



Key Highlights

- Tamil Rights in Sri Lanka
- Terrorism & Organized Crimes
- Wildlife Protection Laws
- **Gaganyaan Mission**
- Paper Leak Free Examinations
- INSAT 3DS
- **Gemma: Responsible AI**
- Invocation of Article 142
- Right to Adopt a Child
- Sangam: Digital Twin
- Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022
- International Solar Alliance
- INDUS -X
- Guinea Worm Disease
- Plastic Particles in Bottled Water
- Green Credit Rules



RAISINA

DIALOGUE 2024

CHATURANGA

CONFLICT, CONTEST, COOPERATE, CREATE

Brain Boosters

- Right to Disconnect
- **Raisina Dialogue 2024**
- World Water Day
- Shahpurkandi Dam

Prelims Special International Relations



Gemma

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- Purulia Chhau
- Permanent Commission for Women
- Jnanpith Award
- Sudarshan Setu
- Purple Festival



GENERAL STUDIES

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Message



Vinay Singh
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Current Affairs has an important role in the examinations conducted by Union Public Service Commission and State Public Service Commissions. It is necessary for the candidate to have knowledge of relevant information on issues of national and international importance. Perfect 7 Magazine is being presented fortnightly to the students to fulfill this requirement. Preparation of civil services exam is only completed when candidates have holistic knowledge and analysis of the dynamic nature of the current affairs. 'Perfect7' keeps this vision and approach and understands the multidimensional need of students at the content level, so this magazine has presented the current affairs with relevant issues of general studies. Keeping in mind the needs of mains exam, current articles on 7 burning issues, Ethics Case Studies, Biographies of important personalities, coverage of most useful topics of various sections of General Studies and the most important current affairs issues are being covered for Preliminary Examination in which emphasis is being given on national, international, environment, ecology, art and culture, science and technology, economic issues.

Brain boosters with 7 themes based graphics are being presented in a concise form to enhance the conceptual understanding of the students. Apart from this, updated information on Global Initiatives, Global Institutions, Structure of Organizations, Functioning, Important Reports, and Indices will be included in this magazine, which is asked prominently in the Civil Services Examination. To give emphasis on facts and analysis, keeping in view the trends of new nature of questions in Preliminary and Main Examination of Civil Services, an inclusive magazine is being provided to the students so that they can give the right direction to their preparation by understanding the new requirements of Civil Services Examination. Columns have been included in the format of the magazine keeping in mind the factual needs of the candidates, mental development, developing writing technique etc. Along with this, we have been introducing new segments according to the changing needs of the candidates and these initiatives will continue in future also. Hope this issue will prove useful for all of you. Your suggestions are always welcome.

Best wishes.



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Rights of Sri Lankan Tamil & India-Sri Lanka Relations

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe said that many steps have been taken to provide economic and social rights to the Tamils in Sri Lanka, thereby paving the way for the welfare of the Tamils. He also expressed his gratitude towards India for the progress made towards the construction of 10 thousand houses in Sri Lanka. Since 2009, India has signed an agreement to build 50,000 houses in Sri Lanka under the Indian Housing Project. India is showing commitment to build a total of 64 thousand houses in Sri Lanka. This is a good sign because strengthening bilateral relations between these two important countries of South Asia is very important for the peace and security of the Indian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean.

- The enduring tension around the Tamil issue has remained a key issue affecting the India-Sri Lanka relations. Historically, the British transported Tamils from South India as forced laborers for Sri Lanka's tea plantations. These Tamils were predominantly settled in the north-eastern part of Sri Lanka, particularly in the Jaffna area, where they played crucial roles in employment and business for an extended period. Over time, as Tamils engaged in these activities, their demands for rights grew, prompting the Sri Lankan government to resist granting those rights.
- In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese majority community holds a dominant position, with Sinhalese being designated as the national language and Buddhism receiving official recognition. However, the Tamil minority faced a stark contrast in treatment, as their language, religion, and culture were not acknowledged. Tamils encountered discrimination, exploitation, and oppression across various levels. The situation worsened in 1956 when the government enacted the Sinhalese Only Bill, aimed at depriving Tamils of their rights, perpetuating the dominance of the Sinhalese majority in social, political, economic, and cultural realms.
- Even in the 1972 Sri Lankan Constitution, which was expected to address Tamil concerns, the aspirations of the Tamil community were unmet. The new constitution continued to grant official recognition to Sinhala as the national language and Buddhism. Despite Tamil demands for recognition of their language, religion, and culture, the Sri Lankan government did not heed these demands.

Key demands by Tamils of Jaffna:

- First-class citizenship status.
- Demand for political representation with participation in the decision-making process in Sri Lanka.
- Participation in socio-economic planning.
- Demand for official recognition of Tamil language.
- Demand for non-discrimination and interference with Tamil culture, civilization and lifestyle.
- Demand for the creation of basic facilities and infrastructure which included primary education, health, electricity, roads, agriculture etc.

Formation of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam:

- Due to the discriminatory policies of the Sri Lankan government, Tamils formed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 1976. This separatist organization sought to protest against the Sinhalese and the army so that their demands could be met through violent activities. This civil war like situation resulted in the longest-lasting armed conflict in Asia, with the Sri Lankan Army intensifying repression against the LTTE rebels after 1976. The pursuit of Tamil autonomy led to violent acts, including the killing of Sinhalese, and in 1983, anti-Tamil violence erupted in Colombo, causing distress in Tamil Nadu due to the harm inflicted on Tamils.
- Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi provided food items, medicines and other essential supplies to the Tamils. To assess the situation Indian Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao was sent to Sri Lanka on July 29, 1983. However, these actions were perceived by Sri Lankans, particularly the Sinhalese, as unwarranted interference in their internal affairs, leading to concerns about encroachment on sovereignty and territorial integrity. Later, India tried to mediate between Tamil separatists and the Government of Sri Lanka.
- By 1987, the influx of around 150,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees into the Indian state of Tamil Nadu created internal unrest, raising concerns about their potential alliances with anti-India elements. Fears heightened due to the historical Dravidastan movement in the 1950s, aiming for a linguistically separate nation in Tamil Nadu. Additionally, there were reports of Pakistan and ISI seeking involvement in the Tamil issue, posing challenges to India's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- Given the unsuccessful attempts at diplomatic

resolutions, India decided to intervene militarily by sending Indian Peace Keeping Forces in Sri Lanka under Operation Pawan. This move marked a significant development in the bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka. India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) gathered intelligence indicating that foreign militant groups, supported Tamil separatist groups with training and financial assistance. The situation led to widespread human rights violations and had adverse effects on India's regional security.

Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord and efforts to solve the Tamil Issue:

On July 29, 1987, an agreement was reached between India and Sri Lanka to address the Tamil problem, known as the Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord. This accord aimed to halt the Sri Lankan civil war by establishing a temporary ceasefire and securing rights for the Tamils. Under this agreement, the Sri Lankan government agreed to the following:

- To facilitate Tamil demands, the agreement outlined the formation of provincial councils in nine Tamil-dominated areas of Sri Lanka. A provision was made to conduct elections for these provincial councils before December 31, 1987. There was also an agreement to invite Indian observers for the elections to these councils in the northern and eastern parts. Along with Sinhala, Tamil and English were recognized as the official languages of Sri Lanka.
- The agreement established the North Eastern Province as an administrative unit with its own elected Provincial Council, Governor, Chief Minister, and Board of Ministers until elections or a referendum in Tamil-majority areas were held.
- A commitment to hold a referendum by December 31, 1988, allowing the people of the Eastern Province to decide whether to remain as a single administrative unit within the Northern Province or form a separate unit with their own governance structures.
- Inclusion of the displaced population's right to vote in the referendum, with provisions for their return to the areas from which they were displaced.
- The lifting of the emergency imposed in the Northern and Eastern Provinces by August 15, 1987, and the surrender of weapons by militant groups following procedures set by the Government of Sri Lanka.
- The Government of Sri Lanka's ability to utilize the same organizations for law enforcement and security purposes in the Northern and Eastern Provinces as in the rest of the country.
- The authority of the President of Sri Lanka to

grant general amnesty to political and other prisoners detained under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

- India's commitment to assist Sri Lanka in rehabilitating militant youth and integrating them into the national development mainstream.

13th Constitution Amendment of Sri Lanka and Tamil rights:

- To implement the Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord, Sri Lanka introduced the 13th Constitution Amendment, incorporating key provisions to address Tamil demands:
 - » The establishment of Provincial Councils to delegate powers to the Tamils and ensure their political representation.
 - » Specific provisions regarding the appointment and rights of provincial governors, tenure of provincial councils, and the appointment of the Board of Ministers with their respective rights.
 - » Granting legislative powers to provincial councils through constitutional amendment.
 - » Formation of a Finance Commission to oversee financial matters and safeguard Tamil interests in the designated areas.
 - » Recognition of Tamil as the official language of Sri Lanka, emphasizing linguistic inclusivity.
 - » Establishment of High Courts in the North Eastern Province.
- Despite the 13th Constitutional Amendment's establishment of nine provinces in Sri Lanka, several provisions remain unimplemented, leading to the notion of "13-minus." Specifically, the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces into the North Eastern Province occurred, but comprehensive Tamil autonomy is yet to be realized. Critical aspects such as police, land-related, and financial rights for Tamils have not been fully granted. The newly elected President of Sri Lanka has also clarified in January, 2020 that some provisions of the 13th Constitutional Amendment cannot be implemented and the Government of Sri Lanka will consider some alternative arrangements.

Way Forward:

In the current geo-economic landscape, South Asia is emerging as a significant centre of power due to the region's growing economies. In response, India, under its Neighbour First policy, places a strong emphasis on peacefully resolving disputes and fostering cooperation with neighbouring countries. This approach aims to shift away from the perceived Big Brother Syndrome, reflecting India's role as a security provider and development partner.



Terrorism and Organized Crimes: Relation & Impact on National Security

Global authorities like national governments, international organizations, and law enforcement units are increasingly worried about the heightened threat to national and internal security, as terrorist networks become more interconnected with organized crime. There is a pressing need for worldwide collaboration to address this evolving challenge.

- Recent months have witnessed evidence of such links and networks in Jammu and Kashmir. J&K Police have emphasized the need to break the networks of organized crime to curb the growth of terrorism as a competitive industry in India. A crucial part of this strategy involves enhancing coordination among intelligence units, identifying terrorist activities and plans in real-time, and disrupting the recruitment process for new terrorist operations to provide better livelihood options for local youth.
- Additionally, addressing factors that enable terrorist activities to persist requires action against front organizations, overground workers, and terrorists. Equipping security forces with state-of-the-art technology and weapons are deemed essential to effectively counter these challenges.

Links between Terrorism and Organized Crimes:

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted in 2000 through resolution No. 55/25 and enforced in 2003, delineates the relationship between transnational organized crimes and terrorism. India's Anti-Money Laundering Act reinforces this linkage, designating crimes involving the combination of drug trafficking and money laundering as more severe offenses. Organized crime is related to terrorism and terrorists in the following ways:

- **Converging Objectives:** The objective of organized crime is mainly to obtain monetary or economic benefits and it is a continuous criminal activity, whereas the main objective of terrorism is political and ideological. Terrorism essentially entails violence and spreads fear, but if organized criminals are not hindered from achieving their goals, they do not show the same interest in spreading violence and fear as terrorists do. The people committing organized crimes as well as terrorists are also seen to have a nexus with the government machinery and the police machinery. This has also been evidenced in the Malimath Committee report.
- **Threat to law and order:** Criminals and terrorists

engaged in organized crime jointly pose a threat to law enforcement and order, working towards a common criminal purpose. Intelligence agencies have provided evidence linking Punjab's drug trafficking to terrorists in Kashmir. Operating in areas with scant government control, weak administrative structures, and porous international borders, both organized criminals and terrorists exploit conditions of weak governance. This symbiotic relationship, marked by mutual interdependence, is prevalent in developing and less developed countries rather than in developed nations.

- **Terror Financing:** Terrorists resort to organized crimes to obtain financial support for their organizations. Terrorists collect money through organized crimes like drug trafficking, wildlife trafficking, kidnapping and extortion, arms smuggling, distribution of fake notes, money laundering, hawala business etc.
- **Haven for terrorism:** Terrorists flourish under the cover of international organized crime networks. Terrorists send their members to different countries by using organized crime networks to cross the international border, in return the terrorists provide them security in the areas under their control.
- **Other areas:** Organized criminals also assist in the formation of sleeper cells for terrorist groups. This relationship can also be seen in the recruitment of young terrorists, providing them with advanced information and technology facilities and providing them with ground workers to assist them in terrorist acts.
- The UN Security Council's 2014 Article 2195 recognizes terrorists benefiting from transnational organized crime globally, involving arms, persons, drugs, archaeological materials, and illicit trade in natural resources. The July 2019 UN Security Council meeting underscored the worrisome trend of small criminals turning to terrorism.

Impact of such linkages:

- Terrorist organizations commit crimes to collect funds for their operations. Small terrorist cells are even engaged in recruiting criminals in jails so that this link continues and jails become an easy place for exchange of information about the world of crime. Due to the increased proliferation and uncertainty of small criminals turning terrorists, even local crimes have started taking

the form of a serious and global threat.

- Human trafficking for sexual exploitation, child soldiers and forced labor can be used not only for money but also to instill fear and recruit new fighters. For example, the Daesh organization amassed huge wealth through illegal oil trade, smuggling of cultural heritage looted from places like Palmyra in Syria and Mosul in Iraq, or kidnapping for ransom.
- Along with this, there has been a growing relationship between piracy and organized crime which poses challenges due to its jurisdictional complexities. Al-Shabaab militants in Somalia financed operations through maritime smuggling and the Gulf of Oman charcoal trade, while Al-Qaeda used sea routes for supplying fighters around the Arabian Peninsula. Addressing this requires training for various officials, including law enforcement, coast guard, border and airport officials, prosecutors, judges, and prison officials. Emphasizing the need for enhanced inter-agency, regional, and international cooperation, investment in mechanisms for information and intelligence sharing is crucial.

Terrorism as a competitive Industry:

- In recent decades, terrorism has evolved as a competitive industry. Similar to industries vying for profits, sales, and market share, terrorist groups collaborate to achieve specific goals, competing with one another. Much like industries attract consumer attention to their products, terrorists adopt new methods to capture the focus of countries and organizations supporting terrorism, including instances of state-sponsored terrorism. Just as states protect enterprises and formulate policies for their development, numerous terrorist groups seek prominence in the eyes of countries, organizations, and groups supporting and promoting them as a priority. This is exemplified below:
 - **Capturing land for terrorist activities:** Yemen's Houthi rebels have attracted the attention of Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni government by capturing parts of their lands including the capital Sanaa. Similarly, Islamic State has captured important areas of Iraq and Syria. The Taliban network and ISIS Khorasan have captured parts of Afghanistan. Taliban even took over the governance power in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2003. Similarly, terrorist organizations like Al Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria are trying to capture different parts of their respective countries with the intention of building an Islamic empire.
 - **Exploration of new sources of terrorist financing:** Terrorist organizations are adopting diverse

methods to fulfill their financial needs. State-sponsored terrorism is a prominent avenue, as seen in Pakistan's support for groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, Iran's funding of Hezbollah in Lebanon accused of promoting terrorism in Gulf countries, and Syria's rebels receiving financial aid from the United States. Additionally, terrorist organizations like the Lord Resistance Army in African countries finance their activities through wildlife trafficking. ISIS has pursued funding by selling oil from occupied lands and demanding money for the release of kidnapped individuals, both foreigners and locals, and returning their bodies to their families.

- **Terrorists in entrepreneurship:** Recruitment of new terrorists and creation of new terrorist organizations by terrorist organizations shows their entrepreneurial tendencies. For example, the establishment of Islamic State by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, establishment of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent by Asim Umar in 2014 and its role in spreading terrorism in South Asia has been clarified by the security forces.

Competitive methods of carrying out terrorist acts:

At present, terrorists, in order to prove themselves superior to other terrorist groups have carried out new methods of carrying out violent activities, including:

- IED, vehicle bomb, suicide bomber and suicide attack. Such attacks have been seen in Kashmir and many parts of the world including Kabul and Islamabad.
- Targeting global financial centers in European countries such as Paris, France and London, UK.
- Attracting the attention of the larger community through terrorist attacks in churches, mosques and temples. The terrorist attack on a Sri Lankan church in 2019 was considered to be of a very serious nature.
- Like competing industries, various terrorist organizations have also opened their networks, branches and offices in different continents of the world, such as Al Qaeda in Yemen, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Al Qaeda in Maghreb in Africa, Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent in Indian Subcontinent, ISIS's active branch in Afghanistan, ISIS Khorasan etc.



Wildlife Protection Laws: The Need For Their Amendment

In view of the increasing incidents of man-animal conflict in Kerala, the state assembly has unanimously passed a resolution urging the central government to amend wildlife protection laws. This proposal was brought to prevent such incidents, in which many people have lost their lives and a large number of properties and crops have been damaged. The proposal to amend the Wildlife Protection Act and related rules, guidelines and some provisions was presented in the House by Forest and Wildlife Conservation Minister AK Saseendran.

According to the Kerala state government, central laws, rules, guidelines and provisions protecting wildlife are extremely stringent and create obstacles in controlling and killing animals like wild boars. Wild boars come out of the forests and cause trouble to the general public. Therefore, Kerala has stressed the need to amend the Wildlife Protection Act to control them. The provisions of wildlife protection laws have not been modified with the change in time and circumstances, hence there is a need for amendment.

Damage caused by wild animals in Kerala:

- Since 2011, 1233 people have lost their lives in attacks by wild animals in Kerala. The Kerala Forest Department report said that nine thousand incidents of conflict between humans and animals have been recorded among which, four thousand cases were specifically related to wild elephants. Wild pigs have made more than 1500 attacks on humans. People have also lost their lives in attacks by tigers, leopards and bison. Between 2017 and 2023, there have been 21 thousand incidents in which wild animals damaged crops and killed more than 1.5 thousand cattle.

How wild animals are declared as vermin?

- Kerala wants the Centre to classify wild boar as vermin. Section 11 of the 1972 Act regulates hunting of wild animals. As per clause (1)(A) of the section, the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) of a state may if satisfied that a wild animal specified in Schedule I (mammals) has become dangerous to human life or disabled or diseased beyond recovery and permit hunting or killing of such animal. The section gives powers to the CWLW to order killing of such a wild animal, if it cannot be tranquillised or relocated after

capturing.

- Now, Kerala wants to amend the Section 11 (1) (A) so as to devolve the above-mentioned powers of the CWLW to Chief Conservators of Forests (CCF) instead. Such an amendment, the state feels, would simplify procedures for dealing with wild animals posing a threat to human life, by enabling speedy and timely decisions to be taken at a more localised level. Kerala has five CCFs, each in charge of a different region of the state.
- Vermin are basically problematic or harmful animals because they pose a threat to humans, crops, livestock or property and they can be hunted freely. The Wild Life Protection Act however, does not define the term vermin, species that are placed in Schedule V of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 are classified as vermin. For example crows, fruit bats, rats. Section 62 of the Wildlife Protection Act empowers the Central Government to declare any wild animal as vermin.
- Wild animal species included in Schedule I and Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 cannot be declared vermin. Moreover, an animal can be declared as vermin in any specified area and for a specified period. The Center has declared rhesus monkeys in Himachal Pradesh, wild boars in Uttarakhand and nilgai in Bihar as vermin. In order to prevent human-wildlife conflicts, several states have in the past filed petitions to declare various animals including elephants, Indian porcupines, bonnet macaques, langurs and barking deer as vermin.

Reasons behind the increase in human-wildlife conflicts:

- In recent years, there has been an increase in human-wildlife conflicts in different states of India due to which the state suffers many losses. Today, the way the natural habitats and grasslands of wild animals are being degraded, the ecological niches of the animals i.e. their original homes are getting vanished. This is one of the main reasons for the increase in human-wildlife conflicts is habitat loss and encroachment.
- Apart from this, increasing urbanization, commercial activities, development projects, industrialization and agricultural expansion have significantly reduced the forest area due to

which predatory wild animals have also started moving out of their original natural habitats into residential areas. This ultimately forced wild animals to come closer to agricultural settlements, leading to problems of human-wildlife conflict.

Wild Life Protection Act 1972:

- The Wild Life Protection Act was passed in the year 1972 and thus the name, Wild Life Protection Act, 1972. Through this law, not only wild animals but also different species of plants are protected. Along with this, their habitat, trade of wild animals, plants and their products is also controlled through this. All those plants and animals are listed in this Act to whom the government provides security and monitors them at different levels. This Act has different schedules, which provide different types of protection to wildlife and flora.
- It is noteworthy that after the 42nd Amendment Act 1976, Wild Life Protection was removed from the State List and put in the Concurrent List. That is why the Kerala Government has to appeal to the Central Government to amend the law related to this because its authority now lies with the Centre only. Many amendments have

been made to this Act from time to time. After the amendment made in 2002, the amount of punishment and fines for causing harm to wild animals and vegetation was increased.

- There is a provision in the Wildlife Protection Act that if a person attacks any wildlife, he can be sentenced to a minimum of three years and a maximum of seven years in jail. There can also be a fine of at least Rs 10,000. Then, considering the nature of the crime, this fine and can be increased up to Rs 25,000. Not only this, if any person harasses or harms any wildlife even in a zoo, he may have to pay six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs 2,000.

Provision for material seized under the Wildlife Protection Act:

- The Wildlife Protection Act 1972 provides that if any vehicle, weapon or other equipment is involved in a crime against wildlife, then they can be confiscated by the government. All these items are never returned. Not only this, if a person uses any part of wildlife, they can also be punished. For example, if someone uses peacock feathers, there is a provision of punishment of up to three years in the Wildlife Protection Act.

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Cruciality of MSP: Government Initiatives for Farmer Welfare

India, characterized by its agrarian roots, sustains a substantial population dependent on farming for their livelihoods. Over time, farmers in the country have confronted numerous challenges. In response, the Central Government has endeavored to address these issues. Recently, there has been a resurgence of farmers' demands, sparking agitations and protests. Their key requests include the enactment of a law ensuring a minimum support price and the implementation of all recommendations outlined by the Swaminathan Commission.

Even before this, there had been protests by farmers to repeal the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Simplification) Act-2020 and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act 2020 and the Essential Commodities Amendment Act 2020. At that time, the farmers were worried that through these laws, the government would abolish the rule of giving minimum support price on some selected crops and would encourage corporatization of agriculture, which would later lead to big agri-businesses and farmers will have to depend on commodity companies.

What are the demands of farmer organizations:

Various farmer organizations are pressurizing the central government to fulfill some demands. These demands include:

- Minimum support price should be guaranteed by the Central Government.
- All cases registered against farmers should be withdrawn.
- Farmers should be kept out of pollution laws.
- The government should waive off the entire loan of the farmers.
- Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 should be repealed.
- Farmers and agricultural laborers should be given pension.
- The culprits in the Lakhimpur Kheri case should be punished.

Demand of farmers on Minimum Support Price:

- Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a guarantee given by the government to the farmers regarding the price of some grain crops. The government currently fixes the minimum support price for a total of 23 crops. MSP is calculated every year before the harvest of the season. No matter how

low the rates of that crop are in the market, the government will purchase it at the fixed MSP, although the government is not bound to purchase at the MSP. There is no law to buy crops on MSP. Even if the government buys their crops from farmers at MSP, the government is not bound to do so because there is no law that forces the government to buy their crops from farmers at MSP. Farmers are demanding to make a law in this regard.

Initiatives taken by the Government of India in the interest of farmers:

- The budget outlay of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in the financial year 2013-14 was Rs 27,662.67 crore. In the budget estimate of 2023-24, it increased more than five times to Rs 1,25,035.79 crore. As a result, the Gross Value Added (GVA) of agriculture and allied sectors has been increasing at the rate of 4.4 percent per year during the last seven years.
- Moreover, the Government of India is running several schemes/programmes for the welfare of farmers to increase production, and provide profitable returns and income support, the major ones of which are as follows:
- **The National Food Security Mission (NFSM):** It aims to increase the production of rice, wheat and pulses by expanding area and enhancing productivity, restoring soil fertility and productivity, and expanding the economy at the farm level.
- **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY):** The scheme was launched with the overarching objective of strengthening the efforts of farmers, reducing risks and making farming a profitable economic activity by focusing more on pre- and post-harvest infrastructure. The scheme also includes sub-components like More Crop Per Drop, Agricultural Mechanization Sub-Mission, Soil Health and Fertility, Parapollination in Agricultural Development Scheme, Rainfed Area Development and Crop Diversification Programme.
- **National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP):** The Government of India had launched the National Edible Oil Mission – Oil Palm in August 2021 with the objective of increasing the oil palm production area to 10 lakh hectares and increasing the production of crude oil palm to

11.20 lakh tonnes by the year 2025-26. Apart from this, for significant increase in the production of edible oils, this mission is successfully taking India in the direction of 'self-reliant India' by reducing the import burden. Under this mission, the state governments in collaboration with oil palm processing companies have started a mega oil palm plantation campaign from July 25, 2023 so that the production of oil palm can be further increased in the country. Three leading oil palm processing companies, namely Patanjali Food Pvt Ltd, Godrej Agrovet and 3F are actively partnering with farmers to increase the area under oil palm to record levels in their respective states. Major oil palm producing states – Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Karnataka, Goa, Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh are participating in this initiative.

- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM Kisan):** The objective of this scheme is to provide financial assistance to all landholding farmer families across the country, except a few, under prescribed criteria, so that they can meet the expenses of agriculture and allied activities as well as household needs. Under the scheme, a total of Rs 6,000/- is transferred directly into the bank accounts of farmers in three installments of Rs 2,000/- released every four months. In this, till now a benefit of Rs 2.81 lakh crore has been provided to more than 11 crore farmers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY):** To provide crop insurance to farmers providing a simple and affordable comprehensive risk cover to their crops against all non-preventable natural risks for the period from pre-sowing to harvest. This scheme was started in 2016 in which farmers get adequate claim amount. During the year 2022-23, applications of 1174.7 lakh farmers were registered under PMFBY and the amount allocated was Rs 15,500 crore.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana (PM - KMY):** Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana is a central sector scheme launched on 12 September 2019 to provide security to very vulnerable farmer families. PM-KMY is a contribution linked scheme, in which any small and marginal farmer can become a member by making monthly contribution to the pension fund, except a few subject to exclusion criteria. The central government will also pay the same amount. Till now a total of 23.38 lakh farmers have adopted the scheme.
- Institutional credit given to the agriculture sector increased from Rs 7.3 lakh crore in 2013-14 to Rs 20 lakh crore in 2023-24. Animal husbandry

and fisheries farmers are also now being provided concessional institutional loan facility at 4 per cent annual interest rate on Kisan Credit Card (KCC) to meet their short-term working capital needs. Keeping in mind the inclusion of all the farmers' beneficiaries of PM-Kisan, a special campaign was started from February 2020 in which concessional institutional loans are being provided through Kisan Credit Card.

- Mechanization of agricultural work has become very important to lighten the hard work of farming and to modernize agriculture. During the period from 2014-15 to December 2023, Rs 6405.55 crore was allocated for agricultural mechanization. 15,23,650 machines and equipment were provided to the farmers on subsidy.
- **Agricultural Infrastructure Fund:** To create a medium-term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects of post-harvest management infrastructure and community agricultural assets through incentives and financial support for improving agricultural infrastructure facilities in the country. Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) scheme of Rs 1 lakh crore was launched.
- **Formation and promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs):** The Government of India had launched the Central Sector Scheme (CSS) in 2020 for the formation and promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations. The FPOs will be formed and promoted through Implementing Agencies (IAs) who will provide professional support to the FPOs for a period of five years including preparation and execution of the business plan while ensuring better marketing opportunities and market linkages for the concerned FPOs on a regular basis. Will engage Shankul based business organizations to provide support and support. However, till 31.12.2023, 7,774 numbers of FPOs have been registered under the new FPO scheme. Of these, equity grant of Rs 129.5 crore has been issued to 2,933 FPOs, while loan guarantee cover of Rs 226.7 crore has also been issued to 994 FPOs.
- **Namo Drone Didi:** The government has recently approved the Central Sector Scheme for providing drones to women self-help groups (SHGs) with an outlay of Rs 1261 crore for the period 2024-25 to 2025-26. The aim of the scheme is to provide drones to selected 14,500 women self-help groups which will enable them to provide services on rent to farmers for agricultural work (fertilizer and pesticide spraying).



Anti-Copying & Paper Leak Free Examinations: Youth's Demand for Better India

The organization of competitive examinations holds immense significance for the future and employment prospects of the youth in the country. However, instances of rigging, cheating, and paper leaks have cast a shadow on the examination management system. Over the past seven years, more than 70 major paper leak incidents have been reported. Surprisingly, despite this alarming trend, two-thirds of our states seem indifferent to addressing this issue. The prevalence of cheating and paper leak scandals, particularly in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, and Jharkhand, raises concerns about the violation of students' rights and the right to equality of opportunity. Such incidents contribute to a corrupt culture in the field of educational examinations, necessitating a collaborative and stringent approach from both the Central and State Governments to tackle this pervasive problem.

In Uttar Pradesh following the revelation of the leaked paper for the Uttar Pradesh Police Constable Recruitment Exam, the Recruitment Board took swift action by establishing an internal inquiry committee and the exam has been cancelled. However, urgent government intervention is imperative to instill confidence among students, addressing the recent paper leak in the Review Officer examination. Notably, 244 individuals have been apprehended since February 15, accused of employing unfair means or planning to do so in the police constable recruitment examination. The collaborative efforts of the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force and UP Police are pivotal in addressing these issues and maintaining the integrity of the examination system.

Paper leak incidents are a matter of concern:

➤ Despite paper leaking in examinations being a huge problem, two-thirds of our states are not able to show the will to enact anti-cheating laws. Only three states Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Rajasthan have made strict laws to prevent incidents of paper leaks. These laws have been made in these three states within a year. While seven other states Chhattisgarh (2008), Jharkhand (2001), UP (1998), Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (1997), Odisha (1988) and Maharashtra (1982) have old anti-copying

laws, which are relatively lenient. If the way corruption has spread in different departments is not curbed, it will be difficult to take action against the organized crime gangs involved in cheating.

Efforts to Develop Anti-Copying System in the Country:

- There is a discussion going on across the country regarding the anti-copying law of the Central Government. While the Central Government has taken action to make the country's examination system cheating-free through the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, a glimpse of Uttarakhand is also visible in this law of the Centre. However, the law of Uttarakhand appears to be more strict in this matter.
- Uttarakhand is one of the few states where strict laws have been implemented on matters like paper leaks. In 2023, the government succeeded in implementing the new law in the state by adopting the legal process.

Paper leak case in Uttarakhand:

- First, the issue of the paper leak came to light in the graduate-level competitive examination of Uttarakhand Subordinate Services Selection Commission (UKSSSC). The graduate-level examination was organized in the year 2021 December, in which 916 candidates were successful. After the release of the list of these 916 candidates, the issue of exam paper leak started coming to light. A complaint was also made before the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. A case was registered in the matter on 22 July 2022. The case was handed over to STF and during investigation, many facts came to light and many arrests were made. It was revealed that a paper was sold for around Rs 15 lakh each and more than 160 candidates were suspicious in this entire matter.
- It was also revealed during the investigation that not only the graduation level examination but also the examinations like Secretariat Guard Forest Guard, and Junior Assistant Judiciary were rigged. STF took the investigation forward in the case and some employees of various departments were also arrested. During this period, the Gangster Act was also imposed against 25 people. Property worth about Rs 20

crore of the six accused was also attached.

Anti-copying law is applicable in Uttarakhand:

- In the midst of these situations, as protests by the unemployed gained momentum and concerns about jeopardizing the future of youth through exam paper leaks escalated, the Uttarakhand government took proactive measures. The government initiated preparations to enact a stringent anti-copying law. Competitive Examination Ordinance 2023, which was implemented in the state and included provisions for a robust legal framework. The ordinance, issued on February 11, 2023, paved the way for the Uttarakhand Competitive Examination (Measures for Prevention and Redressal of Unfair Means in Recruitment) Ordinance 2023, officially passed in March 2023. Following the Governor's approval, this legislation was hailed as the country's strictest anti-copying law, signaling a commitment to addressing malpractices in competitive exams.
- Apart from this, other states like Andhra Pradesh (Act passed in 1997), Uttar Pradesh (Act passed in 1998) and Rajasthan (Act passed in 2022) also have similar laws to prevent copying. The anti-copying laws in Gujarat and Uttarakhand have strict provisions for punishment.

Provisions in the anti-copying law in Center and Uttarakhand:

- Under the anti-copying law in Uttarakhand, a fine of up to Rs 10 crore and life imprisonment has been made to the culprits. At the same time, the Central Government has also fixed a punishment of 10 years and a fine of Rs 1 crore. Under the law, there is a provision to confiscate the property of mafias who leak papers. At the same time, in Uttarakhand, a rule has been made to debar the candidates involved in paper leak from the examinations for a few years.
- Provisions of Uttarakhand Competitive Examination (Measures for Prevention and Redressal of Unfair Means in Recruitment) Act 2023:
 - » If the culprit is found guilty of paper leak, copying or use of unfair means in recruitment examinations in Uttarakhand, there is a provision of life imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 10 crore.
 - » If any person, service providing organization, printing press, coaching institute etc. are found involved in unfair means then they will be punished with life imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10 crore.
 - » If a candidate is found involved in unfair means while copying or getting himself copied in the

recruitment examination, there is a provision of three years' imprisonment and a minimum fine of Rs 5 lakh.

- » If the same candidate is found guilty again for the second time in any competitive examination, he will be imposed with a minimum imprisonment of 10 years and a minimum fine of Rs 10 lakh.
- » If found cheating, a charge sheet will be filed against the accused candidate. He will be suspended for two to five years from the date of filing of the charge sheet and if proven guilty, the candidate will be suspended from appearing in all examinations for 10 years.
- » If the same candidate is found cheating again, he will be suspended for five to 10 years before the charge sheet is filed and if proven guilty, he will be barred from appearing in competitive examinations for life.
- » If any person conspires with the examination conducting body, there is a provision of punishment up to life imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 10 crore.
- » The punishment has been included in the category of non-bailable offense and there is also a provision to confiscate the property of the culprits.

Steps towards anti-copying law in Jharkhand:

- Cases of paper leaks have been coming to light during various competitive examinations in many states of the country including Jharkhand. Even after this, the education mafia is openly challenging this system by violating the law. Laws have been made in Jharkhand regarding anti-copying under which a provision of life imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10 crore has been made. If we look at the strict anti-copying provisions of the Central and Jharkhand governments, Jharkhand has shown more strictness.

Conclusion:

Dedicated students pursuing competitive examinations often relocate far from home, investing years in the pursuit of fulfilling not only their aspirations but also those of their families. A significant proportion of these ambitious students hail from modest backgrounds. Exploiting the commitment and emotions of these individuals represents a blatant transgression of law and order. Such actions stand as a affront to the principles of fair governance and a corruption-free system. It is imperative for the government to undertake resolute and stringent measures to address this matter, thereby safeguarding the trust of these earnest and law-abiding students in the sanctity of the Constitution of India.



Significance of ISRO's Meteorological Satellite INSAT 3DS and its future Missions

“The Indian Space sector is a rapidly growing industry, with increasing opportunities for investments and businesses. With the vision of becoming a major player in the global space market, India has been making significant strides in the development of its space program. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) was established in 1969 and launched India's first satellite, Aryabhata in 1975. Since then, ISRO has launched several successful missions, including the Mars Orbiter Mission and the Chandrayaan missions to the Moon, demonstrating India's capabilities in space technology.”

Context:

Recently, the GSLV-F14 carrying INSAT-3DS meteorological satellite was successfully launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. About 18 minutes after the lift-off from the spaceport's second launch pad, the GSLV-F14 deployed the INSAT-3DS into the intended geosynchronous transfer orbit.

Meteorological Satellite and its importance:

- A weather satellite or meteorological satellite is a type of Earth observation satellite that is primarily used to monitor the weather and climate of the Earth. Satellites can be polar orbiting (covering the entire Earth asynchronously), or geostationary (hovering over the same spot on the equator).
- While primarily used to detect the development and movement of storm systems and other cloud patterns, meteorological satellites can also detect other phenomena such as city lights, fires, effects of pollution, auroras, sand and dust storms, snow cover, ice mapping, boundaries of ocean currents, and energy flows.

Important Satellites for Monitoring Weather in India:

- Indian National Satellite System (INSAT)
- OCEANSAT (1,2,3)
- Saral
- Megha Tropiques
- Kalpana-1

What is GSLV-F14?

- Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) is a three-stage 51.7 m long launch vehicle having a lift off mass of 420 tonnes.
- The first stage comprises a solid propellant motor having 139-ton propellant and four earth-storable propellant stages strap-ons which carry

40 tons of liquid propellant in each.

- The second stage is also an earth-storable propellant stage loaded with 40-ton propellant.
- The third stage is a cryogenic stage with a 15-ton propellant loading of liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen.
- GSLV can be used to launch a variety of spacecraft capable of performing communications, navigation, earth resource surveys, and any other proprietary mission.
- The GSLV or geosynchronous launch vehicle was termed the “naughty boy” of Indian space due to its repeated failures in the past. Following Saturday's successful launch, GSLV-F14/INSAT-3DS Mission Director Tommy Joseph said that the GSLV had become a “disciplined boy”.

INSAT 3D and its Significance:

- INSAT-3D Satellite is a follow-on mission of Third Generation Meteorological Satellite from Geostationary Orbit. GSLV-F14/INSAT-3DS mission is fully funded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES). It is designed for enhanced meteorological observations and monitoring of land and ocean surfaces for weather forecasting and disaster warning.
- The satellite will augment the Meteorological services along with the presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR satellites. Indian Industries have significantly contributed to the making of the Satellite.
- INSAT-3DS will augment the country's meteorological (weather, climate, and ocean related) services with the presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR in-orbit satellites. The newly launched INSAT-3DS satellite aims to enhance the monitoring of Earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans, and environment, elevate capabilities in data collection and dissemination and satellite-aided search and rescue services. The initiative will boost India's weather, climate, and ocean-related observations and services, expanding knowledge and better disaster mitigation and preparedness in the future.
- Meteorological data from the INSAT-3DS satellite shall be utilised by institutes of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), namely, India Meteorology Department (IMD), National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), and Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services

(INCOIS) and various Indian agencies to enhance meteorological research and services. This will boost India's weather and climate prediction and forecasts, timely alerts and early warnings, and advisories for public and last mile users such as fisher folk and farmers.

The primary objectives of the mission are:

- To monitor Earth's surface, carry out Oceanic observations and its environment in various spectral channels of meteorological importance.
- To provide the vertical profile of various meteorological parameters of the Atmosphere.
- To provide the Data Collection and Data Dissemination capabilities from the Data Collection Platforms (DCPs).
- To provide Satellite Aided Search and Rescue services.
- The INSAT-3D satellite will augment meteorological services along with the presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR in-orbit satellites.

About ISRO:

- ISRO is the national space agency of India. It operates as the primary research and development arm of the Department of Space, which is directly overseen by the Prime Minister of India while the Chairman of ISRO also acts as the Secretary of DoS. ISRO is primarily responsible for performing tasks related to space-based operations, space exploration, international space cooperation and the development of related technologies.

Importance of ISRO in India's growth:

- India is the fifth amongst spacefaring nations having end-to-end capabilities in space research and development, including the capability to launch from our own land and operate programs of earth observation, satellite communication, meteorology, space science & navigation and ground infrastructure.
- ISRO's project for sustained human presence in space will yield a large number of spinoff technologies which will improve our everyday life. Advancements in space technology has created a positive impact in society, especially in sectors like health care, education, communication, broadcasting, disaster management, safety & security and land and water resource management.

ISRO's future Missions:

- ISRO is set for another adventurous year ahead with the success of Chandrayaan 3 mission and successful launch of India's first solar observation mission Aditya L1. ISRO will take up a series of space exploration missions and is set to take India's understanding about outer space to next level.
- The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar

(NISAR) represents a collaborative project between NASA and ISRO. This mission aims to launch a dual-frequency synthetic aperture radar satellite that is going to be used for remote sensing. This mission is scheduled for launch in January 2024. The satellite will map the globe in 12 days and provide spatially and temporally consistent data. This data would assist in the understanding of Earth's ecosystems, ice mass, vegetation biomass, sea level rise, groundwater, and natural hazards including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and landslides.

- Gaganyaan's maiden mission is a collaborative endeavour between ISRO and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. It intends to be the basis of the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme.
- Mangalyaan-2 also known as Mars Orbiter Mission 2 (MOM 2). This will be ISRO's second Mars planet mission. This mission aims to study surface, atmosphere, and climatic conditions. MOM 2 orbiter spacecraft will be equipped with scientific instruments including a hyperspectral camera to study the surface composition of Mars. It is also equipped with a magnetometer to study the magnetic field of Mars and radar to map the surface of Mars.
- X-ray Polarimeter Satellite mission aims to investigate the polarization of cosmic X-rays. This satellite is designed to remain operational for a minimum of five years, it will be used to observe pulsars, X-ray binaries involving black holes, active galactic nuclei, and non-thermal supernova remnants.
- Venus Orbiter Mission will be the first attempt for India to plan a mission for Venus and its launch is scheduled for December 2024 or 2025. This spacecraft that will orbit Venus for five years aims to study the atmosphere of the planet.

Way Forward:

The success of the GSLV-F14/INSAT-3DS mission is a big boost for ISRO ahead of the launch of the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite, which is scheduled in the coming months. India's growing launch capabilities provide an opportunity for companies to launch their satellites from Indian soil. With ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and the upcoming Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), the country is well-positioned to offer competitive launch services to a wide range of customers. The increasing demand for satellite-based remote sensing and earth observation services presents an opportunity for companies to develop and launch satellites for these applications. With a growing demand for accurate and real-time data, this sector is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years.



Amendment of the Epidemic Diseases Act by the Law Commission

Context:

The 22nd Law Commission, in its 286th “Report on the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897”, has suggested amendments to the current law to address the existing gaps or to create a new comprehensive legislation. The Commission noted significant deficiencies in the existing law’s ability to handle future epidemics and new infectious diseases or novel strains of existing pathogens.

Introduction:

- The public health and sanitation are included within the state list. However, India’s central government and state government both are empowered to manage health related matters. The epidemic disease act is the main legislative framework for the prevention of transmission of dangerous epidemic diseases.
- India has come across many large outbreaks of emerging and re-emerging infectious disease in the recent past. Hence, it is important to critically evaluate the epidemic disease act 1897, and its importance in the current context.

The Epidemics and Pandemics in India:

India has a long history of grappling with epidemics and pandemics, with significant outbreaks spanning the 19th to 21st centuries:

- **19th Century:** The 19th century saw multiple cholera pandemics, starting from 1817, with outbreaks occurring roughly every decade. The Bombay plague epidemic of 1896 marked a significant event due to its social and political ramifications.
- **20th Century:** Moving into the 20th century, the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 caused widespread devastation, followed by polio and smallpox epidemics in the mid-20th century.
- **21st Century:** The 21st century brought new challenges with outbreaks such as SARS in 2003, dengue in 2003 and 2006, and the H1N1 flu pandemic in 2009. Other notable outbreaks included meningococcal meningitis in 2005 and chikungunya in 2006. Region-specific outbreaks like the Surat plague epidemic in 1994 and the Odisha jaundice epidemic in 2014 underscored the ongoing threat of infectious diseases.
- **Post 2015:** The emergence of novel diseases like Nipah virus in 2018 posed unique challenges, requiring swift public health responses. Throughout these outbreaks, efforts focused

on surveillance, containment, and public awareness. Control measures ranged from fumigation and evacuation to mass vaccination campaigns and public health education.

- Despite advancements in healthcare, challenges persisted, including population density, urbanization, and socioeconomic factors contributing to disease transmission. However, successful containment efforts, such as in the case of the Nipah outbreak, demonstrated the importance of coordinated responses and community engagement in mitigating the impact of infectious diseases.

What is the Epidemic Diseases Act?

- The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 was first introduced during British colonial rule in India to combat the bubonic plague in Bombay.
- It empowers the authorities to implement measures for epidemic containment and grants special powers to control the spread of diseases during outbreaks.

Amendment to Epidemic Disease Act: Lessons from COVID19

- The Epidemic Diseases Act was amended during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance the government’s ability to respond effectively to the unprecedented public health crisis. The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on September 14, 2020. The Bill amends the Act to include protections for healthcare personnel combatting epidemic diseases and expands the powers of the central government to prevent the spread of such diseases.

Key features of the Amendment:

- **Definition:** The Bill defines healthcare service personnel as persons who are at risk of contracting the epidemic disease while carrying out duties related to the epidemic. They include:
 - » Public and clinical healthcare providers such as doctors and nurses
 - » Any person empowered under the Act to take measures to prevent the outbreak of the disease
 - » Other persons designated as such by the state government.
- **Protection to healthcare personnels:** The bill provides for protection for healthcare personnel and damage to property. An act of violence

against a healthcare personnel is a punishable offence.

- **Power of Central govt:** The Bill expands the powers of the central government to regulate the inspection of any bus, train, goods vehicle, ship, vessel, or aircraft leaving or arriving at any land port, port, or aerodrome.
- **Enforcement:** It empowers authorities to enforce guidelines related to social distancing, mask-wearing, quarantine, isolation, and other preventive measures to contain the spread of the virus.

What does the Law Commission's report say about the Act?

- The existing law, designed for a different era, lacks provisions to address modern challenges. The Commission emphasized that managing and preventing epidemic diseases cannot be confined to outdated legislation. It proposed clear definitions, demarcation of powers, and a comprehensive approach to deal with current and future health crises.

Recommendations of the Commission:

Clear Definitions:

- The Commission proposed clear definitions for terms like 'epidemic,' 'outbreak,' and 'pandemic.'
- Demarcation of powers between the Central, State, and local authorities should extend to the micro level.
- Stages of diseases need precise definition.

Quarantine and Isolation:

- The distinction between 'quarantine' and 'isolation' should be clarified.
- Consider adopting provisions from the Epidemic Diseases Bill, 2023.

Social Distancing and Physical Distancing:

- Acknowledging COVID-19 regulations, the Commission recommended defining 'social distancing' within the 1897 Act.
- Suggested using the term 'physical distancing' instead.

Preparedness and Coordination:

- Epidemic situations demand coordinated actions.
- Uncoordinated efforts lead to confusion; a pre-planned mechanism is essential.
- The Central Government should create an Epidemic Plan in consultation with relevant departments and authorities.

Guidelines and Provisions:

- Develop comprehensive quarantine and isolation guidelines aligned with the Indian Port Health Rules, 1955.
- Address lockdowns and movement restrictions

alongside disease surveillance and testing.

- Strengthen penalties for non-compliance.

Why do we need a law to manage epidemics and pandemics?

- The need for acts like the Epidemic Diseases Act in managing pandemics or epidemics arises from several critical reasons.
- **Rapid Response and Control:** Epidemics and pandemics can spread swiftly, affecting large populations. These acts provide legal frameworks to respond promptly, implement preventive measures, and control outbreaks.
- **Public Health Measures:** These acts empower authorities to enforce public health measures such as quarantine, isolation, and contact tracing. They allow for the establishment of health infrastructure, including hospitals, testing centres, and treatment facilities.
- **Coordination and Authority:** Clear legal provisions define the roles and responsibilities of various agencies, including Central, State, and local authorities. Coordinated efforts are essential to prevent confusion and ensure effective management.
- **Legal Backing for Enforcement:** Acts provide the legal basis for imposing restrictions on movement, lockdowns, and other necessary measures. They enable authorities to take decisive actions without delay.
- **Punitive Measures:** Acts include provisions for penalties against non-compliance, reinforcing adherence to guidelines. Strict enforcement discourages risky behaviour and promotes public safety.
- **Adaptability to Changing Circumstances:** Epidemics evolve, and new diseases emerge. Acts can be amended or updated to address contemporary challenges. Flexibility ensures effective responses to novel threats.

Way Forward

India has a long history of encountering epidemics and pandemics, including diseases like cholera, influenza, dengue, and smallpox. These outbreaks have had significant socioeconomic impacts, affecting physical, political, and social aspects of society. The proposed changes by Law Commission to the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 offer a strategic path forward. Strengthening healthcare infrastructure, promoting public awareness, investing in research and surveillance, engaging local communities, and fostering international cooperation will enhance preparedness and protect public health during future outbreaks.



National Issue



1 Money Bills and Constitutional Challenge

Why in News:

Recently, the Supreme Court had struck down the electoral bond scheme as unconstitutional, but the Supreme Court did not clarify the challenge of the government tagging a money bill to pass major legislation. This issue is under consideration before the seven-member Constitution bench of the court which is yet to be formed.

Background:

- The Supreme Court is considering a key legal question regarding what constitutes a money Bill.
- This issue has come to light due to recent cases such as the electoral bond scheme and the Aadhaar Act.

Definition of a Money Bill:

- Money Bills provide a streamlined process for enacting laws by Parliament.
- Article 109 of the Constitution outlines that a Bill designated as a money Bill requires assent only from the Lok Sabha.
- Criteria for categorizing a Bill as a money Bill include its exclusive focus on certain subjects like taxation, financial obligations, or matters incidental to these subjects, as per Article 110.
- The final decision on whether a Bill qualifies as a money Bill rests with the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

Significance of the Issue:

- Recent enactments of 'Finance Acts' through the money Bill route, incorporating amendments to significant laws, have raised concerns.
- Challenges to such enactments have led to questions about the validity of passing certain Bills as money Bills.

Previous Supreme Court Rulings:

- In 2018, the Supreme Court upheld the Aadhaar Act as constitutional, despite challenges regarding its passage as a money Bill.
- However, dissenting opinions highlighted concerns about the misuse of the money Bill route and its implications for legislative processes.
- Another challenge related to the Finance Act, 2017, was referred to a larger bench for consideration of its validity as a money Bill.

Current Status:

- Challenges to amendments passed through the money Bill route remain unresolved pending

the decision of the larger bench.

- Recent rulings, such as the striking down of amendments facilitating the electoral bond scheme, underscore the ongoing significance of the money Bill issue.

Way Forward:

- The decision of the seven-judge bench on the definition of a money Bill could have implications for future challenges against legislation passed through this route, including laws like the Aadhaar Act and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. Depending on the bench's ruling, renewed challenges against existing laws passed as money Bills may emerge.

2 Invocation of Article 142 by Supreme Court

Why in News:

The Supreme Court has quashed the result of the January 30 elections for the post of Mayor in Chandigarh Municipal Corporation. The apex court declared the AAP-Congress candidate as the winner instead of the previously declared BJP candidate. In overturning the results, the Supreme Court invoked the sweeping powers conferred on the court under Article 142 of the Constitution.

About Article 142:

- Article 142 provides a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do complete justice between the parties, where at times law or statute may not provide a remedy.
- In such instances, the Court can go beyond its usual limits to settle a dispute in a way that matches the specifics of the case. The SC can do so in any cause or matter pending before it.
- Such orders of SC are enforceable throughout the territory of India as prescribed by any law made by Parliament or order of the President of India.

How court exercise these power?

- While the powers under Article 142 are sweeping in nature, SC has defined its scope and extent through its judgments over time.
- In the Prem Chand Garg case, the majority opinion demarcated the contours for the exercise of the Court's powers under Article 142(1) by saying that an order to do complete justice between the parties "must not only be consistent with the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, but it cannot even be inconsistent with the substantive provisions of the relevant

statutory laws.

Noticeable Use of Art 142 by Supreme Court:

Union Carbide Corporation vs Union of India:

- In this case, SC announced a settlement and stated that all civil proceedings wherever pending were concluded in terms of settlement.
- It quashed all criminal proceedings arising out of the disaster. In this case, the court ordered to award compensation to the victims and placed itself in a position above the Parliamentary laws.

Babri Masjid Case:

- The article was used in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case and was instrumental in the handover of the disputed land to a trust to be formed by the union government.

Criticism:

- Unlike the legislature and the executive, the judiciary cannot be held accountable for its actions.
- The power has been criticised on grounds of the separation of powers doctrine.
- Definition of complete justice
- It is further argued that the court has wide discretion due to the absence of a standard definition for the term “complete justice”.

Limitations on Article 142:

SC recognised that the power under Art 142 has certain limitations. It held that while exercising power under this article:

- The court should not ignore the substantive rights of a litigant under the existing law.
- The power could not be used to supplant substantive law applicable to a case.
- Express statutory provisions cannot be ignored.

Conclusion:

Through these sweeping power, Supreme Court once again defended the democracy and rule of law and truly established itself as protector of the constitution.

3

Right to Adopt a Child

Why in News:

Recently, The Delhi High Court upheld alterations to Adoption Rules under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Background:

- The court clarified that the right to adopt children is not a fundamental right of prospective adoptive parents. The ruling came in response to a case concerning regulations barring parents with two children from adopting

a ‘normal child.’

- The court made these observations while dealing with batch of pleas filed by several prospective parents with two biological children and wishing to adopt a third child. These pleas challenged a decision of the Central Adoption Resource Authority that affirmed the retrospective application of the Adoption Regulations of 2022.

About prospective adoptive parent (PAP):

- A prospective adoptive parent (PAP) is a non-agency person who is interested in adopting a child. The prospective adoptive parents shall be physically, mentally, emotionally and financially capable. They shall not have any life threatening medical condition and they should not have been convicted in criminal act of any nature or accused in any case of child rights violation.

Laws Related to Adoption in India:

- Adoptions in India are governed by two laws: the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA) and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.
- Both laws have their separate eligibility criteria for adoptive parents.
- Those applying under the JJ Act have to register on CARA’s portal after which a specialised adoption agency carries out a home study report.
- After it finds the candidate eligible for adoption, a child declared legally free for adoption is referred to the applicant.
- Under HAMA, a “dattaka hom” ceremony or an adoption deed or a court order is sufficient to obtain irrevocable adoption rights.

Major Challenges Related to Adoption in India:

- Lengthy and Complex Adoption Process: The adoption process in India can be lengthy, bureaucratic, and complex, leading to delays in the placement of children with suitable families.
- Illegal and Unregulated Practices: Unfortunately, there are instances of illegal and unregulated adoption practices in India.
- Returning Children after Adoption: India also faces an unusual upsurge in adoptive parents returning children after adopting.

About CARA:

- The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is a statutory body of Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India. CARA is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions.

Way Forward:

There is a need to review and update adoption laws to streamline the process, make it more transparent,

and ensure the best interests of the child. This includes simplifying paperwork, reducing delays, and addressing any loopholes or ambiguities in the existing legislation.

4 Sangam: Digital Twin Initiative

Why in News:

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has unveiled the 'Sangam: Digital Twin' initiative, a step towards reshaping infrastructure planning through the integration of cutting-edge technologies. The initiative invites Expressions of Interest (EoI) from various sectors, marking a pivotal moment in the evolution of digital infrastructure in India.

About Sangam: Digital Twin:

➤ At its core, the 'Sangam: Digital Twin' initiative leverages Digital Twin technology, creating virtual replicas of physical assets. This empowers stakeholders with the ability to monitor, simulate, and analyze infrastructure, paving the way for adaptive and innovative outcomes.

Dual Stages for Comprehensive Impact:

➤ The initiative unfolds in two stages, combining creative exploration and practical demonstration. The exploratory phase encourages inventive thinking, while the subsequent stage focuses on real-world use cases. This dual approach aims to create a blueprint for collaboration in future infrastructure projects, aligning with the latest advancements in communication, computation, and sensing technologies.

Technological Integration for Collaborative Solutions:

➤ 'Sangam: Digital Twin' goes beyond conventional boundaries by integrating 5G, IoT, AI, AR/VR, AI-native 6G, Digital Twin, and next-gen computational technologies. This holistic integration breaks silos and fosters a whole-of-nation approach to infrastructure planning, bringing forth a collaborative paradigm shift.

Bridging the Conceptualization-Realization Gap:

➤ The initiative addresses a persistent challenge in infrastructure development, the gap between conceptualization and realization. 'Sangam' aims to transform innovative ideas into practical solutions, ushering in a new era where technological advancements seamlessly translate into tangible infrastructure enhancements.

Encouraging Holistic Innovation:

➤ 'Sangam' promotes a holistic approach to

innovation, urging stakeholders to unite and leverage unified data and collective intelligence. By creating an ecosystem that maximizes the value of technological advancements, the initiative aims to drive sustainable development.

Demonstrating Practical Implementation:

➤ At its core, 'Sangam: Digital Twin' seeks to showcase the practical implementation of innovative infrastructure planning solutions. By providing a model framework for collaboration, it sets the stage for scalable and successful strategies in future projects.

Call to Action:

➤ The DoT has extended an invitation to industry pioneers, startups, MSMEs, academia, innovators, and forward-thinkers to pre-register and participate in Sangam's outreach programs. This inclusive approach underscores the initiative's commitment to fostering a transformative journey in infrastructure planning and design.

Way Forward:

'Sangam: Digital Twin' emerges as a beacon of progress, aligning with India's vision for technological excellence. The initiative signifies a collaborative effort to reshape the future of infrastructure, where ideas seamlessly transform into solutions, driving the nation towards a technologically advanced and sustainable tomorrow.

5 Criminalization of Politics

Why in News:

According to a report by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) 36% of Rajya Sabha candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves in recently held Rajya Sabha election. The ADR and the National Election Watch analysed the self-sworn affidavits of 58 out of the 59 candidates in the 56 seats in 15 states. Additionally, 17% of these individuals face serious criminal charges with 1 candidate having cases related to attempted murder.

Reasons for criminalisation of politics:

- **Lack of Political Will:** Section 8 of the Representation of Peoples (RP) Act, 1951 disqualifies a person convicted with a sentence of two years or more from contesting elections. But those under trial continued to be eligible to contest elections.
- **Use of Muscle and Money Power:** Candidates with serious criminal records seem to do well despite their bad public image, largely due to

their ability to finance their own elections and further fund their respective parties for different election activities.

- **Vote Bank:** Criminals are being wooed by political parties and given cabinet posts because their muscle and money fetches crucial votes.

Implications of Criminalisation of Politics:

- Against the Principle of Free and Fair Elections.
- It is against the ethos of Free and Fair Elections which is the bedrock of a democracy.
- The major problem is that the law-breakers become law-makers, this affects the efficacy of the democratic process in delivering good governance.
- These unhealthy tendencies in the democratic system reflect a poor image of the nature of India's state institutions and the quality of its elected representatives.
- The circulation of black money makes it easier for politicians to buy votes and secure their positions, leading to a situation where corrupt practices are normalized and become a part of the political system.
- It introduces a culture of violence in society and sets a bad precedent for the youth to follow and reduces people's faith in democracy as a system of governance.

Way Forward:

- Increasing criminalisation in politics calls for an amendment in the RPA 1951 to debar the persons from contesting elections against whom any serious Nature of crimes is pending.
- Fast-tracking the judicial process can help weed out the corrupt as well as criminal elements in the political system.
- The judiciary should play a proactive role by considering banning people accused with serious criminal charges from contesting elections.

6

Observation by Supreme Court on Women Inequality

Why in news:

Recently, Supreme Court observed that terminating the employment of a woman on the ground that she has got married is a "coarse case of gender discrimination and inequality.

Background:

- A former military nurse who was removed from service under Army order that provided marriage as a ground for such action.
- The termination order was passed under a 1977 Army instruction titled "Terms and conditions of

service for the grant of permanent commissions in the Military Nursing Service", which was later withdrawn in 1995.

- In March 2016, order was set aside by the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT), Lucknow, which directed her reinstatement with back wages. In August that year, the Centre challenged the appeal in the top court. The appeal was dismissed.
- Supreme Court also directed the Centre to pay a compensation of Rs. 60 lakh to a former military nurse.

Issues faced by women in course of employment:

- Women are often paid less than men for the same job. This can lead to depression and affect a woman's personal life.
- Women may face sexual harassment in the workplace, which can make it difficult to advance their careers. Harassment can also prevent women from working.
- Women may face gender discrimination in many ways, including being passed over for promotions or being treated unfairly by bosses.
- Women who are in abusive relationships may experience high rates of job loss and turnover.
- Exposure to reproductive hazards in the workplace may affect women's reproductive health or job loss.
- Stereotypical gender biases can put women at a disadvantage compared to men.

Recent Initiatives:

- **Permanent Commission (PC):** Granting PC to women officers in 11 arms and services, including the Army Medical Corps, Army Dental Corps, and Military Nursing Service.
- **Recruitment of women cadets:** Including women cadets in the National Defence Academy (NDA).
- **Command appointments:** Command appointments for women officers.
- Introducing women as Agniveers.

Conclusion:

Recent decision given by Supreme Court should fulfill the constitutional goal which constitution envisage such as women equality, end of gender biased, women empowerment.

7

Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022

Why in News:

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has recently notified amendment to Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022, which stated that couples undergoing surrogacy must have both gametes

from the intending couple.

About the Amendments:

- As per the latest amendment, the couple can have a child born through surrogacy but must have at least one gamete from the intending couple.
- The District Medical Board can certify that either husband or wife constituting the intending couple suffers from medical condition necessitating use of donor gamete, then surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition.
- Also, single women (widow or divorcee) undergoing surrogacy must use self-eggs and donor sperm to avail surrogacy procedures.

Background:

- The Centre had in March 2023 issued a notification banning donor gametes for couples intending to undergo surrogacy. The notification insisted on the use of both eggs and sperm from the intending couple, surrogacy rules allowed the use of donor eggs, but not sperm.
- The March 2023 notification was challenged in the Supreme Court by a woman with Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) Syndrome, a rare congenital disorder that affects the


reproductive system and can cause infertility.

Surrogacy for single women:


- The Act allows access to surrogacy only to two categories of single women those who are widowed or divorced. Even in these cases, the regulations stipulate that the woman's own eggs have to be used; this was underlined by the recent notification as well.
- Many are concerned with the association of marital status with eligibility for surrogacy. Further, the provision mandating the use of the mother's own eggs are also recommended.
- The restriction on access to surrogacy for single persons, live-in couples, and LGBTQ couples too have been criticised.

Conclusion:

Surrogacy is not merely a process rather a process to bring a life in this world, which is why several ethical aspects related to it must be dealt with. This process is mainly intended for women who have a missing or abnormal uterus, or have had the uterus surgically removed due to a medical condition. It can also be availed by women living with conditions that make it impossible for them to carry the pregnancy to term, or which make a pregnancy life-threatening.



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International Issue



1 International Solar Alliance

Why in News:

Recently, Malta became the 119th member of International Solar Alliance (ISA).

About ISA:

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an intergovernmental organization that was launched in 2015, by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris.
- It was launched at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris, in 2015.
- **Vision:** Let us together make the sun brighter.
- **Mission:** Every home no matter how far away, will have a light at home.
- The ISA is guided by its 'Towards 1000' strategy, which aims:
 - » To mobilize USD 1000 billion of investments in solar energy solutions by 2030.
 - » To deliver energy access to 1000 million people using clean energy solutions.
 - » To install 1000 GW of solar energy capacity.
 - » To mitigate global solar emissions to the tune of 1000 million tonnes of CO2 every year.
- **Membership:** All UN member states are eligible to join the ISA.
- Countries that do not fall within the Tropics can join the alliance with the exception of voting rights.
- **Headquarters:** National Institute for Solar Energy of India, Gurugram.
- The United Nations General Assembly granted observer status to the ISA in 2021.

Projects of ISA:

One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG):

- The idea of OSOWOG was first floated by India in 2018 during the first assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- It is a part of ISA and is a trans-national electricity grid supplying solar power across the globe.
- **Objective:** Facilitating global cooperation on building a global ecosystem of interconnected renewable energy resources and building a common grid to transfer solar power.
- **Vision:** The Sun Never Sets

Solar Technology Application Resource Centre (STARC) Initiative:

- It is capacity-building & institutional strengthening initiative in developing Member Countries.
- It aims to cultivate the desired human capacity and skills among a Member Country's populace to encourage energy transition activities, creating jobs & contributing to country's economic growth.
- STAR Centres act as hubs of technology, knowledge, and expertise on solar energy and are a go-to place for a Member Country at the regional or country levels.

Conclusion:

By taking a leadership role in the ISA, India can enhance its reputation as a responsible global player committed to sustainable development. Through, ISA India can present themselves as a leader in third world countries.

2 USA Imposes New Sanctions on Russia

Why in News:

The US, UK and EU have announced new sanctions on Russia, two years after its invasion of Ukraine.

Latest Sanctions on Russia:

- Announcing 500 new sanctions against Russia, US President Joe Biden said they would target Russia's war machine. Export restrictions will be imposed on nearly hundred firms or individuals.
- The UK has frozen the assets of six bosses at the prison and banned them from travelling to the UK. With that UK has also imposed new bans on Russian metal, diamond and energy exports.
- The EU has announced sanctions on 200 organisations and people.

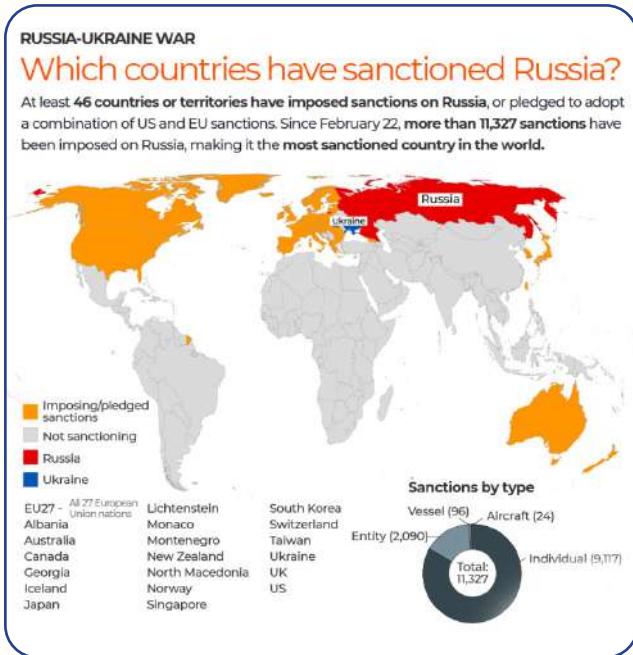
Impact of Sanctions on Russia's Economy:

- In 2022, the first year of the war, Russia's economy shrank by 2.1%, according to the International Monetary Fund.
- The US Treasury claims sanctions are damaging Russia, having cut 5% from the economic growth it might have had over the past two years.
- Russia's government has also been slashing health spending to fund the war in Ukraine, according to the UK's Ministry of Defence.

Relations Between India and Russia During the Sanctions Period:

- In April 2023, Indian External Affairs Minister

S. Jaishankar described India-Russia ties as among the “steadiest” in global relations, arguing that the relationship has recently garnered much focus, not because it has altered, but because it has not.



- Even as India strengthens its strategic partnerships with the US and other Western countries. Indeed, New Delhi is indicating that this pattern should not be interpreted as a “Zero-Sum Game”.
- Russia’s offer to utilise its huge oil export revenues from India to invest in the latter’s manufacturing industry for export to the former.
- The agreement to adopt the Russian financial messaging system for cross-border payments, the acceptance of Indian RuPay cards and UPI in Russia and Russia’s MIR cards and Fast Payments System in India, and the operationalisation of the Maritime Corridor connecting Vladivostok and Chennai point to the eagerness.

Way Forward:

During this period of Global System change, India is strengthening its strategic partnership by promoting its separate bilateral relations with Russia, the US and other Western countries.

3 Punishment for Cough Syrup Deaths in Uzbekistan

Why in News:

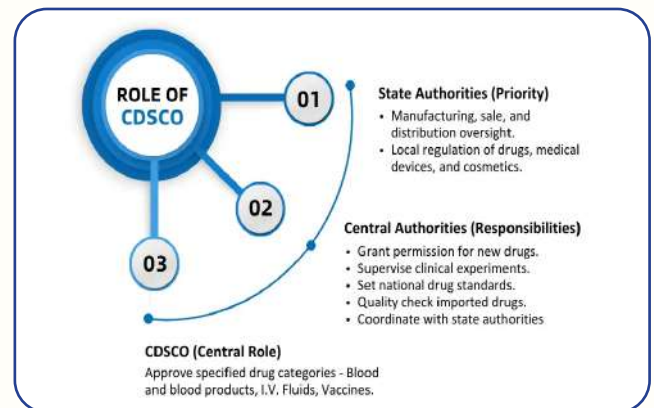
A court in Uzbekistan sentenced 23 people to prison terms over the deaths of 68 children linked to contaminated cough syrups produced by India’s Marion Biotech, following a six-month-long trial.

Indian Cough Syrups and Deaths in Uzbekistan:

- A total of 86 children in Uzbekistan suffered poisoning due to the syrup between 2022 and 2023, of which 68 died.
- A court has sentenced 23 people to prison terms linked to contaminated cough syrups produced by India’s Marion Biotech.
- The defendants were found guilty of tax evasion, sale of substandard or counterfeit medicines, abuse of office, negligence, forgery and bribery.
- In October 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) had issued an alert for four “contaminated” India-made medicines.

Impact on Indian Pharmaceutical Industry:

- The pharmaceutical industry is a sunshine sector in India and India is known as the ‘Pharmacy of the World’.
- Currently, it is valued at USD 50bn and expected to be USD 65bn by 2024 and to USD 130bn by 2030.
- India can continue to be the pharmacy of the Global South & the World only if the regulator begins to behave like a watchdog to ensure drug safety.
- These incidents could also deeply hit India’s pharma exports.



Need for Tough Regulation:

- Following the Gambia, Uzbekistan and West Africa incident, India’s Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) launched an inspection of some drug factories across the country to ensure high quality standards.
- Need for regulation of Drug Regulatory Bodies with emphasis on Centralised Regulatory Data. Strict Punishments should be imposed for non-compliances.

- Time to collaborate with international organizations and Encouraging more pharmaceutical units to obtain WHO's Good Manufacturing Practice certification, which can help in gaining quality standards and global trust.

Way Forward:

India is the largest producer of generic drugs in the world, with a volume share of 20%. India needs to ensure that inspection records and reviews of drug applications are made public. All generic manufacturers must undergo the same tests as companies making new drugs. In fact, doubt about Indian medicines will have dangerous consequences.

4 India's Concerns in WTO

Why in News:

The WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) took place from 26 to 29 February 2024 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Ministers from across the world attended to review the functioning of the multilateral trading system and took action on the future work of the WTO.

Key Areas on India's Agenda at the Meeting:

Food Security Issues:

- India stresses the need for PSH for its large, vulnerable population and wanted a permanent solution from the MC13. Food procurement, stockholding, and distribution are crucial to India's food security strategy.
- As part of the solution, India has asked for measures like amendments in the formula to calculate the food subsidy cap. Developed nations are of the view that such programmes distort global trade prices of food grains.

Plurilateral Agreements:

- India is strongly opposing the efforts of a group of countries led by China to push a proposal on investment facilitation for development agreement at the WTO.
- India has maintained that this agenda falls outside the mandate of the global trade body.

Agricultural Reforms:

- India's stance is to protect farmer livelihoods and ensure equitable market access.
- However, developed nations are pushing to reduce domestic support and increase market openness irrespective of the fact that they provide large subsidies to their rich farmers.

Fisheries Subsidies:

- India has proposed that developing countries should be allowed to subsidize fishing up to 200

nautical miles from the coast. Whereas rich countries in this region should stop giving any kind of subsidy for the next 25 years.

E- Commerce Trade:

- The ongoing moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, in place since 1998, is a contentious issue facing the WTO and a key focus point for India at the upcoming MC13.

Barriers in Trade:

- India would maintain its stand that issues like labour, and environment are non-trade issues and they should not be discussed at the WTO.

Way Forward:

India assured its unwavering commitment to multilateralism and the importance of adhering to the rules-based global trading system.

5 INDUS -X

Why in News:

India- US Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) summit held in February 2023 in New Delhi. This arrangement has been launched in June 2023 under iCET, after the Indian Prime Minister's visit to United States of America. It aims to bolster the bilateral defense ties.

What is INDUS-X?

- The new engagement named as India-US Defense Acceleration Ecosystem has been inked to explore and capitalize new opportunities in the defense innovation.
- The INDUS-X summit in New Delhi represented the crucial stage for advancing defense innovation and collaboration, encouraged the cross-national science-technology networks and set the stage for future strategic development.
- The summit is being organized by India's Innovations for Defense Excellence (iDEX) and the Department of Defense of US in cooperation with the US-India Business Council and Society of Indian Defense Manufacturers (SIDM).

Aims of INDUS-X:

- It has provided a platform to develop ambitious initiatives to enhance the defense capabilities of both nation via providing integrated setup to all defense innovation stakeholders from across governments, academic and research organisation, investors, defense startups, technology incubators and other industry associations.

Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET):

- iCET is an overarching framework for collaboration between India and the USA in critical and emerging technology areas. The initiative facilitates partnerships in sectors such as defense, cybersecurity, aerospace, artificial intelligence and advance manufacturing.

Highlights of the Summit:

- The summit emphasized on the crucial role of India and US to maintain Indo-Pacific as free, inclusive and sustainable region. New measures will be taken to secure defense supply chains, co-producing advanced military capabilities.
- The summit introduced Joint IMPACT Challenges which are aimed to advance defense and aerospace co-development and co-production collaboratively.

Other Key India-US defense Initiatives:

- Both of the countries maintain strong and amicable defense relations which also includes position of India as a 'Major Defense Partner' of the US.
- It has resulted in following crucial defense and security pacts-
 - Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)- 2016
 - Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)- 2018
 - Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) – 2020

Way Forward:

India and USA share a crucial and consequential bilateral relation which holds the potential to provide a stable and sustainable world order in present geopolitical crisis across the world. Therefore strengthening and bolstering of India-U.S relation is a need of hour.

6 UAE removed from FATF's Grey List

Why in News:

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the inter-government body which leads the action to combat illegal and suspicious fund flows, has recently removed the UAE from the category of grey list which includes "jurisdictions under increased monitoring". The country was put on the grey list in March 2022.

Restrictions on Non-complaint Jurisdictions:

- Foreign portfolio investors from 'high risk' or grey-listed nations are subject to a stricter KYC process at the time of registration, and their KYC is done annually by fund custodians as against every 3 years for other funds.

- SEBI circular also restricts investors from a "jurisdiction that has not made sufficient progress in addressing the deficiencies or has not committed to an action plan developed with the Financial Action Task Force to address the deficiencies."



Implications for India:

- UAE-based investors could not have exercised more than 20% of the voting rights due to RBI's restrictions applicable on new investors from or through non-compliant FATF jurisdictions.
- The move will further strengthen such flows and will ease the road for the country's investors seeking to acquire significant influence in Indian NBFCs.
- The coming out of grey List also removes ambiguity for domestic AIFs on accepting commitments from UAE-based investors. This gives Indian AIFs access to a greater pool of global funds.

India-UAE Relations:

- India has signed both a Bilateral Investment Treaty and a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with UAE. The UAE is India's third-largest trading partner for the year 2022-23 and India's second-largest export destination. India is the UAE's second largest trading partner, with the bilateral trade rising to USD 85 billion in 2022-23.
- The UAE was also the 4th largest investor in India in 2023 and the 7th largest source of Foreign Direct Investment overall.
- Both countries have recently signed an MoU for inter-linking RuPay (India) with JAYWAN (UAE) which is based on the digital RuPay credit and debit card stack and UPI (India) and AANI (UAE) to facilitate seamless cross-border transactions between the two countries.

Way Forward:

The Indian PM recently visited Abu Dhabi inaugurating a temple built by the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha and as guest of honour at World Government Summit 2024 marking an ever evolving friendship between two countries. With several bilateral treaties being signed between India and UAE, FATF's removal of UAE from the grey list will further bolster the UAE-India investment corridor consolidating the relationship further.

7 Global Push to Eradicate Guinea Worm Disease

Why in News:

The global effort to eradicate Guinea worm disease, caused by the parasitic Guinea worm, has witnessed significant progress, with nations like South Sudan and Mali making commendable strides. However, challenges persist in countries like Chad and the Central African Republic. The battle against this debilitating disease highlights the triumph of basic public health principles over high-tech interventions.

Historical Context:

➤ In the context of medical advancements dominated by breakthrough vaccines and cures, Guinea worm disease stands out for its reliance on fundamental public health principles. The disease, caused by the Guinea worm, has resisted immunity, vaccine prevention, and most cures. Yet, the possibility of eradication is closer than ever, showcasing the resilience and ingenuity of human efforts.

Infection Cycle and Impact:

➤ Guinea worm disease, or dracunculiasis, involves a parasitic worm causing painful blisters, typically on lower limbs. The emergence of adult worms can last weeks, leading to ulcers, intense pain, swelling, and sometimes secondary bacterial infections. The disease debilitates individuals, hindering daily activities and work, with over 90% of infections manifesting in the legs and feet.

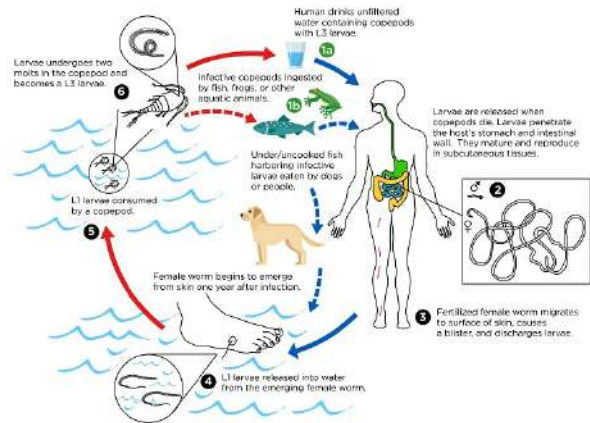
India's Success Story:

➤ India successfully eliminated Guinea worm disease in the late 1990s through a comprehensive public health campaign. This achievement resulted from intersectoral coordination, community participation, and a focus on prevention through health education. The strategy empowered local communities, emphasizing water safety interventions and

immediate response to reported cases.

Progress and Remaining Challenges:

➤ Recent data from the World Health Organization reports only 6 cases of Guinea worm disease in 2023. South Sudan and Mali have shown commendable progress, but challenge persists in Chad and the Central African Republic. The discovery of Guinea worms in animal reservoirs, particularly dogs, in Chad adds complexity to the final stages of eradication.



Human and Political Factors:

➤ Despite substantial progress, the eradication efforts face threats from human and political factors, including civil unrest and poverty. Challenges entrenched in socio-political fabrics disrupt infrastructure and exacerbate vulnerability to disease. The interplay between health and peace is evident, where stability directly influences the success of eradication efforts.

The Global Impact:

➤ Finally eradicating Guinea worm disease represents a triumph over a parasitic adversary, underscoring a collective moral responsibility. It demonstrates the profound impact addressing health disparities can have on communities. The global community's concerted efforts converge to uplift vulnerable populations from preventable afflictions, symbolizing a victory for humankind at large.

Way Forward:

As global efforts converge towards eradicating Guinea worm disease, the journey towards victory epitomizes the triumph of human perseverance and underscores the profound impact of collective action in combating preventable afflictions.

Environmental Issue



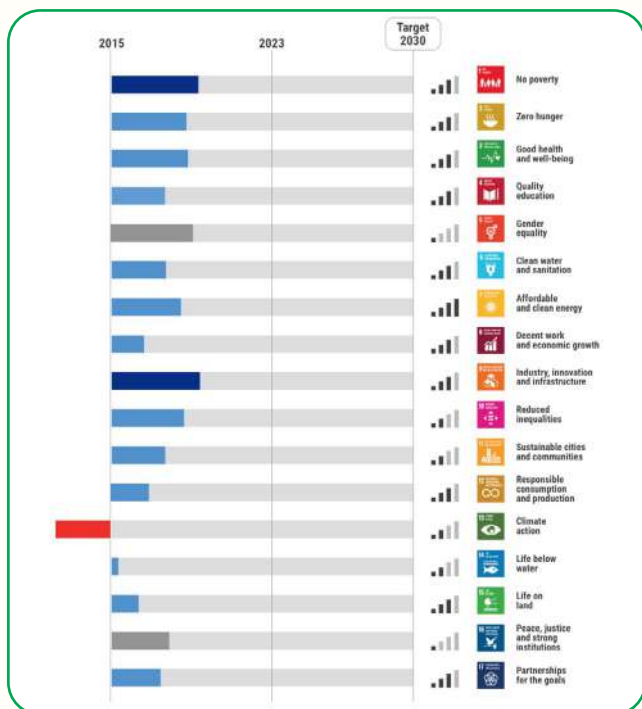
1 Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2024

Why in News:

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) reports that the Asia-Pacific region is currently 32 years behind the 2030 target for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SDGs Progress in Asia-Pacific Region:

- None of the 17 UN-mandated SDGs are currently on track in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The region is projected to achieve only one-third of the required progress by 2030 at its current pace.
- This delay in achieving the SDGs is estimated to be 32 years, with the target year pushed to 2062.



Concerns on Climate Action (SDG 13):

- Progress toward SDG 13, particularly climate action, remains critically behind.
- All targets under SDG 13 show stalled or reversed progress, with 20 targets from 14 SDGs showing deterioration compared to the 2015 baseline.
- The report emphasizes the urgent need to integrate climate action into national policies to

address climate-related disasters effectively.

Challenges in Data Availability:

- Approximately 67% of the 169 SDG targets in the region are currently not measurable due to data gaps.
- While data availability for SDGs has doubled since 2017, significant gaps remain, particularly in climate-related indicators.
- Insufficient data hampers progress monitoring, with about 62.5% of indicators under SDG 13 lacking data altogether.

Impact on Key Goals:

- Progress on key goals such as hunger (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), clean water (SDG 6), affordable energy (SDG 7), and sustainable cities (SDG 11) has been insufficient.
- These goals are interconnected with climate change, which poses significant challenges to the region's food security, livelihoods, and economy.
- Climate change and extreme weather events threaten the achievement of SDG targets and are identified as severe global risks over the next decade.

Way Forward:

The report calls for increased investment in sustainable infrastructure and renewable energy sources to address climate challenges effectively. Urgent attention is needed to prioritize goals related to climate action, food security, health, and sustainable development to mitigate the impact of climate change on the region's progress towards SDGs.

2 Broad and All-Encompassing Definition of Forests

Why in News:

The Supreme Court has urged governments to use the broad definition of forests from its 1996 T N Godavarman case until a complete record of all forest types is compiled.

Background:

- A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud passed the order.
- The order pertains to petitions challenging the 2023 amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (FCA).

Purpose of 2023 Amendments:

- The amendments aimed to address perceived dilution of the FCA due to a Supreme Court judgment.

- According to the government, the SC judgment had expanded the applicability of the FCA, hindering development activities.

Supreme Court’s Definition of Forest:

- The SC ruled that the FCA would apply to land parcels recorded as ‘forest’ or resembling the dictionary meaning of forest.
- This definition was reiterated by a CJI-led three-judge Bench, aligning with Parliament’s intent behind enacting the FCA in 1980.

Extent of FCA’s Applicability:

- Despite the 2023 amendments, the FCA’s ambit extends beyond “reserved forest” to include any forest land.
- This was reaffirmed by the SC in a 2022 case, clarifying that forest land as understood in the dictionary sense is covered by the FCA.
- **Omission of Pro-Conservation Measure:** A proconservation provision proposed by the Ministry in 2021 was not included in the 2023 amendments.

Arguments Against the Amendments:

- Challenges to the 2023 amendments were filed by retired Indian Forest Service officers and NGOs.
- Concerns included potential exclusion of forests outside Recorded Forest Areas from the FCA’s purview.

Current Status and Future Steps:

- States and Union Territories must submit comprehensive forest records by March 31.
- The Ministry is required to publish this data by April 15.
- The matter will be heard for final disposal in July.

Way Forward:

The SC explicitly asked to follow its 1996 definition of forests until the consolidated forest records are finalized. Expert committees are instructed to consider the progress made by previous panels while compiling forest records.

3 Plastic Particles in Bottled Water

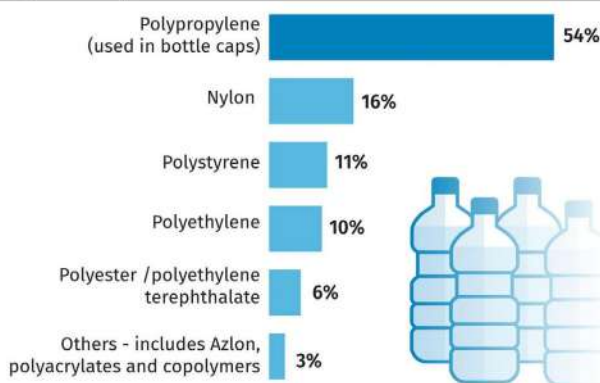
Why in News:

A study, conducted by scientists at Columbia University and published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, profiled individual plastic particles to bridge the knowledge gap that exists in the analysis of nanoplastics, as a result of hyperspectral stimulated Raman scattering (SRS) imaging platform.

Key Findings of the Study Report:

- The researchers analysed 5 samples of three common bottled water brands and found nanoplastic levels ranging from 110,000 to 400,000 per litre, with an average of around 240,000.
- According to the scientists, much of the plastic appears to be coming from the bottle itself and it is not known whether the ingestion of plastic poses a serious health risk.
- Another commonly found plastic type in the examined bottled water samples was nylon.
- The study also revealed the presence of particles in the sample that did not match any standards, suggesting the particulate composition of bottled water could go beyond plastic ‘contaminants’.
- The study found various plastic particles polyamide 66, polypropylene (PP), polyethylene, polymethyl methacrylate, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrene, and polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

Types of plastic found in bottled water



Global Efforts to Reduce Plastic Pollution:

- Under the UNEA Resolution 5/14, the INC (Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee) is responsible for delivering a global plastics treaty by 2025.
- A major review of the scientific evidence by the World Health Organization in 2019 and 2020 concluded there was still too little research to determine if consuming or inhaling microplastics posed a risk to human health.
- The researchers also reported that counting the plastic particles in the model system revealed a complex relationship between the compositions, shapes, and sizes of plastic particles.

Way Forward:

With the new technique allowing researchers to better determine the amount of plastic particles that

exist, it may be possible to work towards reducing the prevalence of these plastic particles globally. The safest thing to do right now is to take measures to reduce the inevitable exposure to plastic particles.

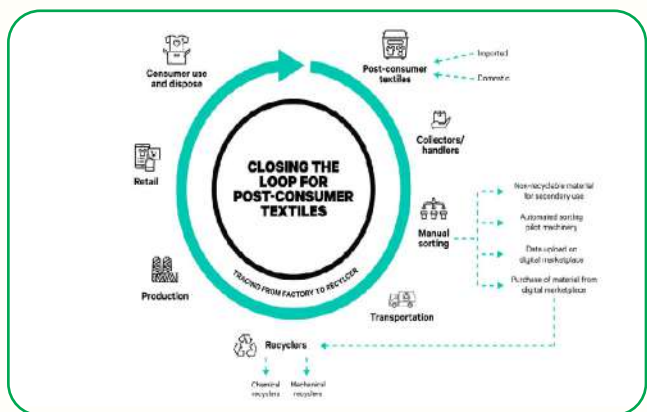
4 Textile Waste In India

Why in News:

Recently, there was a discussion on the floor of Rajya Sabha regarding the management of textile waste. This has sparked immediate debate about its environmental impact, economic implications and possible solutions.

Challenges regarding Textile Waste Generated in India:

- Comprehensive, centralized and state-wise data on textile waste generation remains elusive.
- India’s domestic textile waste primarily comprises cotton, polyester, and their blends. Transforming blended and printed waste feedstock into good quality products remains a challenge due to technological limitations and lack of innovation.
- Initiatives like the Textile Advisory Group on Man-made Fiber (MMF)” might foster industry engagement, but their effectiveness remains unclear.
- It’s also important to distinguish between pre-consumer waste (factory scraps) and post-consumer waste (used clothing).



- Synthetic fibers also make up a large portion of the waste. Challenges in separation, sorting, and technology limitations often lead to downcycling or indiscriminate dumping.
- A concerning 20-30% of the collected textile waste ends up burnt in energy plants due to contamination and lack of technology for processing used and contaminated textiles.
- The 2024 interim budget offered a mixed bag for

the textile industry. While the Union Ministry of Textiles received a 27.6% increase in allocation, there were no specific policies addressing the waste crisis.

- The Indian Textile Journal reported that over 1 million tonnes of textiles, predominantly polyester, are discarded annually, mostly from households.

Benefits of Reducing Textile waste:

- Reducing the cost of purchasing materials and increasing profitability.
- Minimising solid waste treatment and disposal costs and generating an alternative income stream if there is a market for recycled fiber.
- Improved wastewater quality and reducing treatment costs.
- Reducing environmental impacts by reducing the use of raw materials and producing less waste.

Way Forward:

The textile waste crisis demands a multi-pronged approach. We need improved data collection, robust sorting and recycling infrastructure, incentives for sustainable production and consumer education. Additionally, promoting extended producer responsibility, encouraging design for disassembly and supporting innovative upcycling and recycling technologies are crucial.

5 Report on Status of Leopards in India

Why in News:

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have released a report on the status of leopards in India. The report provides key insights into leopard distribution, population trends, and conservation challenges based on data from the 5th Cycle Of Leopard Population Estimation conducted in 2022.

Key Findings of the Report:

- India’s leopard population is estimated at 13,874 (range: 12,616 – 15,132). This indicates a stable population compared to 2018 estimates of 12,852 leopards.
- Madhya Pradesh has the highest leopard population with 3,907 individuals followed by Maharashtra (1,985) and Karnataka (1,879).
- Protected areas and tiger reserves like Nagarjunsagar Srisaikal Tiger Reserve (Andhra Pradesh), Panna Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh) and Satpura Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh) support high densities of leopards.
- Central India shows a stable or slightly

increasing trend. Shivalik-Gangetic plains has seen a 3.4% annual decline between 2018 and 2022.

Population Trends:

- The current leopard census indicates an overall stable population at the national level since 2018. Region-wise, Central India and Eastern Ghats show a modest annual growth rate of 1.5%. However, the Shivalik-Gangetic landscape has suffered a 3.4% annual decline in the leopard numbers.
- If we consider the specific areas sampled in both 2018 and 2022, a marginal growth rate of 1.08% is noticed. But this doesn't account for the approximately 30% of leopard habitats not surveyed including arid regions, higher Himalayas and non-forest areas.

Conservation Challenges:

- Rising human-leopard conflicts pose serious conservation and social challenges. Leopards fare better in protected areas but survival in unsecured habitats is critical to long-term viability of populations.
- Habitat fragmentation, poaching, prey depletion, retaliatory killings over livestock depredation, traffic accidents and illegal wildlife trade are all key threats. Climate change impacts may exacerbate resource pressures going ahead.

Conclusion:

These findings underline the important role of protected areas in the conservation of leopard populations. While tiger reserves serve as important strongholds, it is equally important to address conservation gaps outside the protected areas. The increasing incidence of conflict creates challenges for both leopards and communities. Since the survival of leopards outside protected areas is equally important, collaborative efforts involving government agencies, conservation organizations and local communities are the need of the hour to enhance habitat conservation and reduce human-wildlife conflict.

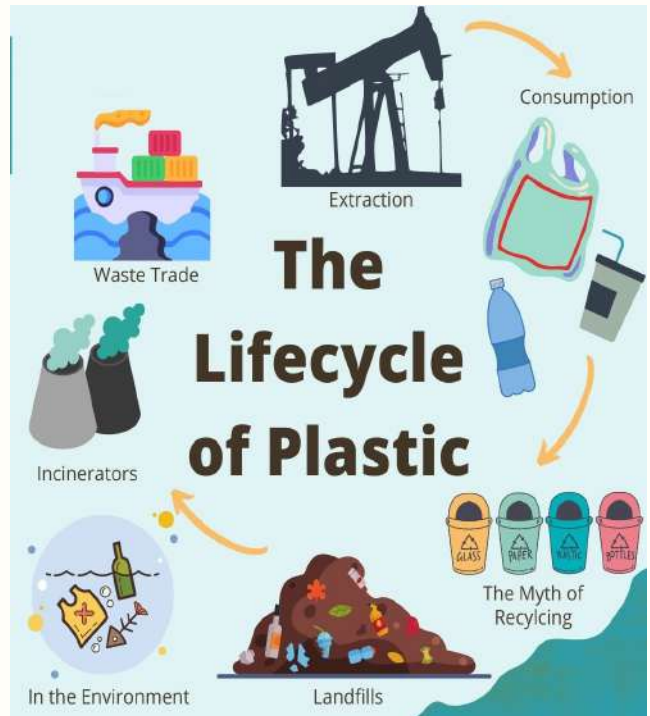
6 Pollution Caused by Plastic

Why in News:

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) headed by the Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has submitted a report titled as "pollution caused by plastic" in budget session 2024 of Parliament. The report has outlined several loopholes in policy implementation for addressing the plastic menace.

Key Finding of the Report:

- The committee has cited CAG report that outlined many loopholes in the measures taken to address the menace of plastic in the country.
- It also criticized Central Pollution Control Board for its lackadaisical approach in dealing with the problems.



- The report underlined the absence of effective measures that could save people from the hazards of plastic pollution.
- It has accounted that plastic generation has increased by almost 3X. (41.2 lakh tons per annum in 2020-21). The data reveals that approximately 50% of the total plastic waste in the country remained unutilized leading to water, soil and air pollution.
- The significant data gap has also been observed by the committees as per CAG audit report. Many state pollution control boards (SPCBs) didn't provided the data on plastic waste generation for the period 2016-18 to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Challenge of Plastic Recycling:

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had banned the hard-to-collect/recycle, single-use plastic (SUP) items from July 2022 with this prohibition on manufacturing, sale, import or use of plastic carry bag (<120microns) and also notified Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Rules to streamline collection and recycling of plastic

waste.

- But still single use plastic is releasing hazardous toxicants in air, water and soil and ultimately impacting human and other organisms life. It poses threat to water reservoirs, river biome, soil and marine and aquaculture.

Suggestion for Redressal:

- The report suggested that a “comprehensive policy is required” with finding a cost effective and dependable alternatives to plastic was a pre-requisite for its elimination. The government have to strictly monitor the implementation of EPR and awareness among industries to adopt eco-friendly alternatives for packaging has to be encouraged.

Way Forward:

The plastic is posing the threat to survival of life over our Earth and therefore coordinated efforts are required to deal with this. The sustainable alternatives to plastic like goods made of organic waste and stringent monitoring of plastic manufacturing should be done. Along with this, people participation should also be encouraged.

7 Green Credit Rules

Why in News:

Green Credit Rules have received criticism from experts for being detrimental to ecological aspects of forests in recent time.

About the Green Credit Rules, 2023:

- Notified on: October 12, 2023

Aim:

- To incentivise individuals, organisations, and industries to undertake positive environmental measures, extending beyond carbon emissions reduction to encompass improvements in air and water quality, increased biodiversity, and more.

Key objectives:

- The rules objective is to launch a Green Credit (GC) programme on a national level to leverage a competitive market-based approach for GC and incentivise voluntary environmental actions by stakeholders.
- The GC programme is meant to complement the proposed Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) introduced by the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022.
- **Eligibility criteria for Green Credit:** Several activities are eligible for Green Credit that includes-

- » **Tree plantation:** Planting trees to combat deforestation and increase green cover.
- » **Water management:** Implementing water conservation techniques like rainwater harvesting.
- » **Sustainable agriculture:** Adopting eco-friendly farming practices.
- » **Waste management:** Promoting waste reduction, recycling, and composting.
- » **Air pollution reduction:** Initiatives that improve air quality.
- » **Mangrove conservation and restoration:** Protecting and reviving mangrove ecosystems.
- » **Eco-mark labelling:** Obtaining the eco-mark certification for products that meet stringent environmental standards.
- » **Sustainable building and infrastructure:** Constructing green buildings and infrastructure that minimise environmental impact.

Challenges:

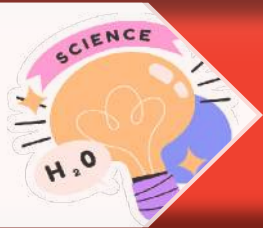
- **Overlapping Schemes:** The Green Credit program may overlap with existing environmental regulations and carbon credit trading schemes, leading to potential confusion and redundancy.
- **Voluntary Participation:** The program is currently voluntary for businesses, raising concerns about the level of participation and its potential impact.

Issue with Afforestation:

- A study titled Divergent Responses of Soil Organic Carbon To Afforestation (2020), had noted that large-scale afforestation considered as an effective natural climate remedy can, in turn, do more harm than good.
- Grasslands, often referred to as ‘wastelands’ but play an important ecological role to protect and conserve rare and unique biodiversity and also have more capacity to sequester carbon, compared to forests. Afforestation can destroy the grassland.

Suggestion:

- Developing clear and objective measurement methodologies of afforestation.
- Exploring ways to incentivize broader participation.
- Fostering market development and awareness.
- Ensuring coordination with existing schemes.
- Investing in necessary resources and capacity building.



Science-Tech



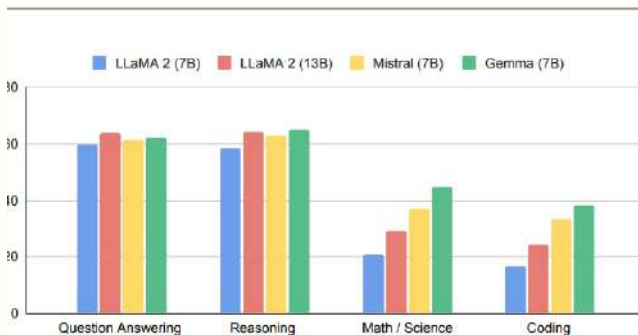
1 Gemma: Responsible AI

Why in News:

Following the recent buzz surrounding OpenAI's text-to-video model Sora, Google has unveiled Gemma, its newest open artificial intelligence (AI) solution.

Introduction to Gemma:

- Google has introduced Gemma, its latest open artificial intelligence (AI) offering.
- Gemma is a family of lightweight state-of-the-art open models developed using the research and technology from Google DeepMind's Gemini models.
- Named after the Latin word 'gemma,' meaning precious stone.
- Available in two model sizes: Gemma 2B and Gemma 7B, with pre-trained and instruction-tuned variants.



Features of Gemma:

- Offered with a new Responsible Generative AI toolkit for creating safer AI applications.
- Toolchains provided for inference and supervised finetuning (SFT) across major frameworks such as JAX, PyTorch, and TensorFlow through native Keras 3.0.
- Ready-to-use Colab and Kaggle notebooks, and integration with popular tools such as Hugging Face, NVIDIA, NeMo, MaxText, and TensorRT-LLM.

What does it do?

- Google aims to democratize AI models with Gemma's
- accessibility.
- Models can run on laptops, workstations, or Google Cloud,
- with easy deployment on Vertex AI and Google
- Kubernetes Engine (GKE).

- Optimized for multiple AI hardware platforms, including
- NVIDIA GPUs and Google Cloud TPUs.

Performance of Gemma:

- Shares key technical and infrastructure components with Gemini models, ensuring best-in-class performance.
- Outperforms significantly larger models on key benchmarks while maintaining safety and responsible outputs.
- Gemma 7B scores higher than Meta's Llama 2 7B in reasoning, maths, and code benchmarks.

Responsible Design of Gemma:

- Designed in compliance with Google's AI principles, ensuring safety and reliability.
- Automated techniques used to filter sensitive data from training sets.
- Models fine-tuned with human feedback and subjected to thorough evaluations to minimize risk.

Google's AI Principles:

- Google's AI principles prioritize socially beneficial applications, avoidance of unfair bias, safety, accountability, privacy, scientific excellence, and adherence to these principles.

Way Forward:

It lists areas where AI will not be designed or deployed, including technologies causing overall harm, weapons or tools primarily designed to harm individuals, surveillance technology breaching global norms, and AI conflicting with international law and human rights. Adaptability of Principles: Google indicates that its AI principles will adapt as it gains more insights into AI applications.

2 Alaskapox

Why in News:

An elderly man died of Alaskapox, the first known death from the recently discovered virus. According to Alaska public health officials, the man who lived in the remote Kenai Peninsula and was hospitalized last November, died in January.

Origin of Alaskapox:

- Alaskapox, an orthopox virus, was first identified in 2015 in the Fairbanks area of Alaska.
- Prior to the recent fatality, only six cases of human infections had been recorded, all resulting in mild illnesses characterized by localized rash and swollen lymph nodes.

Emergence of Viruses like Alaskapox:

- Over 10,000 virus species have been identified, with approximately 270 known to infect humans.
- While some viruses, like smallpox, have been recognized for centuries, others, such as Alaskapox, have emerged more recently.
- Most human pathogens originate from animals, with viruses from mammals, birds, and arthropods posing significant risks.
- Alaskapox likely originates from small mammals like shrews and red-backed voles, highlighting the potential for zoonotic transmission.



Other Orthopoxviruses and Risks:

- Alongside Alaskapox, viruses like Akhmeta virus and Abatino virus have been identified, indicating the presence of additional zoonotic orthopoxviruses.
- Outbreaks of orthopoxviruses like mpox virus and cowpox virus have been reported, with vaccination discontinuation contributing to increased vulnerability.
- Various orthopoxviruses infect mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects, emphasizing the importance of monitoring and preventive measures.

Orthopox Viruses:

- Orthopoxvirus, part of the Poxviridae family, includes 12 species affecting vertebrates like mammals and humans.
- Diseases linked to Orthopoxvirus include smallpox, cowpox, and monkeypox.
- Variola virus, responsible for smallpox, was eradicated globally in 1977 using Vaccinia virus as a vaccine.
- Alaskapox virus, discovered in 2015, is the newest species.

- Orthopoxviruses have brick-shaped structures, with genomes ranging from 170 to 250 kb.
- Their replication cycle involves attachment to host cells, genomic replication, and assembly of new virions.
- Transmission occurs via respiratory droplets, contact, and zoonosis.
- Some orthopoxviruses have broad host ranges, while others are highly specific.
- Vaccinia virus is widely used in vaccines and research.
- Camelpox has become economically significant post the eradication of smallpox.

Way Forward:

Health authorities has urged Alaskans to follow federal health precautions when around wildlife to avoid potential Alaskapox infections. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended washing hands with soap and water after contacting wild animals or their faeces.

3 Chromosomal Aberrations

Why in News:

Researchers have documented chromosomal abnormalities identified in prehistoric skeletal remains dating back around 5,500 years.

Definition of Chromosomal Aberrations:

- Chromosomal aberrations involve changes in chromosome structure or number, including deletions, duplications, inversions, and translocations.
- The most common types are aneuploidies, which feature an abnormal number of chromosomes.

Types of Chromosomal Aberrations:

- Numerical aberrations (aneuploidies) include monosomies (one chromosome missing) and trisomies (extra chromosome).
- Structural aberrations comprise deletions, duplications, inversions, and translocations.

Common Chromosomal Disorders:

- Trisomy 21 (Down syndrome), trisomy 18 (Edwards syndrome), and trisomy 13 (Patau syndrome) are prevalent chromosomal disorders.
- Sex chromosome disorders such as Klinefelter syndrome, Turner syndrome, XYY syndrome, and XXX syndrome also occur.

Causes of Chromosomal Aberrations:

- Errors during cell division, especially during meiosis, contribute to chromosomal aberrations.
- Risk factors include advanced maternal age and exposure to harmful substances.

Diagnosis of Chromosomal Aberrations:

- Prenatal screenings through ultrasound and blood tests aid in identifying chromosomal aberrations.
- Postnatal diagnosis involves techniques like karyotyping and fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH).

Way Forward:

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle before and during pregnancy helps reduce the risk of chromosomal aberrations. Genetic counselling is recommended for families with a history of chromosomal disorders. Early diagnosis allows for informed decision-making and appropriate medical care for affected individuals and families.

4 Odysseus: US Returns to Lunar Surface After 50 Years

Why in News:

The United States accomplished its first lunar touchdown in over five decades, marking a significant milestone in space exploration. The successful landing of the Odysseus spacecraft, developed and operated by Intuitive Machines, represents a monumental leap forward in advancing our understanding of the lunar environment.

Odysseus Touches Down:

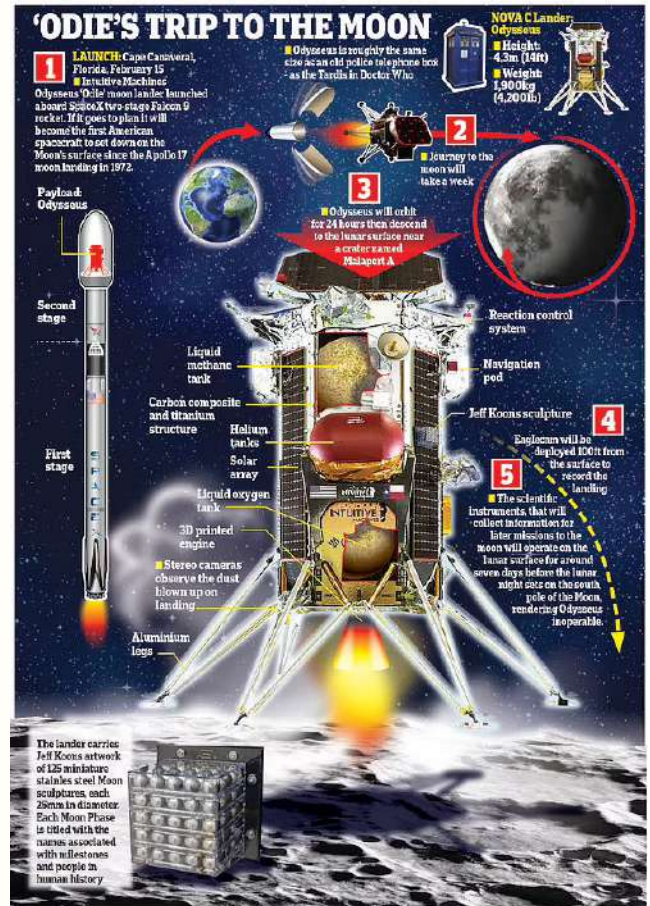
- The Odysseus lander made history by touching down near the moon’s South Pole, becoming the first US spacecraft to achieve this feat since 1972. Despite initial uncertainties due to communication delays, signals confirming the successful landing were received, signalling a momentous triumph for the mission.

Mission Details and Objectives:

- Equipped with a sophisticated array of scientific instruments and technology demonstrations, Odysseus is poised to conduct vital research on behalf of NASA and commercial partners. Its mission encompasses studying space weather interactions, radio astronomy, and various aspects of the lunar environment crucial for future lunar exploration endeavours.

Challenges Overcome:

- The mission encountered last-minute hurdles, including navigation system issues, which were swiftly resolved by ground engineers, underscoring the resilience and adaptability of the mission team. Despite these challenges, Odysseus executed its landing as planned, showcasing the prowess of modern space technology.



Significance of the Achievement:

- The successful landing of Odysseus represents a significant breakthrough, marking the first “soft landing” on the moon by a commercially manufactured and operated vehicle. Moreover, it signifies a pivotal moment in NASA’s Artemis lunar program, propelling the US towards its goal of returning astronauts to the lunar surface.

Global Implications:

- Odysseus’s touchdown not only solidifies the United States’ position as a frontrunner in space exploration but also underscores the international significance of lunar exploration efforts. While only a handful of countries have achieved lunar landings to date, the US’s return to the lunar surface reaffirms its leadership in space exploration endeavours.

Conclusion:

The successful landing of Odysseus represents a triumphant culmination of years of planning, innovation, and collaboration. As the US embarks on a new era of lunar exploration, Odysseus stands as a testament to human ingenuity and the boundless

possibilities of space exploration. With eyes set on the future, this historic achievement paves the way for further advancements in lunar exploration and beyond.

5 Aditya-L1's PAPA Unveils Solar Wind Secrets

Why in News:

The Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA) onboard the Aditya-L1 satellite has successfully identified and analyzed the impact of coronal mass ejections (CMEs) on solar wind. Developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), PAPA plays a crucial role in unraveling the mysteries of the Sun's coronal heating processes and solar transients.

PAPA's Mission and Payload:

- PAPA consists of two cutting-edge sensors:
 - » The Solar Wind Electron Energy Probe (SWEEP)
 - » The Solar Wind Ion Composition Analyser (SWICAR)
- SWEEP measures electrons, while SWICAR measures ions. Both sensors boast the capability to determine the direction of arrival of solar wind particles. Operational since December 12, they have been diligently recording spectra, showcasing the dominance of protons and alpha particles as anticipated.

Temporary Anomaly during Orbit Insertion:

- During Aditya-L1's halo orbit insertion on January 6, a temporary dip in spectra was observed. This anomaly, attributed to the change in payload orientation, did not impede the overall success of the mission.

CME Detection:

- The real prowess of PAPA came to the forefront when it detected the impact of CME events on February 10-11. Analysis of data from December 15 revealed an abrupt increase in particle counts, aligning with solar wind changes observed by other satellites at the L1 point, such as DSCOVR and ACE. These findings indicated the successful identification of a CME event.

Observations and Analysis:

- PAPA's continuous default mode observations, facilitated by the highly sensitive SWEEP and SWICAR sensors, have enabled Aditya-L1 to provide valuable real-time data on conditions at the L1 point. The recorded data showcased minor variations in electron and ion counts during the CME impacts on February 10-11,

aligning with multiple minor events. These observations underscore PAPA's capabilities in space weather monitoring and analyzing solar phenomena.

Significance of PAPA's Success:

- The successful detection of CME impacts by PAPA highlights ISRO's expertise in designing sensitive space science instruments. PAPA's achievements contribute significantly to Aditya-L1's mission objectives, advancing our understanding of solar storms and their implications. By deciphering the variations in solar wind composition, PAPA has become an invaluable tool for space weather monitoring.

Conclusion:

Aditya-L1's PAPA has emerged as a key player in the exploration of solar phenomena, showcasing its ability to detect and analyze the impact of coronal mass ejections on solar wind. ISRO's commitment to advancing space science instrumentation is exemplified by the success of PAPA, marking a significant milestone in the quest to understand the Sun's dynamics and its influence on space weather.

6 Curbing the Antimicrobial Resistance

Why in News:

Kerala has initiated, Operation AMRITH (Antimicrobial Resistance Intervention for Total Health), to enforce the original H1 rule introduced by the Indian government in 2011. The rule prohibits over-the-counter (OTC) sales of antibiotics without a prescription, aiming to address the escalating concern of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Enforcement of H1 Rule in Kerala:

- Kerala's implementation of the H1 rule, distinguishes it as the first state to adopt such stringent measures. The state's high doctor-patient ratio, even in remote areas, and its impressive literacy rate position it favourably for effective rule enforcement. Operation AMRITH mandates a doctor's prescription for acquiring any class of antibiotics, fostering a culture of antibiotic respect.

Challenges and Impact:

- While the immediate impact on drug-resistant infections may be limited, the initiative is a crucial step in the right direction. The effects are anticipated to materialize over several years, if not a decade. Operation AMRITH is not just about rule enforcement; it aims to instill a long-term commitment to combat AMR by educating the populace on antibiotic limitations and

promoting responsible antibiotic use.

Addressing Unnecessary Antibiotic Usage:

- A key aspect of the initiative recognizes that 50-70% of antibiotic prescriptions by doctors are deemed unnecessary and irrational. To address this, there is a call for enhancing laboratory facilities for accurate infection diagnosis. Affordable rapid diagnostic tests are proposed to determine the necessity of antibiotics, preventing unnecessary usage. Additionally, educating patients about antibiotic limitations and discouraging pressure on doctors for unnecessary prescriptions is deemed vital.

Hospital-Acquired Infections Disclosure:

- Beyond OTC regulation, it also emphasizes the importance of hospitals disclosing the incidence of hospital-acquired infections. Recognizing antimicrobial resistance as a socioeconomic problem, the focus shifts to improving public health infrastructure, sanitation facilities and governance to decrease infection transmission and consequently, reduce antibiotic dependence.

A Multipronged Approach:

- Enforcing the H1 rule is just one facet; curbing antimicrobial resistance demands a multipronged approach. Reforming physicians' prescribing practices, mandating hospital reporting of healthcare-associated infection rates and rationalizing antibiotic use in hospitals are identified as critical components. Additionally, banning the growth-promotional use of antibiotics in various sectors and supporting the development of new antibiotics, diagnostics and vaccines contribute to a comprehensive strategy.

Conclusion:

While Kerala's enforcement of the H1 rule is a commendable step, it is emphasized that the real challenge lies in addressing major drivers of AMR. Operation AMRITH serves as a model for other regions, showcasing the need for a holistic approach to combat antimicrobial resistance and protect public health.

7

INSAT-3DS

Why in News:

Indian Space Research Organisation successfully launched the INSAT-3DS satellite from its launch vehicle, Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F14).

About INSAT-3DS:

- INSAT-3DS Satellite is a follow-on mission of

Third Generation Meteorological Satellite from Geostationary Orbit and the Indian industries have significantly contributed to the making of the Satellite.

- The mission is fully funded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and it will augment the Meteorological services along with the presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR satellites.
- The satellites were launched with the aim to enhance the country's capabilities to monitor Earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans, and environment, elevate capabilities in data collection and dissemination and satellite-aided search and rescue services.

About the GSLV-F14:

- Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) is a three-stage (51.7 m long) launch vehicle having a liftoff mass of 420 tonnes.
- It can be used to launch a variety of spacecraft capable of performing communications, navigation, earth resource surveys, and any other proprietary mission.

About ISRO:

- ISRO was established on August 15, 1969, to replace INCOSPAR with a broader mandate to harness space technology.
- The prime objective of ISRO is to develop space technology and its application to various national needs.
- ISRO has established two major space systems: INSAT, which provides communication, television broadcasting, and meteorological services, and the Indian Remote Sensing Satellites (IRS) system, which monitors and manages resources.
- Launch vehicles are rocket-powered vehicles used to transport spacecraft into space.
- ISRO has three active operational launch vehicles: PSLV, GSLV, and GSLV Mk-III (LVM3).

Conclusion:

The mission will help in short-range forecasts of extreme weather events such as thunderstorms, provide visibility estimation for aviation, and help in studying forest fire, smoke, snow cover, climate studies. Thus it will provides real time precaution of natural disaster.



Economic Issues



1 G-33 Ministerial Statement on Agriculture Trade Negotiations

Why in News:

The G-33 Ministerial Statement on Agriculture Trade Negotiations was delivered at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference G-33 Ministerial Meeting in Abu Dhabi on February 25, 2024.

Key Points:

- Acknowledging the shared responsibility of all WTO Members, the G-33 emphasizes the need to address contemporary challenges within the multilateral trading system.
- The G-33 sees the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference as a crucial opportunity to strengthen a rules-based, inclusive, and transparent multilateral trading system centered around the WTO, expressing gratitude to the UAE for hosting the conference.
- Calling upon all WTO Members to engage constructively, the G-33 urges for a substantive outcome on agriculture at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference.
- Expressing deep concern over projected increases in undernourishment and hunger, particularly in Africa, the G-33 highlights the urgency of addressing food security issues.
- Recognizing the vital role of public stockholding for food security, especially for developing countries, the G-33 underscores the necessity of addressing this issue.
- Affirming developing country Members' right to the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM), the G-33 urges for its adoption by the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference.
- The G-33 is open to considering the African Group's submission on the SSM issue and engaging in technical discussions.
- Committing to advancing agriculture trade negotiations in good faith, the G-33 aims to rectify imbalances in the Agreement on Agriculture and address food security challenges of developing countries, including LDCs and NFIDCs.
- Emphasizing the preservation of Special and Differential Treatment for developing country Members and the consideration of non-trade concerns in agriculture trade negotiations, the G-33 underscores the importance of fairness and inclusivity within the WTO framework.

What is G33?

- The G33, also known as the Friends of Special Products in agriculture, is a coalition of

developing countries formed before the 2003 Cancun ministerial conference. It aims to address agricultural concerns within WTO negotiations, particularly focusing on defensive measures and market access for developing nations.

- Led primarily by India, the group advocates for policies that protect developing countries' agricultural sectors from unfair competition, such as predatory dumping and heavily subsidized agriculture in richer nations.
- One of the key objectives of the G33 is to establish a "special products" exemption, allowing developing countries to shield certain agricultural goods from tariff reductions. This exemption is crucial for safeguarding the interests of vulnerable farming communities and ensuring food security.

Way Forward:

The G33 supports the implementation of a "special safeguard mechanism" to counteract sudden import surges that could threaten the stability of domestic agricultural markets. This mechanism would enable developing countries to impose tariffs in response to such disruptions.

2 SEBI Warns Investors Of FPI Fraud Scheme

Why in News:

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the market regulator, has issued a caution to individuals regarding fraudulent trading platforms that falsely assert or imply association with its registered Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs).

Modus Operandi of Fraudulent Platforms:

- Deceptive trading platforms entice individuals through online trading courses, seminars and mentorship programs in the stock market.
- Leveraging social media platforms like WhatsApp or Telegram, as well as live broadcasts, to reach potential victims.
- Impersonating employees or affiliates of SEBI-registered FPIs, urging individuals to download applications for trading shares and subscribing to IPOs, falsely promising 'institutional account benefits' without requiring an official trading or Demat account.
- Employing mobile numbers registered under false names to execute fraudulent schemes.

SEBI's Clarification:

- SEBI clarified that the FPI investment route

is unavailable to resident Indians, except for limited exceptions as outlined in the SEBI (Foreign Portfolio Investors) Regulations, 2019.

- There is no provision for an 'Institutional Account' in trading, and direct access to the equities market requires investors to have a trading and Demat account with a SEBI-registered broker/trading member and depository participant (DP) respectively.
- SEBI emphasized that it has not granted any relaxations to FPIs regarding securities market investments by Indian investors.

Safety Measures for Investors:

- SEBI advises investors to exercise caution and avoid social media messages, WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, or apps claiming to facilitate stock market access through FPIs or FIIs registered with SEBI.
- Such schemes are fraudulent and lack SEBI's endorsement.

Foreign Portfolio Investors:

- Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) entails the possession of financial assets originating from a country other than that of the investor.
- FPI holdings encompass a variety of assets such as stocks, ADRs, GDRs, bonds, mutual funds, and exchange-traded funds.
- Foreign Portfolio Investors maintain passive ownership, lacking control over ventures or direct ownership of property or stakes in companies.
- Investments made by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) are not considered part of FPI.

other hand, has replaced cash transactions and electronic transfers across sectors, contributing \$16.2 billion.

- Ecologically, DPI adoption has led to significant paper savings and carbon emissions reduction. The time saved in logistics and transportation sector reduced carbon emissions by 3.2 million tonnes in 2022. Furthermore, DPIs align with core UN SDG goals by providing citizen-centric solutions.
- India's interoperable and open-source DPIs are now being adopted or considered by over 30 countries to enhance social and financial inclusion.

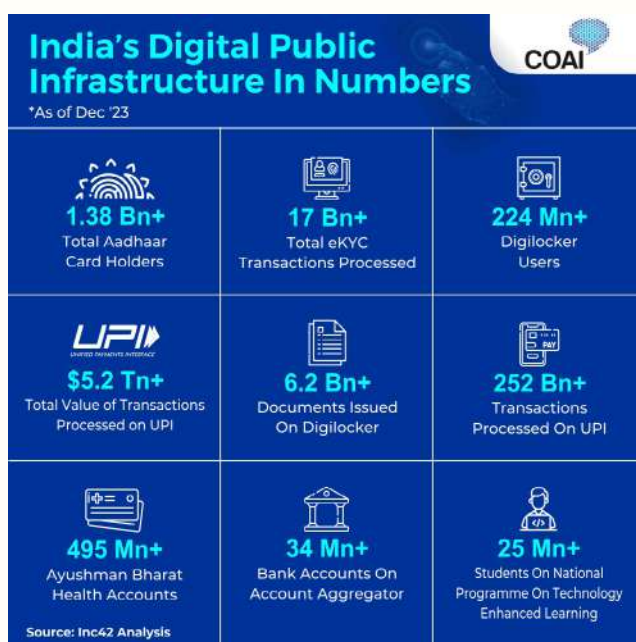
3 Growth of Digital Public Infrastructure

Why in News:

According to Nasscom-led report, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPIs) like Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Aadhaar are poised to propel India towards a \$8 trillion economy by 2030, helping the country achieve a \$1 trillion digital economy target.

Key Findings of the report:

- With successful mass adoption and larger economic impact, DPIs are impacting approximately 1.3 billion citizens, covering 97% of India's population.
- The matured DPIs enabled a value creation of \$31.8 billion, equivalent to 0.9% of India's GDP in 2022.
- Aadhaar has enabled an economic value of \$15.2 billion, primarily through the elimination of Direct Benefits Transfer leakages. UPI, on the



About Digital public infrastructure:

- Digital public infrastructure (DPI) is a network of digital technology that helps countries deliver services and economic opportunities to their residents. DPI includes platforms and blocks like digital identification, payment infrastructure, and data exchange solutions. DPI is similar to roads, which are a physical network that allows people to access goods and services.
- Examples-
 - » Aadhaar Payments Bridge
 - » Complimentary payment systems (UPI)
 - » DigiLocker and Account Aggregator

Key recommendations:

- The transformation of matured and budding DPIs through innovative technology integration such as AI, Web3, Metaverse presents significant opportunities.
- To realize the 2030 DPI potential, government

agencies need to continue to give proactive policy support, regulatory clarity, and promote existing digital ecosystems by setting up task forces to drive adoption and foster innovation through partnerships with corporates and startups.

Way Forward:

Startups and SMEs should build business models that capitalise on the full-scale adoption of existing digital infrastructure and experiment with new-age technologies. Corporates and Big Tech should anticipate future digital demand, build necessary infrastructure and foster innovation.

4 FDI Policy in Space Sector

Why in News:

Recently The Government of India has approved the amendments in the Foreign Direct Investment Policy on space sector. The space sector has been liberalized for the foreign direct investment (FDI) in order to enhance the potential of space sector in India.



The Amendments:

➤ The Indian Space Policy 2023 aimed for augmentation of space capabilities and development of flourishing commercial presence in space sector and visioned for 100% FDI in space sector. The new amendment has been in the line of the vision as now the space sub-sector has been divided into three different activities with defined limits for foreign investment in

each such sector.

- The entry routes for the various activities under the amended policy are as follows-
 - » Upto 49% under Automatic Route-Launch Vehicles, and associated systems or sub-systems, creation of spaceports for launching and receiving spacecrafts. Beyond 49% these activities are under govt. route.
 - » Upto 74% under the Automatic Route-Satellites-manufacturing and operation, satellite data products and ground based segments and user segment which was earlier carried out via government route. Beyond 74% these activities are under government route.
 - » Upto 100% under Automatic Route-Manufacturing of components and systems/ sub-systems for satellites, ground segments and user segment.

Aim of Indian Space policy 2023:

- It is an overarching composite and dynamic framework to implement the vision for unlocking Indian Space sector potential at its fullest via enhanced private participation.
- This policy aimed to develop space sector as a driver of technology development and derive benefits in allied sector, pursue international relations and create an effective ecosystem for implementation of space application among all stakeholders.

Advantages:

- The encouragement of FDI in space sector has been carried out to realize the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat (Make in India) and increased participation of private sector would help to generate employment, enable modern technology absorption into society at faster rate.
- The self-reliant capability of space sector would also get increased. It will integrate Indian Companies with global value chains.
- It would also provide ample amount of time and resources to ISRO for dedicating its full effort in deep space missions.

Way Forward

India Space sector has emerged as crucial pillar for technological advancement of Indian society and become a strong pillar in Indian diplomatic relations. Now, Indian space sector can emerge as growth engine for Indian Economy. Therefore increased private participation with fair distribution of technological development to all stakeholders would fuel development at greater scale.

5 Issue over Financial Devolution among States

Why in News:

Many states, especially southern states had orchestrated protest in New Delhi, as they claimed that the present scheme of financial devolution is not fair towards them. They raised the issue of less proportionate share in receipt in tax revenue when compared to their contribution towards tax collection.

How Financial Devolution System Works?

➤ The Constitution of India has provided the scheme of distribution of net proceeds of tax collected by the Union Government between the Centre and States as per the recommendation provided by the Finance Commission.

What constitutes divisible pool of tax?

- The divisible pool is that portion of gross tax revenue which is distributed between the Centre and the States.
- The taxes that are shared between the Centre and the states includes corporation tax, personal income tax, Central GST, the Centre's share of IGST, basically it consist all type of taxes except surcharges and cess levied for specific purpose.

Criteria	11th FC 2000-05	12th FC 2005-10	13th FC 2010-15	14th FC 2015-20	15th FC 2021-26
Income Distance	62.5	50	47.5	50	45
Population (1971 Census)	10	25	25	17.5	-
Population (2011 Census)	-	-	-	10	15
Area	7.5	10	10	15	15
Forest cover	-	-	-	7.5	-
Forest and ecology	-	-	-	-	10
Infrastructure index	7.5	-	-	-	-
Fiscal discipline	7.5	7.5	17.5	-	-
Demographic performance	-	-	-	-	12.5
Tax effort	5	7.5	-	-	2.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100

What are the issues raised by states?

- The industrially developed states and the southern states have claimed that they are receiving less than what they are paying to the Centre. It means that if each state have contributed one rupee to the Centre than states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Gujarat and Kerala have received less than 50 paise in financial devolution while states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Madhya Pradesh have received more than two rupees of that net proceeds.
- Another issue is the reducing percentage share of southern states in the divisible pool of taxes over the last six Financial Commissions.
- Along with it, exclusion of cess and surcharges

from divisible pool tax is also a concern for the states.

Why this unequal division is a just means of financial devolution?

- The Finance Commission after every five years revises its recommendation about share of vertical divisible pool of tax (Between Centre and States) and provides criterion for horizontal division of proceeds of pool among the states. It is done in order to bridge the gap between rich and poor states, and provide resources to states for their development.

Way Forward:

The financial devolution is fundamental means to promote Co-operative and Competitive Federalism; therefore it lays the bed rock of strong democratic system. So, the problem raised by many states should be considered by the 16th Finance Commission to maintain a balance between all the states' interests.

6 Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure Survey

Why in News:

The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) has released the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23. The survey indicates that Per capita Monthly Household Consumption Expenditure has doubled during 2011-12 to 2022-23.

Objective of the Survey:

- The survey has been conducted by NSSO, Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation during August, 2022 to July, 2023. The survey aims to generate estimates of household monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) and its distribution separately for the rural and urban sectors of the country, for States and Union territories and for different socio-economic groups.

Key Findings of the Survey:

- The findings of survey reports a declining trend in the share of food items in the total spending basket of Indians. It also reveals the shift in the composition of food expenditure from food grains and sugar to animal and horticulture products.
- The share of food in the average MPCE has reduced to 46.4% from 52.9% during 2011-12 to 2022-23 for rural India and a little dip in urban India at 39.2% from 42.6% during the same period.

- The share of spending on milk, fruits and food rich in micronutrients has increased than the share of foodgrains (cereals and pulses) both in rural and urban India.
- With the influence of marketisation on Indian economy and rising income levels, the share of expenditure on processed foods, beverages and purchased cooked meals has been increasing.

Key Takeaways from the report:

- The HCES data findings are suggesting a consistent trend with 'Engel Curve Hypothesis'. The 19th century German statistician states in his hypothesis that with the growth in income levels, household spends smaller proportion of that on food i.e. inferior items and more on superior food items. In this case the cereals and pulses are inferior and milk, fruits, egg, fish, meat and vegetables are superior.
- The survey explicitly reveals that now consumption has been more focused on processed and nutrient rich food items rather than traditional diet.
- The declining consumption of agriculture household among the average rural household is a concern for rural economy.

Way Forward:

The HCES is a valuable data source for policy makers to provide a basis for estimating and projection of the demand of food items. Thereby the schemes and measures should now more focus on dairy, livestock and horticulture sectors to make a balance with market demand.

7 GDP Growth Estimation

Why in News:

Recently, GDP for third quarter and second advance estimates, 2023-24 released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth surged to a six-quarter high of 8.4% in October-December, pushing up the growth rate for 2023-24 to 7.6% as against the earlier estimate of 7.3%.

Key findings:

- In the third quarter of the current financial year, among sectors, manufacturing posted the highest growth rate in double digits at 11.6%, while the construction sector grew 9.5%. Agriculture recorded a contraction of 0.8% in October-December.
- Private final consumption expenditure, an indicator of consumption demand, rose by 3.5% year-on-year in October-December, while

government's final consumption expenditure decreased by 3.2%.

-: Prelims Insights :-

☑ *Gross domestic product (GDP) is a standard measure of the value of final goods and services produced by a country for a particular period of time. GDP is the market value of all final goods and services produced within a country at a given time, where market value means the use of market prices to determine the value of output. GDP is usually measured in domestic currencies. GDP can be calculated on a quarterly, monthly, half-yearly or annual basis.*

- Gross fixed capital formation, an indicator of investment, grew by 10.6% during the third quarter.
- Most of the GDP growth has come about through robust non-agricultural growth on the supply side and substantial investment growth on the demand side. The main negative news on the demand side is the slowdown in consumption expenditure growth which has clocked now only 3% for both private and government final consumption expenditure.
- Economists pointed out the divergence between the GDP and the Gross Value Added (GVA) growth rates on account of a sharp rise in net taxes, which are estimated to have grown by 32% in Q3 FY24 in real terms.
- GDP is Gross Value Added or GVA plus product taxes minus subsidies. GVA, which reflects national income from the output side, is expected to grow at 7% FY23- 24 as against 6.7% last fiscal.

Conclusion:

The 8%-plus GDP estimate for Q3 came as a surprise for many economists. This has happened due to downward revision in GDP growth for the previous financial year and lower input cost by the industrial sector, despite modest volume growth, much higher value-added growth has been recorded in the industrial sector. This also shows India's sound economic position mostly in manufacturing sector through many government initiative such as Make in India and Mudra cheme etc.

Miscellaneous Issues



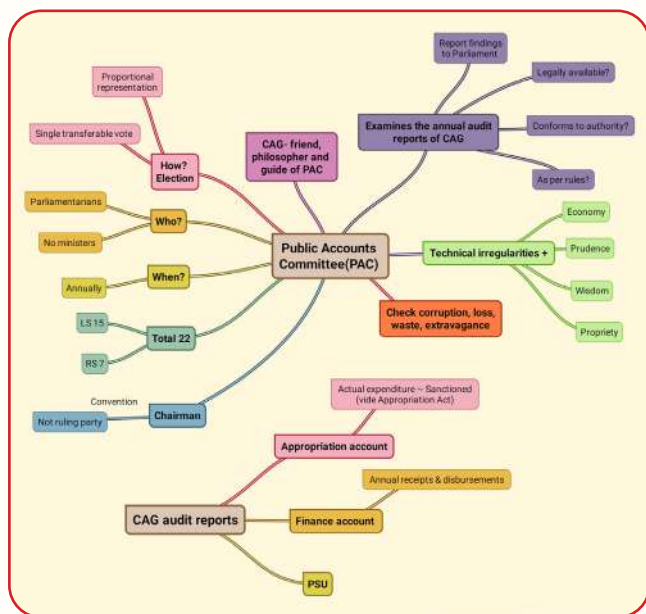
1 Hike in Ministries' Reporting Limits for Financial Expenditure

Why in News:

After nearly two decades, the government is ready to revise the financial limits for 'New Service' and 'New Instruments of Service' with approval from Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

Approval by Public Accounts Committee (PAC):

- The PAC has approved the Finance Ministry's proposal to revise the reporting limit for new policy-related expenditure by ministries/departments.
- The reporting limit for new policy-related expenditure has been raised to above Rs 50 crore but not exceeding Rs 100 crore.
- Parliament's prior approval is mandated for spending over Rs 100 crore.



Revision in Financial Limits:

- This marks the fourth revision since Independence and is aimed at reducing the frequency of Supplementary Demands for Grants presented to Parliament.
- The last revision was in 2006, and low financial limits led to an increase in supplementary proposals from ministries/departments, causing delays in project execution.

Types of Expenditure:

- 'New Service (NS)' refers to expenditure arising from a new policy decision not previously presented to Parliament.

- 'New Instrument of Service (NIS)' refers to relatively large expenditure from significant expansion of an existing policy.

Purpose of Amendments:

- The proposed amendments aim to encourage ministries to estimate budgetary requirements meticulously.
- The necessity for upward revision arises due to a surge in supplementary proposals causing delays in project execution.

Expected Growth and Budget Size:

- With GDP growth expected in the range of 6-7% annually, the Budget size is anticipated to grow substantially in the next decade.
- This necessitates an upward revision in financial limits to accommodate increased expenditure.

Consultations and Changes:

- This is the fourth change in 50 years and has come after wide consultations.
- The revisions aim to streamline the government spending process and simplify the scrutiny process for the PAC.

Conclusion:

The Finance Ministry aims to simplify the process for easier adoption by ministries. This is expected to speed up decision-making and improve the pace of scheme implementation.

2 Sagar Aankalan Guidelines

Why in News:

Mr. Sarbananda Sonowal, the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, introduced the 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines for Indian Port Performance Index.

Launch of 'Sagar Aankalan' Guidelines:

- Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, introduced the 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines during a stakeholders meet.
- These guidelines aim to transform the performance assessment of Indian ports.
- They focus on mapping and benchmarking of Indian port logistics performance and efficiency, harmonization of standards, and improving competitiveness, efficiency, and overall performance of the port sector.

Implementation of MoUs from GMIS 2023:

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) concluded the Stakeholders Meet to implement the MoUs signed at the Global Maritime India Summit 2023 (GMIS 2023).

- Action plans were drawn up for the swift implementation of the MoUs, aiming to make them actionable at the earliest.
- Participants engaged in productive discussions to overcome challenges and facilitate the implementation of the MoUs.

Significance of GMIS 2023:

- GMIS 2023 emerged as one of the largest maritime summits globally, attracting significant investment commitments.
- 360 MoUs were signed with an investment commitment of Rs.8.35 lakh crore, with additional investible projects worth Rs. 1.68 lakh crore announced.
- The MoUs covered various aspects of the maritime sector, including port development, modernization, green hydrogen and ammonia, port-led development, cruise sector, shipbuilding, and knowledge sharing.

Progress Update on MoUs:

- Port representatives provided updates on the progress of the MoUs signed at GMIS 2023, detailing milestones achieved and challenges encountered.
- Stakeholders shared perspectives on the implementation of the agreements, fostering transparency and accountability.

Way Forward:

The Ministry remains committed to translating the objectives outlined in the MoUs into tangible outcomes. By fostering collaboration, leveraging technologies, and embracing sustainable practices, India aims to unlock the full potential of its maritime sector, driving inclusive growth and prosperity.

3 Medaram Jathara

Why in News:

Adivasis from across the country celebrated three-day biennial tribal fair “Sammakka Saralamma Jathara”. On this occasion, Prime Minister of India extended greetings at the start of the largest tribal festival, “Sammakka Saralamma Jathara” or “Medaram Jathara”.

About the Festival:

- The Medaram Jathara festival is a four-day festival that takes place every two years in Medaram Village, Mulugu district, Telangana, India. The festival honors the goddesses Sammakka and Saralamma, who are believed to protect the local tribal community.
- It is celebrated by the Koya tribe, the second-largest tribal community in Telangana. The

festival is organized by the Koya tribes in collaboration with the Tribal Welfare Department of Telangana Government.

- Medaram is a remote place in the Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, Telangana.

Common Belief:

- The festival commemorates the fight Sammakka and Saralamma fought against the Kakatiya rulers' unjust law that levied taxes on the tribal populace during a drought period. After the battle, Sammakka and Saralamma were deified and a festival is held in their honor every two years. The Koya tribe and devotees believe that Sammakka and Saralamma are manifestations of Adi Parashakti sent to protect them.

About Koya tribe:

- The Koya are an Indian tribal community who are known for their rich culture, traditions, and art. They are found in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha.
- The Koyas are a branch of the Gondi-speaking people. They speak the Koya language, also known as Koya basha, which is a Dravidian language related to Gondi. The Koyas call themselves “Koya” or “Koitor” which means “people”.

4 Dand Patta

Why in News:

On the occasion of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's birth anniversary, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde announced the ‘dand patta’ or gauntlet sword as the official state weapon.

About ‘Dand Patta’ Sword:

- Dand patta comprises a double-edged sword measuring up to four feet with a gauntlet integrated as a hand guard. It was used widely during the medieval period and Shivaji is depicted with the weapon in several paintings. When Shivaji was attacked by Afzal Khan, the commander of Adil Shah from Bijapur, his bodyguard Jiva Mahala is believed to have used a dand patta to cut off the attacker Sayyad Banda's arm.
- Shivaji personally wielded the ‘dand patta’ in battle against Mughal forces.
- Over the centuries it became a legendary weapon associated with Maratha warriors' bravery and martial traditions.
- In Mardani Khel various weapons including the Dand Patta' are used. Unlike many martial art forms, Mardani Khel has the same space for women as it does for men.

Significance for Maharashtra:

- The 'dand patta' sword is an important part of Maharashtra's history and heritage as a quintessential weapon of the Marathas. It is a symbol of the tactical innovation and guerilla warfare that Shivaji spearheaded to defeat bigger rivals with smaller forces.
- Declaring it as the state weapon honours the brave Maratha soldiers and military generals who helped establish the Maratha Empire. It connects today's Maharashtra with its glorious past and reinforces Shivaji's image as a strong, smart and skilled warrior king

Conclusion:

The announcement promotes Maharashtra's strong martial heritage and commemorate heroes like Shivaji. It is also an ode to the state's history of spearheading innovation in weapons, strategy and statecraft. The government aims to popularise stories of weapons like the 'dand patta' among the youth to inspire them about the state's rich history. Efforts will be undertaken to display and exhibit such weapons in museums and installations across the state.

5 High-Risk Pregnancies in India

Why in News:

As per a study published recently in the Journal of Global Health by researchers from the ICMR's National Institute for Research in Reproductive and Child Health (NIRRH) in Mumbai, has found the prevalence of high-risk pregnancies to be high at 49.4%.

More about the Study:

- The study analysed the data of nearly 24,000 pregnant women and found that about 33% of pregnant women had a single high-risk factor, while 16% had multiple high-risk factors.
- Further, the study used the nationally representative cross-sectional household survey data of the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021) and unit-level data from the Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) programme.
- Northeastern States of Meghalaya (67.8%), Manipur (66.7%) and Mizoram (62.5%) and the southern State of Telangana (60.3%) had the highest prevalence of high-risk factors in India.
- Sikkim (33.3%), Odisha (37.3%) and Chhattisgarh (38.1%) had the lowest prevalence of high-risk pregnancies.

Risk Factors and vulnerability:

- The study found that pregnant women from vulnerable populations such as poor women and

those who had no education had the possibility of having one or more risk factors for pregnancy.

- The risk factors that were considered for the study were maternal risks, lifestyle risks, medical risks, current health risks, and previous birth outcome risks.
- Maternal risk factors included the age of the mother adolescent women aged 15 to 17 years and women older than 35 years pregnant women who are short (height below 140 cm), and have a higher body mass index of over 30.
- Lifestyle risk factors included tobacco use and alcohol consumption, while previous birth outcome risks included pregnant women with more than five children, women with short birth spacing and long birth intervals of over 59 months.
- Women with a history of preterm deliveries, miscarriages, abortions, or stillbirths were included under the category of previous birth outcome risk factor.

Other data:

- The leading high-risk factors were:
 - » Short-birth spacing (the time interval between the last birth to the time of current conception being less than 18 months found in 31% of pregnant women).
 - » Adverse birth outcomes (19.5%) such as miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth.
 - » Recent caesarean section delivery (16.4%).
- Risk factor arising from adolescent pregnancies was highest in Tripura (10.3%), while advanced maternal age of over 35 years risk factor was most seen in Ladakh (14.3%).

Conclusion:

According to the study, high-risk factors were more commonly seen during the third trimester (51%) than in the first (48.8%) and second trimester (48.6%). The proportion of multiple high risks was higher among women with no educational category (22.5%) compared with educated women. Policies and programmes aimed at creating public awareness and education of women is the need of the hour.

6 Language Atlas of India

Why in News:

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, an autonomous body under the Union Culture Ministry, has recently proposed to conduct a linguistic survey across the country to create a 'Language Atlas' of India.

The Proposals:

- The survey would focus on:
 - » The number of languages and dialects in India.
 - » Try to know how many languages are spoken in India.
 - » How many scripts and dialects are there.
- The survey has to be carried out in phases. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) proposes that firstly, there should be State-wise data collection, and then region-wise. It also proposes to digitally archive the audio recordings of all the languages spoken.
- According to the DPR the stakeholders in the survey would be the Ministries of Culture, Education, Tribal Affairs, Home, Social Justice and Empowerment, and Development of North East Region, apart from various languages communities.

Languages in India:

- India recognises 22 languages officially, which are part of Schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution. According to Census data of 2011, 97 % of the Indian population speaks one of these languages.
- Additionally, there are 99 non-scheduled languages included in the 2011 Census and around 37.8 million people identify one of these non-Scheduled languages as their mother tongue.
- The first and most exhaustive Linguistic Survey of India was carried out by Sir George Abraham Grierson and published in 1928.
- In independent India, the official Census of 1961 was the most exhaustive and detailed with respect to linguistic data. In this Census, even languages with a single speaker were included in the records amounting to 1,554 languages spoken in India.

Conclusion:

- The native language of 1.2 million people remains unaccounted for due to the decision to not include languages with less than 10,000 speakers in the Census since 1971. Many of these languages, not recorded in the official Census records, are spoken by tribal communities.
- A language is not only a means of communication, but is essential for preserving local wisdom, knowledge, stories and culture. Many tribal communities have their own localised medicinal plants and herbs, which they pass on to younger generations in their local language.
- A linguistic survey can be a database for future policy decisions. As India makes efforts towards imparting education in the mother tongue, specially at the primary level, a crucial question remains on the actual number of languages that can be considered to be active in the country.

7

Financial Assistance For Poor Prisoners

Why in News:

A sum of Rs 20 crore has been earmarked by the Ministry of Home Affairs to extend financial support to indigent prisoners unable to meet their bail expenses, thereby alleviating their continued incarceration.

About:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs, in its communication to all states, has urged the establishment of dedicated accounts to facilitate the smooth transfer of funds from the Central government to state headquarters. This initiative aims to streamline the disbursement of funds to individuals in need. An 'Empowered Committee,' in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority and prison authorities, will assess cases of eligible prisoners, holding the authority to approve the necessary funds for fines or bail.
- Additionally, all states and Union Territories have been directed to form 'Empowered Committees' at the district level and an 'Oversight Committee' at the state or UT headquarters. Furthermore, a designated nodal officer is to engage with the Central Nodal Agency (CNA) – the National Crime Records

Data and Statistics:

- Overcrowding Challenge: Indian prisons grapple with severe overcrowding issues, frequently surpassing their intended capacity by 100% or more. In some states, such as UP, the overcrowding reaches alarming levels, peaking at 177%. This situation results in substandard living conditions, sanitation challenges, and an elevated risk of violence and disease.
- Under-trial Population Issue: A substantial portion (76%) of the prison population consists of undertrials awaiting trial, often enduring prolonged periods due to judicial delays. This circumstance raises apprehensions regarding the presumption of innocence and the extended incarceration of individuals without a conviction.

Government Policies in India For Governance Of Prisoners Rights:

- The All India Committee on Jail Reforms (Mulla Committee) of 1980 proposed comprehensive measures to expedite trials, alleviate prison congestion, and prioritize rehabilitation and reintegration. The recommendations included programs for skill development, education, and mental health support for inmates. Additionally, the committee underscored the importance of

upholding the human rights of prisoners and enhancing the training and professionalization of prison staff.

- The National Policy on Prisons in 2000 emphasized the significance of humane conditions, rehabilitation, and reintegration within prison systems.
- The Model Prison Manual of 2016 outlined guidelines for prison administration and prisoner management, aiming to ensure humane conditions, uphold human rights, and foster the reformation and rehabilitation of inmates.
- The 'Modernisation of Prisons' Project' for the fiscal years 2021-2026, with a financial outlay of Rs. 950 crore, focuses on the modernization of prison equipment and strengthening security infrastructure across the country's jails.
- The Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act of 2023 primarily concentrates on maintaining discipline and order within prisons, with a focus on the custody of criminals.
- The 'Support to Poor Prisoners' Scheme 2024' aims to assist prisoners from socially disadvantaged and low-income groups who lack the financial means to pay their bail surety or fine, facilitating their release.

Solutions and Measures:

- **Decongestion Measures:** Initiating the establishment of fast-track courts, introducing plea bargaining, and implementing parole schemes to alleviate the under-trial population and address issues of overcrowding in prisons.
- **Rehabilitation Focus:** Launching programs aimed at fostering positive behavior change, providing anger management sessions, and offering reintegration support to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Notably, Rajasthan's 'open prisons' model allows prisoners who have served one-third of their sentences to transition to open jails.
- **Collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration between government agencies and civil society organizations to harness combined expertise and resources for the effective implementation of reforms. For instance, law students, in partnership with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), are assisting prisoners with bail pleas in Delhi.
- **Improved Infrastructure:** Undertaking efforts to upgrade prison facilities, ensuring access to basic amenities, proper sanitation, and healthcare services for inmates.
- **Skill Development and Education Programs:** Implementing initiatives to provide inmates with opportunities for skill development and

educational qualifications, enhancing their employability prospects upon release.

- **Sensitization of Prison Staff:** Conducting training programs for prison staff, focusing on human rights awareness, mental health education, and effective communication skills to improve interactions with inmates.



Supreme Court Observations:

- **Hussainara Khatoon (IV) Vs. State of Bihar 1979:** The right to free legal services is an essential ingredient of reasonable, fair and just procedure, guaranteed under Article 21, for a person accused of an offence.
- **State of A.P. Vs. Challa Ramkrishna Reddy & Ors. (2000):** the Supreme Court held that a prisoner is entitled to all his fundamental rights unless his liberty has been constitutionally curtailed.
- **R.D. Upadhyay vs. State of A.P. & Ors 2006:** Children in jail are entitled to food, shelter, medical care, clothing, education and recreational facilities as a matter of right.
- **Rattiram v. State of M.P. (2012):** The accused is entitled to a speedy trial. The whole purpose of a speedy trial is intended to avoid oppression and prevent delay.

Way Forward:

Sustained Commitment: The on-going dedication of political will and consistent budgetary allocations are essential for the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of reform initiatives. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Instituting robust mechanisms to monitor progress, assess the effectiveness of implemented reforms, and making necessary adjustments based on data and evidence are critical components for ensuring the success and adaptability of initiatives.

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Right to Disconnect

Why in Broadcast

Australia's Senate has passed right to disconnect legislation to give employees the right to not respond to supervisors' "unreasonable" texts, emails and calls when they're off work. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese supports the measure.

Countries That Recognized Right to Disconnect

- France has introduced a "Right to Disconnect" law in 2017,
- Belgium has introduced the right to disconnect in Feb 2022 for civil servants.
- EU also recognizes this right and demands for declaration of this right as fundamental right.

Challenges and Concerns

- **Cultural Shift:** Encouraging a culture that respects work-life balance requires a shift in societal and organizational norms, challenging the prevalent expectation of constant availability.
- **Communication Challenges:** In certain industries or job roles that demand immediate response or critical support, finding a balance between the Right to Disconnect and organizational requirements can be complex.
- **Monitoring and Compliance:** Ensuring compliance with the Right to Disconnect can be challenging, especially in cases where remote work arrangements and international communication are involved.

About the Right

- The Right to Disconnect recognizes that employees should have the freedom to disconnect from work-related communication and not be obligated to respond to emails, messages, or calls outside their working hours.
- It emphasizes the importance of downtime and the need for individuals to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Need for the Right to Disconnect in India

- In India, the increasing adoption of digital technologies and the rise of remote work arrangements have blurred the boundaries between personal and professional life.
- It is seen that continuously working for long hours without any breaks has resulted in a loss of productivity.
- Therefore, The Right to Disconnect is essential to protect the well-being and rights of employees, ensuring they have adequate time for rest, personal commitments, and leisure.

Benefits of the Right to Disconnect

- **Improved Work-Life Balance:** It empowers employees to set boundaries between work and personal life, allowing them to prioritize their well-being and spend quality time with family and friends.
- **Enhanced Mental Health:** Disconnecting from work-related communication during non-working hours helps reduce stress, anxiety, and burnout, leading to improved mental health outcomes.
- **Increased Productivity:** Providing employees with adequate rest and downtime enables them to recharge and be more productive during working hours.
- **Better Focus and Creativity:** Disconnecting from work allows individuals to engage in activities that foster creativity, personal growth, and hobbies, leading to enhanced overall performance.
- **Employee Retention and Satisfaction:** Organizations that prioritize work-life balance are more likely to attract and retain talented employees, resulting in higher job satisfaction and employee loyalty.

National Science Day

Why in Broadcast

To honour the announcement of the discovery of the “Raman Effect,” the Indian government under PM Rajiv Gandhi designated February 28 as National Science Day in 1986. The first National Science Day was celebrated on February 28, 1987.

Significance of the Raman Effect

- The Raman effect forms the basis for Raman spectroscopy which is used by chemists and physicists to gain information about materials.
- With the invention of lasers and the capabilities to concentrate much stronger beams of light, the uses of Raman spectroscopy have only increased over time.
- It is used to monitor manufacturing processes in the petrochemical and pharmaceutical industries.

About Raman Effect

- The Raman Effect refers to the phenomenon in which when a stream of light passes through a liquid, a fraction of the light scattered by the liquid is of a different colour.
- This happens due to the change in the wavelength of light that occurs when a light beam is deflected by molecules.
- The Raman Effect is when the change in the energy of the light is affected by the vibrations of the molecule or material under observation, leading to a change in its wavelength.

Theme

Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat

Purpose of the Celebration

- To widely spread a message about the significance of scientific applications in the daily lives of people,
- To display all the activities, efforts, and achievements in the field of science for the welfare of human beings,
- To discuss all the issues and implement new technologies for the development of science,
- To give an opportunity to the scientific-minded citizens in the country,
- To encourage the people as well as popularise science and technology.

About CV Raman

- Raman was born to a family of Sanskrit scholars in Trichy (present-day Tiruchirapalli) in the Madras Presidency in 1888.
- He received a BA degree from Presidency College in Madras. While studying for his MA degree, at the age of 18, he got published in the Philosophical Magazine. This was the first research paper ever published by Presidency College.
- A full-time civil servant, Raman began after-hours research at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS).
- At the age of 29, he resigned from his civil services job and took up a professorship in Presidency College, Calcutta.

Discovering the Raman Effect

- Through his journey to England, while passing through the Mediterranean Sea, Raman was most fascinated by the sea's deep blue colour.
- In the first report to Nature, titled “A New Type of Secondary Radiation,” CV Raman and co-author KS Krishnan studied about 60 different liquids, and the scattering of light by their constituent molecules.
- The Raman Effect was the discovery that won physicist Sir CV Raman his Nobel Prize in 1930.

BRAIN BOOSTERS

Raisina Dialogue 2024

Why in Broadcast

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the 9th edition of Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi on 21 February, 2024. PM of Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis joined the inaugural session as the Chief Guest. Delivering a keynote address at the event, Greek PM said that India is a great power on the world stage and an important ally in the pursuit of peace and security.

Importance of the Raisina Dialogue

The Raisina Dialogue 2024 holds immense significance as a platform for fostering dialogue, collaboration, and innovation in addressing global challenges. With its diverse participation and comprehensive thematic focus, the conference contributed significantly to shaping contemporary discourse on geopolitics and geoeconomics.

Participants and Audience

- The Raisina Dialogue 2024 had the participation of over 2,500 delegates from approximately 115 countries, representing a diverse spectrum of expertise and perspectives.
- The conference not only engaged attendees in person but also reached millions worldwide through digital platforms, ensuring widespread dissemination of insights and ideas.

What is Raisina Dialogue?

- The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.
- Hosted in New Delhi by the Observer Research Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, it attracts participants from political, business, media, and civil society backgrounds.
- The Dialogue fosters multi-stakeholder discussions, bringing together heads of state, ministers, government officials, thought leaders, and experts from diverse sectors.

Theme of 2024

- **Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create.**
- The theme of 2024 edition, "Chaturanga," underscores the complex dynamics of conflict, competition, cooperation, and creativity in the contemporary global landscape.
- Through six thematic pillars, participants will explore various dimensions of these dynamics, ranging from technological frontiers and environmental sustainability to geopolitical strategies and democratic governance.

Thematic Pillars

Tech Frontiers: Regulations & Realities

- Delving into the challenges and opportunities posed by technological advancements and the need for effective regulation.

Peace with the Planet: Invest & Innovate

- Addressing environmental sustainability and the imperative for innovation and investment in mitigating climate change.

War & Peace: Armouries & Asymmetries

- Analyzing contemporary security challenges, including traditional and asymmetrical threats and strategies for peace-building.

Decolonising Multilateralism: Institutions & Inclusion

- Examining the evolving landscape of multilateral institutions and the imperative for inclusivity and equitable representation.

The Post 2030 Agenda: People & Progress

- Discussing the global agenda beyond 2030, focusing on human development, social progress, and sustainable growth.

Defending Democracy: Society & Sovereignty

- Exploring challenges to democratic governance and strategies for safeguarding societal values and sovereignty.

BRAIN BOOSTERS

Jnanpith Award

Why in Broadcast

The Jnanpith selection committee made the announcement regarding the 58th Jnanpith Award.

This year's honor will be jointly bestowed upon Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya and Urdu poet and lyricist Gulzar.

Way Forward

- The Jnanpith Award stands as a testament to the vibrancy and richness of Indian literature.
- By honoring exceptional literary achievements across diverse languages, it reinforces the importance of linguistic diversity and cultural expression.
- As it continues to recognize and celebrate literary excellence, the award plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting India's rich literary heritage for future generations.

Selection Process

- Nominations for the award are solicited from literary experts, educators, critics, universities, and language associations.
- Advisory committees, comprising eminent scholars and critics, assess the nominations and submit recommendations to the Jnanpith Award Selection Board.
- The board, composed of esteemed individuals with a commitment to literary excellence, evaluates the recommendations and announces the recipient.
- It is important to note that the award is not bestowed posthumously.

About Jnanpith

- The Jnanpith Award, instituted in 1961 by the Bharatiya Jnanpith, is the oldest and most prestigious literary accolade in India.
- Its primary objective is to recognize and honour outstanding contributions to Indian literature, fostering a culture of literary excellence and promoting linguistic diversity.

Historical Context

- Conceived in 1961 by the Bharatiya Jnanpith, the idea for the award emerged from discussions among eminent literary figures and intellectuals.
- The initial draft was presented to then-President Rajendra Prasad, with subsequent refinement and establishment of selection committees to ensure transparency and integrity in the award process.

Recognition Criteria and Evolution

- Initially, the award was bestowed for the "most outstanding work" published in Indian languages over a specified period.
- Over time, the criteria evolved to consider works published within the preceding twenty years, excluding the year of award conferral.
- The cash prize underwent revisions, reflecting economic changes, and currently stands at Rs. 11 lakh.

Scope and Representation

- The award is open to authors writing in Indian languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, as well as English.
- This inclusivity ensures representation from diverse linguistic backgrounds, promoting cultural richness and literary pluralism.

Significance and Impact

- The Jnanpith Award holds immense significance in the literary landscape of India, symbolizing excellence, creativity, and cultural enrichment.
- It serves as a beacon for aspiring writers, inspiring them to strive for literary greatness and contributing to the enrichment of Indian literature.

National Council for Transgender Persons

Why in Broadcast

The National Council for Transgender Persons (NCTP) held a meeting chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, focusing on safeguarding transgender rights in India. Established under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019, NCTP aims to address livelihood issues, promote awareness, and ensure the fulfilment of essential needs for the transgender community.

Composition

- **Chairperson:** Union Minister of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **Regional Representation:** Representatives from five states/UTs on a rotational basis (North, South, East, West, Northeast).
- **Transgender Community Members:** Five members, each from North, South, East, West, and Northeast regions, with three-year tenure.
- **Central Departments:** Representatives from 10 key central departments.
- **Joint Secretary-Level Members:** Inclusion from Ministries of Health, Home, Minority Affairs, Education, Rural Development, Labour and Law.
- **Additional Members:** A representative from the Department of Pensions, NITI Aayog, National Human Rights Commission, and National Commission for Women.

About National Council for Transgender Persons

- The Transgender Persons Act, 2019 legislation is aimed at protecting the rights and addressing the concerns of transgender individuals.
- One of its significant features is the establishment of the National Council for Transgender Persons, a statutory body that plays a pivotal role in promoting inclusivity and safeguarding the transgender community's rights.

Definition and Identity Recognition

- The Act provides a comprehensive definition of a transgender person, encompassing those whose gender does not align with their assigned gender at birth.
- This includes transmen, trans-women, individuals with intersex variations, gender-queers, and those with specific socio-cultural identities like kinnar and hijra.

Functions of National Council for Transgender Persons

- To advise the Central Government on the formulation of policies, programmes, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons.
- To monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and programmes designed for achieving equality and full participation of transgender persons.
- To review and coordinate the activities of all the departments of Government and other Governmental and non-Governmental Organisations which are dealing with matters relating to transgender persons.
- To redress the grievances of transgender persons.
- To perform such other functions as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

Protection Against Discrimination

- To address the pervasive issue of discrimination, the Act prohibits bias against transgender persons in various sectors such as education, employment, and healthcare.
- This provision aims to create an inclusive environment and ensure equal opportunities for transgender individuals, fostering their full participation in society.

BRAIN BOOSTERS

World Water Day

Why in Broadcast

World Water Day, held on 22 March every year since 1993, is an annual United Nations Observance focusing on the importance of freshwater. World Water Day celebrates water and raises awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water. It is about taking action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

Theme

World Water Day 2024: Leveraging Water for Peace.

India Addressing Its Water Needs

- Stemming groundwater depletion
- Reaching the underserved in India's villages
- Reliable water supply to cities
- Managing India's most iconic river (Ganga)
- Making irrigation more predictable
- Tracking floods and droughts

Origin

- This day was first formally proposed in Agenda 21 of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- In December 1992, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution by which 22 March of each year was declared World Water Day.

Organisations Involved & Related Activities

- UN Water is the convener of the World Water Day and selects the theme for each year in consultation with UN organizations that share an interest in that year's focus.
- UN-Water also releases the The United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR) produced annually by the World Water Assessment Programme on World Water Day.

Key Messages for World Water Day 2024

- **Water Can Create Peace Or Spark Conflict:** When water is scarce or polluted, or when people struggle for access, tensions can rise. By cooperating on water, we can balance everyone's water needs and help stabilize the world.
- **Prosperity & Peace Rely On Water:** As nations manage climate change, mass migration and political unrest, they must put water cooperation at the heart of their plans.
- **Water Can Lead Us Out of Crisis:** We can foster harmony between communities and countries by uniting around the fair and sustainable use of water from United Nations conventions at the international level, to actions at the local level.

Sustainable Development Goal-6

- SDG 6 is related to the issue of Clean Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. Target under SDG-6 to be achieved by 2030 are as follows:
- Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
 - Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all.
 - End open defecation, with special attention to the needs of women and girls.

IWT: Shahpurkandi Dam

Why in Broadcast

Almost three decades after its foundation stone was laid, the Shahpurkandi dam on river Ravi in Punjab, bordering Jammu and Kashmir has finally been completed. The 55.5-metre-high dam is part of the Shahpurkandi multipurpose river valley project, which also comprises two hydropower plants with an installed capacity of 206 MW.

Geopolitical Conflicts

- In the aftermath of the attack on J&K's Uri army camp in 2016, PM Modi had said, "Blood and water cannot flow simultaneously".
- After 2019, Pulwama terror attack, India had for the first time threatened to cut off water supply to Pakistan.

Objections Raised Under the Treaty

The treaty, became a source of dissatisfaction because

- There is a growing demand for water.
- Extensively technical nature of the document.
- The western rivers flow through the conflicted region of Jammu and Kashmir.

More Information

- Shahpurkandi multipurpose river valley project, being implemented by Punjab, will help minimise some of the water of Ravi that is currently going waste through the Madhopur barrage downstream to Pakistan.
- The project facilitates irrigation of 5,000 hectares in Punjab and over 32,000 hectares in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Shahpurkandi dam, located 11 km downstream of Ranjit Sagar dam on river Ravi and 8 km upstream of Madhopur barrage, will help India better utilise the Ravi waters.

About Indus Waters Treaty

- The Indus river basin has six rivers:
 - » Indus
 - » Jhelum
 - » Chenab
 - » Ravi
 - » Beas
 - » Sutlej
- These rivers originate from Tibet and flow through the Himalayan ranges to enter Pakistan, ending in the south of Karachi.
- In 1947, partition also cut the Indus river system into two.
- Both the sides were dependent on water from the Indus river basin for their irrigation.
- Therefore, infrastructure and equitable distribution was needed.
- In 1951, both the countries applied to the World Bank for funding of their respective irrigation projects on Indus and its tributaries, which is when the Bank offered to mediate the conflict.
- In 1960, an agreement was reached between the two countries, leading to the signing of the Indus Waters Treaty.

Crux of the Treaty

- The treaty allocated the three western rivers Indus, Chenab and Jhelum to Pakistan for unrestricted use, barring certain non-consumptive, agricultural and domestic uses by India.
- The three Eastern rivers Ravi, Beas and Sutlej to India for unrestricted usage.
- 80% of the share of water or about 135 Million Acre Feet (MAF) went to Pakistan, leaving the rest 33 MAF or 20% of water for use by India.

News Of National and International Importance

Purulia Chhau

Recently Purulia Chhau dance was performed by Tarapada Rajak and team at a college in Kozhikode, Kerala.

About Purulia Chhau:

- Purulia Chhau is a semi-classical Indian folk dance from the Purulia district of West Bengal.
- It's a UNESCO World Heritage dance that combines martial arts and folk traditions.
- Many scholars believe that the name Chhau comes from "Chhauni", which means "military camp".
- Chhau performances include acrobatics, martial moves and religious dances.
- The dance is a way to tell stories to the audience, so it incorporates elaborate masks and headgear associated with battle and war.
- It has three distinct styles, named after the region where they are performed: Purulia (West Bengal), Seraikella (Jharkhand) and Mayurbhanj (Odisha).

Parhyale Odian

The researchers at Berhampur University, Odisha, discovered a new species of marine amphipod, Parhyale odian in Chilika Lake.

About Parhyale Odian:

- Parhyale Odian is a newly discovered species of marine amphipod, a shrimp-like crustacean, found in Chilika Lake, Odisha.
- It belongs to the genus Parhyale, which now comprises a total of 16 species globally.
- Named after Odisha's native language, Odia, the species is brown in color, around eight millimeters long and has 13 pairs of legs.
- It lives in shallow, intertidal and circumtropical marine environments.
- The genus Parhyale was first reported by Stebbing in 1899 from the Virgin Islands.

Chilika Lake:

- Chilika Lake is the largest brackish water lake in India and serves as a prominent wintering ground for migratory birds in the Indian subcontinent.
- It is Asia's largest and the world's second-largest lagoon.
- In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated as the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, highlighting its ecological significance.

Jnanpith Award

Celebrated Urdu poet Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya have been selected for the 58th Jnanpith Award.

About Jnanpith Award:

- The Jnanpith Award is India's highest literary award, given annually to an author for their "outstanding contribution towards literature".
- It is presented by the Bharatiya Jnanpith, which was established in 1944 and first awarded in 1965. The award is given to writers in any of the 22 "scheduled languages" recognized in the Indian Constitution and, from 2013, in the English language.
- Recipients of the Jnanpith Award receive a cash prize of Rs.11 lakh, a statue of Vagdevi and a citation.

T Cells

Recently, the scientists have engineered a new variant of cancer-fighting T cells that can suppress multiple myeloma tumours in mice while showing superior persistence and endurance compared with standard CAR T cell designs.

About T Cells:

- T cells are a type of white blood cell that are part of the immune system.

- They are also called T lymphocytes and thymocytes.
- These cells play a vital role in both components of active immunity, including cell-mediated and to some extent humoral immunity.
- They express a receptor with the potential to recognize diverse antigens from pathogens, tumours and the environment.
- There are two main types of T cells:
 - » Cytotoxic T-cells destroy infected cells,
 - » Helper T-cells send signals directing other immune cells to fight infection.
- T cells are also implicated as major drivers of many inflammatory and autoimmune diseases.
- The immune system requires protein for T-cell production, which can be obtained from protein-rich foods such as skinless chicken, fish, eggs, lentils, beans and soy.

International Centre for Climate Change And Development

Recently, a report released by ICCCAD unveiled Bangladesh's exposure to 185 extreme weather events between 2000 and 2019, ranking it as the world's seventh most vulnerable country to climate change.

About ICCCAD:

- The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) is a research and capacity building organization that focuses on climate change and development in Bangladesh.
- It was established in 2009 through collaboration between the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) and IIED (UK).
- It is located at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) campus in Dhaka.
- Its aim is to facilitate the adaptation process for communities impacted by climate change by integrating local expertise, knowledge, and research.
- Saleemul Huq has been the Director of the International Centre for Climate Change & Development (ICCCAD) since 2009.

Green Anaconda

Scientists have discovered that the green anaconda, previously thought to be a single species, actually consists of two genetically distinct species.

About the Green Anaconda:

- The green anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*) is a snake found in Amazon and the Orinoco basins.
- It is the largest and heaviest snake in the world with the largest females reaching over seven meters in length and weighing more than 250 kilograms
- It is well-adapted to aquatic life, with nostrils and eyes positioned on top of its head to breathe and see while submerged.
- It is dark green with black spots along its back and black spots with yellow centers along its sides.
- Green anacondas are not venomous. They take down prey using their large, flexible jaws then crush it with their strong bodies, before swallowing it.
- It is classified as a species of least concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List.

Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur

Shashi Tharoor was conferred with the 'Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur' (France's highest civilian honour) announced by the French government in August 2022.

About Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur:

- The National Order of the Legion of Honour, established in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte, is the highest French order of merit, recognizing both military and civil achievements.
- The badge of the Legion features the inscription "Republique Française" (Republic of France) on the front and crossed tricolours along with the motto "Honneur et Patrie" (Honor and Country) on the back.
- The Legion of Honour is divided into five degrees of increasing distinction: Chevalier (Knight), Officier (Officer), Commandeur (Commander), Grand officier (Grand Officer) and Grand-croix (Grand Cross).

- Maharaja Pratap Singh of Idar was the first Indian to receive the Legion of Honour in 1918.
- Over 40 Indians have been awarded this honour, including prominent figures such as JRD Tata (1983), Satyajit Ray (1987), E Sreedharan (2005), Amitabh Bachchan (2007), Lata Mangeshkar (2007), Shah Rukh Khan (2014), Kamal Haasan (2016), Ratan Tata (2016), and Azim Premji (2018).

Global Initiative on Digital Health

Recently, the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare addressed the public launch event of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH).

About Global Initiative on Digital Health:

- Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH) is a WHO-managed network unanimously adopted by all G20 countries, invited countries and international organizations.
- It was launched as a key deliverable of India's G20 Presidency during the Health Ministers' Meeting in Gandhinagar.
- Its aim is to democratize digital health technologies in national digital health transformations, particularly in the Global South.
- The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission promotes healthcare digitization and creates an interoperable digital ecosystem.
- GIDH functions as a network of networks, comprising components like the Country Needs Tracker, Country Resource Portal, Transformation Toolbox and Knowledge Exchange.

Fali Sam Nariman

- The Prime Minister of India expressed grief over the demise of eminent jurist and senior advocate Fali Sam Nariman.
- Fali Sam Nariman (10 January 1929 – 21 February 2024)
- Fali Sam Nariman, an Indian jurist was born in Rangoon, Burma (present-day Yangon, Myanmar) into a Parsi family.

Contributions:

- Nariman's tenure as the President of the Bar Association of India from 1991 to 2010 is notable for his leadership and advocacy for legal reforms.
- He served as the Additional Solicitor General of India from May 1972 until June 1975, resigning in protest against the Declaration of Emergency on June 26, 1975.
- He authored "God Save the Supreme Court," critiquing the lack of collegiality among judges and the need for a free press covering judicial proceedings.
- He played a significant role in shaping the legal framework around the appointment of judges in India's higher judiciary through cases like the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association (AoR) Association case in 1993.

Awards and Honours:

- Nariman was honoured with the 19th Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence in Public Administration, 2018.
- He was awarded the Padma Bhushan (1991), Padma Vibhushan (2007) and Gruber Prize for Justice (2002).
- He was nominated as the member of the Rajya Sabha for the term 1999–2005.

Purple Festival

The President of India inaugurated 'Purple Fest' at Amrit Udyaan in the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

About Purple Festival:

- The Purple Festival is an event which has been organized by the Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities.
- The festival aims at raising awareness about different disabilities and their impact on people's lives and

also challenges the misconceptions, prejudices, stigma and stereotypes revolving around disabilities and promotes understanding, acceptance and inclusion of persons with disabilities within society.

- The key activities at 'Purple Fest' were Amrit Udyaan visit, Know your disabilities, Purple Cafe, Purple Kaleidoscope, Purple Live Experience Zone and Purple Sports among others.
- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is organizing the Purple Fest after the success of 'International Purple Fest, 2024' at Goa from 8-13 January.

Sudarshan Setu

Prime Minister of India inaugurated the longest Cable-stayed bridge in the country of around 2.32 Km.

About Sudarshan Setu:

- Sudarshan Setu is located in Gujarat which connects Okha mainland and Beyt Dwarka island in Dwarka.
- It has solar panels installed on the upper portions of the footpath, generating one megawatt of electricity.
- The bridge serves as a tourist attraction that offers a panoramic view of the surrounding coastal areas.
- It also holds strategic importance by facilitating smooth transportation of goods and personnel, especially in the coastal region of Gujarat.

Permanent Commission

Chief Justice of India, leading a three-judge Bench, directed the Indian Coast Guard to ensure women being granted permanent commission.

About the Permanent Commission:

- A Permanent Commission (PC) in the Indian Army allows an officer to serve in the army until they retire.
- Officers who opt for a PC are commissioned as officers and can serve until they are 60 years old, as long as they are mentally and physically fit.
- Indian Army has granted permanent commission to women officers in 12 arms and services, as well as the Army Medical Corps, Army Dental Corps and Military Nursing Service.
- In 2020, the Supreme Court ruled that the absolute exclusion of women from PC in the Army is discriminatory.
- The court also rejected the Centre's stand on their "physiological limitations" as being based on "sex stereotypes" and "gender discrimination against women".

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Ferry Boat

Prime Minister of India inaugurated India's first indigenously built hydrogen fuel cell ferry boat in virtual mode from Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu.

About the Hydrogen Fuel Cell Ferry Boat:

- The hydrogen fuel cell ferry boat is the first of its kind in India.
- The vessel was constructed entirely in India at the Cochin Shipyard, highlighting the country's indigenous shipbuilding capabilities.
- It features cutting-edge hydrogen fuel cell technology, emphasizing India's commitment to clean energy alternatives and reducing carbon emissions.
- The pilot vessel is a 24-meter catamaran with a capacity to carry 50 passengers, equipped with fully air-conditioned spaces for passenger comfort.
- The boat aims to improve urban mobility by offering smooth and easy transportation options, addressing the growing need for sustainable urban transport solutions.
- The launch of the hydrogen fuel cell ferry boat aligns with India's national goals, including its commitment to clean energy solutions and the pursuit of a net-zero emissions future.

Current Affairs at a Glance

1. Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has become the second Indian bowler to take 500 wickets in Test cricket. He achieved this feat in 98th test match. Earlier Anil Kumble had achieved this feat in 105 matches. Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan took 500 wickets in 87 test matches.
2. Prime Minister of India laid the foundation stone of Shri Kalki Dham Temple at Achida Kamboh in Sambhal district of Uttar Pradesh. The temple is dedicated to Lord Kalki, considered to be the tenth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The temple is important because it is the first 'Dham' where a temple is being established even before the incarnation of a deity.
3. 72 year old Prabowo Subianto will be the new President of Indonesia. Subianto is a former Army General and Defense Minister of Indonesia.
4. Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government has banned strikes by government employees in all state departments, corporations and authorities for six months, citing the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA).
5. US aerospace company Boeing has recently appointed Nikhil Joshi as the Managing Director (MD) of Boeing Defense India (BID).
6. Recently, Sanjay Kumar Jain has been appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).
7. PM visited Valinath Mahadev Temple in Gujarat. This temple is 900 years old and is the center of faith for many communities including the Rabari community. The temple has been built in Mehsana district of northern Gujarat. The temple has been constructed in Nagar style. The temple is made of stones of Bansipaharpur. Its height is about 101 feet, length is 265 feet and width is 165 feet. The temple has 68 pillars.
8. Christopher Nolan's film Oppenheimer won 7 BAFTAs including Best Film at the 77th BAFTA (British Academy Film Awards) ceremony at the Royal Festival Hall of Southbank Centre, London.
9. India won the championship by defeating Thailand 3-2 in the final match of the Badminton Asia Team Championship 2024 held in Malaysia on 18 February. India has won gold in this championship for the first time (Women's).
10. Tamil Nadu government announced to bear the full cost of higher education for transgenders during the state budget 2024-25 in the Legislative Assembly. Tamil Nadu was the first state to constitute a special welfare board for transgenders in 2008.
11. In the recently released list of Forbes Real Time Billionaires, Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani has joined the category of top 10 richest people in the world.
12. In the Union Cabinet meeting, the Central Government approved to increase the Fixed Retail Price (FRP) of sugarcane by Rs 25 to Rs 340 per quintal for the FY 2024-25. The new session will start from October 2024.
13. Dadasaheb Phalke International Awards 2024 was organized at Taj Lands End, Mumbai. Shahrukh Khan was awarded the best actor for the film 'Jawaan', Rani Mukherjee- best actress for the film 'Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway', Bobby Deol -best actor in negative role for the film 'Animal' and Sandeep Reddy Vanga got the best director. Vicky Kaushal- Best Actor (Critics) Award for 'Sam Bahadur'.
14. Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena leader Manohar Joshi passed away at the age of 86.
15. USA's Houston-based private company Intuitive Machines' lander Odysseus has successfully landed on the South Pole of the Moon. After the successful landing of India's Chandrayaan-3 on the South Pole, USA is the second country to successfully land on the South Pole of the Moon.
16. Time magazine released the list of Women Person of the Year 2024. This year, Time magazine has included 12 women from the world. Indian origin woman Leena Nair has got a place in the magazine.
17. In the state cabinet meeting, Assam government has decided to abolish the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act 1935 in the state under the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).
18. The entire government including Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Satayeh has resigned due to the war that broke out between Gaza and Israel.
19. India PM announced the names of astronauts to be sent on the Gaganyaan mission and gave them astronaut wings. These include the names of Group Captain Prashant Balakrishnan Nair, Group Captain Ajeet Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla.

Places in News

Hungary

Recently the Hungary's Parliament approved Sweden's NATO accession, clearing the last hurdle before the historic step by the Nordic country whose neutrality lasted through two world wars and the simmering conflict of the Cold War.

- Hungary's Capital: Budapest
- **Location:** Hungary is a landlocked country situated in Central Europe.
- **Political Boundaries:** Hungary shares its border with Romania (East), Austria (West), Slovakia (North), Ukraine (Northeast), Serbia (South) and Croatia and Slovenia (Southwest).

Physical Features:

- The highest point in Hungary is Kékes, which is located in the Bükk Mountains in the northeastern part of the country.
- The major rivers in Hungary include the Danube, Tisza, Drava and Szamos.
- Hungary's mineral resources include bauxite, coal, natural gas and various industrial minerals such as barite, gypsum, and kaolin.
- Lake Balaton is the largest freshwater lake in Hungary and Central Europe, located in the Transdanubian region.
- Lake Hévíz, the largest thermal lake in the world is located in Hungary, near the western end of Lake Balaton.
- **Political System:** Hungary is a parliamentary republic with a unicameral legislature called the National Assembly or Országgyűlés.
- **Historical Significance:** Hungary has a rich historical background, including being part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, experiencing Ottoman rule and playing a significant role in World War I and World War II.



Albania

Ukrainian President Zelensky attended a summit in Albania, where he sought arms and support from Balkan nations amidst escalating tensions with Russia.

- Albania (Capital: Tirana)
- **Location:** Albania, officially known as the Republic of Albania is a country located in Southeastern Europe on the Balkan Peninsula.
- **Boundaries:** Albania shares its border with North Macedonia (East), Kosovo (Northeast), Montenegro (Northwest), Greece (South & Southeast), the Adriatic Sea (West) and the Ionian Sea (Southwest).

Physical Features:

- Mount Korab, located on the border with North Macedonia, is the highest peak in Albania.
- The major rivers in Albania include the Drin, Mat and Vjose rivers, which flow through various regions of the country.
- Albania is home to several lakes, including Lake Shkodra (shared with Montenegro), Lake Ohrid (shared with North Macedonia) and Lake Prespa (shared with North Macedonia and Greece).
- Albania possesses significant mineral resources, including chromium, copper, iron, nickel and petroleum contributing to its economy and industrial sector.



MCQs Based on Current Affairs

1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Rajya Sabha has no power to reject or amend a Money Bill.
2. The Speaker of Lok Sabha has sole and final power of deciding whether a Bill is a Money Bill.
3. A Bill shall be deemed to be a Money Bill only if it provides for imposition of fines or penalties.
4. When a Money Bill is presented to the Governor, he may give his assent, withhold his assent or reserve the bill for Presidential assent but cannot return the bill for reconsideration of the State Legislature.

How many of the statements are correct?

- A. Only two
- B. Only three
- C. All four
- D. None

2. With reference to Article 142 of the Indian constitution, consider the following statements:

1. Supreme Court of India invoked Article 142 of the Constitution to overturn the election results of Chandigarh mayoral election.
2. The Supreme Court invoked Article 142 to ensure justice and uphold the sanctity of the electoral process.
3. Article 142 empowers the Supreme Court to pass any decree or order necessary for doing complete justice in any case or matter pending before it.

How many of the statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

3. Consider the following statements about adoption:

1. In February 2024, the Delhi High Court ruled that the right to adopt a child is not a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.
2. The court also ruled that prospective adoptive parents (PAPs) do not have the right to choose who to adopt.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

4. Consider the following statements:

1. Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is a statutory body under Ministry of Women and Child Development.
2. CARA is designated as the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions in accordance with the provisions of the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, 1993.
3. CARA does not deal with adoption of abandoned and surrendered children.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Sangam: Digital Twin' is an initiative by the Ministry of Communications, Energy, and Tourism.
2. It aims to use digital twin technology to create virtual replicas of physical assets.
3. These replicas can then be used for real-time monitoring, simulation and analysis.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

6. Consider the following statements:

1. In February 2024, Malta became the 119th country to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
2. The ISA is an alliance of over 120 signatory countries that aims to reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources like fossil fuels.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

7. Consider the following statements:

1. United Arab Emirate was removed from the grey list nearly three years after its inclusion by the Financial Action Task Force.
2. It will ease the road for the country's investors seeking to acquire significant influence

in Indian NBFCs.

3. FATF is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog set up in 1989 out of a G-7 meeting of developed nations in Paris.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

8. Consider the following statements:

1. India expressed “serious” concerns in a WTO meeting in Abu Dhabi over increase in the use of trade protectionist measures by certain countries in the name of environment protection.

2. European Union’s (EU) decision to impose carbon tax (a kind of import tax) on sectors such as steel and fertiliser has negatively impacted developing nations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
 - B. 2 only
 - C. Both 1 and 2
 - D. Neither 1 nor 2
- C

9. Consider the following statements with reference to Guinea worm disease (GWD):

1. Guinea worm disease (GWD) is an infection caused by the parasite *Dracunculus medinensis*. It’s also known as dracunculiasis.

2. The government of India received Guinea worm disease-free certification status from the WHO in 2000.

3. India has eradicated Smallpox (1980), Polio (2014), and Neonatal Tetanus (2015).

How many of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

10. Consider the following statements:

1. Supreme Court has directed governments to follow the “comprehensive and all-embracing” definition of forest set out in the 1996 judgment in the T N Godavarman case.

2. This definition will be followed until a consolidated record of all types of forests is

prepared across the country.

3. In the T N Godavarman case, the court ruled that the Forest (Conservation) Act would apply to all land parcels that were either recorded as ‘forest’, or which resembled the dictionary meaning of forest.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

11. Consider the following statements with reference to Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report:

1. Recently the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (UNESCAP) published the Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report – 2024.

2. The report focuses on success stories, trends and specific challenges faced in different parts of the region in efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. At the current rate of progress, the region will not achieve all SDG targets even by 2072, marking a whopping delay of almost 42 years from the target year of 2030.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

12. Consider the following statements:

1. Recently, ‘Pollution caused by plastic’ Report was published by Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

2. In India, plastic waste production has increased from 15.9 lakh tonnes in 2015-16 to 41.2 lakh tonnes in 2020-21.

3. Inadequate disposal and utilization of plastic waste lead to pollution of air, water, and soil, affecting human health.

4. In India, the per capita consumption of plastic reached 15 kilograms per person in 2021.

How many of the statements are correct?

- A. Only two
- B. Only three
- C. All four
- D. None

13. Choose the appropriate and correct statement:

- A. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) under the United Nations Environment Program will meet in Nairobi in November 2023 for its third round of negotiations to develop an international legally binding instrument to eliminate plastic pollution worldwide.
- B. The World Bank has called for reduction in plastic pollution to reduce human exposure.
- C. Nanoplastic levels ranged from 110,000 to 400,000 per litre, with an average of around 240,000.
- D. Under UNEA Resolution 6/14, INC is responsible for delivering a global plastics treaty by 2030.

14. Choose the appropriate and correct statement/s.

- India is the world's second largest producer of Man Made Fiber (MMF).
 - As per the Waste Management Rules, 2016 and Extended Producer Responsibility Guidelines, which are primarily aimed at plastic packaging, accountability of local authorities for other synthetic textile sources has not been emphasized.
 - Over 94 percent of India's domestic MMF industry is dominated by just two varieties: polyester and viscose (rayon).
 - Allocation for textile ministry increased by 18.6% in interim budget 2024. But there were no specific policies to address the waste crisis.
- Options-
- A. Only 1 is correct.
- B. Only 2 is correct.
- C. Only 1 and 4 are correct.
- D. Only 1 and 3 are correct.

15. Choose the appropriate and correct statement/s.

- Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) is a national regulatory authority of India under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Ethylene glycol is a colorless and odorless alcoholic compound whose consumption can be fatal. It is mostly used as a raw material

for manufacturing automotive anti freeze and polyester fibers.

3. In October 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an alert for four "contaminated" medicines manufactured in India.

4. India is the largest provider of generic drugs in the world with a volume share of 28%.

Options-

- A. Only 1 is correct.
- B. Only 2 is correct.
- C. Only 1 and 4 are correct.
- D. Only 1 and 2 are correct.

16. Choose the appropriate and correct statement regarding Indus-X.

- A. It is an initiative to share the waters of Indus River between India and Pakistan.
- B. is the name of the satellite drone recently developed by the Defense Research Organisation.
- C. It is an initiative to strengthen bilateral defense relations between India and the US.
- D. It is a phase of Seema Gram Vikas Yojana to develop villages across the Indus River.

17. Consider the following statements regarding CPCB.

- Central Pollution Control Board is a statutory organization constituted under the Water Prevention and Pollution Control Act, 1974.
 - The source of its powers and functions is the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
 - An important responsibility of the Board is to monitor India's air and water quality and pollution related issues.
 - The Air Quality Index has been developed by CPCB in consultation with IIT-Kanpur.
- How many of the statements given above is/are correct?
- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. Only three
- D. All of the four

Answer

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 4. B | 7. B | 10. C | 13. A | 16. C |
| 2. C | 5. C | 8. C | 11. B | 14. D | 17. D |
| 3. C | 6. C | 9. C | 12. C | 15. D | |

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- ✓ World Health Organization
- ✓ Universal Postal Union
- ✓ World Intellectual Property Organization
- ✓ World Meteorological Organization
- ✓ Related Organizations of UN

Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation

- PM Modi underlined the importance of free and open Indo-Pacific at FIPIC summit in Papua New Guinea
- The Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) is a multinational group that was established in 2014 by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The FIPIC was created to facilitate cooperation between India and 14 Pacific Islands nations.

India-Japan-Sri Lanka Trilateral Cooperation

- India, Japan and Sri Lanka have initiated an agreement to restart the trilateral cooperation of the East Container Terminal Project (ECT) in Colombo in 2023.
- The Sri Lanka Ports Authority will have 100% ownership of the ECT.
- The Terminal Operations Company will conduct all the ECT operations. Sri Lanka will have a 51% stake in it, while Japan and India will own a stake of 49%.
- For the development of ECT, a 40-year loan agreement has been signed with Japan at an interest rate of 0.1%.

Interests of India and Japan:

- To prevent Chinese dominance in the Indian Ocean region, the Chinese presence in Sri Lanka must be reduced.
- The Colombo International Container Terminal project being built by China, is merely a few miles away from the ECT and will be easier to counter.
- India and Japan share a vision of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific (FOIIP) that is relevant to all countries in the region, including Sri Lanka.
- Both India and Japan are challenging China's debt Trap Policy through tripartite cooperation. China took Hambantota Port on 99 year lease through a debt trap.

Sulina Channel

- The Sulina Channel is a 63-km-long tributary of the Danube River which provides safe transit for cargo ships from Ukrainian Black Sea ports (Udessa, Chornomosko, Pivdennyi). It will ensure global access to Ukraine via the Mediterranean Sea through the Bosphorus Strait.

India-ASEAN Economic Ties

The 20th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers' Meeting was held in Semarang, Indonesia. The main agenda of this year's meeting was the timely review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA)-2009.

ASEAN- India Trade in Goods Agreement- 2009:

ASEAN- India Free Trade Area (AIFTA) is a free trade area among the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and India. It came into force from January 2010. The parties have agreed to review this agreement due to following concerns:

- The trade deficit with ASEAN has widened significantly since the pact was implemented.
- The major cause for trade deficit was low utilisation of FTA routes by Indian exporters.
- It is expected that review would help in making the FTA trade facilitative and mutually beneficial.
- India and ASEAN registered a bilateral trade of USD 131.5 billion in 2022-23. The trade with ASEAN accounted for 11.3% of India's global trade in 2022-23. ASEAN is the 4th largest trading partner of India and the 3rd largest market that can help India boost its export potential.

India-ASEAN Summit and East Asia Summit

- Prime Minister of India participated in the 20th India-ASEAN Summit and the 18th East-Asia Summit in Jakarta on 7 September 2023.
- The ASEAN-led grouping established the EAS in 2005.
- Fundamentally, the East Asia Summit operates on the principles of openness, inclusiveness, respect for international law and ASEAN centrality.
- There are 10 member countries of ASEAN and 18 member countries of EAS.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

- India, the USA, the European Union, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Italy, and Germany recently announced the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) during the G20 summit in New Delhi. The megaproject is seen as a rival to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- It will increase global trade in West Asia and also improve Israel's position as a hub for goods transportation. It will serve as the hub of an international project that will connect

infrastructure from Asia to Europe.

- The ports on the west coast of India that will be connected under this corridor include Mundra, Kandla (Gujarat), and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (Navi Mumbai) and five ports in the Middle East have been shortlisted to connect Indian ports, which includes the ports of Fujairah, Jebel Ali, and Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, as well as Dammam and Ras Al Khair ports in Saudi Arabia.
- The project is part of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), which could also serve as a counter to China's economic influence in the Eurasian region.

Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investments

- It is a value-driven, high-impact, and transparent infrastructure partnership to meet the huge infrastructure needs of small and middle-income countries.
- Its main objective is to help countries secure funding for building critical infrastructure such as roads, ports, bridges, communication setups, etc. to enhance global trade and cooperation.
- During the G7 summit in Germany, PGII was officially launched as a joint initiative to help fund infrastructure projects in developing countries through public and private investment.

Anti-Terrorist Operation by Azerbaijan

- Azerbaijan had launched a terrorist operation against Armenian forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.
- Azerbaijan said the operation was in response to the deaths of two civilians and four of its police officers in a landmine explosion in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.
- Armenia held military exercises with the United States and angered Russia by moving toward ratifying the Rome Convention that created the International Criminal Court, the court where Putin was held guilty.
- The dispute between the two countries started in the year 1918 when both became independent from the Russian Empire.
- The Nagorno-Karabakh Region was declared autonomous between the two countries during Soviet rule.
- In 1988, the legislature of Nagorno-Karabakh held a referendum on joining Armenia which was rejected by Azerbaijan.

Five Eyes Group

US diplomate in Canada confirmed the shared intelligence among 'five eye partners' which led Canadian PM to make allegations regarding the role of Indian agents in the killing Of Khalistani militants Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

About Five Eye Group:

- The Five Eyes is a strategic intelligence-sharing alliance consisting of five English-speaking countries: The United States, The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.
- One of the main objectives of the Five Eyes group is to gather and analyze vast amounts of shared intelligence and collaborate in signal intelligence (SIGINT) operations data.

India-Afghanistan Relationship

Afghanistan embassy in India has shut down its operation citing a lack of support from India.

Developmental partnership between India and Afghanistan:

- India has constructed major projects like the Parliament Building in Kabul, the Zaranj Delaram highway which connects Chabahar port in Iran and the Salma Dam Project (Afghan-India Friendship Dam).
- India has also signed a trilateral preferential trade agreement with Afghanistan and Iran.
- India is supplying military hardware like military vehicles for the Afghan National Army and Mi-25 and Mi-35 choppers for the Air Force.

India-Maldives Relations

Maldivian President Muizzu had said that he would not allow foreign military presence in the country. Indirectly targeting India, he was considering China to be its closest ally.

India-Maldives relations:

- India and Maldives conduct many Joint Exercises like - "Ekuverin", "Dosti", and "Operation Shield.
- India provides training to the Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF).
- In 2022, the National College for Policing and Law Enforcement (NCPL) was inaugurated by India's External Affairs Minister. NCPL is the largest grant project executed by India in Maldives.
- A drug detoxification and rehabilitation centre in Addu City in Maldives was built with Indian assistance. The centre is one of 20 high-impact community development projects being implemented by India in areas such as

healthcare, education, fisheries, tourism, sports and culture.

- Indian company is developing the largest-ever infrastructure project in Maldives which is the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP).
- India is the Maldives 2nd largest trading partner. With the signing of the bilateral USD 200 million Currency Swap Agreement in 2022 between RBI and Maldives Monetary under the SAARC currency swap agreement of 2012, the trade between India and Maldives might increase further.
- JMC Projects Limited of India has signed an agreement with the Maldives government to develop Hanimaadhoo International Airport.

Israel-Palestine Conflict

Israel was recently attacked by Hamas with more than 5 thousand missiles, in which more than 200 innocent people were killed and thousands were injured.

About the Conflict:

- The conflict between Israel and Palestine began in the late 19th century when Jews were being persecuted in the Palestinian territories. To escape this oppression, the Jews started a movement which is known in history as the 'Zionist Movement'. In the Zionist movement, the Jews achieved success against the Palestinians.
- During the First World War, in 1916 AD, a secret agreement called 'Sykes-Picot' was signed between Britain and France under which it was decided that after the end of the World War, Palestine would be under British control.
- Next year in 1917, the 'Balfour Declaration' was signed in which it was agreed to establish a Jewish homeland while accepting the demand for the formation of a country for the Jews.
- Later, the United Nations presented a partition plan to establish independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine, which was accepted by the Jews of Palestine but the Arabs expressed their disagreement on it.
- Immediately after this plan, in 1948, the Jews declared the independent state of Israel. In protest Arab countries Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Syria attacked Israel. At the end of the war Israel occupied more land than was mandated by the UN partition plan. This led to a conflict between Israel and the Arab states that culminated in the famous 'Six Day War' in 1967. In this war, Israel established its dominance over the parts called 'West Bank' and 'East Jerusalem'.
- Later, under the 'Oslo Peace Agreement' signed in the year 1993, it was decided that this area

would be divided into two parts, one part of which was proposed to be given to Palestine and the other part to Israel. During the same Oslo Peace Accords, Palestine also gave official recognition to Israel as a country.

Indian Ocean Rim Association

- India participated in the 23rd Council of Ministers (COM) meeting and the 25th Committee of Senior Officials of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, under the leadership of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.
- In this meeting, India was appointed to the post of Vice President of IORA for the year 2023-25 and it was also decided that India will be the President of IORA in 2025-27.
- The COM adopted the Colombo Communiqué and the 'IORA Vision 2030 and Beyond'.

About Indian Ocean Rim Association:

- The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), formed in 1997, is an inter-governmental organisation aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean region through its 23 Member States and 11 Dialogue Partners.
- **Secretariat-** Mauritius
- The Jakarta Concord adopted at the first IORA Leaders' Summit in 2017 outlines the core objectives to be achieved in the six priority areas and the two cross-cutting issues. These are Maritime Safety and Security, Trade and Investment Facilitation, Fisheries Management, Tourism and Cultural Exchanges, Disaster Risk Management, Academic Science and Technology Cooperation, Blue Economy and Women's Economic Empowerment.

India-Tanzania Relations

- Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of Tanzania, paid a state visit to India from 8-10 October 2023.
- Technical Agreement between Indian Navy and Tanzania Shipping Agencies Corporation on sharing of White Shipping Information.
- Cultural Exchange Program between the Government of India and the Government of Tanzania for the year 2023-2027.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the National Sports Council of Tanzania and the Sports Authority of India.
- Memorandum of Understanding between Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority of India and

Tanzania Investment Center for the establishment of an Industrial Park in Tanzania.

- Memorandum of Understanding between Cochin Shipyard Limited and Marine Services Company Limited on Cooperation in the Marine Industry.

Other Areas of Cooperation:

- Both nations expressed satisfaction at their growing level of bilateral political engagement and strategic dialogue on regional and global issues, including the outlook for the Indo-Pacific and the implementation of the Indian Ocean Rim Association's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.
- Both sides expressed interest in enhancing cooperation in the field of the defense industry.
- The First India-Tanzania joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) monitoring exercise was held in July 2023.
- India is among the top five investment sources for Tanzania, with 630 investment projects worth US\$3.74 billion registered.
- Both nations are exploring the possibility of setting up an investment park in Tanzania and are seeking to promote bilateral trade in local currencies.

Vienna Convention

Governments of India and Canada alleged each other for Vienna Convention violation.

What is the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations?

- The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961 is a United Nations treaty which sets common principles and terms on how countries must treat each other's diplomatic representatives. This convention aims to ensure friendly relations and maintain proper communication channels between countries.
- Article 29 of this convention says that the person of a diplomatic agent shall be inviolable. He shall not be liable to any form of arrest or detention.
- The receiving state shall treat him with due respect and take all essential steps to prevent any attack on his person, freedom and integrity.

Global Maritime India Summit 2023

- The Global Maritime India Summit 2023 was inaugurated by the Prime Minister in Mumbai to build business, forge partnerships and create opportunities to fulfil its aim of emerging as a global leader in the blue economy.
- The theme of the Global Maritime India Summit 2023 was 'Harnessing the Blue Economy'. The summit focused on key areas including the

maritime sector.

- **Vision for Marine Blue Economy:** Prime Minister unveiled 'Amrit Kal Vision 2047' which includes strategic initiatives to enhance port facilities, promote sustainability and facilitate international cooperation in the marine blue economy sector.

SCO Council Meeting in Bishkek

The External Affairs Minister of India represented India in the 22nd meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. The main issues highlighted in this meeting were the G20 New Delhi Summit and the Israel-Hamas war.

About Shanghai Cooperation Organization:

- It is a nine-member organization comprising two major Asian states, China and India, one Eurasian country, Russia, and four 'Stan' nations, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Pakistan and Iran.
- The organization was established in 1996 as the 'Shanghai Five', becoming SCO in 2001 with the inclusion of Uzbekistan.
- It began to expand with the entry of India, Pakistan and Iran. Recently, Belarus has been included as the 10th member.
- SCO has two observers (Mongolia and Afghanistan) and 14 dialogue partner countries.
- This organization is committed to comprehensive political, security and economic cooperation.
- It represents 42% of the world's population and about one-third of global gross domestic product (GDP).

Chanakya Raksha Samvad 2023

- 'Chanakya Raksha Samvad 2023', a two-day event conducted by the Indian Army in collaboration with the Center for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) was concluded with a dialogue on security challenges in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific.
- Chanakya Raksha Samvad is a recurring forum designed to unite leading experts from the international defense and strategic community.
- Its primary objective is to promote relations among these distinguished intellectuals and to facilitate the free flow of ideas and philosophies.
- The dialogue provided a wide range of security challenges with a key focus on South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region.
- This two-day conference included prominent speakers, military strategists, diplomats, and

intellectuals from the field of defence and strategic affairs.

- The conference attracted participants from various countries including Australia, France, Japan and the United States.
- The dialogue covered a wide range of topics, from cooperative efforts to enhance security to counter-terrorism, strengthening maritime security and cyberspace security.

India-UAE Relations

About India-UAE Economic Relationship:

- Recently UAE has become an active partner of India and India-UAE trade has risen to USD 85 billion in 2022, making the UAE India's third-largest trading partner for the year 2022-23 and India's second-largest export destination.
- India is the UAE's second-largest trading partner. In February 2022, India became the first country with which the UAE signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Since the entry into force of the CEPA on 1 May 2022, the bilateral trade has increased by approximately 15%.
- India has long been described as a prized economy in the UAE due to its growing middle class looking to diversify away from other investment destinations such as Europe.
- New Delhi and Abu Dhabi aim to increase non-oil bilateral trade to \$100 billion. It is worth mentioning that presently, a total of 28 lakh Indian citizens live in the UAE.

Diplomatic Ties:

- India and the United Arab Emirates established diplomatic relations in 1972.
- Bilateral relations were further enhanced when the Prime Minister of India visited the UAE in August 2015 marking the beginning of a new strategic partnership between the two countries.
- Indian Prime Minister's recent visit to Abu Dhabi marked his fifth trip to the West Asian nation since he took over as Prime Minister in 2014.
- The last Indian Prime Minister to visit the UAE before him was Indira Gandhi in 1981.

Defence Exercises:

- In-UAE BILAT (bilateral naval exercise)
- Desert Eagle-II (bilateral air force exercise).
- Exercise Desert Flag-VI: UAE
- Pitch Black: Biennial, multilateral air combat training exercise
- Red Flag: Multilateral air exercise

Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain

Awareness Initiative

- During the 2022 Quad Leaders Summit in Tokyo, the Quad Leaders announced the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) to enhance existing maritime domain awareness capabilities.
- It is a technology and training initiative to enhance maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific region and to bring increased transparency to its critical waterways. IPMDA harnesses innovative technology, such as commercial satellite radio frequency data collection, to provide partners across Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean region and the Pacific with near real-time information on activities occurring in their maritime zones.

India-Australia 2+2 Foreign & Defence Ministerial Dialogue

- The second India-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue was concluded in New Delhi, solidifying the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) between the two nations. The first dialogue took place on November 20-21 between India's and Australian counterparts.
- Both countries underscored their commitment to sovereignty and territorial integrity in the Indo-Pacific, democratic values, rule of law, freedom of navigation, and peaceful dispute resolution. They called for adherence to international law in addressing challenges in the East and South China Seas.
- The dialogue emphasized the importance of maritime domain awareness, with commitments to the Australia-India Maritime Dialogue and trilateral groupings with France and Indonesia. The Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness initiative was highlighted for strengthening regional collaboration.

Hijacking of India-bound ship in Red Sea

The Houthi rebels hijacked the India-bound cargo ship 'Galaxy Leader' in the Red Sea, claiming it was of Israel. However, the government of Israel denied the claim, stating the ship is owned by a British company and operated by a Japanese firm.

International law against piracy:

- The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides the framework for

the repression of piracy under international law, particularly in its articles 100 to 107 and 110.

- International Maritime Organization (IMO) has adopted some International Conventions to combat piracy. Some of them are the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA Convention), the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLA), the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) etc.

About Houthi Rebels:

- The Houthis, an Iran-backed group that controls large swathes of northern Yemen and the capital Sanaa, have carried out attacks on Israel in recent weeks and threatened to seize Israeli vessels in the Red Sea.

About the Red Sea:

- The Red Sea is a seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean, lying between Africa and Asia. Its connection to the ocean is in the south, through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden. To its north lies the Sinai Peninsula, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Gulf of Suez.

91st General Assembly of INTERPOL Concluded

- The 91st General Assembly of INTERPOL was held in Vienna where India pushed for concrete steps via INTERPOL to actively address cross-border crimes like terrorism, online radicalization, and cyber-related financial fraud in real time. The four-day gathering also celebrated the centenary of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), which was established in 1923.
- India supported the adoption of INTERPOL's 'Vision 2030'.
- The creation of the INTERPOL Future Council was also discussed, which will be a council of experts to ensure that the development and implementation of 'INTERPOLVision-2030' takes into account the evolving needs of law enforcement in member countries.
- Since joining INTERPOL in 1949, India has hosted two General Assemblies so far. It is well known that last year India hosted the 90th General Assembly in which delegations from 168 countries participated.

What is INTERPOL?

- The International Criminal Police Organization (often known as Interpol) was founded in 1923 as a secure information-sharing platform that facilitates criminal investigations through information received from police forces of different countries.

- At present, it has 196 member countries which are led by the President who is elected for 4 years. Each member country has a nodal agency in INTERPOL. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the nodal agency in India.

Article 99 of UN Charter

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter to establish a ceasefire amid the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, especially in its southern sector.

What is Article 99 of the United Nations Charter?

- Article 99 of the Charter states that 'The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.'
- According to the United Nations, if the Secretary-General brings a matter to the attention of the Council under Article 99, it is the responsibility of the President of the Security Council to call a meeting of the Council.

About United Nations Security Council:

- UNSC is one of the 6 main organs of the United Nations. It consists of five permanent members including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia, while 10 non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms on a rotational basis. It is chaired by each of these 15 members for one month.

Crisis in Suez Canal

- The United States has recently initiated a multinational force dedicated to safeguarding trade in the Red Sea, following attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels that led to the suspension of operations for about a dozen shipping lines.
- Countries such as Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, the Seychelles, and the United Kingdom have joined this collaborative effort, forming a 10-nation coalition for the "multinational security initiative."

About Combined Task Force 153:

- Combined Task Force 153 (CTF 153) is a task force that focuses on maritime security and capacity building in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb, and Gulf of Aden. It was established on April 17, 2022, and is one of five task forces operated by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).

Election in Bangladesh

- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won the re-election for a fifth term in the national election that was conducted amidst the boycott by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by former PM Khaleda Zia, who is currently in jail.
- Sheikh Hasina's party Awami League has won a fourth consecutive term in the 12th parliamentary election.

About India and Bangladesh relationship:

- India was the first country to recognise Bangladesh as a separate and independent state and established diplomatic relations with the country immediately after its independence in December 1971.
- Bangladesh is India's biggest trading partner in the subcontinent.
- India has provided duty free quota free access to Bangladesh on all tariff lines except tobacco and alcohol under South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) since 2011.
- Bangladesh and India in July 2023 launched a trade transaction in rupees, a move aimed at reducing dependence on the US dollar and strengthening regional currency and trade.
- India and Bangladesh also conduct Joint Exercises - Army (Exercise Sampriti) and Navy (Exercise Bongosagar)
- India and Bangladesh have been cooperating in developing cross-border infrastructure projects, such as the Akhaura-Agartala rail link and MaitriSetu.
- India and Bangladesh are also engaged in regional cooperation through multilateral forums such as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

Strike in Yemen

Russia has called for a United Nations Security Council meeting in connection with strikes carried out by the United States and the United Kingdom in Yemen. Russia is key ally of Iran who is backing the Houthirebels.

About Houthi rebels:

- The Houthi rebels belong to a Shiite political and military organization that was formed as an opposition force to the Yemeni government in Yemen during the 1990s.
- Through the years, the group became increasingly inspired by anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiments coursing through the Middle East.
- In 2011, the Houthis played a major role in sparking the Yemeni Revolution, which was born out of a wave of anti-government protests and

uprisings known as the Arab Spring.

- In 2014 the group took control of Sanaa, the Yemeni capital, prompting an ongoing civil war that has ravaged the country.

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee

India is set to chair UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and host its 46th session in New Delhi from July 21 to 31, 2024, marking a historic milestone.

About the World Heritage Committee:

- The World Heritage Committee comprises representatives of 21 States Parties to the World Heritage Convention who meet annually to recognize the global cultural and natural heritage. Their work contributes to the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage Sites list.
- The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage is an international agreement that was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972.

About UNESCO:

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN) aimed at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences, and culture.
- UNESCO was founded in 1945 as the successor to the League of Nations International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.
- It has 193 member states and 11 associate members, as well as partners in the non-governmental, intergovernmental, and private sector.
- Headquartered at the World Heritage Centre in Paris.
- UNESCO is governed by the General Conference, composed of member states and associate members, which meets biannually to set the agency's programmes and budget.
- It also elects members of the Executive Board, which manages UNESCO's work, and appoints every four years a Director-General, who serves as UNESCO's chief administrator.

United Nations Statistical Commission

India has started its four-year term as a member of the United Nations Statistical Commission beginning on 1 January 2024.

About the United Nations Statistical Commission:

- It was established in 1947 by the Economic and Social Council and is the highest body of the

- global statistical system.
- It brings together the Chief Statisticians from member states from around the world.
- Headquarters- New York
- The Commission consists of 24 member countries of the United Nations elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council based on an equitable geographical distribution.
- The term of office of members is four years.
- India was a member of the Statistical Commission last in 2004 and the country is returning to the UN agency after a gap of two decades.

Third South Summit of G77 in Uganda

Recently V.Muraleedharan, Minister of State, Ministry of External Affairs represented India and addressed at the Plenary session of the Group of G - 77 Third South Summit, held in Uganda.

About G- 77:

- It is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations. It was established through the signing of a joint declaration during the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva in the year 1964.
- The purpose of this group is to provide the countries of the Global South with the means to promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity within the United Nations system and to promote South-South cooperation for development.
- There are 134 countries from Asia, Africa, South America, the Caribbean and Oceania.
- The first meeting of the G-77 was conducted at Algiers in 1967, where the historic Charter of Algiers was formally adopted. From that on the G-77's institutional structure evolved into a more permanent form.
- China is not part of this group.

WTO Agricultural Subsidies

India faced WTO pressure on farm subsidies amid protests for minimum support price.

WTOs Agreement on Agriculture (AoA)

It was designed to remove trade barriers and to encourage transparent market access and integration of global markets. AoA stands on 3 pillars:

1. Domestic Support: Subsidies such as guaranteed minimum price or input subsidies which are direct and specific to a product. This can be divided into 3 groups:

- » **Green Box:** Subsidies which are not or least market distorting. It includes measures such as income-support payments, safety-net programs, payments under environmental programs and agricultural research and development subsidies.
- » **Blue Box:** These production-limiting subsidies cover payments based on acreage, yield or number of livestock in a base year. Any support that would normally be in the amber box is placed in the blue box if the support also requires farmers to limit production.
- » **Amber Box:** Almost all domestic support measures that distort production and trade (with a few exceptions) fall into the amber box.
 - These supports are subject to limits- “De minimis”. This threshold is generally 5% of the value of agricultural production for developed countries, 10% for most developing countries.
 - Peace Clause is a product of the Bali Summit, 2013. Article 13 of AoA contains a “due restraint” or “peace clause” which controls the application of other WTO agreements to subsidies.

2. Market Access: Market Access requires that tariffs, which have been fixed (like custom duties) by individual countries, should be cut progressively to facilitate free trade. It also encompasses removal of non-tariff barriers (e.g. quotas on import).

3. Export subsidies: Export subsidies are limited to four situations:

- » Product-specific reduction commitments within the limits.
- » Any excess of budgetary outlays for export subsidies.
- » Export subsidies consistent with the special and differential treatment provision.
- » Export subsidies other than those subject to reduction commitments provided that they are in conformity with the anti-circumvention disciplines of Article 10 of the Agreement on Agriculture.
- » Special Safeguard Mechanism: A SSM was designed as a safety valve, allowing developing countries to impose additional (temporary) safeguard duties in the event of an abnormal surge in imports or the entry of unusually cheap imports.

Expansion of BRICS

- Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have confirmed they are joining the BRICS bloc.

- In 2006, Brazil, Russia, India and China created the “BRIC” group. South Africa joined in 2010, making it “BRICS”.
- The group was designed to bring together the world’s most important developing countries, to challenge the political and economic power of the wealthier nations of North America and Western Europe.
- The name for the expanded group has not yet been announced, but may be “BRICS +”.

Summits of International Organization

ASEAN Summit

43rd summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was held in Jakarta under the chairmanship of Indonesia.

About ASEAN:

- ASEAN stands for Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It was established in Bangkok, Thailand on August 8, 1967 by the founding members of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

ASEAN’s goals:

- Promote social progress, economic growth, and cultural development in the region.
- Promote regional stability and peace by respecting the rule of law and justice in the relationship between countries.
- ASEAN has 10 members, these countries -- Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

East Asia Summit

The 18th East Asia Summit (EAS) was recently held in Jakarta.

About the East Asia Summit (EAS):

- It was founded was in 2005.
- **Membership:** Since its establishment, the membership of the EAS has increased from the original 16 to 18 countries comprising the ten ASEAN countries, along with Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the United States, and Russia.

G20 Summit

- The 18th G20 Summit was held in New Delhi,

India from September 9–10, 2023. The summit’s theme was “One Earth, One Family, One Future” in English, and is translated from Sanskrit as “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”.

- The G20 is an acronym for the Group of Twenty, a group of the world’s major economies. The group represents 80% of the world’s GDP, 75% of global trade, and 60% of the world’s population. The G20 Summit is held annually, with a rotating presidency. India held the presidency from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023. South Africa will host the G20 in 2025, and the United States will host in 2026.
- The 19th Heads of State and Government Summit of the Group of 20 (G20) will take place in November 2024 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- The G20 group of 19 countries and the EU was established in 1999 as a platform for Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to discuss international economic and financial issues.

BRICS Summit

- The 15th BRICS summit was take place from August 22–24, 2023 at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme of the 2023 summit is “BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism”.
- BRICS is an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The BRICS countries meet annually for a BRICS Leaders’ Summit, which is an international relations conference attended by the heads of state or heads of government of the five member states.
- The 14th BRICS summit was held in Beijing on June 23–24, 2022, and the 13th BRICS summit was held in New Delhi on September 9, 2021.

G7 Summit

- The 49th G7 summit took place in Hiroshima, Japan from May 19–21, 2023. The summit is an annual forum for the leaders of the G7 member states, which include France, the US, the UK, Germany, Japan, Italy, and Canada, as well as the European Union. The Group of Seven (G7) was founded in 1975 in response to the oil crisis.

SAARC Summit

- The 20th SAARC summit was held in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- SAARC was established on December 8, 1985,

when eight countries signed the charter in Dhaka. The member countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, and India.

- As of 2021, SAARC includes 3% of the world's land area, 21% of the world's population, and 5.21% of the global economy.

Objectives of SAARC:

- Promoting and strengthening collective self-reliance among South Asian countries.
- Contributing to mutual trust, understanding, and appreciation of one another's problems.
- Promoting active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical, and scientific fields.

SCO Summit

- The 23rd Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State was held virtually on July 4, 2023, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The SCO's full members are nine countries: India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran and Uzbekistan.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai on 15 June 2001.

APEC Leaders' Summit

- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Summit 2023 took place in San Francisco, United States.
- The APEC 2023 summit's theme is "Creating a Resilient and Sustainable Future for All".
- APEC reaffirmed their commitment to free, fair, and open trade and investment, and to advancing inclusive and sustainable growth in the region.
- The summit concluded with the adoption of the Golden Gate Declaration.

About Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

- The APEC is a regional economic forum established in 1989 to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific.
- APEC aims to create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration.
- The APEC process is supported by a permanent secretariat based in Singapore.

Members:

- Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia,

Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Vietnam and the United States.

- India currently has the observer' status.

BIMSTEC Summit

6th BIMSTEC summit is schedule to take place in Thailand.

About BIMSTEC

- BIMSTEC – Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.
- It is a regional organization group of littoral countries encircling the Bay of Bengal with own flag and emblem.
- Established in 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.
- The year 2022 marked the 25th anniversary of BISTEC formation.
- **Secretariat:** Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **Aim:** To foster economic and social development among member countries.
- **Members:** 7 members (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand).
- Thus, it includes 5 members from SAARC and 2 from ASEAN.

NATO Summit

- NATO summit are periodic meetings that allow the heads of state and government of NATO member countries to discuss important issues and provide strategic direction for the Alliance's activities. The 2023 NATO summit was held in Vilnius, Lithuania on July 11–12, 2023. The 2024 NATO summit is scheduled to take place in Washington.
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a security alliance of 31 member countries from North America and Europe. NATO was established in 1949 by 12 countries, including the US, UK, Canada, and France, to safeguard the freedom and security of its members.

Military Exercises

- **Exercise Harimau Shakti 2023:** A joint training exercise between the Indian and Malaysian armies in November 2023
- **Exercise Mitra Shakti-2023:** A joint military exercise between India and Sri Lanka from November 16–29, 2023
- **Vajra Prahar 2023:** A joint special forces exercise between India and the United States in November

2023

- **Naval Exercise Malabar:** A multilateral exercise involving Australia, Japan, the United States, and India
- **Cobra Warrior Exercise:** A multinational exercise held at Waddington Air Force Base in the UK in March 2023, involving Singapore, Finland, the USA, South Africa, and Sweden
- **Austra Hind-23:** A joint military exercise between India and Australia from November 22–December 6, 2023, held in Perth, Australia
- **VINBAX-2023:** A joint military exercise between India and Vietnam from December 11–21, 2023, held in Hanoi, Vietnam.

United Nations

- The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945. It is currently made up of 193 Member States.
- Its mission and work guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter and implemented by its various organs and specialised agencies.
- Its activities include maintaining international peace and security, protecting human rights, delivering humanitarian aid, promoting sustainable development and upholding international law. The main organs of the UN are:
 - » The General Assembly,
 - » The Security Council,
 - » The Economic and Social Council,
 - » The Trusteeship Council- currently not exist
 - » The International Court of Justice,
 - » UN Secretariat

United Nations General Assembly

- The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN.
- All 193 Member States of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it the only UN body with universal representation.
- Each year, in September, the full UN membership meets in the General Assembly for the annual General Assembly session.
- Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.
- Decisions on other questions are by simple majority.
- The President of the General Assembly is elected each year by assembly to serve a one-year term

of office.

United Nations Security Council

- It has primary responsibility, under the UN Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security.
- The Security Council is made up of fifteen member states, consisting of five permanent members China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly on a regional basis.

United Nations Economic and Social Council

- It is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as implementation of internationally agreed development goals.
- It has 54 Members, elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.
- It is the United Nations' central platform for reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on sustainable development.

International Court of Justice

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the primary judicial organ of the United Nations (UN). It was established in 1945 and began work in 1946. The ICJ is located at the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands

Specialized Agencies of UN

Food and Agriculture Organization

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. FAO's goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. It was founded in 1945 as a specialized agency of the United Nations family

International Civil Aviation Organization

- The International Civil Aviation Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations that coordinates the principles and techniques of international air navigation, and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.
- It was founded on December 1944.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

- It is an international financial institution and a specialised agency of the United Nations.
- It was established as an international financial institution in 1977 through United Nations General Assembly Resolution.
- **Headquarters:** Rome, Italy
- It is a member of the United Nations Development Group.

Governance:

- Its Governing Council, consisting of representatives of more than 160 member states, is the principal decision-making body.
- Its 18-member Executive Board oversees daily operations.

International Labour Organization

- It is the only tripartite United Nations agency, bringing together governments, employers and workers representatives from its 187 member states to devise international labour standards.
- It became the first specialized agency of the UN in 1946.
- Established in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles As an affiliated agency of the League of Nations (LoN).
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
- Founding Mission: Social Justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.
- Promotes internationally recognized human and labour rights.
- Received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969.

International Monetary Fund

- IMF came into operation on 27th December 1945 and it consists of 189 member countries. Headquartered in Washington, D.C.
- IMF focuses on fostering global monetary cooperation, securing financial stability, facilitating and promoting international trade, employment, and economic growth around the world. The IMF is a specialized agency of the

United Nations.

International Maritime Organization

- The IMO is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that is responsible for regulating shipping and preventing marine pollution from ships. IMO was established in 1948 following a UN conference in Geneva and came into operation in 1958.

International Telecommunications Union

- ITU was founded in Paris in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union.
- It is the United Nations specialised agency for information and communication technologies.
- World Telecommunications Standardisation Assembly is a four-yearly global conference of ITU dedicated to standardisation of the Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).
- It is headquartered in Geneva.

The World Bank

- It was created in 1944, as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) along with the IMF. The IBRD later became the World Bank.
- The World Bank Group is a unique global partnership of five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.
- The World Bank is one of the United Nations' specialized agencies.

Members:

- It has 189 member countries.
- India is also a member country.

Major Reports:

- Ease of Doing Business (Stopped publishing).
- Human Capital Index.
- World Development Report.

UNESCO

- Founded: 16 November 1945
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN). It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture.
- UNESCO's Headquarters are located in Paris and the Organization has more than 50 field offices

around the world.

- It has 194 Members and 12 Associate Members and is governed by the General Conference and the Executive Board.
- Three UNESCO member states are not UN members: Cook Islands, Niue, and Palestine.
- While three UN member states (Israel, Liechtenstein, United States) are not UNESCO members.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

- It is a United Nations' specialized agency headquartered in Vienna, Austria.
- It was established on 17 November 1966.
- Its Parent organization is United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
- It is a member of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- It promotes industrial development for reducing poverty, inclusive globalization as well as environmental sustainability.
- **Members States:** 170.
- India is a member of United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

United Nations World Tourism Organization

- The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism. The UNWTO's headquarters are in Madrid, Spain. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was founded on November 1, 1975.

World Health Organization

- World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations' specialized agency for Health was founded in 1948.
- Its headquarters are situated in Geneva, Switzerland.
- There are 194 Member States, 150 country offices, six regional offices.
- It is an inter-governmental organization and works in collaboration with its member states usually through the Ministries of Health.

Universal Postal Union

- The UPU was established by the Treaty of Bern of 1874.
- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that coordinates postal policies among member nations, in addition to the worldwide postal system.
- It is the second oldest international organization worldwide.
- UPU's headquarters are located in Bern, Switzerland.

World Intellectual Property Organization

- WIPO is specialised agencies of United Nations.
- WIPO was created in 1967 "to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world".
- WIPO currently administers 26 international treaties.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

World Meteorological Organization

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- It is the UN system's authoritative voice on the state and behavior of the Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with the oceans, the climate it produces, and the resulting distribution of water resources.
- It originated from the International Meteorological Organization (IMO), which was founded in 1873.
- Established in 1950, WMO became the specialized agency of the UN for meteorology (weather and climate), operational hydrology and related geophysical sciences.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- Currently it has a membership of 187 countries.

Related Organizations of UN

- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
- Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Org. (CTBTO)
- International Criminal Court (ICC)
- International Seabed Authority (ISA)
- International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)



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