

WTO Ministerial Conference



❖ Context

- The **twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12)** will take place during 12-15 June 2022 in **Geneva** to take a call on some crucial issues impacting trade and livelihood.

❖ Key Highlights

- MC12 was **originally scheduled** to take place in June 2020 in **Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan**.
- It was **postponed** due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
- MC12 will be **co-hosted by Kazakhstan** and chaired by Deputy Chief of Staff of Kazakhstan's President.
- **MC11** took place in **2017 (Buenos Aires)**.

❖ Five 'potential' deliverables that will be discussed at the MC12

- WTO response to the pandemic.
- Agriculture and Food security.
- WTO reforms.
- Fisheries.
- Extension of the e-commerce and TRIPS non-violation and situation complaints (NVSC) moratoriums.

❖ About WTO Ministerial Conference

- The Ministerial Conference is the **highest decision-making body of the WTO**.
- **Trade ministers and other top officials** from the organization's members attend this meeting.
- The WTO's founding agreement, the **Marrakesh Agreement**, mandates that the **meeting be held every two years**.

- **Singapore** hosted the first Ministerial Conference (**MC1**) in **1996**.

❖ World Trade Organization (WTO)

- **About:**
 - It is the **only global international organization** dealing with the **rules of trade between nations**.
 - It was **created in 1995** superseding the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (**GATT**).
 - **India is a founding member** of the WTO.
- **Headquarters** : Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Goal:** To **ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely** as possible.
- **Roles:**
 - It **operates a global system of trade rules**.
 - It acts as a **forum for negotiating trade agreements**.
 - It **settles trade disputes** between its members.
 - It **supports the needs of developing countries**.
- **Decision-making:** The WTO's top decision-making body is the **Ministerial Conference**.
 - Below this is the **General Council** and various other councils and committees.
- **Membership:** The WTO has over 160 members representing 98 percent of world trade.

Cryptocurrency



❖ Context

- **SEBI has reportedly told** the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance that **regulation of crypto assets would be difficult** given the nature of technology that sustains them.

❖ Key Highlights

- **RBI had also shared its worries** about cryptocurrencies with the committee.
- **Crypto assets** is usually used as an **umbrella term** to encompass:
 - Cryptocurrencies (Bitcoin, Ether).
 - Non-currency tokens such as utility tokens (which provide a certain utility within an ecosystem).
 - Non-fungible tokens (which help establish ownership of unique items).
- The **underlying technology for crypto assets** is the same - **distributed ledgers** that **aren't controlled by any one entity**.

❖ Cryptocurrency

- **About:**
 - It is a **form of digital or virtual currency**.
 - It is based on a **network that is distributed across a large number of computers**.
 - It is **nearly impossible to counterfeit or double-spend**.

- Many cryptocurrencies are decentralized networks based on **blockchain technology**.
- **Issuers:**
 - Cryptocurrencies are generally **not issued by any central authority**.
 - Therefore, it makes them **theoretically immune to government interference** or manipulation.
- **Advantages:**
 - They include **cheaper and faster money transfers**.
 - They are decentralized systems that **do not collapse at a single point of failure**.
 - They **enable secure online payments** without the use of third-party intermediaries.
- **Disadvantages:**
 - They include **price volatility**.
 - They include **high energy consumption** for mining activities.
 - They **can be used in criminal activities**.
 - It is believed that cryptocurrency will **disrupt many industries, including finance and law**.

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Sant Tukaram Temple

❖ Context

- The PM of India is going to **inaugurate the Sant Tukaram Shila Mandir** in the temple town of Dehu in Pune district.



❖ Key Highlights

- **Shila refers to a rock** that is currently on the Dehu Sansthan temple premises.
- It has been the **starting point of Wari** (the annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur) for centuries.

❖ The Shila Mandir

- The Bhakti saint **Sant Tukaram had sat on this piece of rock** for 13 continuous days when challenged about the authenticity of the Abhyangs he had written.
- The very **rock is pious and a place of pilgrimage** for the Warkari sect.

❖ The Warkari Sect

- **Sant Tukaram and his work are central to the Warkari sect** spread across Maharashtra.
- His message about a **casteless society and his denial of rituals** had led to a social movement.
- Sant Tukaram is credited with starting the Wari pilgrimage.
- The group **strictly prohibits the use of alcohol and tobacco**.

- **Jnaneshvar, Namdev, Eknath, and Tukaram** are prominent members of this sect.

❖ About Sant Tukaram (1608-1650)

- He was a **17th-century Marathi poet** and Hindu saint (saint). His master was **Saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu** of the Bhakti movement.
- He **lived with Maratha ruler Shivaji Maharaj and saints such as Eknath and Ramdas**.
- He was a **Saint of Warkari sampradaya** (Marathi-Vaishnav tradition) - that **venerates the god Vithoba - in Maharashtra**.
- He was **part of the egalitarian, personalized Varkari devotionalism tradition**.
- Tukaram is best **known for his devotional poetry called Abhanga** and community-oriented worship with spiritual songs known as **kirtans**.
- He was a **vocal critic of caste and gender injustice**.
- Tukaram **opposed mechanical rites, rituals, sacrifices, and vows**, favoring a direct type of bhakti instead.

Five Non-Permanent Members Elected to UNSC

❖ Context

- Recently, the **U.N. General Assembly approved five new non-permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (UNSC)**.



❖ Key Highlights

- The 193-member UN General Assembly has held elections to elect the five non-permanent members **for the two-year term 2023-24**.
- **Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland** will replace India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway at the horse-shoe table from January 1 next year.

❖ About UNSC

- The UNSC is **one of the six principal organs** of the United Nations (UN).



- It is charged with ensuring international peace and security established by UN charter in 1945.
- Recommend the admission of new UN members to the General Assembly, and approve any changes to the UN Charter.

- **Headquarter: New York**

• Members:

- **15 members:** The five permanent members and **ten non-permanent members** elected for **two-year terms**.
- The United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom are its members with veto power.
- India, for the **8th time**, entered the UNSC as a non-permanent member last year (2021) and will stay on the council for two years i.e 2021-22.
- Each year, the **General Assembly elects five non-permanent members** (out of ten in total) for a two-year term. The ten non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis.
- The council's **presidency is a capacity that rotates every month** among its 15 members.

News in Between the Lines

Aegean Islands

❖ Context

- Recently, **Turkey has demanded Greece to stop arming Aegean Sea islands** that have non-military status.

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❖ **Key Highlights**

- He said that **Greece has been building a military presence on the Aegean islands** in violation of the **1923 Treaty of Lausanne** and the **1947 Paris Treaty**.
- He also said that the **islands were ceded to Greece on condition that they be kept demilitarized**.

❖ **Aegean Islands**

- The Aegean Islands are the **group of islands in the Aegean Sea**, with **mainland Greece to the west and north** and **Turkey to the east**, the island of **Crete delimits the sea to the south**.
- The vast majority of the Aegean Islands belong to Greece, being split among nine administrative regions.
- The **only sizable possessions of Turkey** in the Aegean Sea are **Imbros and Tenedos**, in the northeastern part of the Sea.
- Various smaller islets off Turkey's western coast are also under Turkish sovereignty.
- The islands have **hot summers and mild winters**, a hot-summer Mediterranean climate (**Cfa in the Köppen climate classification**).

Food Safety Index

TOP & BOTTOM IN EACH GROUP		
RANK	STATE/UT	SCORE
LARGE STATES		
1	Tamil Nadu	82
2	Gujarat	77.5
3	Maharashtra	70
15	Telangana	34.5
16	Bihar	30
17	Andhra	26
SMALL STATES		
1	Goa	56
2	Manipur	44
7	Mizoram	22.5
8	Arunachal	21
UNION TERRITORIES		
1	J&K	68.5
2	Delhi	66
7	Dadra & NH& Daman & Diu	27.5
8	Lakshadweep	16

❖ **Context**

- Recently, the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** released the **State Food Safety Index (SFSI) 2021-22**.

❖ **Key Highlights**

- The states and Union Territories are **segregated into three categories** — large states, small states and UTs.
- They are assessed separately within their respective categories, based on their performance on the selected food safety parameters.
- **Performance of Large States:**
 - Tamilnadu (82)> Gujarat (77.5)> Maharashtra (70)> Himachal Pradesh (65.5)> West Bengal= Madhya Pradesh (58.5).
- **Performance of Small States:**
 - Among the eight small states, Goa with a score of 56 has been ranked at the top.
 - Arunachal Pradesh (rank 8th and score 21) is at the bottom.
- **Performance of UTs:**
 - Among the eight Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir with a score of 68.5 has been ranked 1st and Lakshadweep (score 16) as the bottom.
 - Delhi with a score of 66 has been ranked at 2nd place.

❖ **About SFSI**

- It is **developed by the FSSAI**.
- The SFSI is **released annually** for a financial year.
- This is the **fourth edition of the SFSI** since its inception in 2018-19.
- The index is **aimed at encouraging states and UTs to “improve their performance** and work towards establishing a **proper food safety ecosystem in their jurisdiction**.

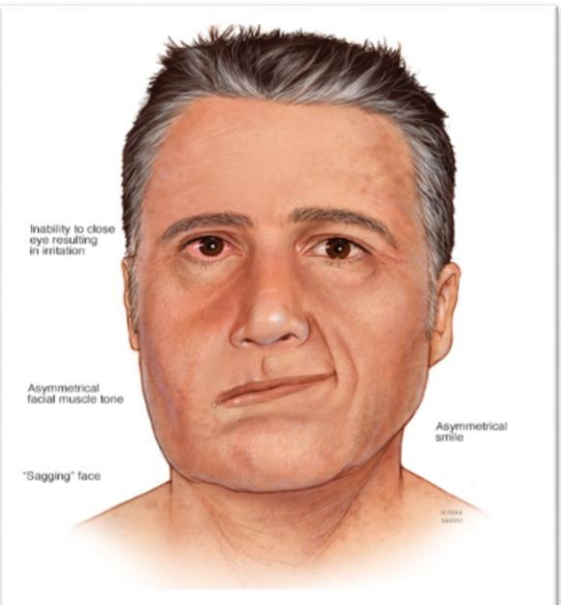
Ramsay Hunt Syndrome

❖ **Context**

- Recently, Pop sensation Justin Bieber revealed that a viral disease has temporarily paralysed one side of his face.
- He has developed a rare condition called the **Ramsay Hunt Syndrome**.

❖ **Key Highlights**

- Ramsay Hunt Syndrome is a **neurological disease**.
- **Virus – Varicella Zoster** – causes inflammation of the nerves involved in facial movements.
 - The Varicella Zoster Virus (VZV) is the **same virus that causes chickenpox and shingles**.



- When the nerves get inflamed, they **lose their ability to function, leading to temporary facial palsy or paralysis.**
- **Symptoms:**
 - The symptoms include **painful, red rash and blisters in and around the ear, and facial paralysis** on the same side.
 - Patients also report **hearing loss** in the ear.
 - **Inability to close the eye causes dryness.**
 - The disease is **not contagious** but can lead to chickenpox in those not vaccinated for the disease.
- **Treatment:**
 - It is **treated using antiviral drugs, steroids and physiotherapy.**
 - **Steroids and antiviral drugs** are the cornerstone of the treatment.
 - The **disease is reversible.** Patients get cured within 15 days to three months of starting the treatment.

e-Vidhan System



❖ Context

- Recently, a **delegation of MLAs from Gujarat** visited the **Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly** to learn about the **novel e-Vidhan system.**

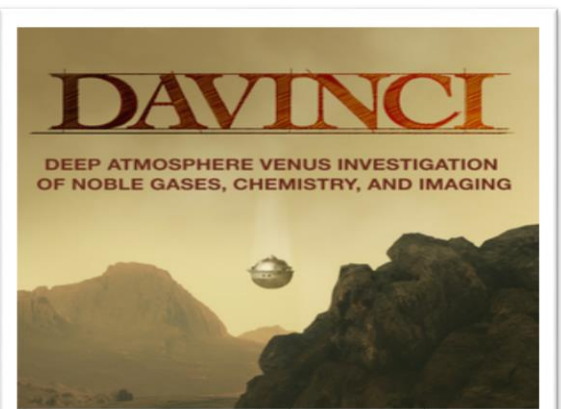
❖ Key Highlights

- e-Vidhan System has been recently **adopted by the UP state assembly.**
- Its last session was completely digitized.

❖ National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) system

- The NeVA system has been **developed to make all the work and data related to legislative bodies available online** for the use of both citizens and the members of Assemblies.
- This has been **done for streamlining information related to various state assemblies, and to eliminate the use of paper** in day-to-day functioning.
- It **includes a website and a mobile app.**
- NeVA is a type of work-flow system that was **deployed on NIC Cloud, MeghRaj.**
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA).
- **Technical support** is being provided by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MietY**).
- **Nagaland** became the **first state to implement NeVA**, in March this year.
- To adopt National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA), Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) have been signed with 18 States.
- The **Government of Dubai** became the world's **first government to go 100 percent paperless.**
- The US government announced in 2019 that by the end of 2022, all government agencies would stop dealing with paper.

DAVINCI MISSION



[Daily Current Affairs](#)

❖ Context

- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)**, an **independent agency** of the US federal government, is going to launch the **'DAVINCI mission'.**

❖ About DAVINCI Mission:

- DAVINCI stands for **'Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble Gases, Chemistry and Imaging Mission'.**
- The mission will fly by Venus and explore its harsh atmosphere in **2029.** It will be the first mission to study Venus by means of both flybys and descent.
- Spacecraft is likely to explore layered Venusian atmosphere.
- It will reach Venusian surface by **June 2031.**
- The mission would capture data about Venus, that scientists are trying to measure since early 1980s.
- Before this mission, only two NASA missions have visited earlier, namely, **Pioneer in 1978** and **Magellan in early '90s.**

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