capital account transactions** and is consistent with full current account convertibility.
- As it specifies the regions requiring certain authorization from the **Reserve Bank/Government of India** on the acquisition/holding of foreign exchange, it is more clear in its application.
- A person living in India who had previously resided outside the country is given complete freedom to own, possess, and transfer any foreign securities or real estate obtained while residing outside of India.
- **Citizens of India who live outside of India** are not covered by FEMA.
- This Act is **not only applicable to residents of India within India but also applicable to all branches, offices** and set-ups outside India which are owned or controlled by a person resident in India.

MUST READ: [Finding Unemployment Benefits](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)



GEOGRAPHY



GULF OF ADEN.

Context: Indian Navy has recently, enhanced maritime surveillance efforts in Central/ North Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Background:-

- The last few weeks have witnessed increased maritime security incidents on merchant vessels transiting through international shipping lanes in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Central/ North Arabian Sea.

About Gulf of Aden:-

IMAGE SOURCE: worldatlas.com



- **Location:**Western Arabian Sea.
- It is an extension of the Indian Ocean, tucked between the Arabian Peninsula and the African continent.
 - The Gulf connects the Red Sea to the Arabian Sea via the **Strait of Bab el Mandeb**.
 - The gulf is named after “Aden,” a port city on **Yemen’s** coast.
 - It is bounded to the south by **Somalia** and the **Socotra Islands**, north by **Yemen**, east by the **Arabian Sea**, and west by **Djibouti**.
 - The dominant relief feature of the gulf’s terrain is the **Sheba Ridge**, an extension of the Indian Ocean ridge system, which extends along the middle of the gulf.

Economic Activities:-

- **Fishing** is a significant economic activity for coastal and the ports facilitate **trade and commerce**.
- The surrounding areas, including Yemen and Somalia, possess **potential oil and gas reserves**.

MUST READ:[Horn of Africa](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

SOMALIA

Context: Recently, Indian Navy rescued 21 crew members from hijacked cargo ship off **Somalia** coast.

Background:-

- The Navy rushed its warship INS Chennai and deployed maritime operations after a distress signal from the cargo ship signalled the hijacking.

About Somalia:-

IMAGE SOURCE: [WORLD ATLAS](#)



- **Location: on the easternmost tip of Africa.**
- **Mogadishu** is the capital and largest city in Somalia.
 - It borders the three nations of, **Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti.**
 - It sits along the **Horn of Africa**, this region is known for being particularly hilly and mountainous.
 - To the **extreme north**, a narrow semidesert coastal plain that varies in width from around 12 km in the west to only 2 km in the east, borders the Gulf of Aden. It is **called Guban.**
 - Beyond this plain is the maritime mountain

range of the **Karkeer Mountains** (marked on the map) hosting the highest point in the country.

- It has **land borders with only two countries; Kenya** to the southwest and **Ethiopia** to the west.
- The **Gulf of Aden** forms Somalia's **northern borders** and the Somali Sea and Guardafui Channel bound it to the east.
- Somalia experiences a predominantly **arid to semi-arid climate** with hot temperatures and **limited rainfall.**

MUST READ: [Horn of Africa](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

TAPIOCA PLANTS

Context: Recently, the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute issued an advisory on using parts of **tapioca plants** to feed cattle.

Background:-

- The ICAR-Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) here has issued an advisory on feeding animals with parts of cassava (tapioca) in view of the incident in Idukki where 13 cows died in a farm recently.

About Tapioca plants:-

- **Family: Euphorbiaceae, Climate:** It thrives best in **tropical, warm humid climates.**
- **Rainfall:** over 100 cm per annum.
- **Altitude:** This crop can be cultivated up to an **elevation of 1000 m.**
- **Soil:** Any **well-drained** soil preferably **red lateritic loam** with a pH range of 5.5 -7.0 is best suited for tapioca cultivation.
- It is **cultivated throughout the tropical world** for its tuberous roots, from which cassava flour, bread, tapioca, laundry starch, and an alcoholic beverage are derived.
- Cassava, also known as Tapioca, production in India is estimated to be 4.98 million tonnes.
- **Tamil Nadu, followed by Kerala** accounts for a major amount of production.
- Its cultivation is also extending towards non-traditional areas like Maharashtra.

Uses:- Cassava has a **high starch content** and **ability to grow under low management conditions** due to which it has been globally recognized as a potential candidate for bioethanol production. ([National Bioenergy Programme](#))

MUST READ: [Invasive Species](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

KAVARATTI ISLANDS

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of development projects worth more than Rs 1150 crores in **Kavaratti Islands**, Lakshadweep.

Background:-

- The development projects of today cover a wide range of sectors including technology, energy, water resources, healthcare and education.

About Kavaratti Islands:-



IMAGE SOURCE: kscl.utl.gov.in

- Kavaratti, the **capital of Lakshadweep**, the smallest Union Territory in India, stands as its most developed island.
- It is located in the **centre of the Lakshadweep archipelago**.
- It is located **between Agatti Island** on the west **and Andrott Island** on the east.
- **Area: 4.22 sq km.**
- The island encompasses **12 atolls, five submerged banks, and three coral reefs.**
 - An atoll is a **ring of land surrounding a pool of water** called a lagoon.

- Kavaratti surprises with a **small inland lake** at its northern tip.
- Kavaratti town is **renowned for the intricately carved wooden pillars and roofs of its mosques, along with the carved stones adorning its graveyards.**
- With a significant percentage of **non-islanders as residents**, the spoken languages are **Malayalam and Mahl.**
- Moreover, Kavaratti has been **chosen as one of the hundred Indian cities** earmarked for development as a **smart city** under the flagship Smart Cities Mission.

MUST READ: [Solomon Islands](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

KORAPUT KALA JEERA RICE

Context: Recently, **Koraput Kala Jeera Rice** got GI Tag.

About Koraput Kala Jeera Rice:-

- **From: Koraput district in Odisha.**
- The rice is grown in **Koraput district's Tolla, Patraput, Pujariput, Baliguda, and Mohuli areas.**
- It is called the '**Prince of Rice**'.
- It is an **aromatic variety of rice.** (Basmati Rice)
- It is popular for its **black colour, good aroma, taste, and texture.** ([Basmati Rice](#))
- The **black-coloured rice variety**, is famous for its aroma, taste, texture and nutritional value.
- Tribal farmers of the Koraput region have **preserved the rice variety for around 1,000 years.**
- As the rice grains resemble cumin seeds, it is also called **Kala Jeera.**

- Consumption of the rice variety helps in **increasing haemoglobin levels and improves metabolism in the body.**
- This fragrant grain has **antispasmodic, stomachic, carminative, antibacterial, astringent, and sedative.**

MUST READ:[GI tag for Narasinghapettainagaswaram](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

SIMILIPAL KAI CHUTNEY

Context: Recently, **Similipal Kai chutney** got the GI Tag.

About Similipal Kai chutney:-

- The chutney **made with red weaver ants** is a traditional delicacy of the tribals in **Odisha's Mayurbhanj district.**
- The ants are found in **the forests of Mayurbhanj**, including in the [Similipal forests](#) – Asia's second-largest biosphere. It is rich in **medicinal and nutritional value.**
- The chutney is believed to be a **good source of nutrients like protein, calcium, zinc, vitamin B-12, iron, magnesium, potassium, etc.**
- The tribals prepare the **Kai chutney by grinding the ants manually** on a Sil Batta or the grinding stone. Mayurbhanj's tribals also **earn their livelihood** by selling the red ants and the chutney made from the ants.
- They believe that its consumption helps **boost immunity and prevents diseases.**

MUST READ:[Similipal National Park](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

LANJIA SAURA PAINTING

Context: Recently, **Lanjia Saura Painting** got a GI tag.

About Lanjia Saura Painting:-

- The painting, **one of the oldest tribal art forms**, is also known as **Idital.**
- The artworks are famous for their **beauty, aesthetics, ritualistic association and iconography.**
- The art form belongs to the **Lanjia Saura community**, a PVTG largely residing in the **Rayagadadistrict. (Saharia tribe)**
- These paintings are in the form of exterior murals painted on the **mud walls of homes.**
- White paintings figure over a **crimson-maroon background.**
- It is believed that the LanjiaSauras paint their walls with Idital artworks to show gratitude to their deities and forefathers, and also for the **well-being of their community.**
- Reflecting the love and affection of the **primitive tribes for nature**, they feature subjects like **tribal humans, trees, animals, birds, the Sun and the Moon.**

MUST READ:[Weathering of oldest rock paintings due to climate change](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

KUNO NATIONAL PARK

Context: Recently, Namibian cheetah Jwala has given birth to four cubs at the **Kuno National Park** in Madhya Pradesh, and not three as earlier announced.

Background:-

- Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on January 24 ,2024 said this.

About Kuno National Park:-

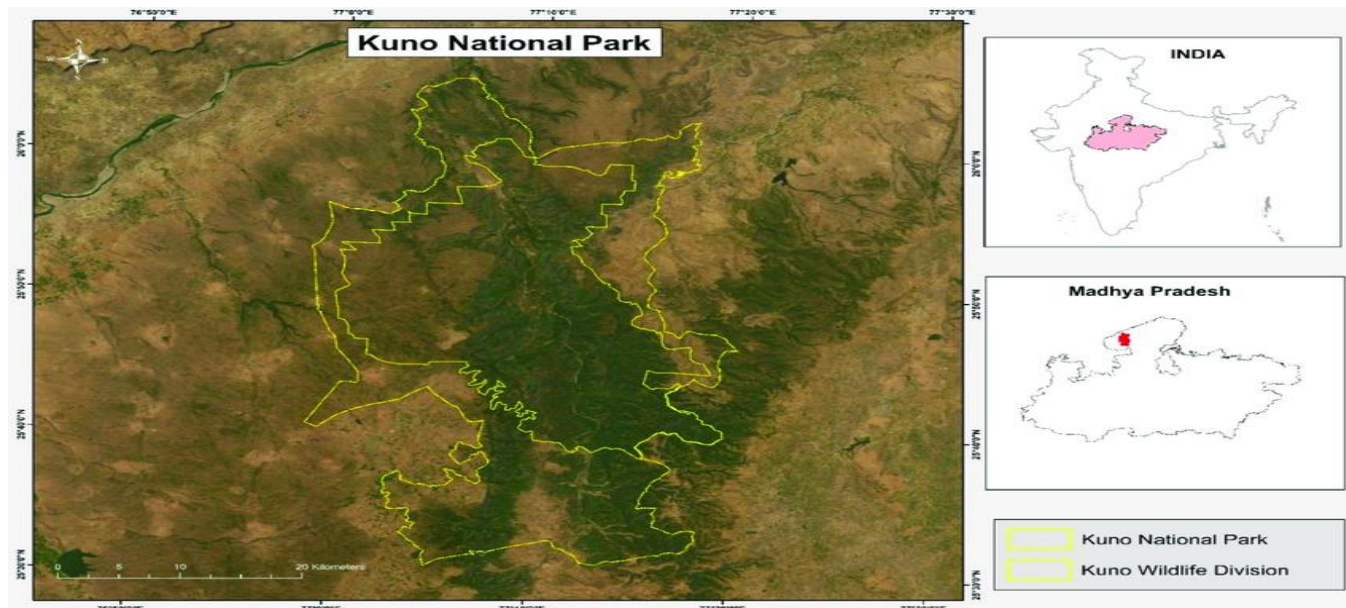


IMAGE SOURCE: [researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net)

- **Location: Madhya Pradesh, India,**It was established in **1981** as a **wildlife sanctuary**.
- It is part of the **Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion**.
- It is named after the Kuno River (One of the main tributaries of the Chambal River) that cuts across it.
- Initially **established as a wildlife sanctuary, it was only in 2018** that the government changed its status into a national park.
- Kuno National Park was selected under ‘**Action Plan for Introduction of [Cheetah](#) in India**’.
- **Flora:**dry savanna forest and grassland and tropical riverine forest.
- **Fauna:**Indian leopard, jungle cat, sloth bear, dhole, Indian wolf, golden jackal, striped hyena and Bengal fox.

MUST READ:[Manas National Park](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

NAYAGARHKANTEIMUNDI BRINJAL

Context: Recently,[NayagarhKanteimundi Brinjal](#) got GI Tag.

About NayagarhKanteimundiBrinjal:-

- Known for prickly thorns on stems and plant.
 - Green, round fruits contain more seeds than other genotypes.
 - Known for unique taste and quick cooking time.
 - Plants resistant to major insects and can be grown with minimal pesticide.
 - Widely cultivated in Nayagarh district.
 - Yield up to 200 quintals per hectare, selling at Rs 60 per kg.
 - Locals collected brinjal seeds from hilly areas nearly 100 years ago.

MUST READ:[GI Tag for Mithila Makhana](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

DHENKANAL MAGJI

Context: Recently, **Dhenkanal Magji** got the GI Tag.

About Dhenkanal Magji:-

- **Location: Odisha.**
- Dhenkanal Magji is a **type of sweet made from cheese from buffalo milk**, with distinct characteristics in terms of appearance, taste, flavour, shape, and size.
- It also **has unique nutritional values** that distinguish it from other cheese-based sweets.
- Thousands of people were said to be **earning their livelihood through animal husbandry, especially buffalo rearing, during the British era.**
- The region was the **hinterland of buffalo milk production and cheese** was the third largest produce, after milk and curd.
- The **Mandar-Sadangi area of Gondia block** is believed to be **the centre of origin of the sweet stuff**, which has now been spread to the entire district.
- The sweet is **prepared by draining moisture from the cheese and then frying it**, finally forming balls from the mixture.

MUST READ:[GI Tag for Mithila Makhana](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

KATARNIAGHAT WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Context: Recently a watchman was trampled to death by elephants near Uttar Pradesh's **Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary.**

Background:-

- A few people found the victim's mutilated body in the bushes of the forest, the officials said.

About Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS):-

- **Location: Uttar Pradesh, It was established in 1975.**
- It was brought under the purview of the 'Project Tiger' in 1987.
- Its fragile **Terai ecosystem** comprises a mosaic of **sal and teak forests, lush grasslands, numerous swamps, and wetlands.**
- [Katarniaghat](#) Forest provides strategic connectivity between the tiger habitats of Dudhwa and Kishanpur in India and the Bardia National Park (Nepal).
- The Gairwa river flows in the sanctuary area are **declared as a sanctuary for Mugger and [Gharials.](#)**
- It is among the few places in India where **Gangetic dolphins (freshwater dolphins) are found in their natural habitat.**
- **Fauna:** Endangered species including, tiger, rhino, swamp deer, hispid hare, Bengal florican, the white-backed and long-billed vultures.
- **Flora:** Its fragile Terai ecosystem comprises a mosaic of sal and teak forests, lush grasslands, numerous swamps and wetlands.

MUST READ:[Wildlife Institute of India \(WII\)](#) **SOURCE:** [HINDUSTAN TIMES](#)



Environment and Ecology



EURASIAN OTTER

Context: Recently, **Eurasian Otter** was spotted in Kerala.

Background:-

- A team of researchers from Kerala has claimed to have spotted the presence of Eurasian Otter in the state for the first time.

About Eurasian Otter:-

- **Scientific Name:** Lutralutra,
- **Distribution:** It is found throughout **Europe, North Africa, and Asia.** ([Blackbuck](#))
- In India, it inhabits **northern, northeastern, and southern regions.**
- It thrives in **diverse environments**, including streams, rivers, lakes, freshwater and peat swamp forests, ocean shores, rice fields, fjords, caves, and terrestrial areas near waterways.
- In the **Indian subcontinent**, specifically found in **cold hills and mountain streams.**
- It is a **semi-aquatic mammal**, it is commonly **native to Eurasia.**
- It has a **diet** mainly of **fish and is strongly territorial.**

Conservation Status:-

- **IUCN Status:** Near Threatened.
- **CITES :** Appendix I.
- **WPA:** Schedule II.

MUST READ: [Animal Welfare Board of India \(AWBI\)](#)

SOURCE: [TIMES OF INDIA](#)

LAOKHOWA-BURACHAPORI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Context: Recently, rhinos returned to Assam's **Laokhowa-Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary** after 40 yrs.

Background:-

- Until 1983, this protected region, which is a part of "greater" Kaziranga National Park, had 45-50 rhinos but they were wiped out by the poachers. However, since November last year, they have been sighted again.
- The Laokhowa and Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuaries are two centrally located Protected Areas (PAs) of Assam.
- In fact, though these two wildlife sanctuaries have two different names, they are **ecologically and geographically a singular entity.**

About Laokhowa-Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary:-

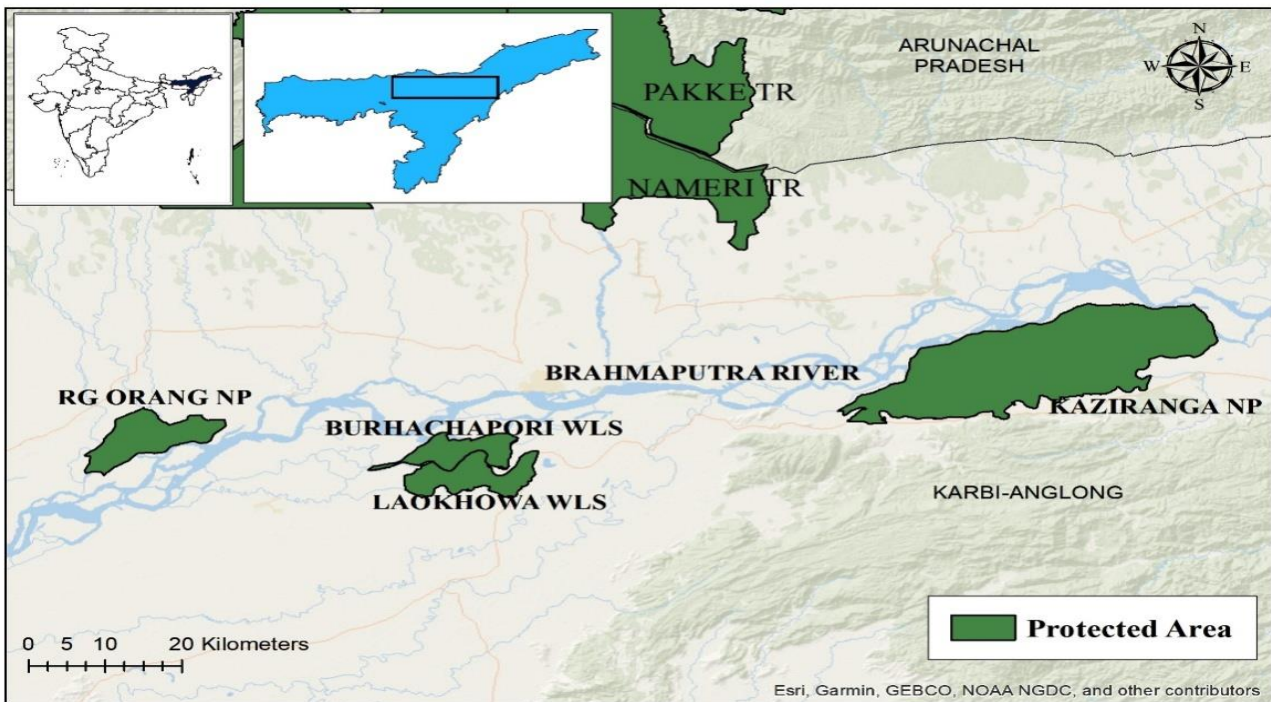


IMAGE SOURCE: pachydermjournals.org

- **Location:** Nagaon district of Assam, India.
- It lies on the southern bank of the **Brahmaputra River**.
- **Area:** approximately 70 square kilometers.
- **Flora:** Flora: freshwater mangrove trees, simul, korai, ajar, hijal, etc. are found in the area.
 - There are many species of trees and medicinal plants in the sanctuary.
- **Fauna:** Indian one-horned rhinoceros, Bengal tiger, wild buffalo, elephants etc.
 - The highly endangered Gangetic River Dolphins are still seen in the waters of the Brahmaputra River adjacent to these Pas.

Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary:-

- Located in Nagaon district of Assam, adjacent to Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Covers 44 square kilometers and officially became a wildlife sanctuary in 1995.
- Crucial part of the Laokhowa-Burachapori eco-system.
- Serves as a buffer for Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.
- Contains a diverse ecosystem of grasslands, wetlands, and riverine habitats.
- Species include freshwater mangrove trees, simul, korai, ajar, hijal, and medicinal plants.
- Home to elephants, wild buffalo, deer, and various primates.

MUST READ: [Wildlife Protection](#)

SOURCE: [THE TIMES OF INDIA](#)

BILIGIRI RANGASWAMY TEMPLE (BRT) TIGER RESERVE.

Context: Recently, the Karnataka Forest Department started collecting green tax, from vehicles entering BR Hills through **Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve**.

Background:-

- The Karnataka Forest Department recently started collecting green tax, Rs 10 from two-wheelers and Rs 20 from four-wheelers, entering BR Hills through BRT Tiger Reserve.

About Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve:-



IMAGE SOURCE: [researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net)

- **Location: Karnataka.**
- **Area: 574.82 Km².**
- 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 also believed that the **hill range gets its name by white mist and silver clouds** that cover these lofty hills for a greater part of the year.
- In Kannada, **Biligiri means white hills** – hence the name.
- It is situated in the middle of the bridge **between the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats in South India. (Amrabad Tiger Reserve)**
- This unique sanctuary exhibits **scrub, dry deciduous, moist deciduous, evergreen, semi evergreen and shola forests.**
- It was constituted as a **Wildlife Sanctuary in 1974.**
- BRT Wildlife Sanctuary was declared as a **Tiger Reserve in 2011.**
- **Flora:**Anogeissus latifolia, Dalbergia paniculata, Grewia teliaefolia, Terminalia alata, Terminalia bellirica, Terminalia paniculata, among others.
 - It is widely known for its many **endemic species of plants** including valuable medicinal ones.
- **Fauna:**tigers, elephants, leopards, wild dogs, bison, sambars, spotted deer, barking deer, four-horned antelope, sloth bears, wild boars,etc.

MUST READ:[Global Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards \(CA | TS\)](#)

SOURCE:[THE TIMES OF INDIA](#)

CONJOINED SILVERLINE

Context: Recently, a new butterfly species, **conjoined silverline** was discovered in Karnataka.

Background:-

The species was first sighted in 2008, followed by an extensive research in 2021.

About Conjoined silverline:-

- **Scientific Name: Cigaritisconjuncta,**It is **endemic to mid-elevation evergreen forests of the Western Ghats, Conjoined Silverline, distinguished by its shiny wing patterns.**
- It has been **identified in Karnataka's Kodagu district,**the first such find in India's Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot since the 1970s.**(Atapaka Bird Sanctuary)**
- Specifically, the **name refers to the fused spots and bands observed** on the undersides of the wings, which are intersected by eye-catching silvery lines running through the middle of these bands.
- The new butterfly is the **size of a one-rupee coin** but is invaluable to conservationists.

MUST READ:[White Tufted Royal Butterfly](#)**SOURCE:** [DOWN TO EARTH](#)

AFRICA CHEETAH

Context: Recently, experts have appealed to IUCN to upgrade Horn of **Africa cheetah** status to 'endangered'.

Background:-

- A group of experts have appealed to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to reclassify the status of the Northeast African Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii*), found in the Horn of Africa, to 'endangered' from 'vulnerable'.

About Africa cheetah:-

- **Scientific Name:** *Acinonyx jubatus jubatus*
- **Habitat:** African Savannahs.
- They have a **long, slender body** measuring 1.2 meters (4 feet), with a long tail (65–85 cm) to balance, that generally ends in a white tuft.
- Their **weight ranges from 34 to 54 kg** (75 to 119 pounds), **males being slightly larger than females**. They are **bigger in size** as compared to Asiatic Cheetah.
- They have **small black round spots all over their body**, black markings running from the inside of the eye to the corner of the mouth. Its very name **originates from Sanskrit** and means 'the spotted one'. They prey on **small antelopes, mammals, birds**. They are the **fastest of all land animals**.

([Cheetah Reintroduction](#))

Conservation status:-

- **IUCN status:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix I

MUST READ: [Cheetahs and others: know the 7 big cats](#)

SOURCE: [DOWN TO EARTH](#)

SENNA SPECTABILIS

Context: Recently, the Forest Department of Tamil Nadu has cleared 356.50 hectares of invasive growth of **Senna spectabilis**.

Background:-

- It was that posing a threat to biodiversity conservation in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR).

About Senna spectabilis:-

- It is commonly known as **Cassia excelsa, Cassia fastigiata, or Cassia multijuga**.
- It is also referred to as "**cassia**" or "**golden wonder tree**." It is native to **tropical areas of America**.
- **Habitat:** Dryland forest in northeast Brazil, most commonly in open formations, favouring deep, well-drained, fertile soils. It is a **deciduous tree**. It grows up to **15 to 20 metres in a short period of time** and distributes thousands of seeds after flowering.
- During the flowering season, the tree produces vibrant clusters of yellow flowers, making it visually appealing.
- It was introduced **as shade trees for coffee and firewood in the country** and soon became a **threat to native tree species** as its dense foliage prevented the growth of other indigenous trees and grass species. ([Invasive species](#))

Conservation status:-

- IUCN: Least Concern.

MUST READ: [Expansion of the Invasive Plants](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

OPIUM

Context: Recent reports show an uncertain future for the production of opium plants.

Background:-

- Three districts in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan together contribute to 80% of India’s opium production.



About Opium:-

IMAGE SOURCE: pinterest.co.uk

- Opium is a **natural substance obtained from poppy seeds** and its derivatives are mainly used for pain management.
- Poppy, any of several flowering plants of the **poppy family (Papaveraceae)**, especially species of the genus Papaver.
- Most poppies are found in the **Northern Hemisphere**, and several species of poppies are **cultivated as garden ornamentals**.
- Opium, from which **morphine, heroin, codeine**,

and papaverine are derived, comes from the **milky latex** in the unripe seed capsule of the opium poppy (**Papaver somniferum**), which is native to Turkey.

Uses:-

- The **extracts from opium poppy** such as **morphine** are **potent painkillers** and are mainly prescribed to cancer patients.
- The opium product codeine is helpful in **cough suppression**.
- It is used illicitly for smoking, drinking, or **even eating as pills**.

Opium cultivation in India:-

- **Poppy cultivation** in India dates back to the **15th century**.
- British East India Company **monopolized poppy** cultivation during the decline of the Mughal Empire.
- Post-independence, opium cultivation and trade were **controlled by the Indian government**.
- Current regulations include The **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act** and Rules.
- Traditional opium-growing states include **Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh**.
- India currently only extracts alkaloids from opium gum at facilities controlled by the Revenue Department.

MUST READ: [Drug Addiction](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

NATIONAL GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION

Context: The Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) have recently published guidelines and

incentives to promote the procurement of green hydrogen as part of the **National Green Hydrogen Mission**.

Background:-

- Under the mission, Rs 17,490 crore has been set aside for the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) programme, to bolster domestic electrolyser manufacturing and green hydrogen production.

About National Green Hydrogen Mission:-

- **Launched: 2021.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.**

Objectives:-

- To make India a global hub for the production and **export of [green hydrogen](#)**.
- To harness green hydrogen energy to fulfill India's **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**.

Salient Features:-

- Part of **National Hydrogen Mission (NHM)**, announced by finance minister in Union Budget 2021-22.
- Launched by **Prime Minister on India's 75th Independence Day**.
- Facilitates demand creation, production, utilization, and export of Green Hydrogen.
- Supports pilot projects in **emerging end-use sectors**.
- Develops enabling policy framework for **Green Hydrogen ecosystem**.
- Facilitates public-private partnership for R&D.
- Aims to develop globally competitive technologies through goal-oriented, time-bound R&D projects.

About Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) Programme:-

- It is a **subcomponent** of National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- **Objective:** To bolster domestic electrolyser manufacturing and green hydrogen production.
- **Implementing agency: The Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI).**
- In the initial stage, **two distinct financial incentive mechanisms** were proposed with an outlay of ₹ 17,490 crore up to 2029-30:
 - Incentive for manufacturing of electrolysers
 - Incentive for production of [green hydrogen](#).

MUST READ:[India's Renewable Energy](#)

SOURCE:[DOWN TO EARTH](#)

GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

Context: The Supreme Court recently directed the Centre to come clean on its plans to save the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard.

About Great Indian Bustard:-

- **Scientific Name: Ardeotis nigriceps.**
- **Habitat: dry grasslands and scrublands.**
- It is one of the most critically threatened species in India, with less than 150 birds left in the wild.
- They are one of the **heaviest flying birds in India. ([Great Indian Bustard](#))**
- Experts say only two districts in Rajasthan: Jaisalmer and Barmer.
- The bird can also be found in very small numbers in **Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka,**

Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

Conservation Status:-

- IUCN Red List: **Critically Endangered.**
- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: **Schedule 1.**
- CITES: **Appendix 1.**

MUST READ: [Snow Leopard](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

AGULHAS LONG-BILLED LARK

Context: Recent reports suggest that, **Agulhas long-billed lark** is adapting and surviving despite farming taking over their nesting grounds in South Africa.

Background:-

- Because it only occurs in a small part of South Africa, the Agulhas long-billed lark presents ecotourism value and forms part of South Africa's unique biodiversity.

About Agulhas long-billed lark:-

- **Scientific Name: Certhilaudabrevirostris**, It is a **small passerine bird**.
- The Agulhas long-billed lark is **only found in South Africa**.
- It builds nests on the ground **mainly in Renosterveld fynbos**, a type of vegetation filled with grasses and wild spring flowers that is critically endangered by agricultural expansion.
- It is an **endemic resident breeder** in the Western Cape, South Africa.
- Its restricted range is **centred on the Agulhas arable farmlands**, from east of the Hottentots-Holland mountain range to Mossel Bay, and occupies a maximum of 15,000 km² (5,800 sq mi).
- The Agulhas long-billed lark is **18–20 cm (7.1–7.9 in) in length**.
- It is **long-tailed and has a longish curved bill**.
- It has a **streaked buff-grey head and back**, and the closed wings are grey.
- The underparts are **cream-coloured with dark streaking** on the breast and flanks.

Conservation status:-

- IUCN: **Near-threatened**

MUST READ: [Zebrafish](#)

SOURCE: [DOWN TO EARTH](#)

E-WASTE

Context: Recent data shows that over 500,000 tonnes of **e-waste** were collected and processed in 2021-22.

Background:-

- In the financial year 2021-22, 527,131.57 tonnes of e-waste was collected, dismantled and recycled, Ashwini Kumar Choubey, minister of state in the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change told the Rajya Sabha.

About E-waste:-

- E-Waste is short for **Electronic-Waste** and the term is used to describe old, end-of-life or **discarded electronic appliances**.
- It includes their **components, consumables, parts and spares**.

- Electronic waste, also called **e-waste**, is various forms of electric and electronic equipment that have ceased to be of value to their users or no longer satisfy their original purpose.
- E-waste is not **hazardous** if it is stocked in safe storage recycled by scientific methods or transported from one place to the other in parts or totality in the formal sector.

E-Waste in India:-

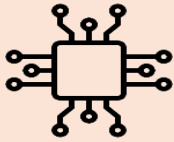
- India generates **18.5 lakh metric tonnes of electronic** waste annually, with Mumbai and Delhi-NCR being the largest contributors.
- The figure is expected to **reach 30 lakh MT annually by 2018**.
- Other major cities include Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmadabad, Hyderabad, Pune, Surat, and Nagpur.
- **Maharashtra is the largest e-waste generating state**, followed by Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, and West Bengal.
- **Over half of e-waste from developed countries is exported** to developing countries.
- Recycling in developing countries often involves manual participation, exposing **workers to toxic substances**.

E-waste Management Rules, 2016:

- Notified by the **Central Government under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
- Superseded the **E-waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011**.
- Aims to recover and reuse useful material from e-waste.
- Introduces **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** for producers.
- Producers responsible for **E-waste collection and exchange**.
- Manufacturers, dealers, e-retailers, and refurbishers also covered.
- **Urban local bodies responsible for collecting and directing e-waste** to authorized dismantlers or recyclers.

MUST READ:[Extended Producer Responsibility](#)

SOURCE:[DOWN TO EARTH](#)



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



PSLV-C58 XPOSAT MISSION

Context: Recently, ISRO's PSLV-C58 XPoSat mission was successfully launched.

Background:-

- The Indian Space Research Organisation ran in the New Year with the successful launch of PSLV-C58 carrying XPoSat and 10 other payloads.

About Isro's PSLV-C58 XPoSatmission:-

- **Launch Date: January 01, 2024.**
- **Launch time: 09:10 Hrs IST.**
- XPoSat (X-ray Polarimeter Satellite) is the **first dedicated scientific satellite from ISRO to carry out research in space-based polarisation measurements of X-ray emission from celestial sources.**
- The Satellite configuration is **modified from the IMS-2 bus platform.** . ([PSLV-C54 launch](#))
- The Configuration of the mainframe systems are derived based on the **heritage of IRS satellites.**
- It carries **two payloads** namely **POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays)** and **XSPECT (X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing)**.
 - POLIX is realized by Raman Research Institute and
 - XSPECT is by Space Astronomy Group of URSC.

The objectives of this mission are:-

- To **measure polarisation of X-rays** in the energy band 8-30keV emanating from **About** 50 potential cosmic sources through Thomson Scattering by POLIX payload.
- To carry out **long term spectral and temporal studies** of cosmic X-ray sources in the energy band 0.8-15keV by XSPECT payload.
- To **carry out polarisation and spectroscopic measurements** of X-ray emissions from cosmic sources by POLIX and XSPECT payloads respectively in the common energy band.

MUST READ: [Next Generation Launch Vehicle \(NGLV\)](#)

SOURCE: [TIMES OF INDIA](#)

R21 VACCINE

Context: Recently, WHO prequalified a second malaria vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India

Background:-

- In October 2023, WHO recommended its use for the prevention of malaria in children, following the advice of the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization and the Malaria Policy Advisory Group

About R21 vaccine:-

- **Developed by:** Oxford University and manufactured by Serum Institute of India.
- It is the **world's second WHO-recommended malaria vaccine**, after RTS, S/AS 01.
- The new vaccine will be sold under the **brand Mosquirix.**

- It is the **first vaccine** to achieve more than **75% effectiveness**.
- It has been **approved for use in children aged 5-36 months**, the age group at highest risk of death from malaria.
- **Ghana** became the first African country which gave approval for the vaccine.

Advantages:-

- High efficacy, Low cost, Mass production ability

MUST READ: [iNCOVACC](#)**SOURCE:** [THE HINDU](#)**GAUCHER DISEASE**

Context: Recently, the treatment of children suffering from lysosomal storage disorders like **Gaucher disease** has been stopped.

Background:-

- Children suffering from lysosomal storage disorders like Gaucher disease are facing a bleak future as their treatment has been stopped due to the exhaustion of one-time support from the Union health ministry.

Gaucher Disease Overview

- An inherited **lysosomal storage disorder** (LSD) causing sphingolipid accumulation in bone marrow, liver, and spleen.
- Caused by a mutation in the GBA gene, **causing a deficiency of glucocerebrosidase** (GCCase), responsible for breaking down fatty substances.
- Symptoms **include enlarged spleen, liver, eye movement disorders**, and yellow spots.
- Types include **Type 1, affecting spleen, liver, blood, and bones**, but no brain or spinal cord.
- Type 2 is rare, **causing enlarged spleen, movement problems**, and severe brain damage in babies under 6 months old.
- Type 3 is common, **causing bone and organ abnormalities and neurological problems before age 10**.
- Treatments can **relieve symptoms and improve quality of life**.

MUST READ: [Rare Diseases](#)**SOURCE:** [TIMES OF INDIA](#)**ISRO's POEM**

Context: Indian Space start-ups recently reported success of in-orbit tests aboard **ISRO's POEM**.

Background:-

- Dhurva Space, Bellatrix Aerospace successfully test solutions onboard ISRO's PSLV Orbital Experimental Module.

About ISRO's POEM:-

- **By : ISRO**
- POEM stands for **PSLV Orbital Experimental Module**.
- It is a **platform that will help perform in-orbit experiments** using the final, and otherwise discarded stage of ISRO's workhorse rocket, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
 - PSLV is a **four-stage rocket** where the first three spent stages fall back into the ocean, and

the final stage (PS4) after launching the satellite into orbit and ends up as space junk.

- However, in **PSLV-C53** mission, the spent final stage will be utilised as a “stabilised platform” to perform experiments.
- POEM is carrying **six payloads**, including two from Indian space start-ups Digantara (for making the map of space radiations, debris, and orbits) and Dhruva Space (for full-stack satellite development, launch, deployment, operation and maintenance services)
- According to ISRO, **POEM has a dedicated Navigation Guidance and Control (NGC) system for attitude stabilization**, which stands for controlling the orientation of any aerospace vehicle within permitted limits. The NGC will act as the platform’s brain to stabilize it with specified accuracy.
- POEM will **derive its power from solar panels** mounted around the PS4 tank, and a **Li-Ion battery**.
- It will navigate using “**four sun sensors, a magnetometer, gyros & NavIC**”.
- It carries dedicated control thrusters using **Helium gas storage**.
- It is enabled with a **telecommand feature**. ([Gaganyaan](#))

MUST READ: [Space Economy of India](#)

SOURCE: [BUSINESSLINE](#)

EXOPLANET WASP-121

Context: Recently, astronomers have made a groundbreaking discovery using Nasa's Hubble Space Telescope, revealing massive cyclones and dynamic weather activity on the distant **exoplanet WASP-121 b**, located 880 light-years from Earth.

Background:-

- An international team of astronomers meticulously analysed Hubble data from 2016, 2018, and 2019 to study these phenomena.

About WASP-121 b:-

- WASP-121 b is gas giant, **similar in size to Jupiter**.
- It has an **atmosphere far too hostile for life as we know it**.
- It has become a **focal point for understanding atmospheric dynamics on alien worlds**.
- WASP-121 b is **tidally locked** with its star, meaning one hemisphere perpetually faces the heat, reaching scorching temperatures of around 3,450 degrees Fahrenheit.

About Hubble Space Telescope:-

- **Launched: April 24, 1990, Launched by: Discovery.**
- Hubble Space Telescope is a large, space-based observatory **by NASA/ESA**. ([NASA’s DART mission](#))
- It has been **deployed since 1990**.
 - **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA):** is an independent agency of the U.S. federal government responsible for the civil space program, aeronautics research, and space research.
 - **European Space Agency (ESA):** is an independent space agency.
- The Hubble Space Telescope is the first astronomical observatory placed into orbit around Earth with the ability to **record images in wavelengths of light spanning the ultraviolet to near-infrared**.
- Hubble orbits roughly **340 miles (547 km) above Earth’s surface**.

MUST READ: [IN-SPACE](#)

SOURCE: [INDIA TODAY](#)

NASA'S CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY

Context: NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory recently captured megastar explosions in 30 Doradus B.

Background:-

- The expansive shell of fainter X-rays indicates that another supernova occurred more than 5,000 years prior, and possibly others before that.

About NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory:-

- **Launch: July 23, 1999, Duration: 23 years**
- The Chandra X-ray Observatory is the **world's most powerful X-ray telescope**.
- It is **part of NASA's fleet of "Great Observatories"** along with the Hubble Space Telescope, the Spitzer Space Telescope and the now deorbited Compton Gamma Ray Observatory.
- The telescope is named after Indian astrophysicist **Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar**, who won the Nobel Prize in physics.
- It **examines the X-rays emitted by some of the universe's strangest objects**, including quasars, immense clouds of gas and dust and particles sucked into black holes.

About 30 Doradus B:-

- 30 Doradus B, is a **supernova remnant** that is part of a vibrant region of space where stars have been forming for millions of years.
 - A supernova is a catastrophic event that occurs at the **end of a massive star's life cycle**.
- This celestial spectacle, is located some **160,000 light-years from Earth**.
- It is a complex landscape of **dark clouds of gas, young stars, high-energy shocks, and superheated gas**.
- The **largest and brightest region of star formation** in the Local Group of galaxies, including the Milky Way, is called 30 Doradus (or, informally, the Tarantula Nebula).
- It is located in the **Large Magellanic Cloud**, a small **neighbour galaxy to the Milky Way**.
- 30 Doradus has long been studied by astronomers who want to better understand how stars like the Sun are born and evolve.

MUST READ: [The North Star](#)

SOURCE: [INDIA TODAY](#)

EINSTEIN PROBE

Context: Recently, China sent a new astronomical satellite called the **Einstein Probe** into space to observe mysterious transient phenomena in the universe that flicker like fireworks.

Background:-

- It is a probe designed to scour the sky for bursts of X-rays that could help illuminate mysterious phenomena linked to black holes and merging stars, took flight this week.

About Einstein Probe:-

- **Launched from: Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in Sichuan Province of China.**
- **Weight: approximately 1.45 tonnes.** The EP utilizes **cutting-edge X-ray detection technology**.
- The **lotus-inspired design** incorporates 12 'petals' housing wide-field X-ray telescopes (WXT) and

two 'stamens' containing follow-up X-ray telescopes (FXT). **(IN-SPACe)**

- The **two 'stamens'** consist of **follow-up X-ray telescopes (FXT)**, designed for in-depth observation and the discovery of transient celestial objects.
- Together, these components form a space observatory with the primary objective of **capturing the initial lightemitted during supernova explosions** and exploring the nature of transient celestial objects at the outer reaches of the universe.
- Designed with a lifespan of five years, the Einstein Probe employs the astronomical time-domain observation method, conducting a **high-sensitivity real-time dynamic sky survey in the soft X-ray band**.

MUST READ: [Next Generation Launch Vehicle \(NGLV\)](#)

SOURCE: [CNN](#)

SMART LANDER FOR INVESTIGATING MOON (SLIM)

Context: Japan's **Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM)** successfully landed on the moon recently.

Background:-

- SLIM landed on the moon surface on January 20, 2024, at 0:20 am (JST).
- Communication with spacecraft has been established after the landing.

About SLIM (Smart Lander for Investigating Moon):-

- **Launch Date: September 7, 2023. Launch Location: Yoshinobu Launch Complex at the JAXA Tanegashima Space Center. Launch Vehicle: H-IIA Launch Vehicle No. 47.**
- **Agency: Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).**
- SLIM is **Japan's first lunar surface mission.** **(CHANDRAYAAN-2)**
- The SLIM (Smart Lander for Investigating the Moon) project is a **mission for researching the pinpoint landing technology necessary for future lunar probes and verifying this on the surface of the moon** with a small-scale probe.
- SLIM is lighter because it **carries much less fuel.** It **utilized earth gravity to build kinetic energy**, eventually aligning its trajectory with the moon for a slower approach and capture.
- Once it gets close to the moon, **it will get deflected into the deeper space by the combined forces of Earth and Moon.**
- Upon soft landing, SLIM will deploy **2 small rovers called Lunar Excursion Vehicle (LEV) 1 and 2.**
- They will **study the lunar surface near the landing point, collect temperature and radiation readings, and attempt to study the moon's mantle.**

MUST READ: [Chandrayaan-3](#). **SOURCE:** [THE HINDU](#)

ASTEROID 2024 BM

Context: Asteroid 2024 BM passed by Earth recently.

Background:-

- The asteroid passed the Earth at a distance of approximately 3 million kilometres today, January 22, 2024.

About Asteroid 2024 BM:-

- This particular space rock **belongs to the Apollo group of Near-Earth Asteroids**, which are Earth-crossing space rocks with semi-major axes larger than Earth's.
- These asteroids are **named after the enormous 1862 Apollo asteroid** which German astronomer Karl Reinmuth discovered in the 1930s. ([Environment of extra solar planets](#))
- It has earlier passed Earth on **December 5, 1900**, at a distance of approximately 23 million kilometers.
- After this, it is set to approach the planet at a distance of 9.7 kilometers on **May 2, 2039**.
- It is **approximately 150 feet wide**, 45 feet wide making it as big as an aircraft.
- The main asteroid belt, situated between the orbits of **Mars and Jupiter**, is where asteroids are commonly found in our solar system.

MUST READ:[Exoplanets](#)

SOURCE:[FINANCIAL EXPRESS](#)

SOVEREIGN AI

Context: Recently, India is building its own 'sovereign AI'.

Background:-

- India has pitched itself as a country that has effectively used technology to develop and deliver governance solutions at a mass scale.

Sovereign AI and India's Role

- Sovereign AI refers to a **nation's control over AI technologies** within its jurisdiction.
- It aims to protect national interests, **ensure ethical AI usage**, promote national security, drive economic growth, **and maintain control over critical AI infrastructure**.
- Governments need to create policies, laws, **and regulations for AI research**, development, and deployment to **ensure ethical standards**, data privacy, security, and accountability.
- India aims to establish sovereign AI, **developing its own AI ecosystem**, focusing on real-world applications in **healthcare, agriculture, governance, and language translation**.
- The Ministry of Electronics and IT **proposes an India Datasets platform to house non-personal and anonymized datasets** from Central government entities.

MUST READ:[ChatGPT and the AI challenge](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

HEALTH

WESTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS

Context: Recently, an outbreak of **Western Equine Encephalitis Virus** occurred in Argentina.

Background:-

- The present outbreak also comes in the context of an ongoing outbreak in horses in Argentina and Uruguay.

About Western Equine Encephalitis:-

- It is a **mosquito-borne infection**.
- It is caused by the **Western Equine Encephalitis Virus (WEEV)**, which belongs to the **Togaviridae family** of viruses with **neurological symptoms in severe cases**, and there is no specific antiviral treatment.
- The virus has an **approximately 11.5 kilobases long single-stranded RNA genome** and is a **recombinant of the eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEEV) and a Sindbis-like virus**.
- **Passerine birds** are thought to be the reservoir and equine species as intermediate hosts.

Western Equine Encephalitis (WEE) Symptoms and Transmission

- Symptoms include **fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, poor appetite, tiredness, and weakness**.
- Primary transmission occurs **through bites of infected mosquitoes, with Culex tarsalis being the principal vector**.
- Diagnosis requires laboratory confirmation due to non-specific clinical presentation.
- Most common in plains regions of the western and central U.S., Central America, and South America.

MUST READ:[malaria](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

KETAMINE

Context: **Ketamine** drug was reported to be involved in actor Matthew Perry's death recently.

Background:-

- In recent years, ketamine has been a subject of widespread debate due to its growing use for treating depression and other serious mental health issues.

About Ketamine:-

- An anesthetic listed as a **hallucinogen** by the US Drug Enforcement Administration.
- Derived from **Phencyclidine (PCP)**, a **hallucinogenic drug**.
- Blocks **NMDA receptor in brain and spinal cord**.
- **Increases neurotransmitter glutamate release**.
- **Treats mental illnesses** in therapy-resistant patients.
- Also used as a recreational drug for pleasure or mind alteration.
- Their types include:
 - **Stimulants:** Increase alertness and energy. E.g., cocaine, methamphetamine, and caffeine.
 - **Depressants:** Produce a calming effect. E.g., alcohol, marijuana, and benzodiazepines.
 - **Hallucinogens:** Produce hallucinations. E.g., LSD, psilocybin, and DMT.

Applications:-

- It is classified as a **dissociative anaesthetic** with psychedelic properties.
- It is used **strictly under medical supervision** for anaesthesia.
- Also employed in the **treatment of conditions such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, end-of-life distress, chronic pain, and substance abuse issues.**

Regulatory Status in India:-

- It is classified as a **Schedule X drug** in India.
- It is **Subject to stringent control and monitoring** on a case-specific basis by the prescribing doctor.
 - Schedule X drugs are categorized as “**restrictive drugs**” under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules. ([National Fund to Control Drug Abuse](#))**
 - The classification of drugs under Schedule X signifies a **high level of regulatory control and monitoring.**

MUST READ:[Bisphenol A](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)



HISTORY AND ART & CULTURE



WARLI PAINTING

Context: Recently, an exhibition of **Warli painting** took place by the Inherited Arts Forum.

Background:-

- It traced the artistic journey of the celebrated Mashe family and their effort in reviving the Warli painting.

About Warli Paintings:-

- Warli art is a folk painting of **Maharashtra**.
- It **dates back to the 10th century AD**.
- The word Warli is inspired by **the largest tribe**, which is found in the Northern outskirts of Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- This art of painting is mainly practiced by the tribes inhabiting the **North Sahyadri range in Maharashtra**.
- This tribal art **originated in Maharashtra**, where it has still maintained its presence.
- It was **traditionally practised by women** of the Warli tribe called Suvasinis, who decorated the Lagn Chowk or the wedding square.
- These paintings are **distinctive with their vivid contrast expressions**.
- These paintings are mainly dominated by **basic geometric shapes like circles, triangles and squares**.
- **Theme:** Warli represents the **daily routine of rural life**, the relationship of the tribal people with nature, their gods, myths, traditions, customs, and festivities.

MUST READ: [Mural Art](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

SAVITRIBAI PHULE

Context: Recently, Prime Minister paid tributes to **Savitribai Phule** on her Jayanti.

About Savitribai Phule:-

- **Born on: January 3, 1831.**
- **Born at: Naigaon village of Maharashtra's Satara district.**
- [Savitribai Phule](#), the **social reformer who is considered to be one of India's first modern feminists**.
- Both Savitribai Phule & her husband Jyotirao Phule went on to found **India's first school for girls called Bhide Wada** in Pune in 1848.
- The Phules started the **Satyashodhak Samaj** (Society for Truth-Seeking), through which they wanted to **initiate the practice of Satyashodhak marriage, in which no dowry was taken**.

Savitribai's Social Work and Literary Works

- Started Mahila Seva Mandal in **1852 to promote women's rights**.
- Campaigned against child marriage and widow remarriage.
- Initiated the first **Satyashodhak marriage in 1873**.
- Opened a care center for pregnant widows in **1853 to end infanticide**.

- Published **Kavya Phule and Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar in 1854 and 1892** respectively.
- Published **Matushri Savitribai Phlenchi Bhashane va Gaani** and her letters to her husband.

MUST READ:[Veer Savarkar](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

DIVYA KALA SHAKTI

Context: Recently, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities presented the spectacular cultural event, "**Divya Kala Shakti**," in Ahmedabad.

Background:-

- The event brought together participants from across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu, totaling 100 divyang individuals who took centre stage in mesmerizing performances.

About Divya Kala Shakti:-

- **Began:2019.**
- **Organized by: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**
- [Divya Kala Shakti](#) is a cultural event which provides a wider and unique platform to **showcase the potential of Persons with Differently Abled** in the field of **performing art, music, dance, acrobatics** etc.

Significance:-

- It aims at **developing confidence among persons with disabilities.**

MUST READ:[Draft National Policy on Persons with Disabilities \(PwD\)](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

RANI VELU NACHIYAR

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi paid tributes to **Rani Velu Nachiyar** on her Jayanti.

Background:-

- The Prime Minister also shared some excerpts from Mann Ki Baat where he expressed his views **About** Rani Velu Nachiyar.

About Rani Velu Nachiyar:-

- **Born on:January 3, 1730.**
- **Died on:December 25, 1796.**
- [Rani Velu Nachiyar](#) is the **18th century** queen from Sivagangai district in **Tamil Nadu**.
- She held the title of **queen** in the **Sivaganga estate** from around **1780 to 1790**.
- She made history as the **first Indian queen to stand up against the East India Company** through armed conflict.
- Among the Tamil people, she is affectionately remembered as **Veeramangai**, meaning "Brave Woman."
- She was **trained in war match weapons usage**, martial arts like Valari, Silambam (fighting using the

stick), horse riding and archery.

- She was a **scholar in many languages** and she had proficiency with languages like French, English and Urdu.
- She married the king of **Sivagangainamed MuthuvaduganathaperiyaUdaiyathevar**.
- She proudly **ruled Sivagangai for more than 10 years**.
- During her reign, the queen also **created a women's only army called Udaiyaal**.

The war against the British:-

- In collaboration with **Hyder Ali and Gopala Nayaker**, she waged a war against the British and emerged victoriously
- She granted **powers to the Marudu brothers** to administer the country in 1780.

MUST READ:[Rani Lakshmibai – Her Jayanti](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

SRIMUKHALINGAMTEMPLE

Context: Recently, ASI assured to send a note to UNESCO over the inclusion of the **Srimukhalingam temple** in Andhra Pradesh in the World Heritage Structures' list.

Background:-

- Srimukhalingam temple's chief priest Naidugari Rajasekhar says the architecture of the temple is similar to Lingaraja temple located in Bhubaneswar of Odisha.

About Srimukhalingamtemple:-

- It was constructed in the **9th century CE**.
- It was built by **kings of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty**.
- **Eastern Ganga Dynasty** also known as Chodagangas ruled Kalinga (consisting of present-day Odisha, parts of West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh) from the 11th – 15th century.
- It is located on the **Vamsadhara River**.
- It is dedicated to **Lord SrimukhaLingeswara (a form of Shiva)**.
- The Shivalinga here has a **mukhaor facialrepresentation of Lord Shiva**.
- It **contains exquisite sculptures** from that period.
- It is built in the **Kalinga architectural style similar** to that of the Lingaraja temple located in Bhubaneswar of Odisha.
- The Nagara style of northern India and the Dravida style of south India were combined to create the **Kalinga architecture**.

MUST READ:[Khajuraho temples](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

THANJAVUR DOLLS

Context: Recent reports suggest that the **Thanjavur dolls** are facing stiff competition from electronic toys and e-commerce platforms, besides a severe labour crunch and shortage of clay.

About Thanjavur doll:-

- It was introduced by **Raja Serfoji (Maratha ruler)** in 19th Century.
- Other name for them is **Thalaiyatti and Uruttu Dolls**.
- They are of 2 Types :-
 - **Bobble-head version**
 - **Tilting doll (roly-poly) version**
- The centre of gravity and **total weight of the doll is concentrated at its bottom-most point**, generating a dance-like continuous movement with slow oscillations.
- These toys are traditionally **handmade**, finished with detailed, painted exteriors.
- Traditionally, these dolls are made from **terracotta clay**.
- Skilled artisans **shape the clay into various forms**, primarily depicting mythological characters, deities, and cultural motifs.
- The dancing doll has **four sections** (including the arms that are individually glued to the torso), each balancing on the other with the help of inner metal loop hooks that create the light bobbing movement.
- It earned the **Geographical Indication tag in 2009**.

MUST READ:[50 iconic Indian heritage textiles by UNESCO](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

BOBBILLI VEENA

Context: Recent reports show that **Bobbilli Veena** craftsmen are struggling for livelihood.

Background:-

- Much like Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, the town of Bobbili in the Vizianagaram district is renowned for producing high-quality veenas.

Bobbili Veena Overview

- Located in **Bobbili, Andhra Pradesh, approximately 120km** from Vishakapatnam.
- Also known as '**Saraswati veena**'.
- Large plucked string instrument used in Carnatic classical music.
- Made in the 17th century by **Pedda Rayudu, king of Bobbili Samsthanam**.
- Crafted from seasoned wood, **including jackwood, teak, or mahogany**.
- Features a resonator, neck, and strings with intricate carvings.
- Central part features a **lion's head carved at the tapering end**.
- **Frets made of bell metal**.
- Symbolizes cultural heritage, representing the artistic legacy of Bobbili and Vizianagaram district.
- Received **Geographical Indication (GI) tag from the Government of India in 2011**.

MUST READ:[Sangeet Natak Akademi](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

KAPDAGANDA SHAWL

Context: Recently, the **Kapdaganda shawl** from Odisha bagged GI tag.

Background:-

- Seven products from Odisha, ranging from the Similipal Kai chutney made with red weaver ants to the embroidered Kapdaganda shawl, have bagged the coveted Geographical Indication (GI) tag in recognition of their exclusivity to the state.

Kapdaganda Shawl Overview

- Originates from Odisha, **woven and embroidered by Dongria Kondh** tribe women.
- **Symbolizes rich tribal heritage of the Dongria Kondhs.**
- Embroidered on off-white coarse cloth **with red, yellow, and green threads.**
- Green symbolizes mountains and hills.
- Yellow represents peace and happiness.
- Red symbolizes blood.
- Motifs are mostly **lines and triangles reflecting mountain importance.**
- Wearable by both men and women.
- **Dongrias gift it as a token of love.**

MUST READ:[\(Pashmina Shawls\)](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Context: Recently, Prime Minister paid tributes to **Swami Vivekananda** on his Jayanti.

Background:-

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to Swami Vivekananda on his Jayanti and National Youth Day.
- Shri Modi has also shared a video of his views on Swami Vivekananda.

About Swami Vivekananda:-

Swami Vivekananda: An **Indian Monk and National Youth Festival Observer**

- **Born on 12 January 1863, died on 4 July 1902.**
- Named **Narendra Nath Datta, he was a chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa.**
- Introduced Hindu philosophies of Yoga and Vedanta to the Western world.
- Founder of the **Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math.**
- Advocated for national integration in colonial India.
- In 1984, **the Government of India declared 12 January as National Youth Day.**
- Preached 'neo-Vedanta', **combining spirituality with material progress.**

Teachings:-

- **Spiritual primacy** is the central theme of Vivekananda's teachings, through which human beings can succeed in every sphere of their lives.
- **Three instruments of knowledge** that he propounded are: **instincts, reason, and inspiration**
- **Vedantic Humanism**
- **Religious acceptance** was important and not tolerance because tolerance comes out of a superiority complex.
- The most desirable path for **self-realisation** was the selfless service of man.
- Divinity within ourselves
- **Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga.**

Books:-

- Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Meditation and Its Methods
- Vedanta: Voice of Freedom, Lectures on Bhagavad Gita, My India: The India Eternal
- Powers of The Mind, My Master, Essentials of Hinduism among many others.

MUST READ: [Dayanand Saraswati](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

PONGAL

Context: Recently, Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has extended his best wishes on the occasion of Pongal.

Background:-

- Cultural celebrations are held across many states of India under different names – **Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Magh Bihu, etc. on January 14.**
- Unlike many Hindu festivals, the **date for these festivals is largely fixed.** This year it is being celebrated on **January 15** in some parts of India, as 2024 is a leap year.



About Pongal:-

IMAGE SOURCE: [IASBABA](#)

- Pongal is celebrated with the **distribution of new crop “Shankarai Pongal”** which is basically rice cooked in milk and jiggery distributed as a **Prasadam.**
- The day is a **marker for a change of season** – warmer months are close and we are moving away from winter, which is seen as a period of inactivity in many ways.
- It is said that the **northward journey of the sun (Uttarayan) begins on this day.**
- In the Hindu belief system, the end of **January heralds the beginning of longer days.**
- It marks the **Sun changing directions** and shifting its trajectory towards the north, therefore, **entering the Makara or Capricorn zodiac sign.**

Rituals associated with Makar Sankranti or Pongal:-

- Activities include bathing, **offering Naivedhya, charity, Shraddha rituals, and fasting.**
 - Worshipers bathe in sacred rivers like **Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Krishna, and Cauvery.**
 - Early morning sunrise is celebrated.
 - Dip absolves sins and is seen as a **time of peace and prosperity.**
 - Regional variations exist, with **Tamil Nadu's Pongal festival beginning with bhogi and ending with Mattu Pongal.**
 - Festival honors bulls' toil in ensuring good harvest.
 - Farmers gather at temples to offer prayers and seek blessings.
 - Festive dishes include Pongal, **lemon and tamarind rice, vadas, vegetable gravies, and Payasam.**

Different names of the same festival:-

- **Makar Sankranti** – Odisha, Maharashtra-Goa, Andhra-Telangana, Kerala and most of north India. ([Makar Sankranti being celebrated all over India](#))
- **PaushParbon**– Bengal
- **Pongal** – Tamil Nadu

- **Bhogali Bihu**– Assam
- **Lohri**– Punjab and Jammu
- **Maghi** – Haryana and Himachal
- **Khichdi Parwa**– parts of Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh

MUST READ:[Attukal Pongala](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

JAGANNATH TEMPLE

Context: Jagannath Temple Heritage corridor project at Puri in Odisha will be open to the public on 17 Jan 2024.

Background:-

- The Temple heritage corridor has been built to enhance the visual connection between devotees and the shrine.

About Jagannath Temple:-

- It was **built in the 12th century** by **Anatavarman Chodaganga** of Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
- It was **rebuilt over the centuries by later rulers like Gajapatis**.
- It is believed to be the **site of an earlier temple** linked to King Indrayumna.
- An important Hindu pilgrimage site as **part of Char Dham**.
- It is **dedicated to Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra**.
- Lord Jagannath is a **form of Lord Vishnu**.
- This temple was called the **“White Pagoda”** and is a part of Char Dham pilgrimages (**Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram**).
- It is a part of **Char Dham circuit, called “Yamanika Tirtha”**.
- Unique **wooden deities replaced periodically**.
- [The temple's](#) main attraction is the **Annual Rath Yatra festival**, in which the three main deities of the temple, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra are taken out in a grand procession on a chariot.
- The temple is also known for its unique food offering, the **Mahaprasad**.

Architecture:-

- The temple stands in the center of an inner courtyard on a **high-raised platform**.
- It has four components:-
 - **Vimana or Deula (Garbagriha)**
 - **Jagamohana**
 - **Natamandapa**
 - **Bhogamandapa**
- The architectural style of the Jagannath temple is a **combination of twotypes-Rekha and Pidha**.
- It has Four **intricately carved gates**.
- Other features like **Nila Chakra, Aruna Stambha**.
 - **Nila Chakra** is located on the top of the temple and a different flag, each named as **Patita Pavana**, is hoisted on the chakra daily.

MUST READ:[Somnath Temple](#)

SOURCE:[AIR](#)**PAKKE PAGA HORNBILL FESTIVAL**

Context: The preparations for recent 9th Edition of Arunachal Pradesh's **Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival** is in line.

Background:-

- The first-ever PPHF was held on January 16-18, 2015, with the aim of recognising the efforts of the Nyishi hunters-turned-conservationists of hornbills

About Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival:-

- It is declared a **state festival**.
- It centers around wildlife conservation, especially **hornbills found in the [Pakke Tiger Reserve](#)**.
 - The reserve **harbors four [hornbill species](#)** – Oriental Pied, Great Indian, Rufous-necked and the endangered Wreathed Hornbill.
- The week-long event **generates awareness on preserving these iconic birds**.
- PPHF also spotlights the role of **indigenous Nyishi tribes** in protecting hornbills after having earlier hunted them.
 - The Nyishi is the **largest tribal group in Arunachal Pradesh**.
- It forges connections between forests, wildlife and local communities.
- The **first PPHF was organized in 2015** with the goal to recognize Nyishi conservation efforts.
- This year, the festival's theme is **DomutohDomutoh, Paga hum Domutoh**.
 - It translates to '**Let Our Hornbills Remain**' in the Nyishi language.

Key activities lined up include:

- **Bird watching tours, Literary competitions, Panel discussions, Tribal music/dance performances**

Significance:-

- Beyond promoting hornbill conservation, other key goals of **launching the Hornbill Festival were generating alternate livelihood streams for locals**.

MUST READ:[Wildlife conservation in Arunachal Pradesh](#)

SOURCE:[DOWNT TO EARTH](#)

MAHAYOGI VEMANA

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to **Mahayogi Vemana** on the occasion of Vemana Jayanti.

Background:-

- The Prime Minister posted on x: "Today, on Vemana Jayanti, we recall the timeless wisdom of Mahayogi Vemana. His verses and profound teachings continue to enlighten and inspire, guiding us towards a life of truth, simplicity, and inner peace. His insightful works resonate all around the world and his teachings light our path in the quest for a better planet."

About Mahayogi Vemana:-

- He was a saint in **Andhra Pradesh**.
- Vemana was born in Gandikota, **Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh**.
- He was an **Indian philosopher and poet** in the Telugu language.

- He was an achala **Yogi, Poet, Social Reformer**.
- His poems are known for their use of simple language and native idioms.
- They discuss the subjects of **yoga, wisdom and morality**.
- His poems follow various themes: **social, moral, satirical and mystical**.
- Most of them are in **Ataveladi**(dancing lady) meter.
- **Notable works:-**
 - vemanasatakam

MUST READ:[Sant Ravidas](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

AMRIT UDYAN

Context: The **Amrit Udyan** will open for public viewing from February 2 to March 31.

Background:-

- People can visit the Udyan six days a week except on Mondays which are maintenance days.

About AMRIT UDYAN:-

- The [Mughal Gardens](#) at Rashtrapati Bhavan were renamed 'Amrit Udyan' in keeping with the theme of **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav**.
- The **cluster of About 15 gardens** will collectively be known as Amrit Udyan.

Historical Background:-

- In 1911, the British decided to shift the Indian capital from Calcutta to Delhi.
- **About 4,000 acres** of land was acquired to construct the Viceroy's House with **Sir Edwin Lutyens** being given the task of designing the building on Raisina Hill.
- While initial plans involved creating a garden with traditional British sensibilities in mind, **Lady Hardinge**, the wife of the then Viceroy, urged planners to create a Mughal-style garden.

Characteristic features:-

- Mughal Gardens (now erstwhile) **draw inspiration from the Mughal Gardens of Jammu & Kashmir**, the gardens around the Taj Mahal and miniature paintings of India and Persia.
- They are known for their '**charbagh style**'. In **Babur Nama**, **Babur** claimed it to be his favourite kind of garden.
- These gardens are defined by their **rectilinear layouts**, are divided into **four equal sections**, and **can be found across lands previously ruled by the Mughals**.
- From the gardens surrounding **Humayun's Tomb in Delhi** to the **Nishat Bagh in Srinagar**, all are built in this style.
- A defining feature of these gardens is the **use of waterways**, often to **demarcate the various quadrants** of the garden.

MUST READ:[Akbar](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

KAUSHAL BHAWAN

Context: Recently, President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu inaugurated **Kaushal Bhawan**.

Background:-

- On the occasion, the President visited the exhibition stalls set up by the beneficiaries of various initiatives of the Government such as PM Vishwakarma, PM JANMAN, Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and interacted with them.

About Kaushal Bhawan:-

- **Location: in New Delhi .**
- Kaushal Bhawan is a **new building of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.**
- **Its foundation stone was laid in March 2019.**
- It will **provide office space for the Ministry** as well as its associated organisations – the Directorate General of Training, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training and the National Skill Development Corporation.
- This state-of-the-art office building, equipped with **modern facilities and infrastructure.**
- It has been built with the **aim of providing a safe, convenient and efficient work environment** to usher in new work culture and give a fillip to [Skill India Mission](#).

MUST READ:[Hoysala temples](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN AULIADARGAH

Context: Recently, French President Emmanuel Macron visits **Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Dargah** in Delhi.

Background:-

- During a banquet hosted by President Droupadi Murmu, Macron expressed gratitude for the warm welcome extended to his delegation and reaffirmed the longstanding friendship between India and France.

About Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Dargah:-

- Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Dargah is located in **Delhi's Nizamuddin West area.**
- It is the mausoleum of the famous [Sufi saint](#), **Nizamuddin Auliya (1238-1325 CE).**
 - Syed Muhammad Nizamuddin Auliya was one of the **most famous Sufi saints** from the Indian subcontinent region.
 - Also known as Hazrat Nizamuddin and Mahbub-e-Ilahi (Beloved of God), he was a Sunni Muslim scholar and Sufi saint of the **Chishti Order.**
- It was built in the **14th Century C.E.**
- It consists of a **square chamber surrounded by verandas**, which are pierced by arched openings.
- The dome is ornamented by vertical stripes of black marble and is **crowned by a lotus-cresting.**
- Towards the north side of Dargah, **there is a stepwell.**

MUST READ:[Ajmer Sharif Dargah](#)

SOURCE:[TIMES OF INDIA](#)

DEFENCE & SECURITY.

CV-22B OSPREY AIRCRAFT

Context: Recently, divers discovered the wreckage and remains of crew members from a crashed US Air Force **CV-22B Osprey aircraft** off southwestern Japan.

Background:-

- Search and rescue operations are underway after a US special operations aircraft crashed off the shore of Japan's Yakushima Island.

About CV-22B Osprey Aircraft:-

- It was developed to fulfil the needs of the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy operational requirements worldwide.
- It is **built by Boeing**, an American aerospace company.
- It is a **multi-engine, dual-piloted, self-deployable, medium-lift aircraft**.
- It is used for a **wide range of missions**, including long-range infiltration, exfiltration, medium-range assault, special operations, VIP transport, resupply, disaster relief, search-and-rescue, medical evacuation, and humanitarian missions.
- It combines the **vertical takeoff, hover, and vertical landing qualities of a helicopter** with the long-range, fuel efficiency, and speed characteristics of a **turboprop aircraft**.
- It is equipped with dual **Rolls-Royce Liberty AE1107C engines**. Up to **24 personnel** can sit inside the aircraft.

MUST READ: [Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft \(AMCA\)](#)

SOURCE: [TIMES OF INDIA](#)

'DESERT CYCLONE 2024'

Context: The Joint Military Exercise '**Desert Cyclone 2024**' between India and UAE began recently.

Background:-

- Ministry of External Affairs said, potential areas of bilateral cooperation in the defence field are the production and development of defence equipment; joint exercises of armed forces, particularly naval exercises; sharing of information on strategy and doctrines; technical cooperation in respect of Intermediate Jet Trainer etc.

About Desert Cyclone 2024:-

- **Date from 2nd to 15th January 2024.**
- **Venue: : Mahajan, Rajasthan.**
- **Objective:** to achieve shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations between two friendly nations.
- This exercise is being organized to **promote exchange of best practices with special focus on urban governance.**
- The two-week long program is designed to **facilitate learning and sharing of best practices in urban operations.**

- The exercise aims to strengthen relations between **the Indian and UAE armed forces**.
- The UAE contingent is being represented by troops from the **Zayed First Brigade**.
- The **Indian Army contingent comprising 45 personnel** is being represented mainly by a Battalion from the **Mechanised Infantry Regiment**.
- Exercise **signifies further strengthening of bonds of friendship** and trust between India and the UAE. ([CEPA between India and the UAE](#))

MUST READ:[India-UAE relations](#)

SOURCE:[AIR](#)

INS CHENNAI

Context: Recently, the Indian Navy responded to a hijacking attempt on vessel MV Lila Norfolk by engaging its mission-deployed platforms, including its maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) P8I and **INS Chennai**.

Background:-

- Foiling a hijacking attempt in the north Arabian Sea, Indian Navy's marine commandos (MARCOS) boarded a Liberia-flagged vessel and rescued its crew of 21, including 15 Indians, after carrying out "sanitisation" operations.

About INS Chennai:-

- **Constructed by:** theMazagon Dock Limited (MDL) at Mumbai.
- **Commissioned into the Indian Navy:** November 21, 2016.
- **Displacement:** Over 7,500 tons.**Top Speed:** 30 knots (approx 55 KM/hour)
- INS Chennai is the Indian Navy's **indigenously designed and constructed guided missile destroyer**. It is the third and last ship of the **Kolkata-class stealth-guided missile destroyers (Project 15A)**.
- It measures **163 meters in length** and has a beam of 17.4 meters.
- It is powered by **four reversible gas turbine engines**. It can carry **350 to 400 people**.
- The ship is equipped to fight under **nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) warfare conditions**.
- It is fitted with a **modern Surveillance Radar**.

MUST READ:[Project-15B stealth guided missile destroyers](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

ARMY DAY

Context: Recently, on the occasion of **Army Day**, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tribute to the extraordinary courage, unwavering commitment and sacrifices laid down by Army personnel.

Background:-

- The Prime Minister posted on x:
"On Army Day, we honour the extraordinary courage, unwavering commitment and sacrifices of our Army personnel. Their relentless dedication in protecting our nation and upholding our sovereignty is a testament to their bravery. They are pillars of strength and resilience."

About Indian Army Day:-

- India celebrates Army Day on **January 15** every year.
- **Objective:** to commemorate the achievements of the **first Indian Commander in Chief** of the Indian Army — **General (later Field Marshal) K.M. Cariappa** and the defence forces.
- In the celebration of Army Day, **the parade is organised every year** at the Cariappa Parade Ground of Delhi Cantonment. India will celebrate its **76th Army Day on January 15, 2024**.

- **Theme of Indian Army Day 2024:** In Service of the Nation. ([Defence Acquisition Council](#))
- **Motto of the Indian Army:** Seva Paramo Dharma and it means 'Service Before Self'.
 - It signifies that Army officials always prioritise the safety and security of the nation.
- It's a day to pay **homage to brave soldiers** who have laid down their lives for the nation, to **recognise the unwavering dedication** of those who stand guard at our borders, and to appreciate the sacrifices made by their families.
- From 1949 till 2022, the Army Day parade was organised at the **Cariappa Parade Ground in the Delhi Cantonment**. In 2023, the Southern Command was in charge of the parade **in Bengaluru**.
- **2024 Army Parade:** This year, the celebration will take place **in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**.

MUST READ: [The new defence systems handed over to Army](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

EXERCISE DESERT KNIGHT

Context: Recently, EXERCISE DESERT KNIGHT was commenced.

Background:-

- On 23 Jan 24, the Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted Exercise Desert Knight along with French Air and Space Force (FASF) and United Arab Emirates (UAE) Air Force.

About EXERCISE DESERT KNIGHT:-

- It is a **bilateral Air exercise** between the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** and **French Air and Space Force**.
- The **French participation included the Rafale fighter aircraft** and a **Multi Role Tanker Transport**, the UAE Air Force fielded the F-16.
- These **aircraft operated from the Al Dhafra air base** in the UAE.
- The **IAF contingent** comprised of **Su-30 MKI, MiG-29, Jaguar, AWACS, C-130-J** and **Air to Air Refueller aircraft**.
- The exercise in Indian FIR was **conducted over the Arabian Sea**, with IAF aircraft operating from bases within India.
- The interactions during the exercise facilitated the **exchange of operational knowledge, experiences and best practices amongst the participants**.
- Such exercises are **indicative of the growing diplomatic and military interactions** in the region, apart from showcasing the prowess of the IAF.

Defence Exercises between India and France:-

- Varuna – Naval exercise
- Garuda – Air exercise
- Shakti – Army exercise

MUST READ:

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

INS SUMITRA

Context: Recently, the Indian Navy's **INS Sumitra** rescued fishermen hijacked by pirates along the east coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden.

Background:-

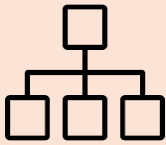
- The Iranian-flagged Fishing Vessel (FV) Iman was hijacked by pirates along the East coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden.

About INS Sumitra:-

- **Designed and constructed: Goa Shipyard Limited.**
- INS Sumitra is a new-generation naval offshore patrol vessel which has joined the **Eastern Naval Command in Chennai.**
- It is the **fourth and last Saryu-class patrol vessel** of the Indian Navy.
- It is based on an **indigenous design**.The ship has a range of **6,500 nautical miles**.
- It is propelled by **two diesel engines**.It is capable of embarking **one Dhruv/[Chetak helicopter](#).**
- It was **commissioned in 2014** and is based in Chennai under the Eastern Naval Command.
- The primary role of the ship is to undertake surveillance of the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) besides other operational tasks such as anti-piracy patrols, fleet support operations, maritime security of offshore assets, and escort operations.

MUST READ:[NAVDEX 23 and IDEX 23](#)

SOURCE:[HINDUSTAN TIMES](#)



GOVT. INITIATIVES, SCHEMES AND POLICIES, ORGANISATION



MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME (MGNREGS)

Context: Recently it was announced that Aadhaar-linked pay will be made mandatory for **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** workers from the new year.

Background:-

- From the New Year, wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) will be paid only through an Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS), which requires the Aadhaar details of workers to be seeded to their job cards.

About Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS):-

- **Launched: 2005.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Rural Development (MRD).**
- **Objectives:** improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or unskilled work to people living below the poverty line in rural India.

Salient Features:-

- Indian legislation **enacted on August 25, 2005.**
- Provides legal guarantee for 100 days of employment annually to adult members of rural households willing to do unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.
- Monitored by the **Ministry of Rural Development (MRD)** in partnership with state governments.
- Beneficiary-oriented works can be taken up by **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, small or marginal farmers, land reform beneficiaries, or beneficiaries under the Indira Awaas Yojana.**
- Wage employment provided within **15 days of application submission or demand.**
- Right to receive unemployment allowance if employment is **not provided within 15 days.**

Benefits:-

- MGNREGA focuses on the **economic and social empowerment of women.(PM SVANidhi scheme)**
- **Social Audit** of MGNREGA works is mandatory, which lends to **accountability and transparency.**
- MGNREGA works to **address the climate change vulnerability.**

MUST READ: [Issues with MGNREGA](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

NATIONAL TRANSIT PASS SYSTEM (NTPS).

Context: Recently, Minister Bhupendra Yadav launched the **National Transit Pass System (NTPS).**

Background:-

- It is a unified system for forest goods' transport across India.

About National Transit Pass System:-

- **Launched: 29 DEC 2023.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.**
- **Objective:** to facilitate the seamless transit of timber, bamboo, and other forest produce across the

country.

Salient Features:-

- National Transit Pass System (NTPS) pan-India to **facilitate the seamless transit of timber, bamboo, and other forest produce** across the country.
- Currently, transit permits are issued for the transport of timber and forest produce based on **state-specific transit rules**.
- The NTPS is envisioned as a "**One Nation-One Pass**" regime, which will enable seamless transit across the country. ([Green Tug Transition Programme](#))
- This initiative will **streamline the issuance of timber transit permits** by providing a unified, online mode for tree growers and farmers involved in agroforestry across the country, contributing to the ease of doing business.

Key Features of the Transit Permit Application:

- Role-based and workflow-based application available as a **desktop and mobile application**.
- Online registration and submission of **Transit Permit (TP)** or **No Objection Certificate (NOC)** applications.
- Online application for species grown on **private land exempt from transit pass regime**.
- Online generation of **Transit Permit or NOC based on species category**.
- E-payment system: **Payment can be made online through the mobile app/web portal** before downloading T.P.

Benefits:

- Faster issuance of **transit permits for minor forest produce**.
- Replacement of **manual paper-based transit system**.
- One permit for **India's transit of timber, bamboo, and minor forest produce**.
- Smooth movement across state borders via a mobile app.
- Promotion of agro-forestry activities.
- **Saving of transportation costs and time**.

MUST READ: [National Rail Plan for Infrastructure Capacity Enhancement](#)

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

PRODUCTION LINKED INCENTIVE (PLI)

Context: Recently, The government has extended the tenure of **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Automobile and Auto Components** by one year with partial amendments.

Key highlights of amendments:-

- The incentive scheme will be applicable for **five consecutive financial years starting from 2023-24**.
- The amendments **aim to provide clarity and flexibility** to the scheme.
- The incentive disbursement will occur in the **following financial year 2024-25**.
- Approved applicants will be eligible for benefits for five consecutive years, but not beyond the financial year ending on **March 31, 2028**.
- If an approved company fails to meet the threshold for an increase in Determined Sales Value over the first year's threshold, it will not receive **any incentive for that year**.
- The amendment also includes changes to the table indicating the incentive outlay, totaling Rs. **25,938 crore**.

About PLI scheme Automobile and Auto Components:-

- **Launched:2021.**
- **Ministry:Ministry of Heavy Industries.**
- **Objective :** to overcome the cost disabilities of the industry for the manufacture of Advanced Automotive Technology products in India.

Salient Features:-

- Union Cabinet approved the PLI-Auto Scheme on 15.09.2021 with budgetary outlay of Rupee 25,938 crore for a period of 5 years (FY2022-23 to FY2026-27).
- The Scheme is focused on **Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs)** i.e. Battery Electric Vehicle and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicle.
- **Base year:** Financial Year 2019-20.
- The scheme has **two components:-**
 - **Champion OEM Incentive scheme:** It is a 'sales value linked' scheme, applicable to Battery Electric Vehicles and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicles of all segments.
 - **Component Champion Incentive Scheme:** It is a 'sales value linked' scheme, applicable on pre-approved Advanced Automotive Technology components of all vehicles. Pre-approval of the eligible products will be done by Testing Agency.
- The **incentive under the scheme is applicable from FY 2022-23 to FY 2026-27** (5 years' period) and the disbursement is applicable in the subsequent financial year i.e. from FY 2023-24 to FY 2027-28.
- **Eligibility:** The scheme is open to **existing Automotive companies as well as new Non-Automotive investor companies** (who are currently not in the automobile or auto component manufacturing business).
- **A minimum 50% domestic value addition** will be required to avail of incentives under the scheme.

Benefits:-

- This scheme will also help **to facilitate and promote deep localization for AAT products** and enable the creation of domestic as well as global supply chains.
- The PLI-AUTO Scheme will **boost manufacturing of Advanced Automotive Technology (AAT) Products. (Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0)**

MUST READ: [Electric Vehicles](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

SAGAR PARIKRAMA

Context: Recently, the 10th phase of **Sagar Parikrama** began from Chennai Port.

Background:-

- The tenth phase of Sagar Parikrama began from Chennai Port today. Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Parshottam Rupala and Union Minister of State Dr L. Murugan jointly inaugurated the mission which will travel through Nellore, **Visakhapatnam** and Srikakulam.

About Sagar Parikrama:-

- **Ministry: Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying.**
- **First phase Began :5th March 2022 .**

- **First phase location: Mandvi, Gujarat.**
- **Organized by:** Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and National Fisheries Development Board along with-
 - Department of Fisheries, Government of Gujarat,
 - Indian Coast Guard,
 - Fishery Survey of India,
 - Gujarat Maritime Board and
 - Fishermen representatives.
- **Objective:** to address the challenges faced by fishers and stakeholders while uplifting their economic prospects through various fisheries schemes and programs, such as Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) & and Kisan Credit Cards (KCC).
- Sagar Parikrama is a **navigation journey** to be conducted in all coastal states/UTs through a pre-decided sea route **to demonstrate solidarity with all fisherfolk, fish farmers, and concerned stakeholders.**
- It is envisioned as a part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsava' saluting our great freedom fighters, sailors, and fishers.
- The Parikrama shall be accompanied by the State Fisheries officials, Fishermen representatives, Fish-Farmers entrepreneurs, stakeholders, professionals, officials, and Scientists from across the nation.
- It is to be celebrated through a pre-decided sea route down right from Gujarat, Diu, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands.

Significance:-

- The Sagar Parikrama Program is being celebrated as a part of the **75th "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsava"**.
- It is an initiative to **know the problems of Coastal Fisherfolk.**
- It will **demonstrate solidarity with all fisherfolk, fish farmers, and concerned stakeholders**

MUST READ: [Marine Spatial Planning Framework](#)**SOURCE:** [AIR](#)**SMART 2.0****Context:** Recently, the **SMART 2.0** was launched.**Background:-**

- According to Prof (Vd) Rabinarayan Acharya, DG, CCRAS, the study aims at safety, tolerability and adherence to Ayurveda formulations in the priority research areas of Bal Kasa, Malnutrition, Insufficient lactation, Abnormal Uterine Bleeding, Osteoporosis in post-menopausal women and Diabetes Mellitus (DM) II.

About SMART 2.0:-

- 'SMART 2.0' stands for **Scope for Mainstreaming Ayurveda Research among teaching professionals program.**
- **Launched on: January 3rd, 2024.**
- **Launched by: The [Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences \(CCRAS\)](#) and National**

Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM).

- **Ministry : Ministry of Ayush.**
- **Objective:** to promote robust clinical studies in priority areas of Ayurveda with Ayurveda academic institutions/hospitals across the country through mutual collaboration.

Salient Features:-

- The objective of 'SMART 2.0' is to generate a tangible evidence **to demonstrate efficacy and safety of Ayurveda interventions using interdisciplinary research methods** and translating it into public health care.
- Under the '**SMART 1.0**', **around 10 diseases were covered** with the active participation of teaching professionals from 38 colleges.
- Under it, the CCRAS and NCISM invite expressions of interest from Ayurveda colleges, hospitals and universities to jointly undertake robust studies demonstrating the efficacy and safety of Ayurveda formulations **targeting key healthcare challenges.**
- **Areas of Focus:**Initial research span pediatrics, women's health, malnutrition and lifestyle diseases:-
 - Childhood Nutrition: Wasting, lactation issues
 - Menstrual issues: Abnormal uterine bleeding
 - Nutrition: Malnutrition, calcium deficiencies
 - Lifestyle Diseases: Diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis
- CCRAS will **provide scientific inputs** and project monitoring during the multi-center trials.

MUST READ:[WHO and Traditional Medicine](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

OPEN ACREAGE LICENSING POLICY (OALP)

Context: Recently,**Open Acreage Licensing Policy Bid Round-IX** was launched.

Background:-

- Contracts signed for 3 Coal Bed Methane Blocks awarded under Special CBM Bid Round- 2022.
- Contracts also signed for 10 blocks awarded under OALP Bid Round-VIII.

About Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP):-

- **Launched:June 2017**
- **Ministry:Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG)**
- **Objective:** to accelerate the Exploration and Production (E&P) activities in India.

Salient Features:-

- Under HELP, [Open Acreage Licensing \(OALP\) mechanism](#) has been launched which **allows the investors to carve out blocks** of their choice by assessing E&P data available at NDR & by submitting an Expression of Interest (Eoi).
 - The **Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)** replaced the erstwhile **New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP)** in March 2016.
- EOI **can be submitted throughout the year** without waiting for a formal bid round from the government.
- These blocks would be subsequently offered through a **biannual formal bidding process.**
- OALP would be manifested through the **National Data Repository** which will provide a rapid

jumpstart to E&P activities by providing seamless access to the country's entire G&G data for interpretation and analysis.

- NDR is a **government-sponsored E&P data bank** with state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure for the preservation, upkeep and dissemination of data to enable its systematic use for future exploration and development.

Benefits:-

- The OALP has helped **remove red-tapism**.
- It brought in a quantum **jump in the Exploration** and production sector. ([India's Transition away from Coal](#))

MUST READ: [Green Hydrogen](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

'VEER GATHA'

Context: The 3rd edition of Project 'Veer Gatha', witnessed an overwhelming response pan India recently.

Background:-

- As per the Defense Ministry, around 1.37 crore students from around 2.43 lakh schools participated in the initiative.

Veer Gatha Project Overview

- Launched in 2021 by **the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Education**.
- Aimed to **disseminate gallantry awardees'** bravery and life stories among students.
- Provides a platform for creative projects based on award winners.
- Students frame projects using **art, poems, essays, and multimedia**.
- Winners are awarded at the national level by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education.
- Coterminous with Republic Day Celebrations each year.
- Two editions conducted in 2021 and 2022.
- **In the current edition, 100 winners, known as the "Super 100,"** will be selected at the national level.
- Winners will also be recognized at **district and State/UT levels**.

MUST READ: [Veer Baal Diwas](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

PRERANA

Context: Recently, PRERANA program was launched.

Background:-

- Online Registration portal of the experiential learning program has been launched.

About PRERANA program:-

- **Launched: 2024.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Education.**
- **Objective:** to offer a meaningful, unique, and inspiring experience to all participants, thereby empowering them with leadership qualities.

Prerana School: A Value-Based Education Program

- Driven by the integration of **Indian education system principles** and the philosophy of value-based education.
- A week-long residential **program for selected students of class IX to XII**.
- Batch of **20 selected students (10 boys and 10 girls)** from various parts of the country.
- Curriculum prepared by IIT Gandhi Nagar, rooted in nine value-based themes like **yoga, mindfulness, meditation, experiential learning, thematic sessions, and hands-on learning activities**.

Benefits:-

- **Holistic Learning Approach:** Participants engage in diverse activities, embracing indigenous knowledge systems, state-of-the-art technologies, and insights from inspirational personalities.

MUST READ: [National Education Policy 2020](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

UTTAR PURVI MAHOTSAV 2024

Context: Recently, **Uttar Purvi Mahotsav 2024** was celebrated.

Background:-

- Shri Chanchal Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Development of North East Region briefed the media **About** the first edition of Uttar Purvi Mahotsav.

About Uttar Purvi Mahotsav 2024:-

- **Date:** from the 13th to 17th January, 2024.
- **Venue:** at Bharat Mandapam at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.
- **Organized by:** Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region.
- It is managed through its CPSE, **North Eastern Handicrafts & Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NEHHDC)** to showcase the rich diversity of North East India.
- A Focused **panel discussions on women empowerment** and the youth workforce .

Benefits:-

- It will **provide a conducive platform** for significant buyer-seller meets, fostering valuable interactions across various sectors.
- It promises an enchanting **journey through traditional dances from different states**, mesmerizing performances, and a showcase of the region's rich cultural heritage.

MUST READ: [Integration of North-Eastern India and its Significance](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

"PRITHviIgyan (PRITHVI)"

Context: Recently, Cabinet approved overarching scheme **"PRITHviIgyan (PRITHVI)"**.

Background:-

- The Union Cabinet Chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved the overarching scheme **"PRITHviIgyan (PRITHVI)"** of Ministry of Earth Sciences, for implementation

during the period from 2021-26 at an overall cost of Rs. 4,797 crore.

About PRITHviIgyan (PRITHVI) SCHEME:-

- **Implementation period: from 2021-2026.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Earth Sciences.**

Objectives:-

- Augmentation of **long-term observations of the atmosphere, ocean, geosphere, cryosphere and solid earth** to record the vital signs of the Earth System and change.
- **Development of modelling systems** for predicting weather, ocean and climate hazards and understanding the science of climate change.
- **Exploration polar and high seas regions** towards discovery of new phenomena and resources.
- Development of technology for **harnessing of oceanic resources** for societal applications.

Salient Features:-

- The scheme **encompasses five ongoing sub-schemes** namely "[Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services \(ACROSS\)](#)", "Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART)", "Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER)", "Seismology and Geosciences (SAGE)" and "Research, Education, Training and Outreach (REACHOUT)".
- It will help in **taking up cross-disciplinary projects** and even use funds allocated for the separate verticals together. Thus, it will also facilitate **ease of doing research**.
- It will **help in addressing the grand challenges of weather and climate, ocean, cryosphere, seismological science, and services** and explore the living and non-living resources for their sustainable harnessing.
- **Significance:- It deal with all the five components** of the earth system: **atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere, cryosphere, and biosphere, and their complex interactions.**

MUST READ: [Deep Ocean Mission](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

PRADHAN MANTRI JAN AUSHADHI YOJANA (PMJAY)

Context: Recently, the Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation and the Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers & Health and Family Welfare addressed the National Mega Conclave on "PACS as Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (provided under **Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana (PMJAY)**)."

Background:-

- As per the new model bylaws adopted by the Ministry of Cooperation, the **scope of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) has been widened** beyond their original function of dealing with agricultural credits at the grassroots level.
- [PACS](#) are now empowered to access many other avenues like the opening of Jan Aushadhi Kendras.
 - PACS are village-level **cooperative credit societies** that serve as the last link in a three-tier cooperative credit structure headed by the State Cooperative Banks (SCB) at the state level.

About Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana (PMJAY):-

- **Launched:2008.**
- **Historical Background:-**
 - It was launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals under the name **Jan Aushadhi Campaign in 2008.**
 - **2015:** It was re-launched as '**Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana' (PMJAY).**
 - **2016:** it was again renamed "Pradhan Mantri BharatiyaJanaushadhiPariyojana" (PMBJP).
- **Ministry: Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.**
- **Implementing Agency: the Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI).**
- **Objectives of PMBJP:** to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to people through special Kendras known as **Pradhan Mantri BharatiyaJanaushadhiPariyojana Kendra.**
- **Funding:** Financial Support is provided by the government to eligible NGOs/Trusts/agencies/individuals to establish Jan Aushadhi stores.

Salient Features of PMBJP:-

- Ensure **access to quality medicines.**
- **Create awareness About generic medicines** through education and publicity so that quality is not synonymous with only high prices.
- The scheme ensures **easy reach to affordable medicine** to the people in every nook and corner of the country.
- **Create demand for generic medicines** by improving access to better healthcare through low treatment cost and easy availability wherever needed in all therapeutic categories.
- **Janaushadhi Sugam** facilitates the public by **providing a digital platform** at the tip of their fingers.
 - **Jan Aushadhi Sugam:** a mobile app that helps in locating the nearest Janaushadhi Kendra and the availability of medicines with its price.
- **Pharmaceutical & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI)** has been established for co-ordinating procurement, supply and marketing of generic drugs through the **Jan Aushadhi Stores. (Pradhan Mantri Janaushadhi Kendra (PMJK))**
- The **quality, safety and efficacy of medicines** are ensured to the required standards before the same are supplied to Supers stockists /Jan Aushadhi Stores from the Warehouse.

Benefits of PMBJP:-

- The scheme ensures easy reach to **affordable medicine** to the people in every nook and corner of the country.

MUST READ:[Mission Indradhanush Complete Immunization](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

VIKSIT BHARAT SANKALP YATRA

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister interacted with beneficiaries of the **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra.**

Background:-

- Thousands of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra beneficiaries from across the country along with Union Ministers, MPs, MLAs and local-level representatives joined the event.

About Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra:-

- **Launched: November 2023.**
- **Objectives:-** Reaching the unreached, Dissemination of information and generating awareness,

Learning from the citizens, Enrolment of potential beneficiaries through details ascertained during the Yatra.

Salient Features:-

- The Yatra launched on the occasion of **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas**, by flagging off IEC (Information, Education and Communication) Vans which will be initially visiting the districts having significant Scheduled Tribe population and the remaining districts from the third week of November 2023 onwards up to 26 January 2024.
- **Five specially designed IEC (Information, Education and Communication) Vans** will carry the message of the Government's flagship welfare programmes.
- The schemes that will be publicized through the yatra include [Ayushman Bharat; PMJAY](#) PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana; [Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana](#) among others.
- The target is to cover over 2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats and over 3,600 urban local bodies by 25th January 2024.

MUST READ:[One District One Product\(ODOP\)](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

SWADESH DARSHAN 2.0 SCHEME.

Context: Recently, Odisha's Debrigarh, Khinda was included in the Ministry of Tourism's **Swadesh Darshan 2.0** scheme.

Background:-

- Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary and Khinda Village will be developed under the scheme as sustainable and responsible destinations with a tourist and destination-centric approach.

About Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme:-

- **Ministry: Ministry of Tourism.**
- **Objective:** to realize India's full potential as a tourist destination and promote "vocal for local" as its guiding principle.

Salient Features:-

- It aims to **develop sustainable and responsible destinations** with a tourist and destination-centric approach and has shared the guidelines for the SD2.0 scheme.
- The Scheme is **100% centrally funded**.
- The projects are sanctioned subject to the **availability of funds, submission of suitable Detailed Project Reports (DPR), adherence to scheme guidelines and utilisation of funds** released earlier etc.
- Swadesh Darshan 2.0 is a generational shift **to transform the [Swadesh Darshan Scheme](#) into a holistic mission** to create sustainable and responsible tourism destinations.
- With a **focus on tourists and destinations**, it will aid in the creation of sustainable and responsible destinations.
- It will **encourage the creation of generic and theme-specific benchmarks and standards** for the **development of tourism destinations** and states will adhere to those benchmarks and standards.
- Some of the prominent places identified are **Jhansi and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, Gwalior, Chitrakoot and Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh and Ajanta and Ellora in Maharashtra**.
 - **The Scheme has identified the following significant tourism themes:** Tourism of Culture and Heritage, Adventure Tourism, Eco-Tourism, Wellness Tourism, MICE Tourism, Rural

Tourism, Beach Tourism, Cruises – Inland and Ocean.

- **Significance:** scheme seeks to **enhance the contribution of tourism to local economies.**

MUST READ: [Promotion of Buddhist Sites under Swadesh Darshan & PRASHAD](#)

SOURCE: [THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

ANUBHAV AWARDS SCHEME 2024

Context: Recently, the Government has notified the **ANUBHAV Awards Scheme 2024.**

Background:-

- The Last Date for submissions on the ANUBHAV portal will be 31 March 2024, all Line Ministries/ Departments will reach out to Pensioners to make submissions on the ANUBHAV Portal.

About ANUBHAV Awards Scheme, 2024:-

- **Launched: 2015.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.**
- **Objective:** to incentivize and encourage more retiring employees to submit their write-ups.
- **It recognises the contribution made by Retired Officials to nation-building** while working in Government and to document the administrative history of India through written narratives.
- On the directions of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, DOPPW **launched an online platform entitled 'Anubhav Portal' in March 2015 for sharing experiences of retiring/retired Central Government employees** while working with the Government.
- To participate in the scheme, retiring **Central Government employees/pensioners are required to submit their Anubhav write-ups**, 8 months prior to retirement and up to 1 year after their retirement.
- The write-ups will be published after **assessment by concerned Ministries/ Departments.**
- The **published write-ups will be shortlisted** for Anubhav Awards and Jury Certificates.

MUST READ: [Padma awardee Shanti Devi](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

INAUGURATED ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE SEWRI-NHAVA SHEVA ATAL SETU

Context: Recently, Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated **Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu** in Navi Mumbai.

Background:-

- The Prime Minister posted : “Delighted to inaugurate Atal Setu, a significant step forward in enhancing the ‘Ease of Living’ for our citizens. This bridge promises to reduce travel time and boost connectivity, making daily commutes smoother.”

About Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu:-

- The **foundation stone of the bridge** was laid by the **Prime Minister in December 2016.**
- **Vision:** to improve the ‘ease of mobility’ of citizens by strengthening urban transport infrastructure and connectivity.
- It is **About a 21.8 km long 6-lane bridge** will be the **longest bridge in India** and also the **longest sea bridge in India.**
- It will **provide faster connectivity to Mumbai International Airport** and **Navi Mumbai International Airport** and **reduce the travel time from Mumbai to Pune, Goa and South India.**
- It has specially designed lighting poles to **withstand high-velocity winds during monsoons** and

equipped with a **Lightning Protection System** to safeguard against damage caused by lightning.

MUST READ: [Char Dham Highways](#)

SOURCE: [THE ECONOMIC TIMES](#)

AMRIT BHARAT STATION SCHEME (ABSS)

Context: Recently, the Udupi station has been included in the **Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS)** for redevelopment.

Background:-

- The railway station is under the Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd. (KRCL) network and was in dire need of attention.

About Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS):-

- **Launched:** August, 2023.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Railways.

Objectives:-

- The **preparation and implementation of master plans** for railway stations to enhance the facilities beyond the minimum essential amenities and creating roof plazas and city centres at the station premises in the long term
- Meet the **needs of all stakeholders** based on the funding availability and inter-se priority
- The scheme will cater to the **upgradation and replacement of existing amenities** as well as the introduction of new amenities

Salient Features:-

- The [Amrit Bharat Station scheme](#) envisages to take up **76 railway stations** over Central Railway for upgradation/modernisation and out of that, the foundation stone will be laid at 38 stations.
- It involves the **preparation of Master Plans** and their implementation in phases to **improve the amenities at the stations** like improvement of station access, circulating areas, waiting halls, landscaping etc. keeping in view the necessity at each station.
- The scheme also envisages **improvement of the building, integrating the station** with both sides of the city, multimodal integration, amenities for Divyangjans, sustainable and environment-friendly solutions, provision of ballastless tracks, 'Roof Plazas' as per necessity, phasing and feasibility and creation of city centres at the station in the long term.
- It will **cover stations that have undergone detailed techno-economic feasibility studies**. However, the roof plazas in these stations will not be constructed in the near term as reallocation of structures and utilities is given higher priority.
- The scheme will be implemented **based on the needs and patronage of the railway stations**.
- Infrastructural development will be ensured for **more than 1,000 stations under this scheme**.

Benefits:-

- Modern passenger amenities.
- Improved traffic circulation.
- Inter-modal integration.
- Sustainability and Eco-friendliness.

MUST READ:[Restructuring of Railways](#)

SOURCE:[THE HINDU](#)

PRASADAM

Context: Recently, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurated the country's 1st Healthy & Hygienic Food Street, 'PRASADAM,'.

Background:-

- It was inaugurated at Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok, in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.

About PRASADAM:-

- **Launched: January, 2024.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.**
- PRASADAM will connect common citizens in every corner of the country with pure and safe local and traditional food.
- This endeavour will align common people and tourists to safe and healthy eating habits.
- It is the country's first "Healthy and Hygienic Food Street".
- It is spread over 939 square metres with 19 shops.
- Prasadam offers convenient and culturally rich dining options for the 1-1.5 lakh devotees who visit the Mahakaleshwar Temple daily. ([Nagara style of temples](#))
- The food street is designed to provide various facilities, including a kids' play area, drinking water facility, CCTV surveillance, parking, public conveniences, and seating spaces.

MUST READ:[Khajuraho temples](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

India Post Payments Bank

Context: Recently, India Post Payments Bank Celebrated a Milestone Achievement of Eight Crore Customers.

Background:-

- Since its inception, the IPPB has been dedicated to providing accessible and affordable banking solutions to every corner of the nation.
- This remarkable achievement of reaching eight crore customers reflects the trust and confidence placed in IPPB by the people of India.

About India Post Payments Bank (IPPB):-

- **Launched: 2018 and Governed by: Reserve Bank of India (RBI).**
- It was launched with 100% equity owned by the Government of India.
- It is a payments bank of the Indian postal department.
- **Objective:** to build the most accessible, affordable, and trusted bank for the common man in India.
- **Focus group:** While its services are available to all citizens, the IPPB is primarily focusing on serving social sector beneficiaries, migrant laborers, un-organized sector, Micro Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Panchayats, low-income households, in rural areas and the unbanked and under-banked segments in both the rural and urban areas.

Functions of IPPB:-

- It accepts deposits and offers remittance services, mobile banking, and third-party fund transfers.
- It offers **3 types of saving accounts: Regular Account – Safal, Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account (BSBDA) – Sugam and BSBDA Small – Saral**
- The **maximum limit on deposits** for current and savings accounts is Rs 1 lakh.
- The bank offers a **4% interest rate** on savings accounts.
- They **can issue debit cards and ATM cards** and **cannot issue credit cards** it **cannot loan money**.
- It provides **social security payments like MNREGA wages, and direct benefit transfer** and gives **access to third-party services insurance, and mutual funds**.
- IPPB account holders will be issued a **QR code-based biometric card** with a unique QR code.

MUST READ: [Bharat Bill Payment System \(BBPS\)](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

PM-EBUS SEWA SCHEME

Context: Recently, tenders for e-buses have been floated under **PM-eBus Sewa** scheme.

Background:-

- Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday said that the Ministry has floated tenders for procuring buses under the PM-eBus Sewa scheme and the bidding process would be completed by the end of this month.

About PM-eBusSewa:-

- **Launched: 2023.**
- **Objective:** to give a push to the slow adoption of e-buses in public transport.
- Under it **10,000 e-buses will be deployed across cities in the country**.
- It will include all the **capital cities of the 'Union Territories, North Eastern Region, and Hill States'**.

Segments of the scheme:-

- There are two segments - **Augmenting the city bus services and Associated Infrastructure, and Green Urban Mobility initiatives**.
- **Augmenting the city bus services and Associated Infrastructure:** Under this segment, the scheme will augment city electric bus operations by extending Central Assistance (CA) for 10,000 electric bus operation on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, bus depots and behind-the-meter power infrastructure.
- **Green Urban Mobility Initiatives (GUMI):** Under this segment, the scheme will support the implementation of GUMI projects for complementing bus services and demonstrating a reduction in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in urban areas.

Operation Model:-

- City bus operations managed through a **Public Private Partnership (PPP) model**.
- Bus services **supported for 10 years**, with states/cities responsible for operations and payments to operators.

Benefits of PM e-bus Sewa scheme:-

- The scheme will **promote e-mobility**.

- Cities will be supported for the **development of charging infrastructure** under Green Urban Mobility Initiatives.
- Adoption of Electric mobility will **reduce noise and air pollution** and curb carbon emission.

MUST READ: [Hybrid Electric Vehicles \(HEV\)](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

STARTUP RANKING 2022

Context: Tamil Nadu was recognised as the 'Best Performer,' the top category in the States' **Startup Ranking 2022**, released recently.

Background:-

- It was the 4th edition of Startup India Ranking carried out by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.

About Startup Ranking 2022:-

- **Released by:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- **Objective:** to evaluate all of India's States and Union Territories (UT) on their efforts to build an ecosystem conducive to startup growth.
- States' Startup Ranking **was launched in February 2018**.
- It **aims to evaluate the Indian [startup landscape](#)** through the eyes of state / UT policy intervention and identify practices that accelerate ecosystem growth and development.
- The **States' Startup Ranking Exercise has led each state / UT to have dedicated startup policies** and through its annual rankings, it is able to track the evolution of these policies and the overall efforts of states / UTs in ecosystem building.

Startup Ranking 2022:-

- Ranking framework comprised of 7 reform areas with a total of 25 action points with score of 85 marks and an overall score of 100 marks including that of the feedback exercise.
- This edition **saw the maximum participation** across all editions, of 33 States and Union Territories.
- The **states and union territories were divided into Category-A** (Population more than 1 crore) and **Category-B** (Population less than 1 crore) to establish uniformity and ensure standardization in the ranking process.
- The results of the 4th edition of the States' Startup Ranking 2022 on National Startup Day - **16th January 2024** at an event held in New Delhi at **Bharat Mandapam**.

Category A States (Population more than 1 crore)

- **Best performer:** Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu.
- **Top Performer:** Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana.
- **Leader:** Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand.
- **Aspiring leader:** Bihar, Haryana
- **Emerging Ecosystems:** Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir

Category B States (Population less than 1 crore)

- **Best performer:** Himachal Pradesh
- **Top Performer:** Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya

- **Leader:** Goa, Manipur, Tripura
- **Aspiring leader:** Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Nagaland
- **Emerging Ecosystems:** Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Ladakh, Mizoram, Puducherry, Sikkim.

MUST READ: [Ranking of States on Support to Startup Ecosystems](#)

SOURCE: [BUISINESSLINE](#)

AYUSH DIKSHA

Context: Recently, the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony for the construction of 'Ayush Diksha' will be held on 20th January 2024.

Background:-

- The Ceremony will be held at Central Ayurveda Research Institute (CARI), Bharatpur, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

About Ayush Diksha:-

- **Ministry:** Ministry of Ayush.
- It's a **Human Resource Development Centre of the Government of India**, of Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences.
- The Institute will **provide a teaching training programme to all the stakeholders of Ayush** in general and Ayurveda in particular at the national level.
- It will also **help in collaborating with other national institutions** for capacity development, **strengthening human resources in Ayurveda, facilitating research and development, maintaining high-quality standards and generating revenue besides achieving self-sufficiency.**

MUST READ: [Ayush Mark Certification Scheme](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

AROGYA MAITRI DISASTER MANAGEMENT CUBE – BHISHM

Context: Recently, Two **Arogya Maitri Disaster Management Cube-BHISHM** have been deployed in Ayodhya.

Background:-

- The revolutionary **mobile hospitals** equipped with cutting-edge technology, have been deployed in Ayodhya to bolster medical readiness and response capabilities during the upcoming 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony.
- It's part of the broader initiative named "**Project BHISHM**" – Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita and Maitri, is tailored to **treat up to 200 casualties, emphasizing rapid response and comprehensive care.**

About Arogya Maitri Disaster Management Cube:-

- It is the **world's first portable hospital** and **designed indigenously under Project BHISHM.**
- The modular trauma management and aid system is **made up of 72 detachable mini-cubes**, each being a specialized station for emergency response and humanitarian efforts.
- It contains **medical equipment and supplies** such as a mini-ICU, an operation theatre, a cooking station, food, water, a power generator, blood test equipment, an X-ray machine, and more.
- It **integrates AI and data analytics** to facilitate effective coordination, real-time monitoring.
- In the face of **mass casualty incidents (MCIs)**, where requirements range from basic aid to advanced medical and surgical care, the Aid Cube stands out with its ability to be deployed within

an astonishing 12 minutes.

- From **airdrops to ground transportation**, the cube can be rapidly deployed anywhere.
- Advanced medical equipment, **RFID-tagged for efficient repacking and redeployment**, is a key feature of the Cube.
- The state-of-the-art BHISHM software system **integrated into a provided tablet allows operators to locate items quickly, monitor their usage and expiry, and ensure readiness for subsequent deployments.**

Significance:-

- It **effectively bridges the crucial time gap from primary care to definitive care**, potentially saving numerous lives in the golden hour of emergencies.

MUST READ: [Ayushman Bharat PMJAY](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

PRADHANMANTRI SURYODAY YOJANA.

Context: Recently, PM Modi announced the launch of **Pradhanmantri Suryoday Yojana.**

Background:-

- Currently, there is no centrally compiled estimate of the number of households in India with rooftop solar installations.

About Pradhanmantri Suryoday Yojana:-

- **Launched: January, 2024.**
- **Objectives:-** Provide affordable solar energy, Increase energy independence, Promote environmental sustainability.

Salient Features:-

- It will **provide incentives and financial assistance** to make it affordable for residential consumers to adopt rooftop solar.
- This **scheme comes after India missed its initial target of 40 gigawatts of rooftop solar capacity by 2022** under the existing Rooftop Solar Programme.
- The new scheme signals **renewed impetus to achieve the target of 40GW capacity by the extended deadline of 2026.**
- The scheme aimed to **expand India's rooftop solar installed capacity** in the residential sector.
- A consumer can avail of the **benefits of the scheme through DISCOM** tendered projects.
- The **DISCOM's role is limited to issuing of technical feasibility approval**, installation of the net meter and inspect the system.
 - Net metering is a billing mechanism that credits solar energy system owners for the electricity they add to the grid.
- **Surplus solar power units generated can be exported to the grid.**

Benefits:-

- Installing solar rooftops will help **reduce monthly electricity bills of households.**
- It will also **support India's ambitious goal of reaching 500GW** of renewable energy **by 2030.**
- It will **boost energy security and self-reliance** while also benefiting the environment.

MUST READ: [Solar Roof Top Scheme](#)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)**'VAIBHAV' FELLOWSHIP****Context:** Recently, the Science Ministry announced the first recipients of the 'Vaibhav' fellowship.**Background:-**

- Science Minister Jitendra Singh said that the scheme was "open-ended" and was meant to facilitate meaningful collaboration, and potentially attract diaspora scientists to work in India.

About Vaibhav fellowship:-

- It offers **NRI researchers** an opportunity to work for a **minimum of one month to a maximum of two months a year** with a research institution or an academic institution in India.
- The duration is **three years** with offering the researchers up to **Rs 37 lakh for the entire period**.
- **Objective:** The VAIBHAV Fellowship aims at **improving the research ecosystem of India's Higher Educational and Scientific Institutions** by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world through the mobility of faculty/researchers from overseas institutions to India.

Eligibility: (for Scientists)

- The applicant should be a **Non-Resident Indian (NRI)**, [Person of Indian Origin \(PIO\)](#) and **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)**, currently living abroad.
- The applicant **must have obtained Ph.D./M.D/M.S degree from a recognized University**.
- Applicant **must be a researcher engaged in an overseas academic / research / industrial organization** with a proven track record of research & development working in the **top 500 QS World University Ranking**.
- Plan to pursue research **work for a minimum of 1 month to a maximum of 2 months a year** in a research institution / academic institution in India, spread over 3 years.

Eligibility: (for Institutions)

- Higher Educational Institutions / Universities ranked in the top 200 in NIRF overall rankings and have NAAC 'A' grades (3.0 and above) and scientific institutes.

Nature & Duration of Support:

- The fellowship is **tenable only in India and implemented in any of the recognized academic institutions, national laboratories and other recognized R&D institutions**.
- The host institution should provide the necessary administrative and infrastructural support
- The fellowship is for **1-2 months each year for a period of 3 years**.

The fellows will be entitled to receive the grants as given below:

- Fellowship of **USD 5000** (in equivalent Indian currency)
- **International Travel** from a place of their institute to a place of work in India in business class
- **Contingency Rs 1,00,000 per year**
- **Domestic Travel** for academic purposes up to two stations in a year

MUST READ: [SpaceTech Innovation Network \(Spin\)](#)SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

ALL INDIA SURVEY ON HIGHER EDUCATION (AISHE) 2021-2022

Context: Recently, the Ministry of Education, released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022.

Background:-

- The total number of Universities / University level institutions registered is 1,168, Colleges 45,473 and Standalone Institutions 12,002.

About All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022:-

- **Conducted by: Ministry of Education.**
- It was started in **2010-11** and is an **annual web-based survey**.
- Various parameters of data collection includes - **teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, and infrastructure.**
- Indicators such as **Institution Density, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Pupil-teacher ratio, Gender Parity Index, Per Student Expenditure** will also be calculated from the data collected through AISHE.
- **Significance:-** useful in **making informed policy decisions** and research for the development of the education sector.

Key findings from the report:-

- **Enrolment in higher education increases** to 4.33 crore in 2021-22 from 4.14 crore in 2020-21 and 3.42 crore in 2014-15 (an increase of 91 lakh students, i.e., 26.5% since 2014-15).
- **Female enrolment in Higher Education increases** to 2.07 crore in 2021-22 from 1.57 crore in 2014-15 (an increase of 50 lakh students, 32% increase).
- **GER increases** to 28.4 in 2021-22 from 23.7 in 2014-15; Female GER increases to 28.5 in 2021-22 from 22.9 in 2014-15
- Female GER continues to be more than male GER for fifth consecutive year since 2017-18.
- **Significant 44% increase in enrolment of SC students** since 2014-15 (66.23 lakh in 2021-22 from 46.07 lakh in 2014-15)
- **Substantial increase of 65.2% in enrolment of ST students** in 2021-22 (27.1 lakh), compared to 2014-15 (16.41 lakh)
- **Increase of 45% in OBC Student enrolment** in 2021-22 (1.63 crore) from 2014-15 (1.13 crore)
- **Significant 49.3% increase in Female OBC Students** in 2021-22 (78.19 lakh) since 2014-15 (52.36 lakh)
- **Total Ph.D. enrolment has increased 81.2% in 2021-22** (2.13 lakh) from 2014-15 (1.17 lakh)

MUST READ: [Gender gap in education](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

PM YASASVI SCHEME.

Context: Recently, a total of ₹32.44 Crore has been released for Pre-matric Scholarships and ₹387.27 Crore for Post-Matric Scholarships to States/Union Territories (UTs) under the **PM YASASVI scheme**.

Background:-

- These scholarships aim to assist students in pursuing their studies from pre-matriculation to post-secondary stages.

About PM YASASVI - PM Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for a Vibrant India :-

- **Ministry: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**

- **Objective:** To provide financial assistance to the OBC, EBC and DNT students studying at the post-matriculation or post-secondary stage.
- **Testing Agency:** The National Testing Agency has been entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the YASASVI ENTRANCE TEST.

Historical Background:-

- MSJ&E, a **national testing agency** founded by the government of India, is an autonomous, **self-sufficient premier testing organization** that conducts efficient and transparent standardized tests for the admission of applicants to premier higher education institutions.

Salient Features:-

- It is a Scholarship scheme for Other Backward Class (OBCs), Economically Backward Class (EBC) and Denotified Nomadic Tribes (DNT) Students
- **Components:-** Pre-Matric Scholarships, Post-Matric Scholarships, Top Class School Education, Top Class College Education, Construction of Hostels for OBC.

Eligibility:-

- Applicant students must be permanent residents of India.
- Candidate students should belong to any one of OBC, EBC, DNT SAR, NT or SNT community.
- Only students studying in class 9 or class 11 will be considered eligible to get this scholarship.
- The family annual income should be a maximum of 2.5 lakh rupees to get this scholarship.
- Students of all genders will be eligible to get the benefits under PM Yashasvi Scheme 2023.

Selection:-

- The candidate students have to **pass the computer-based entrance test.**

Benefits:-

- Financial assistance of Rs 75,000 per year is provided to eligible students of class IX in the form of scholarship.
- An amount of Rs 125,000 per year is provided to the students of class 11th as financial assistance.

MUST READ: [New National Education Policy](#)

SOURCE: [HINDUSTAN TIMES](#)

SPORTS

KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES 2023

Context: Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the opening ceremony of the **Khelo India Youth Games 2023** in Chennai, Tamil Nadu recently.

Background:-

- Shri Modi also launched and laid the foundation stone of projects related to the Broadcasting sector worth **About** Rs 250 crores.

About Khelo India Youth Games 2023:-

- It will witness the participation of **athletes from all 36 states and union territories of India.**
- The Logo carries the image of **Saint Thiruvalluvar** and mascot is **Veera Mangai.**
- This is the **first time that Khelo India Youth Games are being held in South India.**
- The Games will be **played across four cities of Tamil Nadu, namely Chennai, Madurai, Trichy and Coimbatore.**

MUST READ:[Grand Slam](#)

SOURCE:[THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

MISCELLANEOUS

WORLD BRAILLE DAY

Context: World Braille Day was celebrated across globe recently.

Background:-

- On this occasion, National Institutes and Composite Regional Centres under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities are organizing several programs in the country.

About World Braille Day:-

- This day marks the **birthday of Louis Braille**, the visionary **inventor of the Braille script**.
- The day recognizes that **people with visual impairments should have the same access to human rights** as everyone else.
- The **United Nations has designated 4 January** every year as World Braille Day.
- The **United Nations General Assembly declared World Braille Day** an international day in **late 2018**.
- Braille, a **universal code rather than a language**, serves as a tool to write and read in various languages, including Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Spanish, and many others.
 - It is a system of **reading and writing by touch** used by the blind.
 - It consists of **arrangements of dots** that make up letters of the alphabet, numbers, and punctuation marks.

MUST READ: [Enable The Disabled](#)

SOURCE: [AIR](#)

NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

Context: Recently, the President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu paid homage to **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose** on his birth anniversary.

Background:-

- Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his birth anniversary is on **January 23, 2024**.
- It is celebrated as **Parakram Diwas**.

About Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose:-

- **Birth: 1897, Birth place: Cuttack, Bengal &** was the **ninth child** of Janakinath and Prabhavati Bose.
- He passed the **Indian Civil Services (ICS) examination** in 1919.
- **Vivekananda's teachings** had a strong influence on him, and he regarded him as his **spiritual Guru**.
- **Chittaranjan Das** was his political mentor.
- He founded his own **newspaper, Swaraj**, after working as an editor for Das's newspaper Forward.
- He **advocated for unqualified Swaraj** (independence) and **opposed the Motilal Nehru Report**, which advocated for India's dominion status.
- He **actively participated in the 1930 Salt Satyagraha** and was vehemently **opposed to the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement** and the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931.
- He was **intimately linked with left politics in Congress in the 1930s**, alongside Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N. Roy.
- In 1938, Bose was elected **president of the Congress Party in Haripura**.

- In 1939, he won the presidential elections in Tripuri against **Gandhi's candidate, Patabhi Sitaramayya**.
- Bose **resigned and left Congress** due to ideological differences with Gandhi.
- He established a new political party, called "**the Forward Bloc**."

INA and World War II:-

- The Indian National Army was **formed in 1942**, consisting of thousands of **Indian prisoners of war captured** by the Japanese, and supported by Japanese troops.
- After his arrival in Singapore, Bose, issued from there his famous call, '**Delhi Chalo**', and announced the **formation of the Azad Hind Government** and the Indian National Army on **21st October 1943**.
- The **headquarters of the provisional government was moved to Rangoon in January 1944**, and after fighting at the Arakan Front, the INA crossed the Indo-Burma border and marched towards Imphal and Kohima in March.
- The Chalo Delhi campaign ended at Imphal however, as the British and British Indian armies, were able to defeat the Japanese forces and the INA and push them out of Kohima as well.
- After the Japanese surrendered on August 16, Bose left South East Asia on a Japanese plane and headed toward China.

MUST READ: [Nataji Subhash Chandra Bose's contribution and legacy](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

NATIONAL VOTERS DAY

Context: Recently, Prime Minister extended greetings on the occasion of **National Voters Day**.

Background:-

- The Prime Minister posted "Greetings on National Voters Day, an occasion which celebrates our vibrant democracy and also a day to encourage people to register as voters, if they haven't already. At 11 AM, I will address the Nav MatdataSammelan, which will bring together first time voters from across India."

About National Voters Day:-

- Every year **on January 25**, India celebrates National Voters Day.
- **Objective:** to encourage every voter in the country to participate in the political process.
- **It** was observed for the **first time in the country in 2011**.
- The main reason behind this was to **inspire more young people to participate in the electoral process**.
- The theme for 2023 was "**Making Elections Inclusive, Accessible, and Participatory**."

Significance:-

- The main significance behind the voting system is allows people **to decide who will govern** at the local, regional and national levels.
- This also means that **people have the power to select which political party, ideology or policies** will shape the nation's future.

MUST READ: [National Voters' Day – The Power of Vote](#)

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

PADMA AWARDS

Context: Recently, Prime Minister congratulates to all those who have been conferred the **Padma Awards**.

Background:-

- The Prime Minister said - "Congratulations to all those who have been conferred the Padma Awards. India cherishes their contribution across diverse sectors. May they continue to inspire people with their exceptional work."

About Padma Awards:-

- They are one of **the highest civilian honours of India** which were instituted in the **year 1954**.
- It is announced **every year on the occasion of Republic Day except** for brief interruption(s) during the years **1978 and 1979 and 1993 to 1997**.
- The Awards are given in **three categories**:- **Padma Vibhushan**: for exceptional and distinguished service, **Padma Bhushan**: distinguished service of higher order, **Padma Shri**: distinguished service.
- The Padma Awards are conferred on **the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee**, which is constituted by **the Prime Minister every year**.
- The **nomination process is open to the public also self-nomination** can be made.
- **Eligibility**:-
 - All persons **without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex** are eligible for these awards.
 - **Government servants** including those **working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards**.
- The award seeks to recognize works of distinction and is **given for distinguished and exceptional achievements/service in all fields of activities/disciplines**:-
 - **Art**: includes Music, Painting, Sculpture, Photography, Cinema, Theatre etc.
 - **Social work**: includes social service, charitable service, contribution to community projects etc.
 - **Public Affairs**: includes Law, Public Life, Politics etc.
 - **Science & Engineering**: includes Space Engineering, Nuclear Science, Information Technology, Research & Development in Science & its allied subjects etc.
 - **Trade & Industry**: includes Banking, Economic Activities, Management, Promotion of Tourism, Business etc.
 - **Medicine**: includes medical research, distinction/specialization in Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Siddha, Allopathy, Naturopathy etc.
 - **Literature & Education**: includes Journalism, Teaching, Book composing, Literature, Poetry, Promotion of education, Promotion of literacy, Education Reforms etc.
 - **Civil Service**: includes distinction/excellence in administration etc. by Government Servants
 - **Sports**: includes popular Sports, Athletics, Adventure, Mountaineering, promotion of sports, Yoga etc.
 - **Others**: fields not covered above and may include propagation of Indian Culture, protection of Human Rights, Wild Life protection/conservation etc.
- The award is **normally not conferred posthumously**. However, **in highly deserving cases**, the Government could consider giving an award posthumously.
- The awards are **presented by the President of India** usually in the month of March/April every year.
- The awardees are presented a **Sanad (certificate) signed by the President and a medallion**.
- The **total number of awards to be given in a year** (excluding posthumous awards and to NRI/foreigners/OCIs) **should not be more than 120**.
- The award **does not amount to a title and cannot be used as a suffix or prefix** to the awardees' name.

MUST READ:[Ramon Magsaysay Award](#)

SOURCE:[PIB](#)

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MAINS

PAPER 1

WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT

GS I – ROLE OF WOMEN

Context: India in its recent G20 presidency, designated "women-led development" as one of the six central focal points alongside inclusive growth, advancement of Sustainable Development Goals, environmentally friendly development, technological innovation, and the restructuring of multilateral institutions.

What do you mean by “Women-led Development”?

- Under women-led development, women are not just beneficiaries of development, instead, they set the agenda for development and are key participants in development planning and decision-making as leaders and equal participants.

Why India is making efforts to close the gender gap?

- India was ranked **127** out of **146** countries in the **Global Gender Gap Report, 2023**, and faces the perennial issue of **“missing women”** from the workforce – which is a serious problem.
- When women have access to resources, they invest in the education and health of families and communities, more than men. Ex: Women in **Panchayati Raj Institutions** have initiated and implemented various community development projects related to water management, sanitation, rural infrastructure, and poverty alleviation.
- According to a **McKinsey** report, **India can add up to 18% to its GDP provided it bridges its gender equality gap** by improving female workforce participation in the country.

Challenges faced by India in implementing Women-led Development:

- India has one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world. According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** of 2021, a total of 4,05,861 cases of crimes against women were reported in India, of which 32,033 cases were of rape.
- The Agriculture Census shows women land owners constituted only 13.9% in 2015–16.
- Women are underrepresented in political roles, including at the local level. Encouraging greater political participation by women is a challenge. Only 82 women members of parliament in India, in LS (15.2%) and RS (13%).

Various initiatives by the Indian government promoting Women-led Development:

- Stand Up India Scheme was **launched on 5th April 2016** to promote **entrepreneurship** amongst **women, Scheduled Caste (SC), and Scheduled Tribe (ST) categories**.
- **Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017** which was a revision of the Maternity Benefit Act, of 1961, provides for maternity leaves, and a creche facility at the workplace.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013** has provisions regarding grievance redressal and providing a safe working environment.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** ensures **access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, and Pension affordably**.

WOMEN IN ARMED FORCES

GS I – WOMEN

Context: Recently, the Defence Minister of India approved a proposal for extending the rules for maternity, child care, and child adoption leave for women soldiers, sailors, and air warriors in the Armed Forces on par with their officer counterparts.

History of Women in Armed Forces:

- Women had their first induction into the British Indian Army in 1927 as Military Nursing officers and as medical officers in 1943 to look after the troops, families, and public during deployments which included the female section of the population.
- It was only in the year 1992 that the Army, Air Force, and Navy began inducting women as Short Service Commission (SSC) officers. This was the first-time women were allowed to join the military outside the medical stream and as of now, there are more than 9500 women in the military.

Current Status of Women in Armed Forces:

- At present, women are being commissioned in the Indian Army in ten .
- The induction of women as officers in the Indian Navy commenced in the year 1991. Since then, the Indian Navy has gradually opened all branches to women officers including induction through NDA.
- For the first time women are also being recruited for sailors' entries under the Agnipath Scheme with effect from 2022 and 20% of vacancies are reserved for women.
- Officers' recruitment in the Indian Air Force is gender-neutral. Women officers are inducted in all the branches and streams of IAF.

Current statistics on women in the armed forces:

- There are 9,118 women currently serving in the army, navy, and air force.
- Women comprise only 3.8% of the Indian army, 13% of the air force, and 6% of the navy.

Examples of Women in the Indian Armed Forces:

- Gunjan Saxena is a former Indian Air Force officer who became the first woman to fly in a combat zone during the 1999 Kargil War between India and Pakistan.
- Tania Shergill became the first woman Parade Adjutant for the Republic Day parade in 2020, leading an all-male contingent of the Indian Army.

Significance of Women joining the Armed Forces:

- Women joining the armed forces can help to break down gender stereotypes and promote gender equality.
- It upholds the Right to Equality as provided in Articles 14, 15, 16, and 19 of the Indian Constitution
- Allowing a mixed-gender force keeps the military strong.
- Diversified talent pool: The inclusion of women in the armed forces increases the recruitment pool, allowing for a more diverse and representative military.

Challenges faced by Women in the Armed Forces:

- Both male and female prisoners are at risk of torture and rape. There is low acceptance in societies of abuse of women prisoners of war by the enemy.
- Having women serving in direct combat may hamper mission effectiveness by hurting unit morale and cohesion as the mindset of an average soldier on the ground remains averse to having a woman leader.

Global trends regarding women in armed forces:

- There are approximately 200,000 American women on active duty in the US armed forces. They constitute nearly 20 percent of its strength.
- Israel is known for its high representation of women in the armed forces. As of 2021, women comprise **About** 33% of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), including combat roles in the air force, navy, and infantry.

NAGARA STYLE OF TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

GS I – INDIAN CULTURE: ARCHITECTURE

Context: Ayodhya Ram Mandir is built in the Nagara style of temple architecture.

What do you mean by the Nagara style of architecture?

- It is a temple-style architecture prevalent in North India started from the fifth century A.D.

Features of Nagara style of Temple Architecture:

- They follow the Panchayatan style of making, which consisted of subsidiary shrines laid out in a crucified ground plan for the principal shrine.
- Outside the garbhagriha, images of the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, were placed.
- Unlike the Dravidian style of temple architecture, no water tanks or reservoirs are present on the temple premises.
- The temples were generally built on upraised platforms.
- The Shikharas were generally of three types:
 - **Latina or Rekha-prasad:** They were square at the base and the walls curved inward to a point on the top.
 - **Phamsana:** They had a broader base and were shorter in height than the Latina ones. They slope upwards in a straight line.
 - **Valabhi:** They had a rectangular base with the roof rising into vaulted chambers. They were also called wagon-vaulted roofs.
- The vertical end of the shikhara ended in a horizontal fluted disc, known as the Amalak. On top of that, a spherical shape was placed known as the Kalash.
- Inside the temple, the wall was divided into three vertical planes called rathas. These were known as triratha temples. Later, pancharatha, saptaratha, and even navaratha temples came into existence.
- Unlike the Dravidian style, the temple premises did not have elaborate boundary walls or gateways.
- **Examples of the Nagara style of architecture:** Lakshmana Temple in Khajuraho, Sun Temple at Modhera, Siddheshvara Mahadeva Temple in Barakar, and Kamakhya Temple in Assam.

Sub-schools of Nagara style of temple architecture:

- **Odisha School:** It is the most prominent distinguishing feature is the Shikara (Deul) which rises vertically before curving inwards at the top. These temples have intricately carved exteriors and usually bare interiors. Unlike Nagara temples of the north, most Odisha temples have boundary walls.
- **Chandel School:** Unlike the Odishan style, these temples are conceived as a single unit and have Shikaras that are curved from bottom to top. There are many miniatures of Shikaras rising from the central tower and towers that gradually rise to the main tower cap both the porticos and halls.
- **Solanki School:** They are similar to the Chandel School except that they have carved ceilings that appear like a true dome. The distinguishing feature of these temples is the minute and intricate decorative motifs.

GANDHIJI IN SOUTH AFRICA

GS I –MODERN INDIAN HISTORY: PERSONALITIES

Context: INS Trishul, a frontline warship of the Indian Navy visited Durban from 06 to 09 Jun 23 to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the 7th Jun 1893 incident at Pietermaritzburg, Railway Station.

What led Gandhiji to start Satyagraha in South Africa?

- On 7th June 1893, **Mahatma Gandhi** faced racial discrimination when he was forced to leave a **first-class compartment on a train in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa**. Despite purchasing a ticket, a European passenger demanded his removal, citing that **non-whites were not allowed in first-class compartments**.
- This incident became a pivotal moment for Gandhi, sparking his fight against racial oppression and the development of his philosophy of **Satyagraha**.

Contributions of Gandhiji in South Africa:

- He mobilized support for the welfare of Indians and **established the Transvaal British Indian Association in Johannesburg in 1903**.
- He organized Indians in **Durban and founded the Natal Indian Congress in 1894** to advocate for voting rights for Indians.
- He established the Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg in 1910 to prepare **Satyagrahis**. It was aimed to foster self-reliance, promote communal harmony, and provide training in practical skills.
- He compelled the South African government to **pass the Indian Relief Act in 1914**.
- He launched his first Satyagraha campaign in Johannesburg in 1906 against **an ordinance that imposed restrictions on Asians**
- He faced imprisonment multiple times for such as the famous **Volkruist Satyagraha in 1913**.

Note:

- In recognition of Gandhiji's fight against racial discrimination, Nelson Mandela, then President of South Africa, conferred **the Freedom of Pietermaritzburg** posthumously **on Mahatma Gandhi in a moving ceremony at Pietermaritzburg Railway Station on April 25, 1997.**
- **INS Trishul:** It is the second frigate of **the Talwar class** of the Indian Navy. It is the guided missile frigate, that joined the arsenal of the Indian Navy in 2003.

Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP)

GS I - INDIAN CULTURE: BUDDHISM

Context: Recently, the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP), a voluntary mass movement of Buddhists in Asia convened its 12th General Assembly in New Delhi.

What do you mean by the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP)?

- It was founded in **1970 with its headquartered at Gandanthechenling Monastery at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia** as a voluntary movement of followers of Buddhism.
- ABCP then emerged as a collaborative effort of Buddhist dignitaries from **India, Mongolia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, the then USSR, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and South and North Korea.**

Objectives of ABCP:

- To bring together efforts of Buddhists in support of consolidating universal peace, harmony, and cooperation among peoples of Asia and disseminate the Buddhist culture and traditions.

Major Highlights of the 12th General Assembly of ABCP:

- **The theme was "ABCP - The Buddhist Voice of Global South".** It reflects India's commitment, as demonstrated through its **G20 presidency** and the **Voice of Global South Summit.**
- The proactive role of India was highlighted in developing the Buddhist circuit and establishing the **India International Centre for Buddhist Culture.**

Relevance of the Buddhist teachings in the sphere of good governance:

- The Buddha's emphasis on **the Right View**, avoiding distortion and delusion, aligns with good governance principles of **transparency, objectivity, and evidence-based decision-making.**
- The Buddha's Five Precepts - non-violence, non-stealing, **non-lying, non-sexual misconduct, and non-intoxication** - can be interpreted as ethical guidelines for public officials.
- The Buddha's core teaching of compassion encourages leaders to consider the needs and **suffering of all citizens, not just certain groups.**
- The Buddha's emphasis on Right Speech and Right Action promotes respectful communication and non-violent solutions to conflict which can be applied in **international diplomacy, interfaith dialogue,** and even within internal political debates.

PAPER 2

SUICIDE CASES IN EDUCATIONAL HUB

GS II – GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

Context: Recently, the Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) has conducted a survey, highlighting a concerning issue of rising student Suicides in Kota.

Status of Student Suicides in India:

- As per the **National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB's)** Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India (ADSI) Report 2021, over 13,000 students died in 2021 in India at the rate of more than 35 every day, a rise of 4.5% from the 12,526 deaths in 2020 with 864 out of 10,732 suicides being due to **failure in examination**.

Reasons for increasing student suicide cases in educational hub:

Image Source: PIB

States with Higher Percentage Share of Suicides during 2019 to 2021

Sl. No.	Year		
	2019	2020	2021
1	Maharashtra (13.6%)	Maharashtra (13.0%)	Maharashtra (13.5%)
2	Tamil Nadu (9.7%)	Tamil Nadu (11.0%)	Tamil Nadu (11.5%)
3	West Bengal (9.1%)	Madhya Pradesh (9.5%)	Madhya Pradesh (9.1%)
4	Madhya Pradesh (9.0%)	West Bengal (8.6%)	West Bengal (8.2%)
5	Karnataka (8.1%)	Karnataka (8.0%)	Karnataka (8.0%)

- Academic Pressure because of high expectations** from parents, teachers, and society can lead to excessive stress and pressure to perform well in exams. It can be overwhelming for **some students, leading to feelings of failure and hopelessness**.
- Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder can contribute to student suicides. These conditions can be exacerbated by stress, loneliness, and lack of support.
- Many students in educational hubs come from far away and live away from their families and friends which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which becomes difficult to deal with in an unfamiliar and competitive environment.

Indian initiatives to curb suicides:

- Mental Healthcare Act (MHA), 2017** aims to provide mental healthcare services for persons with mental illness.
- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched a 24/7 toll-free helpline "KIRAN" to provide support to **people facing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts**, and other mental health concerns.
- Manodarpan** is an initiative of the Ministry of Education under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan which is aimed at providing psychosocial support to students, family members, and teachers for their mental health and well-being during the times of Covid-19.
- The National Suicide Prevention Strategy** announced in 2023 is the first of its kind in the country, with time-bound action plans and multi-sectoral collaborations to achieve a reduction in suicide mortality by 10% by 2030.

SEDITION

GS II – GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN VARIOUS SECTORS AND ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THEIR DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Context:The Supreme Court will hear a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of section 124A which deals with sedition, in January 2024.

The Law Commission, in its 22nd report, has urged that the sedition law needs to be retained but certain amendments should be made for greater clarity regarding its usage.

What is Sedition?

- Section 124A defines sedition as:** "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law shall be punished with imprisonment for

life, to which fine may be added...”

- Although Thomas Macaulay, who drafted the Indian Penal Code, had included the law on sedition, it was not added to the code enacted in 1860. Legal experts believe this omission was accidental. In 1890, sedition was included as an offence under section 124A IPC through the Special Act XVII.
- Several pre-independence cases involving Section 124A of the IPC are against freedom fighters, including Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Annie Besant, Shaikat and Mohammad Ali, Maulana Azad, and Mahatma Gandhi.

Punishment Under Section 124A:

- Sedition is a non-bailable offence. A person charged under this law cannot apply for a government job. They have to live without their passport.
- Upon conviction, the person can be punished with either life imprisonment for up to three years and a fine, or just a fine.

Why the sedition law is still retained?

- The 22nd Law Commission report cited threats to India’s internal security, including Maoist extremism, militancy, etc. for retaining the law on sedition. It justified criminalising sedition, saying it is a reasonable restriction under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.
- The report also said that courts of competitive jurisdictions like the US, the UK, etc. had their history, geography, population, diversity, laws, etc. These are not compatible with Indian circumstances.
- The Law Commission simply states that the absence of a provision like 124A of IPC, any expression that incites violence against the government would invariably be tried under special laws and counter-terror legislation.

Criticisms of sedition law:

- It poses a threat to freedom of expression guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.
- Words like *disaffection towards the government*, *visible representation*, etc. are vague and provide enough scope for its misuse.
- It has been misused to silence critics and target political opponents.

Supreme Court on sedition law:

- The *Kedarnath Singh v State of Bihar (1962)* upheld the constitutional validity of IPC Section 124A. However, the court attempted to restrict its scope for misuse. The court held that unless accompanied by incitement or a call for violence, criticism of the government cannot be labelled sedition.
- In the *Balwant Singh vs State of Punjab (1995)* case, the SC held that merely shouting slogans, in this case Khalistan Zindabad, does not amount to sedition.

22nd Law Commission’s Recommendation on Sedition Law:

- It recommended to include the ratio of the Kedar Nath ruling in the sedition law provision. The words "with a tendency to incite violence or cause public disorder" should be added to the provision.
- It suggests defining the "tendency to incite violence" as a mere inclination to incite violence or cause public disorder. This definition emphasizes that proof of actual violence or imminent threat to violence is not necessary.
- It proposes enhancing the jail term to up to seven years or life imprisonment.

Indian Penal Code (IPC):

- It is the primary criminal code enacted in 1860 during the British colonial rule, comprehensive legislation that defines various offenses, their punishments, and procedures for the prosecution of crimes.

ROLE OF AUDITS IN INDIA

GS II – POWERS, FUNCTIONS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VARIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES

Context: In 2023, only 18 audit reports on the Union government’s accounts, prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), were tabled in Parliament.

What do you mean by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)?

- It is a constitutional authority that heads the **Indian Audit and Accounts Department (IA&AD)**. The two entities are known as the **Supreme Audit Institution of India (SAI)**.
- He/She is appointed by the **president of India** by a warrant under his hand and seal.
- They the office for six years or until attaining the age of 65 years whichever is earlier.

Constitutional provisions related to the CAG:

- **Article 148** provides for an independent office of the CAG.
- **Articles 149-151 (Duties & Powers, Form of Accounts of the Union and the States and Audit Reports)**, **Article 279** (calculation of net proceeds, etc.), and **Third Schedule** (Oath or Affirmation), and **Sixth Schedule** (Administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram).

Provisions that provide independence for the functioning of the CAG:

- The salary and **expenses are charged to** the Consolidated Fund of India.
- It's provided with the **security of tenure** and does not hold office till the pleasure of the president, though he is appointed by him.
- Upon relinquishing the office, the **CAG is barred from holding any subsequent position within either the Government of India or any State Government**, maintaining the independence and integrity of the office.

Role/Significance of Audits in India:

- Audits instill **confidence in the public regarding how taxpayer money is utilized**, ensuring transparency in government operations.
- Audits help uncover **errors, discrepancies, or potentially fraudulent activities**, ensuring corrective actions are taken promptly.
- Audits highlight inefficiencies in processes, allowing for improvements and **cost-saving measures**.
- **Audits** assess the effectiveness of government programs and initiatives, **guiding future policy decisions for better outcomes**.

ONE NATION-ONE ELECTION (ONOE)

GS II – IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

Context: The Union Government established a 'High-Level Committee on One Nation, One Election', led by former President Ramnath Kovind.

What do you understand by 'One Nation, One Election'?

- It is a proposal under consideration by the Government of India to synchronize elections for the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian Parliament) and all state assemblies.
- It intends to hold these elections simultaneously, either on a single day or within a specific time frame.

Advantages/Benefits of ONOE:

- **It promotes national unity and integrity** by emphasizing collective decision-making, and reducing divisive regional politics, thereby promoting a shared national identity and common goals among citizens.
- **Economic efficiency of the election process:** According to the report on simultaneous elections by the Law Commission, ONOE will lead to economic efficiency by saving the public money. For example, the 2014 Lok Sabha elections (held with four Assembly elections) were spread over nine phases and of large number of CAPF personnel were deployed.
- **It may reduce disruptions in the service delivery mechanism of government** because a significant amount of time goes into election planning and strategizing it. Also, **governance is hampered by repeated application of MCC during election season**.
- Frequent elections come with hidden and hard-to-measure social and economic costs reducing the strain on the administrative setup. For example, teachers have to leave schools and colleges to perform election duties.

- Frequent elections can lead to voter fatigue and reduced participation. A synchronized election system may re-engage voters and lead to higher voter turnout, resulting in a more representative democratic process.

ONOE Challenges in India

- Constitutional provisions **limit the tenure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to five years**, raising feasibility issues if the central or state government collapses mid-tenure.
- **ONOE** contradicts the concept of '**federalism**', as it does not align with India's '**Union of States**'.
- The dominant party compromises regional party's voices in the state, making it difficult for regional parties to compete effectively.
- Recurrent elections can be beneficial in democracy as they allow voters to have their voices heard more frequently.
- **Simultaneous elections require a substantial budget**, with additional costs for procuring EVMs and VVPATs.
- ONOE may influence voter behavior, leading to larger national parties winning both state and Lok Sabha elections, marginalizing regional parties.

ONOE practiced at the global level:

- **In South Africa**, elections to national as well as provincial legislatures are held simultaneously for five years and municipal elections are held two years later.
- In **Britain**, the Fixed-term Parliaments Act of 2011 was passed to provide a sense of stability and predictability to the British Parliament and its tenure. It provided that the first elections would be held on the 7th of May, 2015, and on the first Thursday of May every fifth year thereafter.
- **Article 67 of Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany** proposes a constructive vote of non-confidence (electing a successor while dismissing the incumbent).
- **In Sweden**, elections to the national legislature (Riksdag) provincial legislature/county council (Landsting), and local bodies/municipal Assemblies (Kommunfullmaktige) are held on a fixed date i.e. second Sunday in September every fourth year.

INDIA-KENYA RELATIONS

GS II – International Relations: India's bilateral relations with Kenya

Context: India has extended a \$250 million Line of Credit for the modernization of agriculture in Kenya.

Where is Kenya located?

- Kenya is situated on the eastern coast of Africa, bordered by the Indian Ocean to the southeast. It shares land borders with Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the north, and Somalia to the east.

Various aspects of Indo-Kenya Relations:

Historical Relations:

- The presence of Indians in East Africa is documented in the 'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea' or Guidebook of the Red Sea by an ancient Greek author written in 60 CE.
- India established the office of Commissioner for British East Africa residents in Nairobi in 1948.
- Following Kenyan independence in December 1963, a High Commission was established in **Nairobi**, the capital of Kenya.
- India has had an Assistant High Commission in **Mombasa**, a coastal city in south-eastern Kenya.

India-Kenya Trade and Development Cooperation

- India-Kenya Trade Agreement (1981) and **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)** (1989) were signed, with revised DTAA in 2016 and 2017.
- India provides development assistance to **Kenya through loans and credit, including a Rs. 50 million loan**

in 1982 and Lines of Credit by EXIM Bank to Industrial Development Bank Capital Ltd.

- In 2021, India exported \$2.55B to Kenya, mainly Refined Petroleum, Packaged Medicaments, and Semi-Finished Iron.
- Kenya **exported \$107M worth products to India in 2021**, mainly Dried Legumes, Carbonates, and Tea.
- India is the third largest source of inbound tourists to Kenya.
- Kenya and India are members of international foras like the United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, Commonwealth of Nations, **G-77, G-15, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association** for Regional Cooperation.
- Line of credit (LOC) is a predetermined borrowing limit.
- Lake Turkana, the world's largest desert lake, is part of the Omo-Turkana basin.

INDIA – BANGLADESH RELATIONS

GS II – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD- RELATIONS

India-Bangladesh Relations Overview

- **India played a key role in forming Bangladesh**, acknowledging it as an independent state in 1971.
- Bilateral trade volume has grown significantly, fostering economic ties and job creation.
- **Improved connectivity between the two countries improves cross-border transportation** and trade.
- Bangladesh imports nearly 2,000 MW of electricity from India. **In 2018, Russia, Bangladesh, and India signed a memorandum on cooperation in the implementation of the Rooppur Nuclear power plant project**, Bangladesh's first nuclear power reactor
 - Financial assistance has supported infrastructure projects and contributed to Bangladesh's socio-economic development.
 - **Successful resolution of the long-standing border dispute has improved** bilateral relations and security.
 - High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) have improved community quality and fostered bonds.
 - India and Bangladesh engage in regional cooperation through multilateral forums.
 - Robust military cooperation enhances interoperability and strengthens defense capabilities.

Issues/Challenges in India-Bangladesh Relations:

- The border region faces a vulnerability to terrorist infiltration, with various extremist groups aiming to expand their influence. The presence of groups like Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) underscores the importance of close cooperation in intelligence sharing, counterterrorism operations, and border security.
- **India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers**, but only two treaties have been signed so far of **Ganga Waters Treaty and the Koshiyara River Treaty**. The other major rivers, such as the Teesta and Feni are still under **negotiation**.
- **Illegal Migration** involves both refugees and economic migrants, leading to socio-economic and political ramifications in the border states.
- Instances of drug smuggling, poaching, and human trafficking across borders undermine security and socio-economic development.
- China's involvement in Bangladesh through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) raises concerns for India's national security. China's military equipment procurement by Bangladesh and its pressure to undertake infrastructure projects pose challenges.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):

It is an ambitious project that focuses on connectivity and cooperation among multiple countries spread across the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe

Way Forward:

- Implementing smart **border management solutions that utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and data analytics can streamline cross-border movements while ensuring security and efficiency.

- **Resolving the illegal immigrant issue** requires enhanced border management and comprehensive immigration policies.
- India and Bangladesh need to engage in constructive dialogue to address China's rising presence and associated concerns and maintain regional stability.
- There is a **need to establish joint task forces comprising law enforcement agencies** from both countries to effectively combat cross-border drug smuggling and human trafficking.

INDIA – RUSSIA RELATIONS

GS II – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: INDIA'S BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

Context: Recently, the External Affairs minister of India visited Russia for a Bilateral Meeting where both countries signed agreements on nuclear power and in areas of medicines, pharmaceutical substances, and medical devices.

Indo-Russia Relations Overview

Historical Relations:

- Enhanced cooperation in political, security, defence, trade, economy, science and technology, and culture after the "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" in October 2000.

Political Relations:

- Annual meeting between Prime Minister of India and President of Russia is the highest institutionalised dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership.
- Two inter-governmental commissions - one on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological, and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) and another on Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) meet annually.

Nuclear Energy:

- Russia is a key partner for India in peaceful nuclear energy use.
- Kudankulam nuclear power plant is being built in Tamil Nadu with technical assistance from Russia.

Cultural Relations:

- Indian languages, dance, music, yoga, and Ayurveda are taught in Russian institutions.

Space Technology:

- Cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space, including satellite launches and the GLONASS navigation system.

Trade Relations:

- Total bilateral trade with Russia stood at USD 13 billion in 2021-22 and USD 8.14 billion in 2020-21.

Defence Relations:

- Joint military programmes include BrahMos cruise missile programme, 5th generation fighter jet programme, Sukhoi Su-30MKI programme, Ilyushin/HAL Tactical Transport Aircraft, and KA-226T twin-engine utility helicopters.

Terrorism:

- Agreement on Cooperation in Combating Terrorism and Organized Crime signed in November 2017.

Infrastructure:

- International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) aims to reduce transportation time and costs between the two countries.

Five Pillars of the India-Russia Relationship:

- **Similar political and strategic perceptions:** India and Russia share common perspectives on global affairs.
- **Intensive military-technical cooperation:** Defense collaboration between the two nations has been robust.
- **Strong economic bonds:** Economic ties between India and Russia have been substantial.
- **Deep ties in science and technology:** India and Russia have fostered significant cooperation in the fields of science and technology.
- **People-to-people and cultural links:** The relationship between the people of India and Russia has been characterized by cultural exchanges and mutual understanding.
- **Namaste Russia** promotes educational collaboration between India and Russia, facilitated through institutes like the Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre.
- **INDRA** is a joint military exercise between India and Russia.

- In **St. Petersburg Declaration** both India and Russia agreed to jointly explore hydrocarbons in the Arctic area. Russia's "Pivot to Asia" strategy and India's Draft Arctic Policy demonstrate the convergence between the two nations.
- The **Global Orbiting Navigation System (GLONASS)** is Russia's radio-based global navigation satellite system. It is the second alternate navigational system in use, with global coverage and comparable precision. It is Russia's answer to the US Global Positioning System (GPS) and the European GALILEO system.
- The **International North-South Transport Corridor** is a 7,200-kilometer **multi-mode transit system** that connects ship, rail, and road routes for moving cargo between India, Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe.

FOREST RIGHTS ACT(FRA) OF 2006

GS II - Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the Population by the Centre

Context: Even after 17 years of its enactment, the FRA has barely begun to deliver on its promise of freeing forest dwellers from historic injustices and democratizing forest governance.

What do you mean by the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006?

- The Forest Rights Act, 2006 (also known as the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act) is a landmark legislation in India that seeks to recognise and vest forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers.
- It aims to rectify historical injustices done to forest-dwelling communities and recognise their role in forest conservation.

- **Forest Rights Act (FRA) Provisions and Impacts**

Importance of the Act:

- Recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers.
- Enjoins Gram Sabha and rights holders to conserve biodiversity, wildlife, forests, and ecologically sensitive areas.
- Encompasses rights of self-cultivation, habitat, community rights, and traditional customary rights.
- Provides rights to the allocation of forest land for developmental purposes.

Impacts of the FRA:

- Improves livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities by enabling access to forest resources.
- Enables greater role in forest conservation and management.
- Recognizes traditional rights of forest-dwelling communities to ancestral lands and resources.

Challenges in Implementing the FRA:

- Poor recognition of Individual Forest Rights.
- Non-recognition of community rights serving the interests of conservationists and the development lobby.
- Slow and incomplete recognition of community rights to access and manage forests.
- Lack of comprehensive implementation of 'forest villages'.
- Challenges in areas with poor connectivity and low literacy rates due to digital processes.

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 identifies four types of rights:

- **Title rights** give FDST and OTFD the **right to ownership** of land farmed by tribals or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of **4 hectares**. Ownership is only for land that is being cultivated by the concerned family and no new lands will be granted.
- **The use rights** of the dwellers extend to **extracting Minor Forest Produce, grazing areas, etc.**
- **Relief and development rights** help to **rehabilitate** in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.

- **Forest management rights** include the right to **protect, regenerate conserve,** or manage any community forest resource that they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.

ELECTION COMMISSIONERS APPOINTMENT

GS II – WELFARE SCHEMES FOR VULNERABLE SECTIONS

Context: According to a recent study published in the Lancet Global Health, one in five girls and one in six boys are still getting married below the legal age of marriage in India.

What is child marriage in India?

- Child Marriage is defined as the marriage of a girl or boy before the age of minimum legal age (18 years).

Child marriage in India:

- In India, child marriage reduced from 47.4% in 2005-06 to 26.8% in 2015-16. In the last five years, it declined by 3.5% points to reach 23.3% in 2020-21, according to the latest National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) data.
- **The rate of child marriage is the highest in the central and western parts of India and lower in the eastern and southern parts of India.**

Why child marriage is prevalent in India?

- Social customs and cultural values of the family.
- Poverty and illiteracy.
- Socio-economic condition of the family.
- Lack of awareness **About** the harmful effects of it.
- Political patronage due to social acceptance.
-

Schemes/Policies for Preventing Girl Child Marriage:

- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY)** was launched in 2015, to promote the welfare of girl children. It encourages parents **to invest and build funds for the future studies and marriage expenses of the girl's children.**
- **Balika Samridhi Yojana** is a central government scheme to support girls in financially vulnerable sections of society. It ensures the enrolment and retention of girl children in primary and secondary schools. It aims at the **prosperity of a girl's child and provides them with a better-quality education.**
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** celebrates girl children, literally translating to Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child. It believes in women's empowerment and creating an inclusive ecosystem for the same. It aims **to promote girl children's safety before and after they are born.**
- **Ujjawala** is a **comprehensive scheme for the prevention of trafficking and rescue,** rehabilitation, reintegration, and repatriation of victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.

Legal Intervention in India:

- The **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006** and the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012** aim at protecting children from violation of human and other rights.
- The **Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill of 2021** seeks to **increase the marriage age of women from 18 years to 21 years.**

Global Scenario:

- According to data from UNICEF, the total number of girls married in childhood stands at **12 million per year.**
- The 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals, under goal 5 aims to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

Note:

According to NFHS data, West Bengal, Bihar, and Tripura top the list with more than 40% of women aged 20-24 years married below 18.

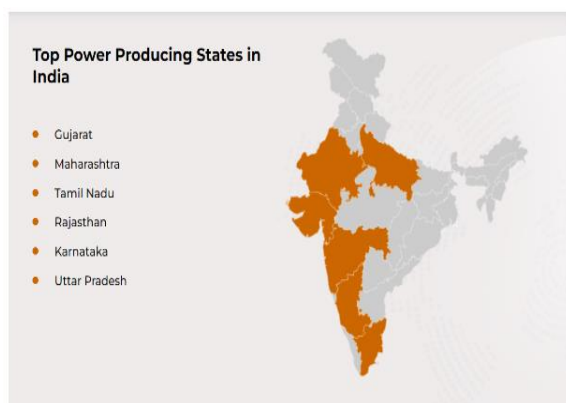
PAPER 3

TIME-OF-DAY (TOD) TARIFF SYSTEM

GS III – ECONOMY

Context: The Union Power Ministry announced amendments to the **Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules 2020**, and the changes included the introduction of time-of-day (ToD) tariff provisions.

- **Time-of-Day Tariff System Overview**
 - Set of rules determining electricity prices throughout the day.
 - Aims to disincentivize higher energy consumption during peak demand hours.
 - Determines when electricity is cheaper or more expensive based on different time periods.
 - Tariff during solar hours is 10-20% lower than the normal tariff.
 - Applicable for Commercial and Industrial consumers with maximum demand of 10 KW and above from 1st April 2024.
 - Smart meters are a prerequisite for ToD tariff systems.

Top power-producing states in India:**Advantages of ToD Tariff System**

- Ensures better grid integration of renewable energy sources.
- Improves management of renewable generation fluctuations.
- Sends price signals to consumers to manage their load according to the tariff.
- Expected to lead to better integration of renewable energy sources with the electricity grid.

Image Source: IBEF

Limitations of the Time-of-day (ToD) System:

- **It increases complexity in billing** as users must monitor usage across different times.
- **It needs behavioural changes** as consumers must adapt routines, like altering vehicle charging or appliance use.
- Some users might not adjust their consumption habits which may create resistance.
- Inflexible users face elevated costs during high-demand hours.
- Its success relies on ample smart meter deployment; India aims for 250M by 2026.

The Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules 2020:

- The Ministry of Power has promulgated the Rules under **the Electricity Act of 2003**.
- It shall **empower the consumers of electricity** as the consumers have the right to get **reliable services and quality electricity**.

ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN CANCER DETECTION AND TREATMENT

GS III – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- DEVELOPMENTS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS AND EFFECTS IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

Context: Mumbai's Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH), the biggest cancer hospital in India, is turning to artificial intelligence (AI) by establishing a Bio-Imaging Bank for early-stage cancer detection.

Future of AI in Cancer Treatment

- AI is expected to optimize treatment based on patient profiles, especially in rural India.
- AI could enable general practitioners to diagnose complex cancers with a simple click, enhancing precision in cancer solutions.
- AI promises timely cancer diagnoses, better patient outcomes, and support for healthcare professionals.
- AI tools in healthcare raise debates **About** the potential replacement of human radiologists and face regulatory scrutiny and resistance.

Cancer Overview

- Cancer is a large group of diseases that can affect any part of the body.
- Seven cancers accounted for more than 40% of the total disease burden in India.

AI in Cancer Detection and Treatment

- AI analyses radiological and pathological images to recognize unique features associated with various cancers.
- Comprehensive imaging generates longitudinal patient data for understanding behaviour, treatment response, disease recurrence, and overall survival.
- The creation of a tumour image bank allows for the development of algorithms for different tumours.

Artificial intelligence (AI):

- It is the ability of a computer or robot to perform tasks that are typically associated with human intellectual processes.

Bio-Imaging Bank Overview

- Repository of radiology and pathology images.
- Uses deep learning for cancer-specific early detection algorithm.
- Funded by Department of Biotechnology.
- Collaborates with IIT-Bombay, RGCIRC-New Delhi, AIIMS-New Delhi, and PGIMER-Chandigarh.
- Tasks include lymph node metastasis screening, nucleus segmentation and classification, biomarker prediction, and therapy response prediction.

National Cancer Grid (NCG):

- It aims to create a network of cancer centres, research institutes, patient groups, and charitable institutions across India to develop uniform standards of patient care for -
 - Prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer;
 - Providing specialised training and education in oncology and
 - Facilitating collaborative basic, translational, and clinical research in cancer.
- It was established in 2012 as a government of India initiative through the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and its grant-in-aid institution, the Tata Memorial Centre.

PROJECT TIGER

GS III – CONSERVATION OF WILDLIFE

What is Project Tiger?

- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.
- It was first initiated in the year **April 1, 1973**.
- It was administered by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**.

Objectives of Project Tiger:

It aims at

- Ensuring a viable population of the Bengal tiger ('endangered') in its natural habitats,
- Protecting it from extinction,
- Preserving areas of biological importance as a natural heritage that represent the diversity of ecosystems across the tiger's range in the country.

Project Tiger: Contributions and Challenges

- Established numerous tiger reserves across India, from nine in 1973 to over 50 in 2021.
- These reserves protect tigers and the ecosystem, promoting ecological balance and groundwater recharge.
- The tiger population has significantly recovered, now home to nearly 3,682 tigers, accounting for 75% of the global tiger population.
- The popularity of tiger reserves has increased eco-tourism, local employment, and conservation awareness.
- Tiger habitats are crucial for carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation.
- Challenges include poaching, fragmented habitats due to infrastructure projects, rising sea levels, insufficient funds, and community resettlement.

Ways to Enhance Project Tiger's Effectiveness:

- Strengthening anti-poaching measures through enhanced surveillance, technology-driven monitoring like drones, and better-equipped forest guards can deter poachers.
- Habitat connectivity by establishing wildlife corridors to connect isolated tiger habitats, ensuring genetic diversity and reducing human-tiger conflicts.
- Community involvement by engaging local communities in conservation efforts, providing alternative livelihoods, and compensating for losses due to wildlife.
- Research and monitoring through regular tiger censuses, health check-ups, and habitat quality assessments can provide insights to fine-tune conservation strategies.

Protection Status of Tiger:

- Schedule I: Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- Endangered: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List
- Appendix I: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Tiger Landscapes of India:

- Shivalik Hills and the Gangetic Plains, Central India, Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats
- North-Eastern Hills and Brahmaputra Plains, Sunderbans

Indian Initiatives to Protect Tiger:

- The Government conducts a **national tiger census** every four years to estimate the tiger population in the country.
- **Tiger Conservation Plan** is a document mandated under Section 38 V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for each tiger reserve, which prescribes management interventions for the said tiger reserve.
- **Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS)** is a comprehensive system that will provide a reference point to evaluate the existing management effectiveness of tiger conservation within integrated landscape planning and ensure that benefits from these efforts are optimized.
- The Government has also established **Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves** to protect critical tiger habitats outside of the designated tiger reserves.

- **Lidar-based survey technology** is being used to deal with the challenge of human-animal conflict that was causing the death of animals.
- **M-STripES** (Monitoring system for tigers – intensive protection and ecological status) uses GPS to geotag photo-evidences and survey information of tigers.
- **CaTRAT** (Camera Trap Data Repository and Analysis Tool) for automated segregation of camera trap photographs to species.

Global Initiatives to Protect Tiger:

- **Global Tiger Forum (GTF)** was established in 1994 and is the only inter-governmental body for tiger conservation. Its membership includes seven tiger range countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam.
- **Global Tiger Initiative (GTI)** was launched in 2008 as a global alliance of governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to work together to save wild tigers from extinction.
- **St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation** was adopted in 2010, by the leaders of 13 tiger range countries (TRCs) assembled at an International Tiger Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia. 13 tiger range countries – India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

PEGASUS

GS III – INTERNAL SECURITY: BASICS OF CYBER SECURITY

Context: Several opposition leaders said they had received a “threat notification” from Apple, alerting them to a “potential state-sponsored spyware attack” on their iPhones.

What is Pegasus?

- It is a spyware developed by an Israeli firm, NSO Group, to infiltrate smartphones — Android and iOS — and turn them into surveillance devices.
- It is used as a tool to track criminals and terrorists for targeted spying and not mass surveillance.
- It is **designed to gain access to devices, without the knowledge of users**, gather personal information, and relay it back to whoever it is that is using the software to spy.

Indian efforts to combat cybercrime:

- **Cyber Swachhta Kendra** was introduced for internet users to clean their computers and devices by wiping out viruses and malware.
- **Computer Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-IN)** is the nodal agency which deals with cybersecurity threats like hacking and phishing.
- **Telegraph Act, 1885** deals with interception of calls.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000** was enacted to deal with surveillance of all electronic communication.

Detecting Pegasus Spyware:

- The Amnesty International researchers have developed a tool called **Mobile Verification Toolkit (MVT)** that helps identify if your phone has been targeted by Pegasus spyware.

Global efforts to combat cybercrime:

- **International Telecommunication Union** is a specialized agency within the United Nations that plays a crucial role in the development and standardization of telecommunications and cybersecurity issues.
- **Budapest Convention** aims to address internet and computer crime by improving investigative techniques, harmonizing national laws, and increasing cooperation among nations. India is not a part of this convention.

Decoding Pegasus

Pegasus is a spyware, developed and licensed by an Israeli company, NSO Group. It can be used to infiltrate smartphones that run on both iOS and Android operating systems, and turn them into surveillance devices. A low down:

- Pegasus's method of attack is called zero-click attacks, which do not require any action by the user. The spyware can hack a device simply by giving a **missed WhatsApp call**
- It will **alter call logs** so that the user has no knowledge of what happened
- Once the spyware enters the device, it installs a module to track call logs, read messages, emails, calendars, Internet history, and gather location data to send the information to the attacker
- It can also be **installed manually** on a device or over a wireless transceiver
- If it fails to connect with its command-and-control server for more than 60 days, it **self-destructs and removes all traces**
- If it detects that it was installed on the wrong device or SIM card, it will **self-destruct**
- Amnesty International noted that despite issuing security updates, Android and iOS devices were **breached**
- To stay safe, users need to ensure that software in devices is updated and all apps are installed directly through the official stores. **No suspicious email or text should be clicked**



- The **World Press Freedom Index** produced by Reporters Without Borders has **ranked India 161st out of 180 countries in 2023.**

NATIONAL MONETISATION PIPELINE (NMP)

GS III – INFRASTRUCTURE

Context: Recently, the Centre has decided to conduct an asset recycling drive under the National Monetization Pipeline (NMP), aiming to generate resources for new investments in infrastructure.

What is the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)?

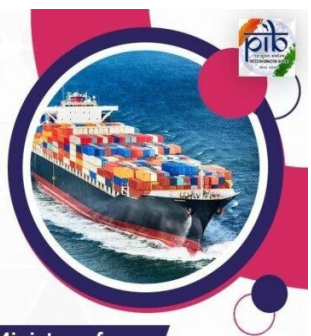
- The NMP envisages an **aggregate monetisation potential of Rs 6-lakh crore through the leasing of core assets of the Central government** in sectors such as roads, railways, power, oil and gas pipelines, telecom, civil aviation, etc., over four years (**FY 2022-25**).
- The **Monetization through NMP only includes core assets**, excluding monetization through **disinvestment of non-core assets**. Currently, only assets of **central government line ministries and CPSEs** in infrastructure sectors have been included.
- It is intended to support investments under the **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) worth Rs 111 trillion in six years through FY25.**


A Giant Stride in India's \$5 Trillion Economy Goal


Gati Shakti National Master Plan


Multimodal Connectivity Infrastructure to various Economic Zones

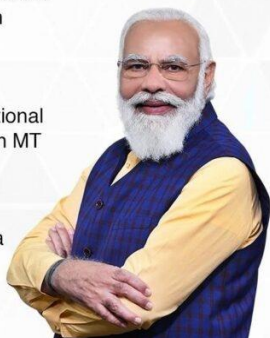
Targets upto 2024-25 for Ministry of Shipping



 Increase in Cargo capacity at the Ports to 1,759 MMTPA from 1,282 MMTPA in 2020

 Cargo movement on all National Waterways will be 95 million MT from 74 million MT in 2020

 Cargo movement on Ganga to be increased from 9 to 29 million MT



Need for National Mission for Infrastructure (NMP)

- Identifies inefficiencies in resource allocation and utilization leading to project delays and cost escalations.
- Encourages collaboration between public and private sectors to optimize resources.
- Addresses lack of optimum input-output ratio in government infrastructure projects, leading to overcapitalization.
- Addresses reluctance to implement labour reforms, poor decision-making, and ineffective governance contributing to public infrastructure asset failure.

Significance of NMP

- A first-of-its-kind initiative to boost the Indian economy and generate better employment opportunities.
- Links with PM Gati Shakti, a holistic approach to infrastructure development.
- Advocates unlocking idle capital from non-strategic underperforming government-owned assets.

Concerns/Challenges associated with NMP

- Potential for a vicious cycle of creating new assets and monetizing them when they become liabilities.
- Taxpayers' concerns **About** potential double charges on public assets.

- Low capacity utilization in gas and petroleum pipeline networks, regulated tariffs in power sector assets, and multiple stakeholders.
- Potential for monopolization resulting from asset transfer, leading to increased prices.

National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP):

- NIP enables a forward outlook on infrastructure projects which will create jobs, improve ease of living, and provide equitable access to infrastructure for all, thereby making growth more inclusive.
- It will help in stepping up annual infrastructure investment to achieve the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of **\$5 trillion by 2024-25**.
- NIP includes economic and social infrastructure projects along with greenfield and brownfield projects.

PM Gati Shakti Scheme:

- It is a national master plan designed to streamline the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects in India, with the ultimate goal of reducing logistics costs.

Image Source: PIB

INDUSTRY-ACADEMIA COLLABORATION

GS III – CHANGES IN INDUSTRIAL POLICY.

Context: Recently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) approved the draft guidelines on the ‘Sustainable and Vibrant University-Industry (UI) Linkage System for Indian Universities’.

Industry-Academia Collaboration Importance and Challenges

Importance:

- Provides opportunities for universities to commercialize research.
- Fosters economic growth by fostering innovation and job creation.
- Establishes a talent pipeline, preparing future professionals for industry challenges.
- Provides organizations with a blend of practical expertise and academic rigor.

Challenges:

- **Higher education institutions (HEIs)** are service motives, industries are profit-driven.
- There's a lack of trust between HEIs and the industry regarding intellectual property confidentiality.
- Industry recognizes product development as a team effort, academia recognizes individual effort.
- HEIs focus on theoretical knowledge and research, industries focus on practical applications.

Steps to Address Challenges:

- Open **dialogue between industries and HEIs**.
- Establish communication channels for mutually agreeable IP arrangements and non-disclosure agreements.
- Refine HEI researchers' findings into practical recommendations.
- Focus on long-term research collaborations with industries.

Various government schemes to promote industry-academia collaboration:

- **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)** is a web portal aimed at **improving the research ecosystem of India's higher educational institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian institutions and the best institutions in the world**.
- **UchhatarAvishkar Yojana (UAY)** aimed to **promote innovation** of a higher order that directly impacts the needs of the industry and thereby improves the **competitive edge** of Indian manufacturing. It focuses on a viable **industry-academic collaboration** where the industry shares a part of the cost of research.
- The recent **UGC draft guidelines on 'Sustainable and Vibrant University-Industry Linkage System for Indian Universities'** have suggested the creation of an **Industry Relation Cell (IRC)** at the universities and

a **University Relation Cell (URC)** at companies for collaborations.

- **India Innovation Growth Programme (IIGP)** is aimed at enhancing the Indian innovation ecosystem by enabling innovators and entrepreneurs through the stages of ideation, innovation, and acceleration, to develop technology-based solutions for the future.

INDIA'S LOGISTICS SECTOR

GS III – CHANGES IN INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND THEIR EFFECTS ON INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

Context: India has shown improvement in the Logistics Performance Index (LPI), rising to the 38th position out of 139 countries in 2023 from its 54th ranking in 2014.

What do you mean by Logistics?

- The term logistics encompasses **planning, coordinating, storing, and moving resources**, people, raw materials, inventory, equipment, etc., from **one location to another**, from the production points to consumption, distribution, or other production points.
- It entails **locating potential distributors and suppliers and evaluating the viability** and accessibility of such parties.

What is the Logistics Performance Index (LPI)?

- It is an interactive benchmarking tool developed by the **World Bank Group**.
- It measures the ease of establishing reliable supply chain connections and the structural factors that make it possible.
- It helps countries **identify the challenges and opportunities they face** in their performance of trade logistics and what they can do to improve their performance.
- **It considers 6 parameters to evaluate logistics performance** - customs performance, infrastructure quality, ease of arranging shipments, logistics services quality, consignment tracking and tracing, and timeliness of shipments.

Status of India in the LPI:

- India has climbed six places on the **World Bank's Logistic Performance Index (LPI) 2023, now ranking 38th in the 139 countries index**. This is a significant improvement from its **previous ranking of 44th in 2018 and 54th in 2014**.

India's Logistics Performance Improvement

- Policy interventions like **PM Gati Shakti Initiative and National Logistics Policy (NLP)** have led to improved logistics performance.
- Investment in trade-related infrastructure has improved India's infrastructure **score from 52nd in 2018 to 47th in 2023**.
- Technology, particularly a supply chain visibility platform, has reduced delays.
- **India's low dwell time (2.6 days) demonstrates improved logistics performance**.

Issues with India's Logistics System

- Logistics costs in India range from **14-18% of GDP, higher than the global benchmark of 8%**.
- Methodological challenges exist in estimating logistics costs, particularly as percentages of GDP.
- Freight movement is heavily skewed towards road transport, leading to increased congestion, pollution, and logistics cost escalation.
- Railways, despite being cost-effective, are losing freight share to more flexible modes due to the convenience of road transport.
- Infrastructural challenges include lack of necessary terminal infrastructure, uncertain wagon supply, and

absence of all-weather roads.

CRITICAL MINERALS

GS III – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

Context: Twenty blocks of critical minerals are currently on auction for commercial mining by the private sector. Out of 20 blocks, 4 blocks are being auctioned for a Mining License (ML) while the remaining 16 blocks are being auctioned for a Composite License (CL).

What are Critical Minerals?

- Critical minerals are those **minerals that are essential for economic development and national security, the lack of availability of these minerals or concentration of extraction or processing in a few geographical locations may lead to supply chain vulnerabilities** and even disruption of supplies.
- A mineral is critical when the risk of supply shortage and associated impact on the economy is (relatively) higher than other raw materials.

Critical Minerals for India:

- **An Expert Committee** under the Ministry of Mines has identified a set of **30 critical minerals for India**. They are Antimony, Beryllium, Bismuth, Cobalt, Copper, Gallium, Germanium, Graphite, Hafnium, Indium, Lithium, Molybdenum, Niobium, Nickel, PGE, Phosphorous, Potash, REE, Rhenium, Silicon, Strontium, Tantalum, Tellurium, Tin, Titanium, Tungsten, Vanadium, Zirconium, Selenium, and Cadmium.

India's status regarding critical minerals:

- India is 100 percent reliant on imports for its lithium and nickel demand. In FY23, India imported 2,145 tonnes of lithium carbonate and lithium oxide.

Significance of Critical Minerals for India:

- They help in economic development as industries such as **high-tech electronics, telecommunications, transport, and defense heavily rely on critical minerals**.
- **Critical minerals are essential for green technologies like solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, and electric vehicles.**
- Critical minerals play an important role in providing national security as they are vital for **defence, aerospace, nuclear, and space applications**, as they provide high-quality and reliable materials capable of withstanding extreme conditions and performing complex functions.
- International collaboration like the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP) enables India to diversify its import sources, reduce dependency on China, and enhance mineral security and resilience.

Challenges faced by India related to Critical Minerals:

- The recent Russia-Ukraine conflict affected the critical mineral supply chains as Russia is a **significant producer of various critical minerals, while Ukraine possesses reserves of lithium, cobalt, graphite, and rare earth elements**.
- India has limited domestic reserves of critical minerals such as **lithium, cobalt, and other rare earth elements**.
- **India has limited reserves but higher requirements that make it reliant on foreign partners to meet domestic needs. It can create vulnerability in terms of price fluctuations, geopolitical factors, and supply disruptions.**

Centre of Excellence for Critical Minerals

- It was recommended by the Report of the Committee on Identification of Critical Minerals released in June

2023. It is to frame policies and incentives for creating a complete value chain of critical minerals in the country.

Mineral Security Partnership (MSP)

- It is a US-led collaboration of 14 countries that aims to catalyze public and private investment in critical mineral supply chains globally.
- India has recently been inducted into MSP.

KhanijBidesh India Ltd. (KABIL):

- It is a joint venture company mandated to identify and acquire overseas mineral assets of a critical and strategic nature (lithium, cobalt) to ensure supply-side assurance.

India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership:

- It aims to strengthen their partnership in the field of **projects and supply chains for critical minerals**.

Mining License (ML):

- It means that once a license is granted, the licensee can begin mining operations after obtaining the requisite clearances. Once granted a license, the licensee will have to obtain 15 approvals and clearances before beginning operations.
- These include forest clearance, environmental clearance, Gram Sabha consent, etc.

Composite License (CL):

- It allows the licensee to conduct further geological exploration of the area to ascertain evidence of mineral contents.
- Once the licensee collects sufficient information on mineral deposits, they can make an application to the relevant state government to convert their CL to an ML.

WHAT DOES COP-28 MEAN FOR CITIES?

GS III - INDIGENIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY

Context: NexCAR19 is India's first indigenously-developed CAR-T cell therapy.

What is Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T- Cell Therapy?

- It is a revolutionary therapy that modifies immune cells, specifically T-cells, by turning them into potent cancer fighters known as CAR-T cells.
- It is a **breakthrough** in cancer treatment.
- It has **been approved for leukaemias** (cancers arising from the cells that produce white blood cells) and lymphomas (arising from the lymphatic system).

Significance of CAR-T Cell Therapy:

- Unlike chemotherapy or immunotherapy, which require mass-produced injectable or oral medication, CAR T-cell therapies use a **patient's cells**.
- They **are even more specific than targeted agents** and directly stimulate the patient's immune system to fight cancer, leading to greater clinical efficacy. That's why they're referred to as "living drugs."
- The cells are even more specific than targeted agents and directly activate the patient's immune system against cancer, making the treatment more clinically **effective**
- Chemotherapy or immunotherapy comprises molecules that bind to the tumour or block chemical pathways that allow the tumour to grow or multiply but **don't directly affect the immune system**.

- In CAR T-cell therapy, the immune system is activated when the modified T-cells are reintroduced into the body so the **immune system can't resist** such drugs as in old treatment methods.

Advantages of CAR-T Cell Therapy:

- It can regulate the unregulated cells by strengthening the immune system.
- It is used where patients with cancers that have returned after an initial successful treatment or haven't responded to previous combinations of chemotherapy or immunotherapy.
- In certain kinds of leukaemias and lymphomas, the efficacy is as high as 90%.
- For prostate, lung, colon, and some other organs, CAR T-cell therapy can cure patients who have evaded multiple lines of treatment.

Concerns/Challenges related to CAR-T Cell Therapy:

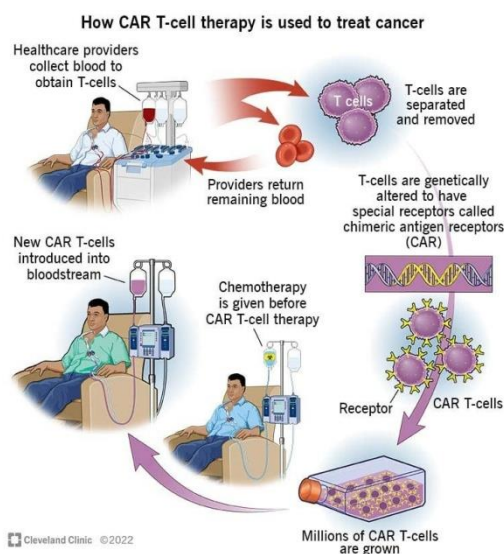
- The difficulty of **preparing CAR T-cell therapies** has been a major hindrance to their widespread use. The first successful clinical trial was published a decade ago, and the first indigenously developed therapy in India was performed in 2021.
- Introducing any new therapy faces the twin challenges of cost and value as CAR T-cell therapy will be unaffordable to most Indians.
- In certain kinds of leukaemias and lymphomas, the efficacy is as high as 90%, whereas, in other types of cancers, it is significantly lower.

- Having access to the global standard of care is every patient's right but the treatment incurs out-of-pocket expenses for their treatment since insurance coverage is minimal.

Image Source: Cleveland Clinic

T Cells:

- They also known as **T lymphocytes**, are a type of white blood cell that play a central role in the immune response.
- T cells are involved in **cell-mediated immunity, which means they help the body recognize and respond to foreign substances**, such as viruses, and bacteria, and abnormal cells, such as cancer cells.



CHANDRAYAAN-3

GS III – AWARENESS IN THE FIELD OF SPACE

Context: Scientists have brought the Propulsion Module (PM) of the Chandrayaan-3 mission back into Earth orbit.

What is Chandrayaan-3 Mission?

- Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2 (2019) to demonstrate ISRO's end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the Moon's surface.
- It comprises an indigenous propulsion module, a lander module (called Vikram), and a rover (called Pragyaan) to develop and demonstrate new technologies required for inter-planetary missions.

Objectives of Chandrayaan-3:

- To demonstrate a safe and soft landing on the lunar surface
- To demonstrate rover roving on the moon
- To conduct in-situ scientific experiments

What is a Propulsion Module in Chandrayaan-3?

- It is a box-shaped component of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft powered by solar panels.
- Its main objective was to ferry the Lander module to the final lunar polar circular orbit and separate the Lander.

Significance of Chandrayaan-3:

- It provided India - a leadership in space technology as India joined the elite group of nations - Russia, the US, and China by demonstrating lunar soft-landing capability.
- The demonstrated soft landing capability by Chandrayaan-3 holds strategic importance for India with applications extending to standard refueling and docking technology enabling interplanetary science missions.
- The reusable launch vehicle technology derived from the mission aids in cost reduction for future launches.
- The technologies used in Chandrayaan-3 translate into strategic tools and commercial products that have applications in disaster management and infrastructure monitoring.

Key Challenges faced by India in the Space Technology:

- India's space budget is only 0.05% of its GDP which is less compared to other major space-faring nations. In contrast, the US allocates 0.25% of its GDP to space activities.
- India relies on foreign countries for critical technologies and components for launch vehicles, spacecraft, and satellites. For example, India's Human Spaceflight Program gets technological help from Russia.
- Maintaining a competitive edge in the global space market requires regular innovation, cost-effectiveness, and timely execution in the international space market.
- India needs effective strategies to minimize debris generation and actively participate in international efforts for space debris mitigation.
- India has a limited presence in space manufacturing, human space transport, space tourism, and high-altitude platforms as India's share of the world space economy is barely 2.6%.

Hohmann Transfer Orbit:

- It is a specific orbital maneuver used by spacecraft for efficient interplanetary travel between two circular orbits, typically around the same central body, such as Earth and the Moon or Earth and Mars.

Shioli Crater:

- It is a **prominent lunar feature located at coordinates approximately 13.3° S and 25.2° E on the Moon's surface.**



Practice Questions



DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1) Consider the following pairs:

PAINTINGS	STATE
Ajanta paintings	Maharashtra
Kishangarh paintings	Rajasthan
Warli paintings	Kerala

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- Only one
- Only two**
- All three
- None

Q2) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

There's no cure for Gaucher disease.

Statement-II :

It is an inherited lysosomal storage disorder (LSD).

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

- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I**
- Statement-I is correct but Statement II is incorrect
- Statement-I is incorrect but Statement II is correct

Q3) With reference to the Warli Paintings, consider the following statements:

- This tribal art originated in Karnataka.
- It was traditionally practiced by women.
- These paintings are mainly dominated by basic geometric shapes like circles, triangles and squares.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 2 only
- 1, 2 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only**
- 3 only

Q4) With reference to Savitribai Phule , consider the following statements:

- She published Kavya Phule in 1854 and Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar in 1892.
- In 1852, Savitribai started the Mahila Seva Mandal to raise awareness **About** women's rights.
- She published Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar in 1892.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 1, 2 and 3 only**
- 1 and 3 only
- 3 only

Q5) With reference to Rani Velu Nachiyar , consider the following statements:

- She is the 18th century queen from Tamil Nadu.

2. She made history as the first Indian queen to stand up against the East India Company through armed conflict.
3. Among the Tamil people, she is affectionately remembered as Veeramangai, meaning "Brave Woman."

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q6) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

Somalia experiences a predominantly arid to semi-arid climate.

Statement-II :

The Gulf of Aden forms Somalia's northern borders.

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

Q7) With reference to the Eurasian Otter, consider the following statements:

1. It thrives only in rivers.
2. It is found only in Europe.
3. It is under Appendix II of CITES .

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 2 only
- b. 1, 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. None**

Q8) Consider the following pairs:

MISSILES	TYPE
Astra	surface-to-surface missile
Barak 8	Air-to-Air Missiles
Agni-III	anti-tank missile

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one**
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q9) With reference to the Srimukhalingam temple, consider the following statements:

- 1 It was constructed in the 19th century CE.
- 2 It is located on the Vamsadhara River.
- 3 It is dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q10) Consider the following pairs:

TRIBE	STATE
Chakma	Assam
Agariya	Chhattisgarh
Gaddis	Kerala

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two**
- c. All three
- d. None

Q11) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

Kavaratti town is renowned for the intricately carved wooden pillars.

Statement-II :

The spoken languages of Kavaratti are English, Tamil and Malayalam only.

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

Q12) With reference to the Hattee community, consider the following statements:

- 1. Hatti men traditionally don a distinctive white headgear on ceremonial occasions.

- 2. They follow a loose Caste System.
- 3. Bhat and Khash are lower castes.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q13) Consider the following pairs:

SCHEMES	MINISTRY
Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
STARS Project	Ministry of Education
Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) Scheme	Ministry of Rural Development

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All three**
- d. None

Q14) With reference to the Bobbili Veena, consider the following statements:

- 1. In 2001, it received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag from the Government of India.
- 2. It is also known as 'Saraswati veena'.
- 3. It is a large plucked string instrument used in Hindustani classical music.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q15) Consider the following pairs:

GI TAG product	STATE
Lanjia Saura paintings	Odisha
Wancho Wooden Craft	Tripura
Anardana	Gujarat

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q16) Consider the following pairs:

NATIONAL PARKS	STATE
Hemis National Park	Himachal Pradesh
KeibulLamjao National Park	Assam
South Button Island National Park	Goa

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q17) With reference to Swami Vivekananda, consider the following statements:

1. Mahatma Gandhi had called Vivekananda the “maker of modern India.”
2. In 1893, he took the name ‘Vivekananda’ after Subhash Chandra Bose requested him to do so.
3. He preached ‘neo-Vedanta’.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

1. 3only
2. 1, 2 and 3 only
3. 2 and 3 only
4. 1only

Q18) Consider the following pairs:

SCHEMES	MINISTRY
Kala Utsav	Ministry of Culture
Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna	Ministry of Women and Child Development
RashtriyaSwachhta Kendra	Ministry of Jal Shakti

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q19) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

Koraput Kala Jeera Riceis grown in Koraput district’s Tolla, Patraput, Pujariput, Baliguda, and Mohuli areas.

Statement-II :

It is a non- aromatic variety of rice.

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

Q20) With reference to the Einstein Probe, consider the following statements:

1. It was launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in Cambodia.
2. It weighs approximately 1.45 tonnes.
3. The EP utilizes cutting-edge UV ray detection technology.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q21) Consider the following pairs:

GI TAG	STATE
Anardana	Assam
Wancho Wooden Craft	Mizoram
Kachchhi Kharek	Gujarat

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q22) Consider the following pairs:

SPECIES	IUCN STATUS
Pygmy Hog	Critically Endangered
Kondana Rat	Vulnerable
Asiatic Lion	Least concern

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q23) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

As per Startup Ranking 2022,Gujarat is one of the Best performer in Category A States.

Statement-II :

Bihar and Haryana are aspiring leaders in Category A States.

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

Q24) With reference to Jagannath Temple, consider the following statements:

1. It was built in the 10th century.
2. It was rebuilt over the centuries by later rulers like Gajapatis.
3. It is an important Hindu pilgrimage site as part of Char Dham.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q25) Consider the following pairs:

REPORTS	ORGANIZATION
Technical Cooperation Report	ILO (International Labour Organization)
World Employment	IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)

and Social Outlook	
Global Corruption Report (GCR)	Transparency International

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. **Only one**
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q26) With reference to the Indian Army Day, consider the following statements:

1. The theme of Indian Army Day 2024 is 'In Service of the Nation'.
2. The motto of the Indian Army is 'Satyamev Jayate'.
3. In 2023, the celebration took place in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q27) Consider the following pairs:

SPECIES	IUCN STATUS
Javan Rhinoceros	Vulnerable
Forest Owlet	Least concern
River Terrapin	Critically Endangered

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. **Only one**
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q28) With reference to the Lanjia Saura Painting, consider the following statements:

1. It is one of the newest tribal art forms, is also known as Idital.
2. The art form belongs to the Lanjia Saura community, a PVTG largely residing in the Rayagada district.
3. It has white paintings figure over a crimson-maroon background.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q29) Consider the following pairs:

NATIONAL PARK	STATE
South Button Island National Park,	Manipur
Sirohi National Park	Andaman, and Nicobar Island
Nokrek National Park	Meghalaya

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. **Only one**
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q30) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

Kaziranga National Park is a prestigious national park was declared a National Park in 1974.

Statement-II :

It was declared a tiger reserve in 2007.

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

- 2. Chandrakant Sompura, and his two sons – Nikhil Sompura and Ashish Sompura are the Chief Architects.
- 3. Steel or Iron has been used extensively in the construction of Ram Mandir.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q31) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024 was conferred by the Prime Minister of India.

Statement-II :

The awards are conferred upon the children in the age group 5 – 18 years.

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**

Q32) With reference to the Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Mandir, consider the following statements:

- 1. The chief sculptors are Arun Yogiraj (Mysore), Ganesh Bhatt and Satyanarayan Pandey.

Q33) Consider the following pairs:

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES	MINISTRY
STARS Project	Ministry of Education
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna	Ministry of Finance
PM SVANIDI	Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two**
- c. All three
- d. None

Q34) Consider the following pairs:

NATIONAL PARK	STATE
Mount Harriett	Goa
Nameri	Assam
Valmiki	Bihar

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two**
- c. All three
- d. None

Q35) With reference to the Parkinson's disease, consider the following statements:

1. Parkinson's disease is a progressive disorder that affects the nervous system and the parts of the body controlled by the nerves.
2. Its symptoms start rapidly.
3. The risk of developing it decreases with age.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q36) Consider the following pairs:

SCHEME	MINISTRY
Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojna	Ministry of Defense
PM SVANIDI	Ministry of Jal Shakti
Saral Jeevan Bima	Ministry of Finance

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q37) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Madhya Pradesh.

Statement-II :

Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary was notified as a wildlife sanctuary in 1994.

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

Q38) With reference to the Padma Awards, consider the following statements:

1. The nomination process is open to the public.
2. Self-nomination cannot be made.
3. The total number of awards to be given in a year should not be more than 100.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q39) Consider the following pairs:

SPECIES	IUCN STATUS
Nicobar White-tailed Shrew	Critically Endangered
Forest Owlet	Least concern
Ganges Shark	Vulnerable

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. **Only one**
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q40) With reference to the Bharat Ratna, consider the following statements:

1. The award can be used as a prefix to the recipient's name.
2. Dr.S. Radhakrishnan, C. Rajagopalachari and C.V. Raman were the first recipients of Bharat Ratna when it was instituted in 1954.
3. Bharat Ratna is awarded to Indian citizens only.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q41) Consider the following pairs:

DISEASE	CAUSED BY
Anthrax	Bacillus anthracis
Chickenpox	Naegleria fowleri
Meningoencephalitis	Varicella zoster virus

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. **Only one**
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q42) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

PM YASASVI is under the Ministry of Education.

Statement-II :

The National Testing Agency has been entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the YASASVI ENTRANCE TEST.

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**

Q43) With reference to Western Equine Encephalitis, consider the following statements:

1. It is a mosquito-borne infection.
2. Western Equine Encephalitis Virus (WEEV) belongs to the Togaviridae family.
3. It is only found in western and central United States.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q44) Consider the following pairs:

SPECIES	IUCN STATUS
Kondana Rat	Vulnerable
Hog deer	Least concern
Kharai Camel	Endangered

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. **Only one**
- b. Only two
- c. All three
- d. None

Q45) Consider the following statements

Statement-I :

WTO was established following the Marrakesh Agreement which was ratified on April 15, 1994.

Statement-II :

The General Agreement on Tariff and Trade was substituted by the Marrakesh Agreement.

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

- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I**
- Statement-I is correct but Statement II is incorrect
- Statement-I is incorrect but Statement II is correct

- The sweet is prepared by draining moisture from the cheese and then frying it, finally forming balls from the mixture.
- It also has unique nutritional values that distinguish it from other cheese-based sweets.
- It is a type of sweet made from cheese from buffalo milk.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 2 only
- 1, 2 and 3 only**
- 2 and 3 only
- 3 only

Q46) With reference to the Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Dargah , consider the following statements:

- It was built in the 12th Century C.E.
- It consists of a square chamber surrounded by verandas.
- It is the mausoleum of the famous Sufi saint, Nizamuddin Auliya.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 2 only
- 1, 2 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only**
- only

Q46) With reference to Dhenkanal Magji, consider the following statements:

New Batch

IAS BABA



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