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## **Fake news on social media**

### **In Context**

- Recently, **Election Management Bodies (EMBs)** expressed their expectation from social media sites to proactively flag fake news.

### **More about the news**

- **International conference for EMBs:**
  - **The Chief Election Commissioner** was addressing an **international conference for EMBs** hosted by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**.
    - The conference was held under the aegis of the **United States’ ‘Summit for Democracy’ platform**.
- **Chief Election Commissioner on managing fake news:**
  - He stated that Election management bodies (EMBs) expected social media sites to use their “**algorithm power**” to **proactively flag fake news**.
    - He said social media platforms proclaim to **have content policies** but added that they **do also have such “algorithm power”**.
    - According to him, a proactive approach by these platforms to counter fake news would facilitate “**credible electoral outcomes**”.

### **Summit for Democracy**

- ‘Summit for Democracy’, was an initiative of the US President hosted in December 2021.
- It brings together leaders from **government, civil society, and the private sector** in a shared effort.
- It aims to set forth an **affirmative agenda for democratic renewal** and to tackle the greatest threats faced by democracies today through collective action.
- The Summit also developed two platforms – ‘**Focal Groups**’ and ‘**Democracy Cohorts**’ to facilitate participation in the Year of Action.

### **More about the Fake News**

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- Fake news, broadly termed as false news or misinformation disguised as credible news, which is very persuasive and has serious consequences for democracy.

### Effects

- **Influencing opinions:** It can be used to **influence public opinions**, to gain popularity or to malign the image, character of certain individuals or opponents or to defame them.
- **Issue of fake news during elections:** During the **2016 US Presidential elections**, a **bipartisan Senate committee** found that before and after the 2016 election, the Russian government used social media advertising to **spread misinformation and conspiracy theories**.
- On similar lines, there has been talk of **Facebook interfering with India's electoral democracy**.
- **Disturbing harmony:**
  - It affects social & communal harmony by spreading extremists' ideologies especially in sensitive areas like radicalization of youths, inciting violence and hatred among the communities, swinging public opinions etc.

### Challenges

- No standard definition:
- Lack of regulation:

### Legal remedies to tackle fake news

- Indian Broadcast Foundation (IBF):
- The Press Council of India:
- IPC Sections 153A and 295: .
- Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC):
- Defamation Suit:
- The Information Technology (IT) Act:
- Contempt of Court laws:
- Constitution:

### Way ahead

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- **Policy-makers:** Although the policy-makers' steps and regulations are in the right direction, the existing loopholes need to be filled.
- All the stakeholders- **lawmakers, online intermediaries, and citizens** have a **collective responsibility** to curb fake news.
  - **Lawmakers:** While lawmakers can keep amending the laws, the citizens' duty lies to gain awareness about media literacy.
  - **Online intermediaries:** On the other hand, tech platforms need to ensure the use of a sophisticated algorithm to present the public with correct, accurate, and truthful information.

**Citizens:** The responsibility lies equally among the general public to educate with the necessary information to critically analyze information and then make deductive conclusions.

### **Decentralising MGNREGS**

#### **In Context**

- Recently, an **internal study** commissioned by the **Ministry of Rural Development** has advised the decentralisation of **MGNREGS**.

#### **Major highlights of the study**

- The study argued for decentralisation of the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** which will allow for more “flexibility” at the ground level.
- It was the report of the **sixth Common Review Mission**
  - The report surveyed seven States — Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Nagaland, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh — and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir
- The report aimed to assess the **implementation of all rural development schemes, including the MGNREGS**.
- **Issue:**
  - **Centralised fund management:**
    - In the past few years, the fund management has been centralised **instead of paying the gram sabhas an advance**.
  - **Delay in fund disbursement:**

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- The internal study also flagged the frequent delay in fund disbursement.
- **Wages below the market rate:**
  - The study also noted that the MGNREGS wages were far below the market rate in many States, defeating the purpose of acting as a safety net.
    - **For example,**
      - At present, the minimum wage of a farm labourer in Gujarat is ₹324.20, but the MGNREGS wage is ₹229.
      - In Nagaland, the wage is ₹212 per day, which does not take into account the difficult terrain conditions.
- **Recommendations:**
  - **Diversification of permissible works:**
    - According to the study, there should be a **greater diversification of permissible works** instead of listing the types of permissible works.
      - The broad categories of works may be listed out and flexibility should be given at ground level to select the type of works as per broad categories.
  - **Paying gram sabhas an advance:**
    - **Paying the gram sabhas in an advance will** enable them to decide the work they want to undertake.
    - The gram sabhas can take into account the local conditions and the community's requirement instead of chasing a target set for them.
  - **Revolving fund:**
    - To deal with the frequent delay in fund disbursement, the report suggested a "revolving fund that can be utilised whenever there is a delay in the Central funds".

**MGNREGS**

- **About:**
  - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (Mahatma Gandhi NREGS) is a demand driven wage employment Scheme.
- **Aim:**

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- To provide not less than 100 days of unskilled manual work as a guaranteed employment in a financial year to every household in rural areas as per demand, resulting in creation of productive assets of prescribed quality and durability.
- **Features:**
  - **Legal Right to Work:**
    - The Act provides a legal right to employment for adult members of rural households.
  - **Women:**
    - At least one-third of beneficiaries have to be women.
- **Time-Bound Guarantee of Work:**
  - Employment must be provided within 15 days of being demanded to fail which an 'unemployment allowance' must be given.
- **Decentralised Planning:**
  - Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are primarily responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring of the works that are undertaken.
  - Gram Sabhas must recommend the works that are to be undertaken and at least 50 percent of the works must be executed by them.
- **Transparency and Accountability:**
  - There are provisions for proactive disclosure through wall writings, Citizen Information Boards, Management Information Systems and social audits (conducted by Gram Sabhas).

**Other Challenges faced by MGNREGS**

- **Corruption and Irregularities:**
  - Funds that reach the beneficiaries are very little compared to the actual funds allocated for the welfare schemes.
- **Discrimination:**
  - Frequent cases of discrimination against women and people from the backwards groups are reported from several regions of the country and a vast number goes unreported.
- **Non-payment of Unemployment Allowance:**

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- There is a huge pendency in the number of unemployment allowances being shown in the Management Information System (MIS).
- **Lack of Awareness:**
  - People, especially women, are not fully aware of this scheme and its provisions leading to uninformed choices or inability to get the benefits of the scheme.
- **Poor Infrastructure Building:**
  - Improper surveillance and lack of timely resources result in poor quality assets.
- **Non-Purposive Spending:**
  - MGNREGA has increased the earning capacity of the rural people but the spending pattern of the workers assumes significance because there is hardly any saving out of the wages earned.

**Suggestions & way ahead**

- **Social audits:**
  - There is a need to carry out social audits as per rules and effective implementation of the delay compensation system.
- **Utilization of funds:**
  - Reasons for poor utilization of funds should be analyzed and steps must be taken to improve them. In addition, actions should be initiated against officers found guilty of misappropriating funds.
- **Raising awareness:**
  - The participation of women and backward classes must be increased by raising awareness and making it more inclusive.
- **National Level Monitors:**
  - The frequency of monitoring by National Level Monitors (NLMs) should be increased and appropriate measures should be taken by States based on their recommendations.

Source: [TH](#)

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## India-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

( GS 2 Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests: )

### In News

India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries are **expected to start negotiations** for a free trade agreement next month to boost economic ties between the two regions.

- India has already implemented a free trade pact with the UAE in May this year. Terms and Conditions for this one are also being finalised.

### About Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

- GCC is a **union of six countries** in the Gulf region — Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.
- It was established by an agreement concluded in 1981 among Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in view of their special relations, geographic proximity, similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives.
- The Secretariat is located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- It is a political, economic, social, and regional organisation according to its charter.



Image Courtesy: [TH](#)

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**India and GCC: Contours of cooperation:**

- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a collective entity has tremendous significance for India.
- The Gulf constitutes the “immediate” neighbourhood of India separated only by the Arabian Sea. India, therefore, has a vital stake in the stability, security and economic well-being of the Gulf.
- **Strategic relations:** From the strategic point of view, India and GCC share the desire for political stability and security in the region. The common political and security concerns of India and GCC translate into efforts for peace, security and stability in the Gulf region and South Asia. The emerging common security perceptions create further opportunities for GCC-India cooperation in the future
- **Economic and commercial relations:** India imports predominately crude oil and natural gas from the Gulf nations like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and exports pearls, precious and semi-precious stones; metals; imitation jewellery; electrical machinery; iron and steel; and chemicals to these countries.
  - India's exports to the GCC increased by 58.26% to about \$44 billion in 2021-22 against \$27.8 billion in 2020-21.
  - The share of these six countries in India's total exports has risen to 10.4% in 2021-22 from 9.51% in 2020-21.
  - Similarly, imports rose by 85.8% to \$110.73 billion compared to \$59.6 billion in 2020-21.
  - The share of GCC members in India's total imports rose to 18% in 2021-22 from 15.5% in 2020-21.
- **Country wise :** Saudi Arabia was India's fourth-largest trading partner last fiscal. From Qatar, India imports 8.5 million tonnes a year of LNG and exports products ranging from cereals to meat, fish, chemicals, and plastics.
  - Kuwait was the 27th largest trading partner of India in the last fiscal, while the UAE was the third-largest trading partner in 2021-22.
- **Indians Diaspora:** Gulf nations are host to a sizable Indian population.
  - Out of about 32 million non-resident Indians (NRIs), nearly half are estimated to be working in Gulf countries.
    - These NRIs send a significant amount of money back home.
- **Remittances:** According to a November 2021 report of the World Bank, India got \$87 billion in foreign remittances in 2021.
  - Of this, a sizable portion came from the GCC nations.

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**Potential**

- The GCC region holds huge trade potential and a trade agreement would help in further boosting India's exports to that market.
  - The GCC's substantial oil and gas reserves are of utmost importance for India's energy needs.
- India has enjoyed centuries of good relations with countries like Iran, while smaller gas-rich nation Qatar is one of India's closest allies in the region. India shares good relations with most of the countries in the Gulf.

**Way Ahead**

- GCC is a major import dependent region. We can increase our exports of food items, clothing and several other goods. Duty concessions under a trade agreement will help in tapping that market. It will be a win-win situation for both sides.
- They need to adopt an **integrated and cohesive approach** to develop ties in diverse areas — renewables, water conservation, food security, digital technology and skills development.

Source: [TH](#)

**Digital Rupee**

**( GS 3 - Mobilization of Resources:)**

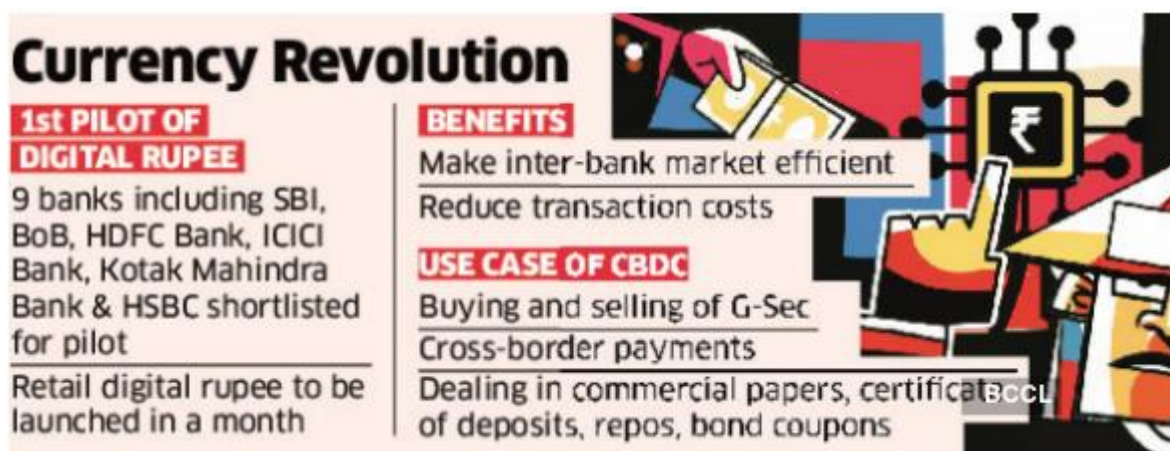
**In News**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said that the **first pilot in the Digital Rupee, Wholesale segment (e?-W)** will commence on November 1, 2022.

- It also announced that the first pilot in the Digital Rupee - Retail segment is planned for launch within a month in select locations in closed user groups comprising customers and merchants.

**What is Digital Rupee?**

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**Currency Revolution**

**1st PILOT OF DIGITAL RUPEE**

9 banks including SBI, BoB, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank & HSBC shortlisted for pilot

Retail digital rupee to be launched in a month

**BENEFITS**

- Make inter-bank market efficient
- Reduce transaction costs

**USE CASE OF CBDC**

- Buying and selling of G-Sec
- Cross-border payments
- Dealing in commercial papers, certificates of deposits, repos, bond coupons

Image Courtesy: [ET](#)

- A Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or Digital Rupee is a digital form of currency notes issued by a central bank.
  - It is an electronic form of money that can be used in contactless transactions.
- It can be defined as the legal tender issued by the Reserve Bank of India.
- **Background:** Presenting Union Budget 2022, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) would be rolling out its digital currency soon.
- **Types :** CBDC can be classified into two types
  - Retail (CBDC-R): Retail CBDC would be potentially available for use by all
  - Wholesale (CBDC-W) is designed for restricted access to select financial institutions.
- **Benefits :** the digital rupee system will "bolster India's digital economy, enhance financial inclusion, and make the monetary and payment systems more efficient."
  - It will reduce the transaction cost, having a digitised currency will make it easier for governments to access all transactions happening within the authorised networks.
  - The lifeline of a digital currency will be indefinite compared to physical notes
  - "CBDC is aimed to complement, rather than replace, current forms of money and is envisaged to provide an additional payment avenue to users, not to replace the existing payment systems.
- Risks in adopting digital currencies

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- **Cyber hacks and threats**
- **Threat to privacy**

**Difference between digital rupee and cryptocurrency**

- A cryptocurrency is a decentralised digital asset and a medium of exchange based on blockchain technology. However, it has primarily been controversial due to its decentralised nature, meaning its operation without any intermediary like banks, financial institutions, or central authorities.
- On the Contrary, Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will be a legal tender in a digital form.
- The digital rupee will be different from Bitcoin, Ethereum and other cryptocurrencies in the sense it will be backed by the government.
- Secondly, having an intrinsic value on account of government backing, the digital rupee will be equivalent to holding a physical rupee equivalent.

**Future Prospects**

- Going forward, other wholesale transactions, and cross-border payments will be the focus of future pilots, based on the learnings from this pilot
- To build a CBDC ecosystem and make it sustainable, it is essential to address all existing issues and for CBDC to act as a tool for inclusion by solving the problems through innovation.
- There is also a need for strong cooperation between government agencies and regulatory bodies so that a balance is maintained and a proper data or information collection framework is implemented that oversees the ecosystem.

**Source:** [TH](#)

**The Amendments to the IT Rules 2021**

(GS 2 – Government Policies & Interventions : )

**In News**

Recently, The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) has notified amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules, 2021).

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**About IT Rules, 2021**

- **India in 2021 replaced its decade old regulations on SMIs with the IT Rules, 2021** that were primarily aimed at placing obligations on SMIs to ensure an open, safe and trusted internet.
  - It also aims at **regulating social media intermediaries (SMIs)**.

**Need to amend the IT Rules 2021**

- There was a need to ensure that the interests and constitutional rights of netizens are not being contravened by big tech platforms,
- There was also a need to strengthen the grievance redressal framework in the Rules, and
  - Compliance with these should not impact early stage Indian start-ups.

**Major amendments**

- The grounds in rule 3(1)(b)(ii) have been rationalised by removing the words '**defamatory**' and '**libellous**'. Whether any content is defamatory or libellous will be determined through **judicial review**.
- Some of the content categories in rule 3(1)(b) have been rephrased to deal particularly with misinformation, and content that could incite violence between different religious/caste groups.
  - **Currently, intermediaries** are only required to inform users about not uploading certain categories of harmful/unlawful content.
    - These amendments impose a legal obligation on intermediaries to take reasonable efforts to prevent users from uploading such content. The new provision will ensure that the intermediary's obligation is not a mere formality.
- **Grievance Appellate Committees**
  - Grievance Appellate Committee(s) will be established to allow users to appeal against the inaction of, or decisions taken by intermediaries on user complaints. However, users will always have the right to approach courts for any remedy.
- **Relevant rules of the platform**
  - The original IT Rules, 2021 obligated the SMIs to merely inform its users of the "rules and regulations, privacy policy and user agreement" that governed its platforms along with the categories of

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content that users are prohibited from hosting, displaying, sharing etc. on the platform.

- This obligation on the SMIs has now been extended to ensuring that its users are in compliance with the relevant rules of the platform.
- **Respecting Fundamental rights**
  - The amendment requires intermediaries to respect the rights guaranteed to users under the Constitution, including a reasonable expectation of due diligence, privacy and transparency.
    - SMIs are supposed to respect all the rights accorded to the citizens under the Constitution, including in the articles 14, 19 and 21.

**Source:** [TH](#)

**Facts in News**

**National Unity Day:**

GS 1

**In News**

The Prime Minister of India paid homage to Sardar Patel at the Statue of Unity and participated in the **Rashtriya Ekta Diwas-related events**.

**About National Unity Day**

- Every year, October 31 is marked as National Unity Day or Rashtriya Ekta Diwas in India to observe Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary.
  - It was introduced by the Government of India in 2014.
- The day is celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel who had a major role in the political integration of India.
- The celebration of the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel makes everyone aware of the ideas of strength and diversity of religions, languages, cultures, and traditions of our nation.

**About Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**

- He is popularly known as the 'Iron Man of India'.

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- He was Leader of the freedom movement and follower of Mahatma Gandhi.
- He was Deputy Prime Minister and first Home Minister of independent India.
- He played an important role in the integration of Princely States with India.
  - He played a prominent role in forming states and bringing them together under the Union of India after independence.
- He was a member of important committees of the Constituent Assembly on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, Provincial Constitution, etc.

Source:[PIB](#)

### **Facts in News**

#### **WHO Fungal Priority Pathogens List (FPPL)**

(GS 2 – Health )

#### **In News**

Recently ,The World Health Organization (WHO)published a report highlighting the first-ever list of **fungal "priority pathogens"** – a catalogue of the 19 fungi that represent the greatest threat to public health.

#### **About**

- The **WHO fungal priority pathogens list (FPPL)** is the first global effort to systematically prioritise fungal pathogens, considering the unmet research and development (R&D) needs and the perceived public health importance.
- The WHO FPPL list is divided into three categories: critical, high and medium priority.
  - The fungal pathogens of in each priority category are so ranked primarily due to their public health impact and/or emerging antifungal resistance risk
- The WHO FPPL aims to **focus and drive further research and policy** interventions to strengthen the global response to fungal infections and antifungal resistance.

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**Do you know ?**

- **Fungal pathogens** are a major threat to public health as they are becoming **increasingly common** and **resistant to treatment** with only four classes of antifungal medicines currently available, and few candidates in the clinical pipeline.
- **Most fungal pathogens lack rapid and sensitive diagnostics** and those that exist are not widely available or affordable globally.

Source:[LM](#)

**Facts in News**

**Two-finger test:**

**(GS 1)**

**In News**

- Recently, the Supreme Court said that those found indulging in the practice of the 'two-finger test' on alleged rape victims will be **declared guilty of misconduct**.

**About Two-finger test**

- The two-finger test is an **invasive, unscientific and regressive practice** where two fingers are inserted in the vagina to assess laxity of vaginal muscles and examine the hymen.
- The two-finger test or **per vaginum examination** is conducted on **alleged victims of sexual assault and rape** to determine whether they are habituated to sexual intercourse.
  - The test is based on the **incorrect assumption that a sexually active woman cannot be raped**.

**Criticism**

- The two-finger test has **no scientific basis** and neither proves nor disproves allegations of rape.
- **It instead re-victimises and re-traumatises women** who may have been sexually assaulted and is an affront to their dignity.

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- **Section 375 (rape) of the IPC:** Whether a woman is habituated to sexual intercourse or habitual to sexual intercourse is irrelevant for the purposes of determining whether the ingredients of Section 375 (rape) of the IPC are present in a particular case.

**Way forward**

- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013**
  - **It amended the Evidence Act to insert Section 53A** that the evidence of a victim's character or of her previous sexual experience with any person shall not be relevant to the issue of consent or the quality of consent, in prosecutions of sexual offences.
- **Workshops**
  - The SC also ordered workshops to be held to communicate the appropriate procedure to determine sexual assault and rape.
- **Curriculum in medical schools**
  - SC also directed the government to review the curriculum in medical schools so ensure the practice is no longer used.

**Source:IE**

**Facts in News**

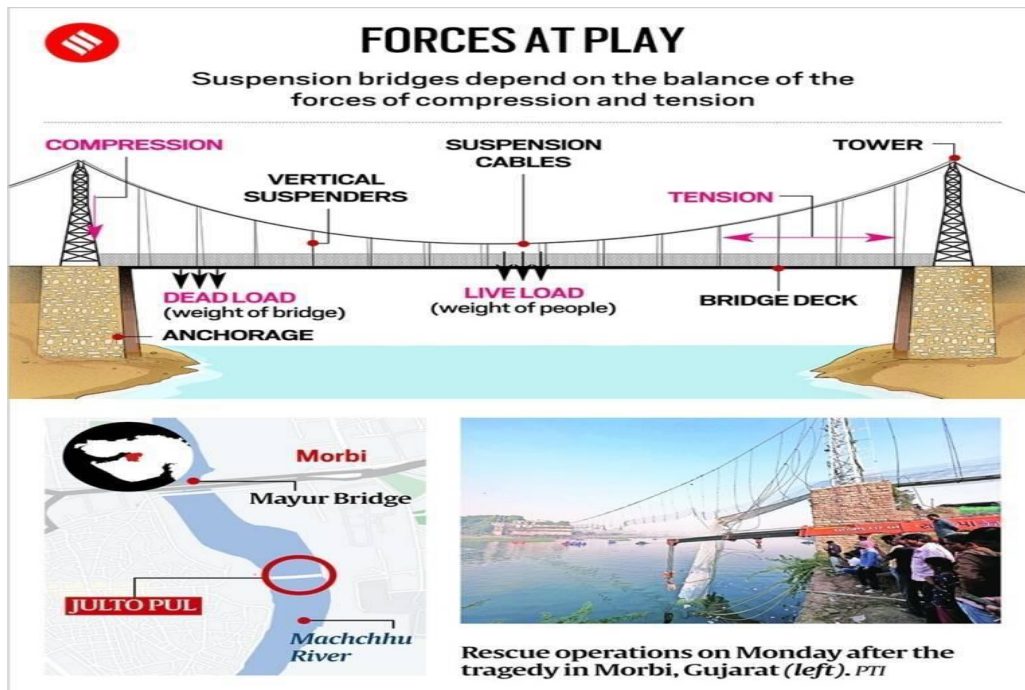
**Suspension bridges: (Gs- 3 Infrastructure:)**

**In News**

- Recently, the suspension bridge that collapsed in **Gujarat's Morbi** killed at least 134 people.
  - **The 19th century Bridge**, which had been reopened days previously after repairs spanning six months, reportedly had over 400 people on it when it collapsed.

**About Suspension bridges**

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- It is a type in which the **deck is hung below suspension cables on vertical suspenders.**
- The basic structural components of a suspension bridge system include **stiffening girders, two or more main suspension cables, and towers and anchorages for cables at either end of the bridge.**
- **The main cables are suspended between the towers** and are connected to the anchorage or the bridge itself.
  - The vertical suspenders carry the weight of the deck and the commuter load on it.
- The design ensures that the **load on the suspension cables is transferred to the towers at the two ends**, which transfer them further by vertical compression to the ground by way of the anchorage cables.
- All of this balancing has to happen within the **permissible weight restrictions for the bridge**, given that the deck is hanging in air, supported by the two sets of cables.
  - Given that the most important load bearing members are the main suspension cables, the entire cross-section of the main cable is the mainstay of carrying the load and ensuring that buckling does not happen.

**Data/ Facts**

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- Suspension bridges are **among the most robust structures**, starting from the earliest ones made of twisted grass.
- **Bridges worldwide**
  - **Spanish conquistadors** made their way into Peru in 1532; they discovered an Incan empire connected by hundreds of suspension bridges spanning deep mountain gorges.
  - **The Golden Gate Bridge and Brooklyn Bridge in the US** are examples of suspension bridges.
  - **India's longest single-lane motorable suspension bridge is the 725 metre Dobra-Chanti suspension bridge** built over the **Tehri Lake**.
- **Other type of Bridges**
  - Besides suspension, bridges can be **arch bridges, beam bridges, cantilever bridges, truss bridges and tied-arch bridges**.

**Source:**[IE](#)

### **Facts in News**

#### **Deinococcus Radiodurans:**

##### **In News**

- Recently, researchers simulated the **harsh ionising radiation on Mars** in a new study where they found that **ancient bacteria** could potentially **survive close to the surface of the planet much longer than previously thought**.
  - A new study shatters that record, finding the hearty bacterium could **survive 280 million years if buried**. This means **evidence of life could still be dormant and buried below Mars' surface**.

##### **About Deinococcus radiodurans**

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- Many of the terrestrial microorganisms proved that they might be able to survive on Mars, but one particular microbe called **Deinococcus radiodurans** seemed particularly well-suited to living on the planet.
  - The researchers nicknamed the bacteria “**Conan the bacterium**” for its **ability to survive massive amounts of radiation while frozen**.
- This means that scientists might even find bacteria and bacteria remains when the **first samples from Mars come back to our planet**.
- To understand whether any **life forms could survive the harsh climatic conditions on Mars**, the research team exposed six different terrestrial bacteria and fungi under conditions similar to life on the red planet.
  - They did this by **freezing the microbes** and hitting them with gamma rays and protons.

**Source:IE**

**Women’s Role during the Farm Law Agitations:**

**(GS 1&2 –Government intervention & policies: )**

**In News**

- Women’s participation in the protests against the three agriculture laws gave them a chance to assert their disregarded position as farmers in the country, moulding the scope and character of the agitation.

**Women’s Participation in Protests**

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- **India has had a long history of protests** against the ruling government, be it during the colonial rule of the British, or against the government in independent India.
- **Despite the prevalent patriarchal system**, women have actively participated in these protests alongside men.
  - Women activists, politicians and leaders have emerged from even the most orthodox regions of the country.
- Protests against the State or with a common cause gave them the opportunity to **dissent openly, voice out their issues, and create a space for themselves within the larger discourse.**

**Facts/ Data**

- Agriculture employs about **80 percent of rural women.**
- **As per Census 2011**, out of total female main workers, 55 per cent were agricultural labourers and 24 per cent were cultivators.
- **Only 12.8 per cent of the operational holdings** were owned by women, which reflect the gender disparity in ownership of landholdings in agriculture.
- **The workforce participation rate for rural females is significantly higher** at 41.8 percent against urban women participation rate of 35.31 percent (MoSPI, 2017).
- **Related Schemes:**
  - Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program (PMEGP)
  - National Livelihoods Mission, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)
  - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
  - Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
  - Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana I (PMMVY).

**Major Challenges faced by women in agriculture and during the farm protest**

- **Socio-economic factors:** The reasons behind their participation are rooted in the historic conditions and socio-economic factors that affect women throughout the country.
- **Patriarchal system:** Most women, who participated, came from States where women, especially from rural regions, are disadvantaged by the patriarchal systems that constrain them.

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- **Denial of land ownership:** Though women play a crucial role in the agricultural process in these regions, they are denied land ownership and are expected to do unpaid or exchange labour.
- **Lack of State protection mechanisms:** With the coming of the farm laws, the already precarious condition of farmers in the country was expected to become even more unstable due to the lack of State protection mechanisms.
- **Lack of food security:** It directly affected women, who are already burdened with the responsibility of managing the domestic (food) needs of the family.
- **Other challenges:**
  - **Societal issues:** Women have always subtly challenged society; be it through clothing, gossiping, folk songs mocking their in-laws or expressing eroticism and folk art among others.
  - **Gender roles:** As the division of labour was mostly decided according to gender roles, women were made responsible for cooking, cleaning and taking care of the elders during the protest.
  - **Harassed and molested:** In many of the protest sites they were asked to cover their face while on the podium and in a few instances, they were even harassed and molested.
  - **Class and caste inequalities:** with oppressive structures like the Khap panchayats being reproduced in the sites.

**Their role during farm protest**

- **Equality:** From being mere spectators of the movement, they joined the men demanding the repeal of the agriculture laws.
- **Responsibility:** They took up responsibilities of the production and distribution of food and bringing supplies to the sites.
  - Many of them drove themselves in tractors to the protest sites, symbolising their status as farmers.
- **Contribution:** Women's dissent, though directed towards the government, questioned and challenged the society that burdens them disproportionately and acts oblivious towards their contributions to farming.

**Way forward**

- **Defied patriarchal norms:** by participating in sporting events primarily associated with masculinity, preparing for the civil services or pursuing higher education, and engaging in mixed caste or mixed religion marriages.

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- **Added texture:** women created songs and slogans that mocked the new laws, discussed the problems of the peasants and workers, and challenged the political system.
- **Boosting the morale:** Women's participation in the protests also helped in creating a festive mood, boosting the morale of the protesters as they struggled with harsh conditions (weather, police harassment) at the protest sites.
  - **Local festivals were celebrated,** where gender roles of certain local traditions were subverted.
- **Self-sufficient:** though the initial conditions of the protest sites were unfavorable for women in terms of sanitation and safety, they managed to organise committees to address these issues.
- **Gender inclusive:** by becoming more gender inclusive, the protest managed to attract more media attention and support from the general public.
- **Agrarian politics:** women's participation in the farmer's protests against the State brought them to the centre stage of agrarian politics and proved that society's attitude towards women activists and agitators were changing in the right direction.

Source: [TH](#)

### **Voting Rights to NRIs**

(GS 2 –Resposibilities of Constituional bodies:)

#### **In News**

- Recently, the Union government told the Supreme Court (SC) that it was considering ways to **facilitate non-resident Indians (NRI), especially migrant labourers**, to cast their votes remotely.

#### **Key Points**

- **About:**
  - The Supreme Court disposed of the Petition stating that the Plea was filed in 2013 “at a stage when nothing was being done to enable such persons to cast their votes.
  - But today the awareness has not only seeped in, but it went to the extent of tabling a Bill before one of the Houses of the Parliament.

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- **Court's Stand:**

- Making the postal ballot facility available to soldiers serving in far-flung areas across the country was different from affording the same facility to someone who had **chosen to reside abroad**.
- However, migrant labourers would often find it beyond their limited means to fly in just to cast their vote.
- The government was aware of the issue and had even introduced a Bill to amend the Representation of the People Act to **allow overseas Indians to vote by proxy**.
  - The Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill had however lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha.

- **Supreme Court recommended Committee (2013):**

- On Court's notice in February 2013, the Election Commission had constituted a committee "to look into the matter with regard to ways and means to facilitate voting for non-resident Indians and migrant workers".
- The committee thereafter submitted its report.
- The **central government had accepted the recommendations** made by the Election Commission and then introduced a Bill in 2018 in Lok Sabha to **amend Section 60 of Representation of People Act, 1951**.

- **Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill of 2017:**

- The intended amendment was to enable the overseas electors to appoint a **proxy** to cast vote on behalf of such electors.
- The Bill had proposed the removal of an "unreasonable restriction" posed by Section 20A of the Representation of the People Act requiring overseas electors to be physically present in their electoral constituencies to cast their votes.
- The Bill was passed in Lok Sabha. However, the same was not introduced in Rajya Sabha and as a result, the Bill itself lapsed. Thereafter, there hasn't been any development on the front.

### **Current Status of Voting for Overseas Citizens**

- **After the passing of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2010:**

- NRIs who had stayed abroad beyond six months have been able to vote, but only in person at the polling station where they have been enrolled as an overseas elector.

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- However, only a very low proportion of overseas residents actually registered or turned up to vote.
- The provision of having to visit the polling booth in person has discouraged eligible voters from exercising their mandate.
- **The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 was amended in 2016:**
  - To allow service voters to use the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS).
  - Under this system, postal ballots are sent electronically to registered service voters.
  - The service voter can then register their mandate on the ballot and send it back via ordinary mail.
  - The ECI proposed to extend this facility to overseas voters as well.
- **In the case of overseas voters:**
  - Their address mentioned in the passport is taken as the place of ordinary residence and chosen as the constituency for the overseas voter to enrol in.

**Alternative: Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS)**

- The ETPBS method allowed for greater turnout among service voters in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.
- With increasing mobility of citizens across countries for reasons related to work, the postal ballot method has been recognised by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (an intergovernmental organization that works to support democratic processes and institutions) as a means to allow overseas voters to exercise their right, subject to certain conditions normally related to the time spent abroad or the work carried out abroad.
- A postal ballot mechanism that allows for proper authentication of the ballot at designated consular/embassy offices and an effective postal system should ease this process for NRIs, but rules must be clearly framed for eligibility on the basis of time spent away from the country.

**Significance**

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- Allowing NRIs to vote from abroad may see expatriates emerge as a **decisive force** in the country's electoral politics.
- NRI voters could be **empowered** better by amending the law.
- Purpose is to see that persons living outside India and migrant labourers are still part of the entire electoral process and every facility shall be extended which will also ensure the **confidentiality** of the election

### Way Ahead

- Government should consider the **option of digital voting**.
- The authorities concerned should take a call taking into account various factors, and come to the **best result satisfying most stakeholders**.

Source: [TH](#) + [IE](#)

### **SCO's Council of Heads of Government (CHG) Meeting**

( GS 2-India & Foreign Relations)

### In News

- The 21st Meeting of SCO Council of Heads of Government (CHG) was recently held in Nur-Sultan in virtual format under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan.

### More about the news

- **About:**
  - The SCO Heads of Government meet is held annually to focus on the trade and economic agenda of the organisation and approves the SCO's annual budget.
  - The SCO-CHG meeting was attended by SCO Member States, Observer States, the Secretary General of the SCO, the Executive Director of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, Turkmenistan and other invited guests.
- **India's stand:**
  - India's External Affairs Minister represented India in the meeting.
  - In his address, the minister underlined India's strong cultural and historical connect with the SCO region.

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- He reiterated India's firm commitment towards **deepening multilateral cooperation** in the areas of
  - Food and energy security,
  - Climate change,
  - Trade and culture.
- He spoke about the launch of the global Mission '**LIFE**' (**Lifestyle for Environment**) and its relevance to ensuring food and energy security.
- **India on Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):**
  - The Indian minister reiterated that the Connectivity projects should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States and respect international law.
    - This was said in a reference to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- **Trade with SCO:**
  - As stated by the Indian Minister, India's total trade with SCO Members is only \$141 billion, which has the potential to increase manifold.
  - Fair market access, according to him, is to our mutual benefit and only way to move forward.
    - The bulk of India's trade with SCO countries is with China, which crossed \$100 billion this year,
    - Trade with Russia is less than \$20 billion.
    - Trade with Central Asian countries is less than \$2 billion, and
    - With Pakistan it is about \$500 million.
- **India as Chairperson of the SCO:**
  - India has taken over as Chairperson of the SCO, and will host leaders of all SCO countries, including China and Pakistan, at a summit in Delhi expected in mid-2023.

**Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):**

- **About:**
  - It is a **permanent intergovernmental** international organisation of **Eurasian Nations** with a **secretariat in Beijing**.
    - Over the years, it has emerged as one of the largest trans-regional international organisations.
- **Aim:**
  - It is a political, economic and military organisation that aims at maintaining

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peace, security and stability in the region.

- **Origin: Journey from Shanghai Five to SCO**
  - Shanghai Five emerged in 1996 from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks between 4 former USSR republics and China.
  - **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan** were members of the Shanghai Five.
  - With the accession of **Uzbekistan** to the group in 2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
  - The SCO Charter was signed in 2002 and entered into force in 2003.
- **Inclusion of India & Pakistan:**
  - **India and Pakistan** both were initially observer states.
  - Both were given full membership in 2017.
- **Iran and Belarus:**
  - **2021 SCO summit in Dushanbe** agreed for **Iran** to join in SCO.
  - **Belarus** has also begun the membership process for SCO.

Member states	Observer States	Dialogue Partners
Kazakhstan	Afghanistan	Azerbaijan
China	Belarus	Armenia
Kyrgyzstan	Iran	Cambodia
Russia	Mongolia	Nepal
Tajikistan		Turkey
Uzbekistan		Sri Lanka
India		
Pakistan		
Iran		



### Significance of SCO for India

- **India's upcoming Presidency:**
  - India will take over the SCO Presidency in 2023.
  - **India will also host the upcoming SCO Summit** in 2023, which will be held in **Samarkand, Uzbekistan**.
- **Security:**
  - **RATS** can help India to improve its **counterterrorism abilities** by working toward intelligence sharing, law enforcement and developing best practices and technologies.
  - Through the SCO, India can also work on **anti-drug trafficking** and **small arms proliferation**.
- **Regional Integration:**
  - SCO can help in achieving **regional integration** and promote **connectivity and stability** across borders.
  - Further, it also helps India to have a **multilateral talk** with **friends like Russia** and **adversaries like China and Pakistan**.
- **Geopolitical Advantage:**
  - Central Asia is a part of India's Extended Neighbourhood.
  - And SCO provides India with an opportunity to pursue the **“Connect Central Asian Policy”**.

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- It will also help India to check on the ever-growing influence of **China in Eurasia**.

**China's Belt and Road initiative:**

- China began the Belt and Road Initiative in **2013** under its President Xi Jinping.
- It aims to **revive the ancient trade routes** crossing to and from **China—from Rome in Europe to East Asia**.
- **Criticisms:**
  - China was criticised in the West and by some other countries for providing unsustainable debts to countries that will be unable to repay them.
  - **2019 World Bank report:**
    - According to the report, among the 43 corridor economies for which detailed data was available, 12 could face a situation where debts were not sustainable, which could lead to public assets being handed over to foreign contractors or China itself.
  - **India's stand:**
    - India opposed the BRI as it included the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**, which connected **Kashgar in China with the Gwadar port in Pakistan** via **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir**.

Source: TH

**Challenges to COP27:**

( GS 2- Agreements Involving India and/or affecting India's Interest )

**In News**

- The annual United Nations Climate Change Conference (**COP27**), will soon begin in the **Egyptian** resort town of **Sharm el-Shaikh**.

**Climate Objectives & CoP**

- These annual conferences have been the main driver of the global fight against climate change.
  - However, the response so far has not been commensurate to the enormity of the challenge.

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**Conference of Parties(COP)**

- It is the supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC.
- **Aim:**
  - The agreement seeks to **limit global warming to well below 2°C**, preferably to **1.5°C**, compared to **pre-industry levels**.
- **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):**
  - To achieve the targets under the agreement, the member countries have to **submit the targets themselves**, which they believe would lead to substantial progress towards reaching the Paris temperature goal.
    - Initially, these targets are called **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)**.
    - They are **converted to NDCs when the country ratifies the agreement**.

**Issues & Challenges**

- **Action plans falling short:**
  - It's been at least two-and-a-half decades since the world decided to restrain its greenhouse gas emissions.
    - Latest assessments suggest that current action plans of countries to meet climate goals are falling woefully short.
- **Rising emissions:**
  - In absolute terms, the annual global emissions are still rising, now touching almost 50 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.
  - In the decade between 2010 and 2019, the global emissions grew by over one percent on average.
    - This is significantly slower than the growth in the previous decade, of about 2.6 percent, but for meeting climate targets, it is not good enough.
- **Global issues:**
  - **Economic:**
    - Amid a deepening energy crisis and prevailing economic gloom, there is little appetite among countries to scale up climate action.
  - **Ukraine war:**
    - The energy and economic crisis caused by the Ukraine war is threatening to undo even the small gains made.

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- **Possibility of increase:**

- Moreover, even if the growth in emissions is halted immediately, or is made to decline, it does not solve the problem.
- This is because the warming of the planet is the **result of accumulated emissions in the atmosphere and not the current emissions.**
  - Carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, remains in the atmosphere for about 100 years, so the effect of any immediate decline in emissions would have an impact only after several decades.
- As a result, the **average global temperatures have risen faster** in the last one decade than any time earlier.

- **Inadequate & unfair response:**

- The response in terms of emission cuts has been inadequate.
- **The rich and industrialised countries:**
  - These were the main polluters and hence mainly responsible to bring down emissions, have not met their collective targets.
- **Developing countries:**
  - Countries like China or India, which were not major emitters till sometime back, have seen their emissions rise steeply.

### Global picture

- **EU:**

- As a bloc, the European Union has done relatively better on climate goals, with the United Kingdom, which is struggling with an economic downturn right now, halving its emissions from 1990 levels, UN data shows.

- **USA:**

- The United States, the world's leading emitter till it was overtaken by China in the mid 2000s, has been a major laggard, cutting its emissions by only about 7 percent from 1990 levels.

- **India & China:**

- China's emissions have risen by almost four times, and India's by about three times, during this period.

### Suggestions & way ahead

- **Suggestion by Emissions Gap Report:**

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- For a realistic chance to keep global warming within 1.5 degree Celsius, annual emissions would need to drop from the current level of about 50 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent to about 33 billion tonnes by 2030 and 8 billion tonnes by 2050, according to the newest Emissions Gap Report.
- Even for meeting the 2-degree target, emissions have to come down to about 41 billion tonnes by 2030 and 20 billion tonnes by 2050.
  - This would require drastic action from all the major emitters
- **Approaching the action plans:**
  - **First, climate change is a global problem** and it requires **cooperation** between all nations.
  - **Second, it needs rules that are fair and just**, for the poor and the rich alike.
  - **Third, science is clear that humans are responsible for the global temperature rise** and that this increase will lead to more and more variable and extreme weather events, much like what we are seeing now.
  - **Four, it is possible to estimate each country's responsibility** for the stock of emissions already in the atmosphere — the **historical cumulative emissions** that have “forced” climate change impacts.
  - And **fifth, countries that have not yet contributed to the emissions will do so in the future, simply because the world has reneged on the need to make global rules that would apply fairly to all.**

**Glasgow Climate Meet (COP26)**

- Glasgow meet strengthened the Paris Agreement mechanism of eliciting Pledges from countries and ratcheting them up over time.
- It requested countries to update and strengthen 2030 emission targets in their NDCs by the end of 2022.
- It explicitly revolved around **keeping 1.5 degrees alive through such pledges.**
  - However, it came under criticism that it focused on target setting, without giving sufficient importance to the challenge of implementing those targets.

**India's 'Panchamrit' strategy**

- India's '**Panchamrit**' strategy was announced at the COP 26 in Glasgow conference into enhanced climate targets.
  - India will increase its **non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 500 gigawatt**

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**(GW) by 2030.**

- It will meet **50 percent of its energy requirements** from renewable sources **by 2030.**
  - The total projected carbon emissions will be reduced by **1 billion tonnes** from now through 2030.
  - The carbon intensity of its economy will be brought down to **less than 45 percent.**
- India will achieve its target of **net zero by 2070.**

Source: TH

### **C-295 Transport Aircraft Manufacturing Facility:**

**( GS-3 Indigenisation of technology )**

#### **In News**

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India **laid the foundation stone** for the C-295 transport aircraft manufacturing facility in **Vadodara, Gujarat.**

#### **About**

- **Set up by:** Airbus Defence and Space and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL).
- This is the **first time** a private sector company would be manufacturing a full aircraft in the country.
- This is a huge step forward for India in the **global aircraft manufacturing domain.**

#### **C-295MW Transporter**

- **About:**
  - The C295 was originally produced by a Spanish aircraft manufacturer named Construcciones Aeronauticas SA.
  - This company is now part of Airbus and the aircraft's manufacturing takes place at Airbus's plant in Spain.
- **Capacity:**
  - The C-295MW is a transport aircraft of 5-10 tonne capacity.

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- **Request For Proposal (RFP):**
  - It was issued to global firms in May 2013 and the sole bid by Airbus and TASL was approved by the Defence Acquisition Council in May 2015.
- **Agreement:**
  - In September 2021, India signed a Rs 21,935 crore deal with Airbus Defence and Space to procure 56 C295 aircraft to replace the IAF's ageing Avro-748 planes, which entered service in the early 1960s.
- **Delivery:**
  - Of the 56 aircraft contracted, 16 will come in fly-away condition from Spain between September 2023 and August 2025.
  - The remaining 40 will be manufactured here to be delivered between September 2026 and 2031 at the rate of eight aircraft per year.
- **Training and skilling:**
  - Nearly 240 engineers will be trained at the Airbus facility in Spain for the project, the MoD said.
- **Feature:**
  - The C-295 has very good fuel efficiency.
  - It can take off and land from short as well as unprepared runways.
- **India's Image:**
  - With the procurement of these aircraft, India has become the 35th C-295 operator worldwide.
  - With 285 aircraft ordered and 38 operators in 34 different countries, the aircraft has achieved more than 5,00,000 flight hours.
  - The Navy and the Coast Guard have also expressed interest in the C-295 and it can be used in civilian roles as well as exported in the future.
  - The C-295 is also a potential replacement for the AN-32 aircraft, the workhorse of the IAF with over 100 of them in service.
  - The AN-32s will be in service upto 2032 and beyond.

**Effect on the domestic aircraft manufacturing ecosystem**

- **Background:**
  - Over the last two decades, Indian companies, both public and private, have steadily expanded their footprint in the global supply chains of major defence and aerospace manufacturers supplying a range of components, systems and sub-systems.
- **Good force :**

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- As U.S. and India pursue the Indo-Pacific strategy, India's strengths coupled with U.S. and European technology prowess can be a force for good in the world
- **Manufacturing boost :**
  - The domestic defence manufacturing ecosystem will get a boost with the C-295 project as it will lead to the development of a strong private industrial aerospace ecosystem not only in and around Vadodara but across the country.
  - Bengaluru and Hyderabad already have developed such aerospace and defence domains over the years.
- **Skilled jobs created:**
  - The C-295 project is expected to create more than 15,000 skilled direct and indirect jobs across the aerospace ecosystem, with more than 125 suppliers qualified on global quality standards across India.
- **Assembly and production functions:**
  - Manufacturing of over 13,400 detail parts, 4,600 sub-assemblies and all the seven major component assemblies will be undertaken in India, along with tools, jigs and testers, Tata said.

### **India's Civil Aviation Sector**

- India has a much bigger footprint in civil aviation manufacturing than defence, in addition to being a major market itself. Both Airbus and Boeing do significant sourcing from India for their civil programmes.
- According to Airbus every commercial aircraft manufactured by them today is partly designed and made in India.
- Since 2007, Airbus has had a **wholly domestic-owned design centre** in India which has more than 650 engineers who specialise in high-tech aeronautical engineering and work across both fixed- and rotary-wing Airbus aircraft programmes.
- Another major growing area is **Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO)** for which India can emerge as the regional hub.

### **Way Ahead**

- The private defence sector is still nascent and a conducive and **stable regulatory and policy environment** will be an important enabler.
- With the **right momentum, a realistic roadmap and enabling policy framework**, India can become a hub for aircraft manufacturing akin to the

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automobile clusters which turned India into a major exporter of cars to the world..

- India is moving ahead with the mantra of ‘Make in India’ and ‘Make for the Globe’, and continues to enhance its potential by becoming a **major manufacturer of transport planes.**

Source: [TH](#)

### **Facts in News**

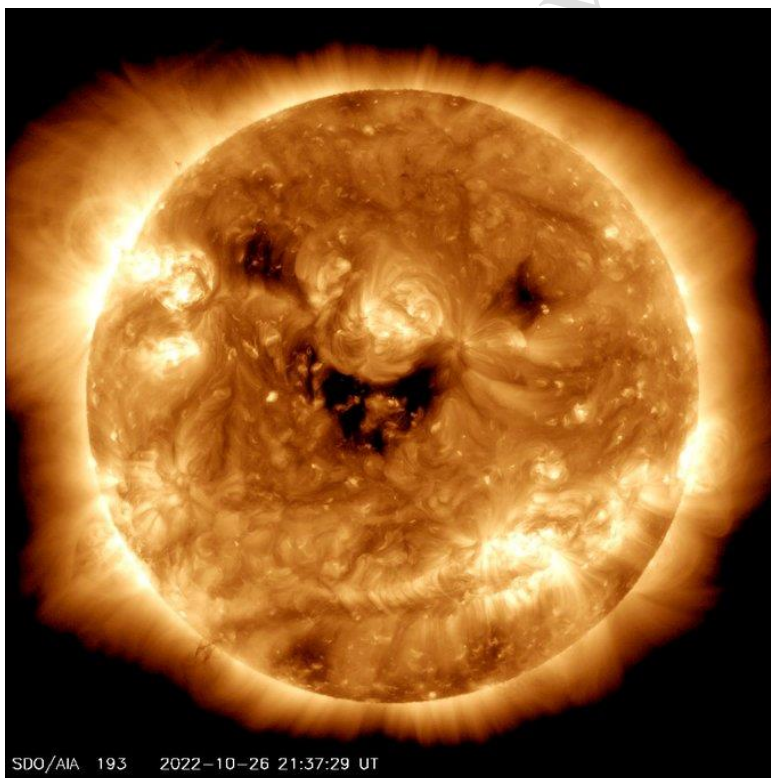
### **Coronal Holes:**

( GS-3 Space )

### **In News**

Recently, NASA Solar Dynamics Observatory Captured dark patches on the sun’s surface resembling eyes and a smile

- NASA explained that the patches are called coronal holes.



SDO/AIA 193 2022-10-26 21:37:29 UT

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Image Courtesy :[IE](#)

### **About Coronal Hole**

- It is a **patch** of the **Sun's atmosphere with much lower density** than elsewhere.
- In ultraviolet views of the Sun, coronal holes appear as dark splotches.
- These are regions where the **Sun's magnetic field lines are connected directly to interplanetary space**, allowing **solar material to escape out** in a **high-speed stream of solar wind**, leaving a dark "hole" near the surface of the Sun.
- Coronal holes appear **throughout the solar cycle**, but can last for much longer periods of time during solar minimums, when the Sun is less active.
- **Importance** : "These 'coronal holes' are important to understanding the space environment around the earth through which our technology and astronauts travel.

Source:[IE](#)

### **Facts in News**

#### **Senna spectabilis (An invasive species):**

(GS-3 Species in news)

### **In News**

Senna spectabilis has taken over between 800 and 1,200 hectares of the buffer zones of the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) in the picturesque Nilgiris hill district.

### **About**

- It is an exotic tree and it was introduced as an ornamental species and for use as firewood from South and Central America.
- It has become highly invasive in the Sigur plateau in both the core and buffer zones of the MTR.
  - Over the last few years, its bright yellow flowers have become more visible across the Tiger Reserve, with conservationists stating that the

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invasive weed has a **negative effect on local biodiversity**, crowding out native species and limiting food availability for wildlife.

### Steps

- The Forest Department is coming up with a comprehensive strategy to deal with the spread of the invasive species, which continues to spread rapidly in the buffer zone.

### Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR)

- It is located in the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu state, at the tri-junction of three states, viz, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- **Flora** :A variety of habitats ranging from tropical evergreen forest, moist deciduous forest, moist teak forest, dry teak forest, secondary grasslands and swamps are found here.
- **Fauna** : It is rich in wildlife, like Elephants, Gaur, Tiger, Panther, Spotted Deer, Barking Deer, Wild Boar, Porcupine etc., birds like-minivets, hornbill, fairy BlueBirds, Jungle Fowls etc., and reptiles like python, Monitor Lizards Flying Lizards etc.

Source:[TH](#)

### **Facts in News**

#### **Aceclofenac**

( Gs-3 Science and technology)

### In News

Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) has demanded a ban on using **Aceclofenac** in cattle after a new study showed that the drug is metabolized into **diclofenac in water buffaloes — as it does in cows**.

- Diclofenac — an anti-inflammatory drug — was banned for veterinary use by the Government of India in 2006.
  - It was found to be the main cause of a dramatic decline (99 percent) of the vulture population across Asia.

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**About Aceclofenac**

- It is the prodrug of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) diclofenac, widely used to treat acute and chronic pain
- It behaves similarly in domestic water buffalo as it does in domestic cattle, posing the same risk to vultures
- Wildlife Institute of India, BNHS and IVRI had written to DGCI and the Union health ministry demanding a ban on aceclofenac, but no action has been taken so far.

**Source:** [DTE](#)

**Facts in News**

**Lithium-ion Batteries:**

( Gs-3 Science and technology)

**In News**

- Indian researchers have discovered a **new anode material**, which could be helpful in ensuring the life and fast charging of lithium-ion batteries (LIBs).

**About the new study**

- The study is carried out by researchers from the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar** in collaboration with the **Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (JAIST)**.
- The new two-dimensional (2D) anode material is developed using **Nano sheets** derived from **titanium diboride (TiB<sub>2</sub>)**, which resemble a stack of sandwiches, where metal molecules exist between layers of boron.
  - This innovation has potential for **translation from lab to real-life application.**
- **Working**
  - LIBs have the anode material as the negative electrode, which is attached to the cathode material in the Li-ion battery cell.
  - The anode materials in a lithium-ion cell act as the host, enabling lithium-ion intercalation/de-intercalation during the battery's charge or discharge cycle.
- **Comparison**

## 5 Types of Lithium-Ion Batteries

### Lithium-Cobalt Oxide Battery

- Used mostly in handheld electronics (Cell phones, Laptops and Cameras)
- Risky specially when damaged
- Cobalt is scarce and expensive
- Low discharge rates
- Highest energy density (110-190) Wh/kg



### Lithium-Nickel Manganese Cobalt Oxide Battery

- Longer life and inherent safety
- Cobalt is scarce and expensive
- Less prone to heating
- Used in Power tools, e-bikes and electric power trains
- Lower energy density (95-130) Wh/kg

### Lithium-Iron Phosphate Battery

- Dramatically reduces the risks of overheating and fire.
- Offers much less volumetric capacity
- Used in power tools and medical equipment
- Longer-life and inherently safe
- Lower Energy Density (95-140) Wh/kg

### Lithium-Titanate Battery

- Can operate at very low temp (-40°C)
- Rapid charge and discharge
- Used in Mitsubishi i-MiEV
- Lower inherent voltage 2.4 V (compared to 3.7 V)
- Lower energy density (30-110) Wh/kg



### Lithium-Manganese Oxide Battery

- Lower cost
- Longer life and inherently safe
- Used in Hybrid Vehicles, Cell phones, Laptops
- High discharge rates
- Lower energy density (110-120) Wh/kg

- **LIBs with Graphite anode** are extremely energy dense, and can power an electric vehicle for hundreds of kilometres on a single charge. However, it has its challenges on the safety front as they are prone to fire hazards.
- **Lithium Titanate anodes** are safer and more preferred alternatives and they also facilitate fast charging. But, they have a lower energy density, so they would need more frequent recharging.
- **Li-Ion batteries enabled by nanosheets based anode material** have an edge as they offer ultra-fast charging time, long life cycle (10,000 cycles at high charge currents), and nanosheets used to prepare the anode have a high density of pores.

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**Table: Advantages and Disadvantages of Lithium Batteries**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lightweight battery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risky sourcing of lithium</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lithium-ion batteries have impressive high energy density (one of the best energy-to-weight ratios).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A major downside is the pace of lithium extraction that is unable to meet the growing demand for lithium supplies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High adaptability to several applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive than other batteries</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As there is no memory effect, there is no need to fully drain the battery before recharging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temperature-sensitive battery with quick degradation to heat exposure or at high temperatures.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The battery can withstand a greater number of charge/discharge cycles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flammable liquid electrolyte or damaged separator may lead to explosion or fire risk.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self-discharge rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly fragile with a risk of perforation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult transportation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow loss of charge when not in use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs protection circuitry to maintain safe charging limits.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If used correctly, lithium-ion batteries have a long lifespan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improper disposal/recycling may lead to environmental contamination.</li> </ul>

Source: Blackridge Research & Consulting

**Source: DTE**

**Facts in News**

**Mengtian Module**

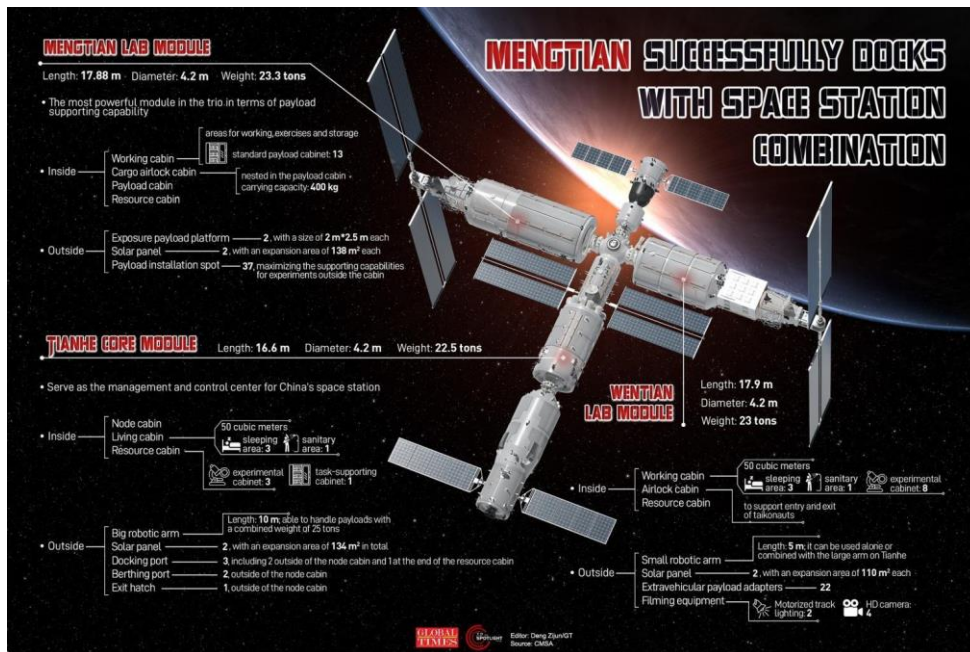
**(GS-3 space)**

**In News**

- Recently, **China** launched its third and final permanent space station component (**Tiangong space station**).

**About Mengtian module**

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- Mengtian is the second lab module and the last major component of China's space station.
  - It means “heavenly dream”.
  - Mengtian will later be relocated to its permanent position and the three modules Tianhe, Wentian lab module and Mengtian will form a basic T-shape structure of the space station.
- Mengtian weighs in at about 23 tons, is 17.9 meters (58.7 feet) long and has a diameter of 4.2 meters (13.8 feet).
- It will provide space for science experiments in zero gravity, an airlock for exposure to the vacuum of space, and a small robotic arm to support extravehicular payloads.
- The already orbiting 23-ton Wentian, or “quest for the heavens” laboratory is designed for science and biology experiments and is heavier than any other single-module spacecraft currently in space.

## Do you know?

- Next year, China plans to launch the Xuntian space telescope, which, while not a part of Tiangong, will orbit in sequence with the station and can dock occasionally with it for maintenance.

Source: TH

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**Issues with the Aadhaar-Voter ID card Linkage:**

**( GS-2 Government Policies & Interventions, Issues Arising out of their Design & Implementation)**

**In Context**

- Recently, **the Supreme Court** issued notice to the Union government on a plea challenging the **power of the Election Commission (EC)** to link the **Aadhaar database with voter ID cards**.

**More about the news**

- **Issue:**
  - **Electoral reforms:**
    - In December 2021, the Central government passed **The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021**.
      - The bill amended the **Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Representation Act, 1951** to implement certain electoral reforms.
  - **The amendment:**
    - The amendment stated that an electoral registration officer may require a person to furnish their Aadhaar number for the purposes of “**establishing the identity of a person**” or for the “**authentication of entries in electoral roll and to identify registration of name of the same person** in the electoral roll of more than one constituency or more than once in the same constituency.”
  - **Not voluntary in action:**
    - The updated Act also stated that no individual **will be denied inclusion in the electoral roll**, nor have their names deleted from the roll **if they are unable to furnish their Aadhaar number** due to “sufficient cause as may be prescribed”.
    - Such individuals may be allowed to **provide alternative documents** prescribed by the government.
- **The petition:**
  - **Right to Vote & secrecy of the votes:**

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- The petitioner, argued that the **right to vote is one of the “most sacred rights” and cannot be denied** if a person lacks an Aadhaar card.
- It also stated that the linkage would compromise the secrecy of the votes.
- **K. S Puttaswamy v Union of India & Ors:**
  - The petitioner argued that the Aadhaar card can only be made mandatory if some benefit of subsidy is sought and not if there is an intrinsic right, such as the right to vote.
    - This is the stated judgment in Justice **K. S Puttaswamy v Union of India & Ors**, which dealt with the validity of the Aadhaar card.
- **Questioning the independence of the EC:**
  - The petition argued that the linkage poses a major threat to the independence of the Election Commission (EC).
  - **The preparation of the electoral rolls** is made dependent on the **processes of Aadhaar**, a process EC has no control over.

**Other Challenges & criticisms**

- **Infringing Fundamental right:**
  - The linking of voter IDs and Aadhaar violates the fundamental right to privacy as defined by the Supreme Court in the judgment.
- **Influencing the voting process:**
  - Many have also flagged concerns that the linkage would help in creating voter profiles that may be used to influence the voting process.
- **Data breach:**
  - The linkage would open the ecosystem to a possibility of a data breach by any agency or non-state actors.
- **No legislative competence:**
  - It is beyond the legislative competence of the Aadhaar Act to be linked with the electoral laws.
- **Voting rights of non-citizens:**
  - Aadhaar is meant for the residents of India and all residents are not Indians.
  - By linking Aadhaar with the electoral process, we are potentially giving voting rights to non-citizens.

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**Significance of linking link electoral rolls to Aadhaar**

- **Issue of multiple enrollments:**
  - The government claims the linkage will solve the problem of multiple enrollments of the same person at different places.
- **How will this linkage help?**
  - Once the Aadhaar linkage is achieved, the electoral roll data system will instantly alert the existence of previous registration(s) whenever a person applies for new registration.
  - This will help in cleaning the electoral roll to a great extent and facilitate elector registration in the location at which they are ‘ordinarily resident’, a government official had said earlier.

**Way Ahead**

- The Election Commission should list the safeguards built into the electoral roll data platform for “protecting the privacy of individuals”.

**Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) & Aadhaar**

- **Aadhaar Act & Establishment of UIDAI:**
  - The UIDAI is a **statutory authority** established under the provisions of the **Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 (“Aadhaar Act 2016”)** on 12 July 2016 by the Government of India, **under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).**
- **Need of UIDAI:**
  - UIDAI was created to issue Unique Identification numbers (UID), named as "Aadhaar", to all residents of India. The UID had to be -
    - Robust enough to eliminate duplicate and fake identities, and
    - Verifiable and authenticable in an easy, cost-effective way.
  - As on 31st October 2021, the Authority has issued 131.68 crore Aadhaar numbers to the residents of India.
- **Under the Aadhaar Act 2016, UIDAI is responsible for:**
  - Aadhaar enrolment and authentication, including operation and management of all stages of Aadhaar life cycle,
  - Developing the policy, procedure, and system for issuing Aadhaar numbers to individuals and
  - Perform authentication and the security of identity information and

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authentication records of individuals.

Source: [TH](#)

**China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC):**

**( GS-2 Agreements Involving India &/or Affecting India's Interests )**

**In News**

- In a reference to **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, at a virtual meeting of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**, India's External Affairs Minister recently reiterated that **connectivity projects (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC))** should respect **sovereignty and territorial integrity**.

**About**

- The External Affairs Minister also pitched for more trade through Iran's Chabahar port and the International North South Transport Corridors (INSTC) that India is a part of, aiming to improve bilateral trade with Central Asian countries.

**Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):**

- **About:**
  - It is a **permanent intergovernmental** international organisation of **Eurasian Nations** with a **secretariat in Beijing**.
- **Aim:**
  - It is a political, economic and military organisation that aims at maintaining peace, security and stability in the region.
- **Origin: Journey from Shanghai Five to SCO**
  - Shanghai Five emerged in 1996 from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks between 4 former USSR republics and China.
  - **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan** were members of the Shanghai Five.
  - With the accession of **Uzbekistan** to the group in 2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
  - The SCO Charter was signed in 2002 and entered into force in 2003.
- **Inclusion of India & Pakistan:**

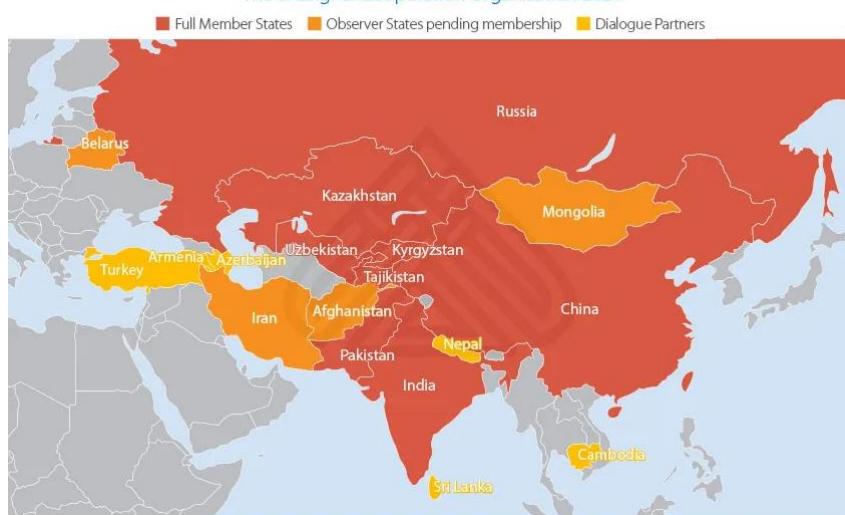
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## (INSTITUTE FOR IAS/IPS AND TNPSC EXAMINATIONS)

- **India and Pakistan** both were initially observer states.
- Both were given full membership in 2017.
- **Iran and Belarus:**
  - **2021 SCO summit in Dushanbe** agreed for **Iran** to join in SCO.
  - **Belarus** has also begun the membership process for SCO.
- 

Member states	Observer States	Dialogue Partners
Kazakhstan	Afghanistan	Azerbaijan
China	Belarus	Armenia
Kyrgyzstan	Iran	Cambodia
Russia	Mongolia	Nepal
Tajikistan		Turkey
Uzbekistan		Sri Lanka
India		
Pakistan		

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation 2021



- **Language:**
  - The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- **Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:**
  - **Heads of State Council:**

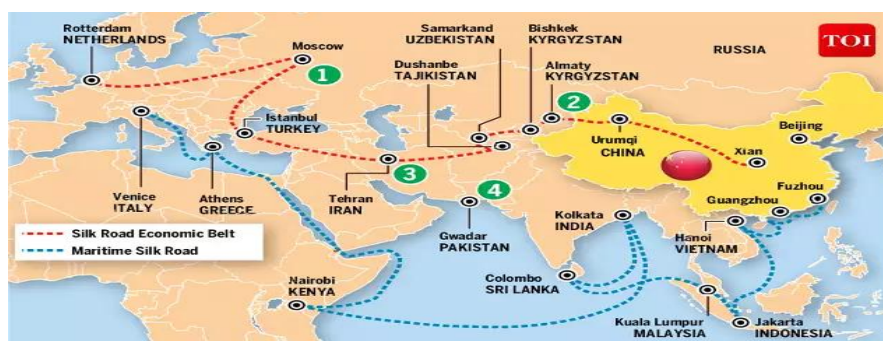
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- It is the supreme SCO body that decides its internal functioning and its interaction with other States & international organisations.
  - It also considers contemporary international issues.
- **Heads of Government Council:**
  - It approves the budget, considers and decides upon issues related to economic spheres of interaction within SCO.
- **Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs:**
  - It considers issues related to day-to-day activities.
- **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS):**
  - It was established to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- **SCO Secretariat:**
  - It is based in Beijing.
  - It provides informational, analytical & organisational support.

**About China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

- **Launched in 2015**, the CPEC is the flagship project of the multi-billion-dollar **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing's influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.
- The **3,000 km-long China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** consists of highways, railways, and pipelines.
- CPEC eventually aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China's North Western region Xinjiang through a vast network of highways and railways.
- The proposed project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banks.

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OBOR talks of connecting 65 countries

Over half the world's population (4.4 Billion)

Around 30% of the global economy

Total infra investment need of about \$5 trillion

## THE PLAN

- Land and sea routes running from China to Europe and Africa
- Assets planned: Ports, roads, railways, airports, power plants, oil & gas pipelines, refineries, free trade zones, and infra for IT, telecom and fintech
- Audit firm PwC has said that about \$250 billion in projects are underway or signed off

## Significance

- The agreement is aimed at boosting Chinese investment in Pakistan as well as transferring Chinese industrial capacity.
- The framework will promote industrialisation and development of economic zones, and initiate, plan, execute, and monitor projects, both in the public as well as the private sectors.
- The corridor links Xinjiang with Gwadar and also passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) where China is investing in a number of projects.
- CPEC's early-harvest projects had transformed Pakistan's economic landscape, thus laying a solid foundation for sustainable economic growth.

## Challenges associated with the plan

- **Delays in execution:** The CPEC projects were also facing delays because of the change in taxation policies by the last government in violation of commitments given to China.
- **Pakistan's failure:** The Chinese authorities were irritated because of Pakistan's failure to honour its contractual obligations under the CPEC framework.

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- **Financial crisis:** China is also concerned over the acute financial crisis faced by Pakistan, prompting it to step in periodically to bail it out with induction of foreign exchange loans.
- Pakistan was a critic of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) earlier for its **secrecy and uneven investments** neglecting certain provinces of the country.
- India has protested to China over the CPEC as it is being laid through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- A report by US-based international development research lab AidData said that a substantial chunk of Chinese development financing under the CPEC consists of loans that are at or near commercial rates as opposed to grants.
- **Lack of transparency:** As much as 40 percent of China's lending to Pakistan does not appear on the government's books.
- **Laxity:** The project is behind schedule and only three of the total 15 projects announced have been completed so far.
- **China's debt trap policy:** Critics also foresee that the weak economic indicators of Pakistan might lead to a possibility of the country defaulting on debt repayments, as Chinese loans have high interest rates.

### India's Concerns

- **Violation of Indian Sovereignty:**
  - The project violates the sovereignty of India as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), which is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan.
  - As per well-established international conventions, no construction is allowed in any disputed territory, without taking the other country into confidence.
- **Exploitation of Natural Resources:**
  - Under CPEC, China plans to build two mega-dams on the Indus, named Bunji Dam and Bhasha Dam.
  - This will put a heavy strain on the Indus Water Basin.
- **Security Concerns for India:**
  - **Increase in China's Activities in IOR:**
    - With Gwadar being a part of CPEC, India fears an escalation of PLA Navy activities in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
  - **Threat to Indian Trade and Connectivity:**
    - Majority of Indian tangible imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

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- China can easily create impediments to its access to the Middle-east in case of a conflict, jeopardizing India's energy security.
- **Enhanced threat from Pakistan:**
  - With the overhauling of the Karakoram Highway, Pakistan will enjoy an advantage in mobilizing troops as well as heavy military equipment to PoK.
  - At the same time, an increase in financial returns to Pakistan through CPEC may expand its ability to fund military infrastructure as well as state-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir, thus destabilizing the region.

**Way ahead**

- **Maintain Communication:**
  - Experts have advocated that India maintain communication and cordial relations with its neighbours.
  - In such a context, India has done well to keep participating in forums like Shanghai Cooperation Organization to maintain communication with both Pakistan and China.
- **International Collaboration:**
  - It is well settled that India cannot compete with China in the matter of financing developmental projects like CPEC in other developing countries.
  - Therefore, it needs to collaborate with agencies like Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to offer soft loans to save them from falling into the Chinese debt trap.
- **Security Concerns:**
  - Developing countries, especially the countries of Southeast Asia have pinned their hopes on India to counter China's hegemony in the region.
  - Here, India needs to build on alliances like Quad to maintain the balance of power in the Indo-pacific region.

**Source:** [IE](#)

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**Expanding Biosphere Footprint:**

( GS-2 Agreements Involving India &/or Affecting India's Interests, GS-3 Conservation , Biodiversity and Environment )

**In News**

- **November 3** is the first 'The International Day for Biosphere Reserves', to be celebrated beginning 2022.

**More about The World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)**

- **About:**
  - The UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) was formed in 1971.
  - WNBR covers **internationally designated protected areas**, known as **biosphere reserves**, which are **meant to demonstrate a balanced relationship** between people and nature (e.g. encourage sustainable development).
    - They are created under the **Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)**.
- **About the biosphere reserves:**
  - All biosphere reserves are internationally recognised sites on land, at the coast, or in the oceans.
  - There are 738 biosphere reserves in 134 countries, including 22 transboundary sites. **They are distributed as follows:**
    - 90 sites in 33 countries in Africa
    - 36 sites in 14 countries in the Arab States
    - 172 sites in 24 countries in Asia and the Pacific
    - 308 sites in 41 countries in Europe and North America
    - 132 sites in 22 countries Latin America and the Caribbean.
  - **India has 12 internationally recognised BRs. They are as follows:**
    - Nilgiri
    - Gulf of Mannar
    - Sunderban
    - Nanda Devi
    - Nokrek
    - Pachmarhi
    - Similipal

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- Achanakmar-Amarkantak
- Great Nicobar
- Agasthyamala
- Khangchendzonga
- Panna
- **Nomination & approval of biosphere reserves:**
  - Governments alone decide which areas to nominate.
  - Before approval by UNESCO, the sites are externally examined.
  - If approved, they will be managed based on a plan, reinforced by credibility checks while remaining under the sovereignty of their national government.
- **Functions of Biosphere Reserves:**
  - Biosphere Reserves involve local communities and all interested stakeholders in planning and management. They integrate three main "functions":
  - Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity
  - Economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable
  - Logistic support, underpinning development through research, monitoring, education and training.

**Structure of Biosphere Reserve**

- They are demarcated into the following 3 interrelated zones:
- **Core Zone:**
  - Includes protected areas, as they act as reference points on the natural state of the ecosystems represented by the biosphere reserves. Have endemic species of plants & animals.
  - A core zone is a protected region, like a National Park or Sanctuary/protected/regulated mostly under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
  - It is kept free from human interference.
- **Buffer Zone:**
  - The buffer zone surrounds the core zone and its activities are managed in this area in ways that help in the protection of the core zone in its natural condition.
  - It includes restoration, limited tourism, fishing, grazing, etc; which are permitted to reduce its effect on the core zone.
  - Research and educational activities are to be encouraged.

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- **Transition Zone:**

- It is the outermost part of the biosphere reserve. It is the zone of cooperation where human ventures and conservation are done in harmony.
- It includes settlements, croplands, managed forests and areas for intensive recreation and other economic uses characteristics of the region.

**Expansion of biosphere reserves**

- **Biosphere reserves in Asia:**

- There are 12 BRs in India, four in Sri Lanka, and three in the Maldives.
- Some of the countries in South Asia do not yet have any or enough biosphere reserves.
  - **Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal** do not have biospheres as yet.
- In most, if not all cases, the political will is certainly there, but there is a lack of know-how and financial resources.

- **Need for expansion:**

- According to the **Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** released in **2019** by the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)**, the main global drivers of biodiversity loss are:
  - Climate change,
  - Invasive species,
  - Over-exploitation of natural resources,
  - Pollution and
  - Urbanisation.
- **The ecological carrying capacity** of planet earth has largely been exceeded because of our collective excesses.
- Therefore, the need was felt to address this trend with **cleaner air, high-quality drinking water, and enough food and healthy habitats** to ensure that ecosystem services continue to benefit humanity without critically affecting nature's balance.

**Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)**

- MAB is an intergovernmental scientific program, **launched in 1971** by

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**UNESCO.**

- **Aim:**
  - It aims to establish a scientific basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments.
- The MAB program **provides a unique platform for cooperation** on research and development, capacity-building and networking to share information, knowledge and experience on three interlinked issues:
  - Biodiversity loss,
  - Climate change and
  - Sustainable development.
- The programme addresses challenges linked to **scientific, environmental, societal and development issues** in diverse ecosystems; from **mountain regions to marine, coastal and island areas; from tropical forests to dry lands and urban areas.**

**Way Ahead**

- The ‘**South and Central Asia MAB Reserve**’ **Networking Meeting** (where MAB stands Man and the Biosphere) is planned for 2023, to advance biosphere reserve establishment and management.
- In addition, an expert mission has been planned for spring 2023 — to Bhutan, India’s north-east and the Sundarbans in Bangladesh.
- With at least one biosphere reserve per country in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal until 2025 (with additional biosphere reserves in India’s North-East and along the coasts) it will give realisation to millions of people that a better future is truly possible — one where we will truly live in harmony with nature.

**Source:** [TH](#)

**Nutrient Based Subsidy Scheme :**

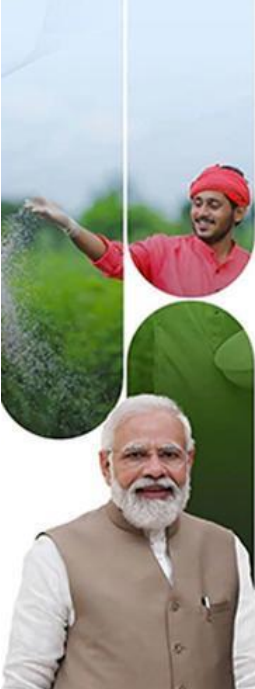
(GS -3 Agriculture)

**In News**

- Recently, the **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** chaired by the Prime Minister approved a 51,875 crore subsidy for phosphatic & potassic fertilisers for the rabi season.

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## About Nutrient Based Subsidy Scheme



**CABINET DECISIONS**  
02 NOVEMBER 2022

**Nutrient Based Subsidy For Fertilizers**

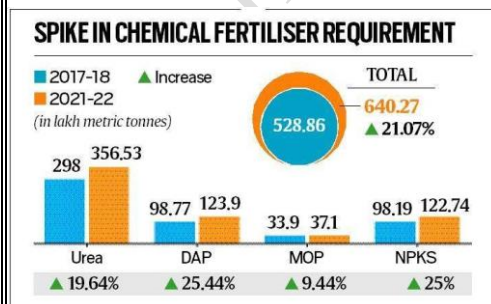
Cabinet approves Rs 51,875 Crore Nutrient Based Subsidy for per Kg rates of Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) for various Nutrients that is Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potash (K) and Sulphar (S) for Phosphatic and Potassic fertilizers for Rabi Season 2022-23, from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> march 2023

Nutrient	Rs / kg
Nitrogen (N)	98.02
Phosphorus (P)	66.93
Potash (K)	23.65
Sulphar (S)	6.12

Cabinet approves Nutrient Based Subsidy rates for Phosphatic and Potassic fertilizers for Rabi season 2022-23 from 1st October, 2022 to 31st March, 2023

- The nutrient based subsidy scheme has been **implemented since 2010 by the Department of Fertilizers.**
- Under the NBS policy, a **fixed rate of subsidy is announced** on nutrients namely **Nitrogen (N), Phosphate (P), Potash (K) and Sulphur (S) by the government on an annual basis.**

## PM PRANAM (PM Promotion of Alternate Nutrients for Agriculture Management Yojana)



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- It aims to **bring down the subsidy burden on chemical fertilisers.**
- The scheme will have **no separate budget** and will be financed through the “savings of existing fertiliser subsidy” under schemes run by the Department of Fertilizers.
  - **50 per cent of subsidy savings** will be passed on as a grant to the state that saves the money.
- **70 percent of the grant provided under the scheme can be used for asset creation** related to technological adoption of alternate fertilisers and alternate fertiliser production units at village, block and district levels.
  - The remaining **30 per cent grant money can be used for rewarding and encouraging farmers**, panchayats, farmer producer organisations and self-help groups that are involved in the reduction of fertiliser use and awareness generation.

- Government is making available fertilizers, **namely Urea and 25 grades for P&K fertilizers** to farmers at subsidized prices through fertilizer manufacturers/importers.

#### **Rationale behind Nutrient Based Subsidy Scheme**

- **Availability:** This will enable smooth availability of all P&K fertilizers to the farmers during Rabi season at the subsidized prices of fertilizers and support the agriculture sector.
- **Absorbing the volatility:** the volatility in the international prices of fertilizers and raw materials has been primarily absorbed by the Union Government.
- **Ensuring supply:** The P&K fertilizers are made available to farmers in adequate quantities.
- **Wider choice:** More grades of P&K fertilizers have been brought under the purview of the NBS Scheme giving the farmers wider choice to use complex fertilizer grades.

#### **The Soil Health Card Scheme**

- It was launched in **2015 at Suratgarh, Rajasthan.**
- The scheme has been introduced to **assist State Governments to issue soil health cards to all farmers** in the country.
- Soil health card **provides information to farmers on nutrient status** of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.

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- **Objectives:**
  - **To issue soil health cards every two years to all farmers**, so as to provide a basis to address nutrient deficiencies in fertilization practices.
  - **To strengthen functioning of Soil Testing Laboratories (STLs)** through capacity building, involvement of agriculture students and effective linkage with Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
  - **To diagnose soil fertility** related constraints with standardized procedures for sampling uniformly across states and analysis and design taluka / block level fertilizer recommendations in targeted districts.
  - **To develop and promote soil test** based nutrient management in the districts for enhancing nutrient use efficiency.
  - **To provide financial assistance to farmers** to apply corrective measures for deficiencies and popularizing balance and integrated nutrient management practices for their cropping systems.
  - **To build capacities of district and state level staff** and of progressive farmers for promotion of nutrient management practices.

Source: [LM](#)

**Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) interceptor AD-1 missile:**

(GS- 3 Defence)

**In News**

- Recently ,Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted a successful maiden flight-test of Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) interceptor

**About AD-1 missile**

- It is a **long-range interceptor missile** designed for both **low exo-atmospheric** and **endo-atmospheric interception** of **long-range ballistic missiles** as well as aircraft.
- It is propelled by a **two-stage solid motor** and equipped with an indigenously-developed advanced control system, navigation and guidance algorithm to precisely guide the vehicle to the target.

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- **Relevance** : it is a unique type of interceptor with advanced technologies available with a very few nations in the world and it will further strengthen the country's BMD capability to the next level.

Source:[PIB](#)

### **J&K's 'Back to Village' Programme**

( GS-2 Government Policies & Interventions: )

#### **In News**

Jammu and Kashmir administration holds the fourth phase of the week-long programme .

#### **About 'Back to Village' Programme**

- In 2018 ,the **Government of Jammu and Kashmir** has embarked on an ambitious and extensive programme of reaching out to the people at the grassroots level to create in the rural masses an earnest desire for a decent standard of living.
- As part of this programme, **civil servants will have to reach out to each Panchayat of the State**, where they will stay for a specific period to interact and obtain feedback from the grassroots so as to tailor government efforts in improving delivery of village-specific services.
- **Objectives**
  - It is aimed to involve the **people of the state and government officials** in a joint effort to deliver the **mission of equitable development**.
  - It is aimed at energising Panchayats and directing development efforts in rural areas through community participation.

Source:[IE](#)

### **Facts in News:**

#### **Shrinking of Rhinoceros Horn:**

(GS-3 species)

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**Context**

- As per the Study by British Ecological Society, the **horns of rhinoceroses may have become smaller over time.**

**Reasons for shrinking Horns**

- Rhinos have long been hunted for their horns, which are highly valued in some cultures.
- The declining horn length over time across species, perhaps related to selective pressure of hunting and evolution.

**Key Fact:**

- Rhino horns are made of keratin, which is also the key component of human hair and fingernails.

**More about the Study**

- The study found that the rate of decline in horn length was **highest in the critically-endangered Sumatran rhino** and **lowest in the white rhino of Africa**, which is the most commonly found species both in the wild and in captivity.
- This observation follows patterns seen in other animals, such as tusk size in elephants and horn length in wild sheep, which have been driven down by directional selection due to trophy hunting.

**Rhinoceroses**

- **About:**
  - Rhinoceroses are large, herbivorous mammals identified by their characteristic horned snouts.
  - The word "**rhinoceros**" comes from the Greek "**rhino**" (**nose**) and "**ceros**" (**horn**).
  - There are **five species** and 11 subspecies of rhino; some have **two horns, while others have one.**

## Types of Rhinos

Animal Spot



Javan Rhinoceros



White Rhinoceros



Black Rhinoceros



Indian Rhinoceros



Sumatran Rhinoceros

- **Geographical Location:**
  - **White rhinos and black rhinos** live in the grasslands and floodplains of eastern and southern Africa.
  - **Greater one-horned rhinos** can be found in the swamps and rain forests of northern India and southern Nepal.
  - **Sumatran and Javan rhinos** are found only in small areas of Malaysian and Indonesian swamps and rainforests.
- **Threats:**
  - Habitat loss and fragmentation
  - Poaching (especially for their horns and hide)
  - Reducing population density
  - Decreasing genetic diversity
- **Conservation status of the five species are:**
  - Javan Rhinos (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*): **Critically Endangered**
  - Sumatran rhinos (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*): **Critically Endangered**
  - Black rhinos (*Diceros bicornis*): **Critically Endangered**
  - White rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum*): **Near Threatened**
  - Greater One-Horned Rhinos (*Rhinoceros unicornis*): **Vulnerable**

### Rhinos in India

- **About:**

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- **Only the Greater One-Horned Rhino** is found in India which is also known as the **Indian rhino** and is the **largest of the rhino species**.
- **Assam accounts for its largest population** in India and had at least five rhino-bearing areas till the 1980s.



- **Features:**
  - It is identified by a **single black horn and a grey-brown hide** with skin folds.
  - They primarily graze, with a diet consisting almost entirely of grasses as well as leaves, branches of shrubs and trees, fruit, and aquatic plants.
- **Conservation Efforts by India**
  - **New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019:** Signed by India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia.
  - National Rhino Conservation Strategy 2019
  - Project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
  - Indian Rhino Vision 2020.
- **World Rhino Day** is celebrated on **September 22 every year**.

Source: [TH](#)

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**Facts in News:**

**ST status to Pahari community:**

( GS-2 Government Policies & Interventions: )

**In News**

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has cleared the way for the **inclusion of the ‘Pahari ethnic group’ in the Scheduled Tribes** list of the Union Territory of **Jammu and Kashmir**.
  - Currently, Jammu and Kashmir has **12 communities** that have been notified as STs.

**How will the inclusion happen?**

- For the addition to the ST list of J&K, the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** will be required to bring a **Bill in Parliament to amend the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1989** accordingly.
- The addition will be **finalised once the President of India notifies** the revised schedule as empowered by **Article 342 of the Constitution of India**.

**About Pahari community**

- It is a **linguistic group** mainly residing in the **Pir Panjal valley** comprising Rajouri and Poonch districts.
  - They are also spread in **parts of the Kashmir valley**.
- **Gujjar’s, Bakarwals and Pahari’s** are **non-Kashmiri speaking** population of J&K.
  - Pahari’s also comprise both **Hindus and Muslims** unlike Bakerwals and Gujjar’s, two prominent nomadic clans.

Source: [TH](#)

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**Facts in News**

**One nation, One ITR Form:**

( GS-2 Government Policies & Interventions: GS-3 Indian Economy & Related Issues )

**In News**

- Recently, the **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** has proposed a single income tax return (ITR) form for all taxpayers.

**How many kinds of ITR forms are there now?**

- There are **seven kinds** of ITR forms, which are used by different categories of taxpayers. They are as follows:
  - **ITR Form 1, called 'Sahaj'**, is for small and medium taxpayers. Sahaj forms can be filed by individuals who have an income up to Rs 50 lakh, with earnings from salary, one house property/ other sources (interest etc).
  - **ITR-2** is filed by people with income from residential property.
  - **ITR-3** is intended for people who have income as profits from business/ profession
  - **ITR-4 (Sugam)** is, like ITR-1 (Sahaj), simple forms, and can be filed by individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs) and firms with total income up to Rs 50 lakh from business and profession.
  - **ITR-5 and 6** are for limited liability partnerships (LLPs) and businesses respectively.
  - **ITR-7** is filed by trusts and non-profit organisations.

**Changes that has been proposed**

- All taxpayers, barring trusts and non-profit organisations (ITR-7), will be able to **use a common ITR form**, which will include a separate head for disclosure of income from virtual digital assets.

**Rationale behind the move**

- The proposed draft ITR takes a relook at the return filing system in tandem with **international best practices**.

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- The draft form aims to **make it easier to file returns**, and to considerably **reduce the time taken** for the job by individuals and non-business-type taxpayers.
- It intends the **smart design of schedules in a user-friendly manner** with a better arrangement, logical flow, and increased scope of pre-filing.
- It will also **facilitate the proper reconciliation of third-party data** available with the Income-Tax department vis-à-vis the data to be reported in the ITR to reduce the compliance burden on the taxpayers.

**Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)**

- **Functions and Organization**
  - The Central Board of Direct Taxes is a **statutory authority** functioning under the **Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963**.
  - The officials of the Board in their ex-officio capacity also function as a Division of the Ministry **dealing with matters relating to levy and collection of direct taxes**.
- **Composition and Functions of CBDT**
  - **The Central Board of Direct Taxes consists of a Chairman and following six Members:**
    - Chairman
    - Member (Income Tax & Revenue)
    - Member (Legislation)
    - Member (Administration)
    - Member (investigation)
    - Member (TPS & system)
    - Member (Audit & Judicial)

Source: [IE](#)

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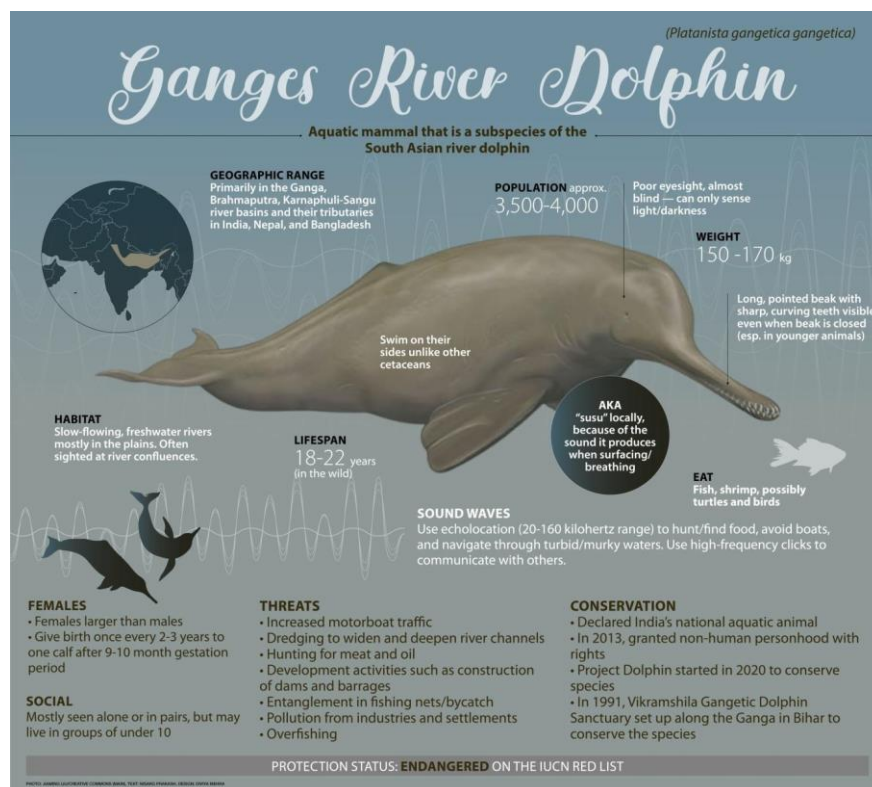
## Gangetic River Dolphin

(GS3- Conservation & species in news)

### In News

- The Dolphins have started coming back to Ganga river with improvement in the quality of its water through the **Namami Gange programme**.

### About Gangetic River dolphin



- Discovery:**
  - The Ganges river dolphin was officially **discovered in 1801**.
  - They were declared as the **National Aquatic Animal of India in 2009**.
- Freshwater species:**
  - The Gangetic river dolphin is one of the **four freshwater dolphin species in the world**.

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- The other three are the **baiji**, now likely extinct from the Yangtze River in China, the **bhulan** of the Indus in Pakistan and the **boto** of the Amazon River in Latin America.
- **Habitat:**
  - Ganges river dolphins once lived in the **Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.**
    - But the species is **extinct from most of its early distribution ranges.**
  - The distribution range of the Ganges river dolphins in India covers seven states namely, **Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.**
- **Characteristics:**
  - The **Ganges river dolphins can only live in freshwater** and are essentially blind.
  - They are **frequently found alone** or in small groups, and generally a mother and calf travel together.
  - **Females are larger than males** and give birth once every two to three years to only one calf.
  - The Dolphin **cannot breathe in the water.** It surfaces every **30-120 seconds** to breathe in fresh air as **it is a mammal.**
  - Navigation and hunting through a highly developed ‘**sonar system**’, using **echolocation (ultrasonic sounds).**
- **Different names:**
  - They are also known as **Susu, Hihu, Blind dolphin, Ganga river dolphin, side swimming dolphin and South Asian river dolphin.**
    - They **hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds**, which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to see an image in their mind.
- **IUCN Status**
  - Ganges river dolphins are listed as **Endangered in the IUCN Red List.**

**Environmental significance**

- They are an **indicator of a healthy ecosystem.**
- They are the **apex predators in the freshwater food chain** and their presence indicates that the **water is clean** and there is a **good number of prey species such as fish, turtles, crustaceans etc.**

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**Threats**

- **Dam creation, barrages, irrigation projects and fishing** are activities that are dividing and isolating populations of the Ganga river dolphin, significantly reducing its range.
- Poachers kill them for their **flesh, fat and oil**. They are also sometimes injured by machines in the water or accidentally caught in fishing nets.

**Katarnia wildlife sanctuary**

- It is situated in the **Upper Gangetic plain** falling in the **Terai of Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh**.
  - It is part of **Dudhwa Tiger Reserve Lakhimpur kheri**.
- It provides **strategic connectivity** between the tiger habitats of **Dudhwa and Kishanpur in India and Nepal**.
- It is **home to a number of endangered species** including gharial, tiger, rhino, Gangetic dolphin, Swamp deer, Hispid hare, Bengal florican, the White-backed and Long-billed vultures.

Source: **TH**

**Facts in News**

**Black Sea Grain Initiative:**

(GS -2 India and foreign relation)

**In News**

- **Russia** recently **re-joined** the Black Sea Grain deal.

**About Black Sea Grain Initiative**

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- The deal was brokered by the **United Nations (UN) and Turkey**.
- The deal was to provide for a **safe maritime humanitarian corridor** for **Ukrainian exports** (particularly for food grains) from three of its key ports, namely, **Chornomorsk, Odesa and Yuzhny/Pivdennyi** in the **Black Sea**.
- It aims to **tackle rising food prices** due to the geopolitical conflict.
- **Joint Coordination Centre (JCC):**
  - The deal put in place a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC), comprising **senior representatives from Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the UN** for oversight and coordination.
  - **All commercial ships** are required to **register directly with the JCC** to ensure appropriate monitoring, inspection and safe passage.

### Significance of the deal

- **Approximately 9.8 million tonnes of grains** have been shipped since the initiative was commenced.
- **People hoarding the grain** in the hope of selling it for a sizable profit owing to the supply crunch were **now obligated to sell**.
- The initiative has also been **credited for having made a huge difference to the global cost of living crisis**.

### Do you know?

- Ukraine is among the **largest exporters of wheat, maize, rapeseed, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil, globally**.
- Its access to the deep-sea ports in the Black Sea enables it to directly approach **Russia and Europe** along with **grain importers from the**

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**Middle East and North Africa.**

**Source: TH**

**Voting Rights of Undertrial Prisoners:**

**(GS-2 Executive & Judiciary; Government Policies & Interventions)**

**In News**

- Recently, the Supreme Court decided to examine poll law which deprives under trials, civil prison detainees their right to vote.

**More about the news**

- **Section 62(5) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951:**
  - This section mandates that “**no person shall vote at any election** if he is **confined in a prison**, whether under a sentence of **imprisonment or transportation** or otherwise, or is in the **lawful custody of the police**”.
- **The Petition:**
  - The petition is challenging a provision in the election law that imposes a **blanket ban on under trials, persons confined in civil prisons** and **convicts** serving their sentence in jails **from casting their votes**.
- **Issue:**
  - **Comparing with convicts out on bail:**
    - While **convicts out on bail could vote**, under trials, whose innocence or guilt has not been conclusively determined, and those confined in civil persons were deprived of their right to vote.
  - **Lack of reasonable classification:**
    - The ban lacks reasonable classification **based on the nature of the crime or duration of the sentence imposed** unlike in countries like **South Africa, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Greece, Canada, etc.**
  - **Infringement of Fundamental Right:**

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- This lack of classification is anathema to the **fundamental right to equality under Article 14 (right to equality)**, the petition pointed out.
- **Large number of population not voting:**
  - Petition claims that this provision disenfranchises a large segment of the population of the country.

**Issue of Undertrial Prisoners:**

- **Meaning:**
  - An undertrial is a person who is currently on trial or who is imprisoned on remand whilst awaiting trial or A person who is on a trial in a court of law.
  - **The 78th Report of Law Commission** also includes a person who is in judicial custody on remand during investigation in the definition of an 'undertrial'.
- **NCRB report on undertrial prisoners in India:**
  - The **latest National Crime Reports Bureau (NCRB) report of 2021** shows that a total of **5,54,034 prisoners were confined as on December 31, 2021** in various jails across the country.
    - The number of undertrial prisoners has increased from 3,71,848 in 2020 to 4,27,165 in 2021. A hike of 14.9%.
  - **State wise data:**
    - Uttar Pradesh has the maximum number of undertrials (21.2%, 90,606 undertrials) in the country followed by Bihar (13.9%, 59,577 undertrials) and Maharashtra (7.4%, 31,752 undertrials) at the end of last year.
- **Challenges faced by undertrial prisoners:**
  - The criminal justice delivery system in India saw **more than 0.2 million undertrial prisoners** being neglected in jail for many years.
  - In many cases it **exceeded the maximum sentence** for the crime which they had committed.
  - There have been cases where the **amount of bail** is disproportionately high.

**Voting for preventive detainees**

- While prisoners are not allowed to vote, people under preventive detention can cast their votes through postal ballots.
  - **Postal voting or ballots:**
    - It is also called Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot Papers

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(ETPB) and under this ballot papers are distributed electronically to electors and are then returned to the election officers via post.

**Recent Improvements in the Judicial System**

- **Virtual court system:**
  - The regular court proceedings in our Indian courts in such unprecedented times are either being adjourned or have been carried out virtually via **video conferencing**.
- **e-Courts portal:**
  - It is a **one-stop solution** for all stakeholders like the **litigants, advocates, government agencies, police, and common citizens**.
    - This portal is designed in a way that uses multiple languages.
    - This portal is a consolidation of all the portals across the country.
- **E-filing:**
  - E-filing, also known as **electronic filing**, is a facility that provides filing of cases through the internet.
- **National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG):**
  - The statistics of cases pending at the national, state, district and individual court level are now made accessible to the **general public, researchers, academicians and the society at large**.
  - Any individual can access this information by visiting the National Judicial Data Grid portal.
- **National Service and Tracking of Electronic Process (NSTEP):**
  - This is a mechanism that consists of a centralised process service tracking application and a mobile app for the bailiffs.
  - This is used for quick delivery of summons, notices, processes and the reduction of unreasonable delays in process serving.
- **e-Sewa Kendra:**
  - The e-Sewa Kendra is set up as a one-stop centre for accessing all the facilities provided under the **eCourts Project**.
  - It has been set up in high courts and one in the district court of each state on a trial basis.
  - With these centres, a litigant can acquire information on case status and get judgments and orders passed by the courts.
- **Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS):**
  - The Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) is an initiative of the e-Committee to **transfer data and information** between the

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different pillars of the criminal justice system, like **courts, police, jails, juvenile homes and forensic science laboratories** seamlessly, from one platform.

**Source: TH**

**India Abstains on Russia's Resolution at UNSC on Ukraine's Alleged Bio Weapons**

(GS-2 India & Foreign Relations ; Effect of Policies & Politics of Developed & Developing Countries on India's Interests)

**In News**

- Recently India abstained on a Russia-sponsored draft resolution at UNSC for a probe into Ukraine's alleged bioweapons.

**More about the news**

- **Issue:**
  - Russia has raised the **issue of chemical and biological weapons in Ukraine** several times at the U.N. Security Council since its forces invaded Ukraine.
- **Russian resolution at UNSC:**
  - Recently a motion was sponsored by Russia at the UNSC that sought to **establish a commission to investigate claims** by Moscow that the **U.S. and Ukraine are carrying out "military biological activities"** in laboratories in Ukraine in violation of the **biological weapons convention**.
- **Failed attempt:**
  - The resolution failed to get adopted as **only two Council members — Russia and China — voted in its favour**.
  - In contrast, the U.S., the U.K. and France voted against it.
  - The other Council members, including India, abstained.
- **India's opinion:**
  - In the explanation of the vote, India attached high importance to the **Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)**, which is the first non-discriminatory disarmament treaty banning a complete **category of weapons of mass destruction**.

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- India also reiterated the need to negotiate a **comprehensive legally binding protocol** providing for an **effective, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanism** to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

**Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**

- WMDs are weapons with the capacity to inflict death and destruction on such a massive scale and so indiscriminately that its very presence in the hands of a hostile power can be considered a grievous threat.
- Modern weapons of mass destruction are either **nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons**—frequently referred to collectively as **NBC weapons**.

**More about the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)**

- **About:**
  - Came into force in 1975 and the Convention was negotiated by the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Aim:**
  - Treaty prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological weapons.
- **Signatories:**
  - It has 183 signatories, including the United States, Russia, and Ukraine.
  - India has signed and ratified this convention.
- **Significance:**
  - It was the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
  - The BWC is a key element in the international community's efforts to address WMD proliferation and it has established a strong norm against biological weapons.
  - A total of eight Review Conferences have taken place since the first one in 1980.
- **Issues:**
  - There is **no implementation body of the BTWC**, allowing for blatant violations as seen in the past.

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- This conference takes place every five years to assess and try to improve upon the convention's implementation, however, it has no provisions to make sure countries are abiding by its terms.

**Chemical Weapons Convention, 1997**

- **About:**
  - It is an arms control treaty that allows for the stringent verification of compliance by State Parties.
- **Genesis:**
  - It was adopted by the **Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on 3rd September 1992** after 12 years of negotiations.
  - It opened for signature in Paris on 13th January 1993 and entered into force on 29th April 1997.
- **Administration & prohibition:**
  - It is administered by the **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**.
  - It prohibits the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of CWs by state parties.
- **Significance:**
  - It is the first disarmament agreement negotiated within a multilateral framework that provides for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under universally applied international control.
- **India:**
  - India is a signatory and party.

**Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)**

- **About:**
  - The NPT came into force in 1970.
  - The provisions of the Treaty envisage a review of the operation of the Treaty every five years.
  - The Tenth Review Conference, scheduled for 2020, was delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Aim:**
  - It seeks to inhibit the spread of nuclear weapons.
- **Members:**
  - A total of 191 States have joined the Treaty, including the five nuclear-

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weapon States.

- **Non-signatories:**
  - India, Israel, South Sudan and Pakistan never signed NPT and North Korea has declared withdrawal in the past.
- **India's stand:**
  - India refused to sign it on the grounds that the nuclear weapons states must agree to a clear plan for nuclear disarmament.
  - India reiterated its commitment to a Nuclear Weapons Convention calling for a verifiable and non-discriminatory elimination of all nuclear weapons.

**The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**

- **About:**
  - It is a multilateral treaty to ban nuclear weapons test explosions and any other nuclear explosions, for both civilian and military purposes, in all environments.
- **Not in force:**
  - It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 September 1996, but has not entered into force.

**India's Stand on Russia's War with Ukraine & way ahead**

- India's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been **distinctive among the major democracies** and among U.S. strategic partners.
- Despite its discomfort with Moscow's war, New Delhi has adopted **studied public neutrality toward Russia**.
- It has abstained from successive votes in the **UN Security Council, General Assembly, and Human Rights Council** that condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine and thus far has refused to openly call out Russia as the instigator of the crisis.
- India has been under **immense indirect pressure from Western nations** that have openly condemned Russia's military aggression against Ukraine.
- India has been pressing for the **resolution of the crisis through diplomacy and dialogue**.

**Source: TH**

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**Performance Grading Index 2020-21:**

**( GS-2 Government Policies & Intervention )**

**In News**

- Recently, the **Ministry of Education** released its Performance Grading Index.

**About the index**

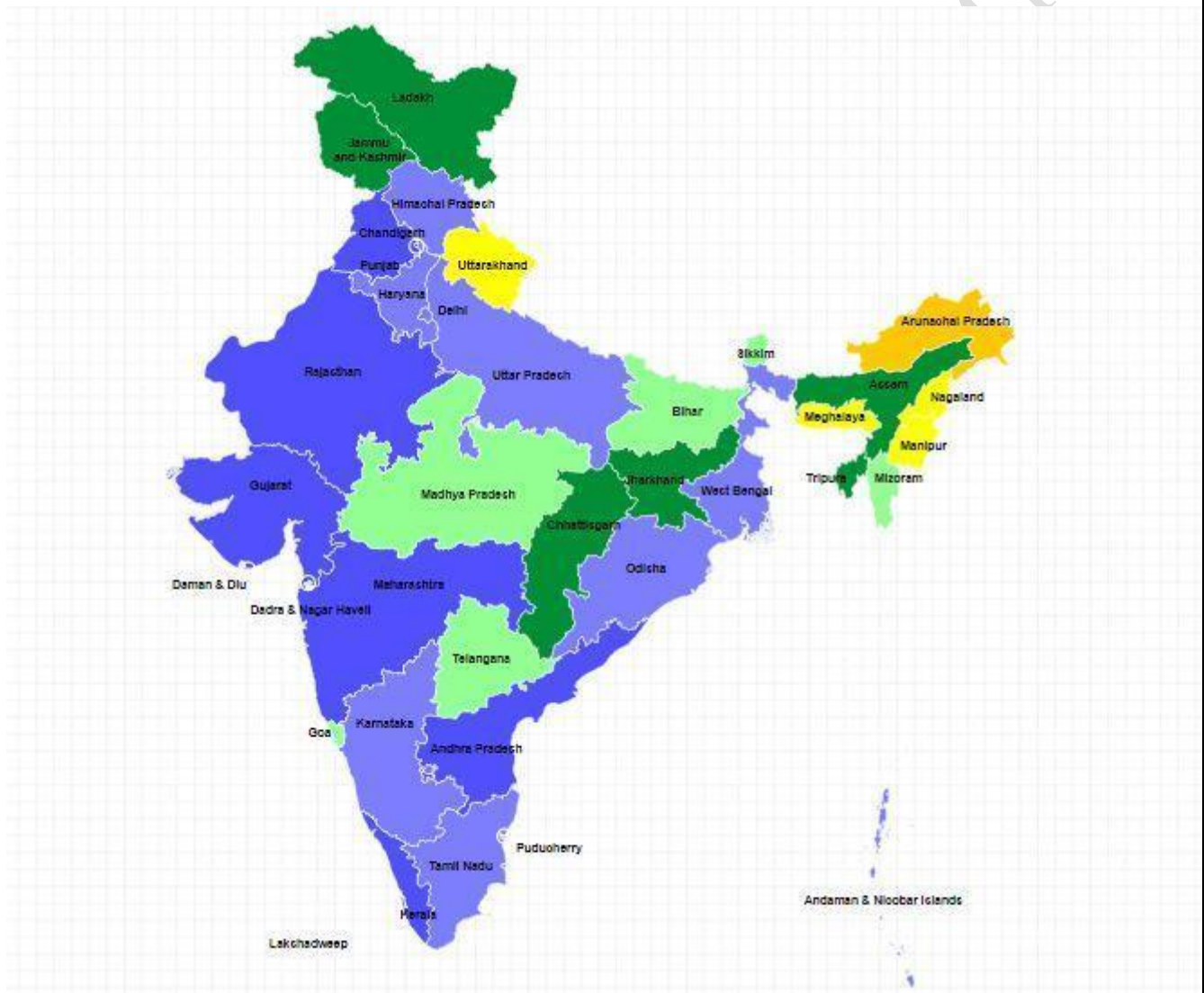
- **Previous Editions**
  - The department has released the PGI report for the year 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- **Objective**
  - The prime objective of PGI is to promote evidence-based policymaking and highlight course correction to ensure quality education for all.
- **Grading**
  - PGI 2020-21 classified the States/UTs into **ten grades**:
    - Highest achievable Grade is Level 1, which is for State/UT scoring more than 950 points out of a total of 1000 points.
    - The lowest grade is Level 10 which is for scores below 551.
- **It is an evidence-based comprehensive analysis of the school education system** across states and Union Territories.
  - It classifies States and Union Territories into 10 grades based on their score out of a total 1,000 points.
- **Their performance is assessed on a total of 70 indicators in five domains:**
  - Learning outcome
  - Access
  - Infrastructure and facilities
  - Equity
  - Governance process
- **Sources**
  - The Index is based on data drawn from several data sources, including the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE +) 2020-21, National Achievement Survey NAS 2017, and Mid Day Meal Portal.

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## Data/ Facts

- The Indian Education System is **one of the largest in the world** with about 14.9 lakh schools, 95 lakh teachers, and nearly 26.5 crore students from varied socio-economic backgrounds.

## Major Highlights



- **Top performers**
  - **Gujarat** is now among the top performers in school education.

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- **Gujarat, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh** have joined Kerala, Punjab, Chandigarh, and Maharashtra categorised under Level 2 with a score of 901 to 950 out of a total score of 1,000.
- A total of 12 States and UTs, including National Capital Territory of Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Odisha, attained **Level 3 with a score between 851-900**
- **No State** figured in the **bottom three grades**.
- **Best Improver**
  - **Ladakh** has seen the biggest improvement by climbing up from Level 10 in 2019-2020 to Level 4 in 2020-2021.
- **Gross enrolment ratio**
  - It compares the enrolment in a **specific level of education to the population of the corresponding age group**.
  - **The primary section** has improved from 101.3% in 2018-2019 to 104.8% in 2021-2022.
  - **For secondary classes**, it has risen to 79.6% in 2021-22, from 76.9% in 2018-19
  - **For higher secondary level**, it has increased from 50.14% to 57.6%.
- **Gender Parity Index (GPI) of GER**
  - It indicates the representation of girls in school with respect to their population in the corresponding age group.
  - It was also found to be **favourable to girls** compared to boys.
- **Decline in pre-primary enrolments**
  - A total of 94.95 lakh students entered pre-primary classes in 2021-2022, registering a drop of 10% as compared to the previous year when 1.06 crore children enrolled in these classes.
    - In 2020-2021, there was already a decline of 21% enrolment in pre-primary classes.
- **Decline in primary classes Enrolment**
  - It includes **classes 1 to 5**.
  - It also saw a drop for the first time falling from 12.20 lakh in 2020-2021 to 12.18 lakh in 2021-2022.
  - However, the total number of students from primary to higher secondary increased by 19 lakh to 25.57 crore.
- **Decline in number of schools**
  - The report records a decline in the number of schools due to closures as well as a lack of teachers.
  - There were 20,000 fewer schools in 2021-2022 as the total number of schools dropped from 15.09 lakh to 14.89 lakh.

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- In terms of state-wise break-up, the states where large numbers of schools were shut down in the second pandemic year included Madhya Pradesh (7,689), Odisha (1,894), Andhra Pradesh (1,395), Uttar Pradesh (1143), Punjab (994), and Maharashtra (509).
- **Private schools VS Public schools**
  - The UDISE+ report also highlighted that the enrolment in private schools continued to decline while the number of students joining government schools increased.
    - Private school students continued to join government schools as a result of financial constraints wrought by the pandemic.
- **Infrastructure**
  - **Computer facilities** were available in 44.75% of schools, while Internet access was available only in 33.9% of schools.
    - However, their availability has improved as compared to pre-Covid when only 38.5% of schools had computers and 22.3% had Internet facilities.

**Significance of the Index**

- **Optimal education outcomes**
  - PGI is to propel States & UTs towards undertaking multi-pronged interventions that will bring about the much-desired optimal education outcomes covering all dimensions.
- **Pinpointing the gaps**
  - PGI is expected to help States and UTs to pinpoint the gaps and accordingly prioritize areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level.

Source: [TH](#)

**Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan**

( GS-3 Internal security )

**In News**

- Recently, a new report by the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** was released highlighting the cultivation of Poppy in Afghanistan.

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**Key Points**

- **Demand and need driven cultivation:**
  - Driven by the demand for heroin and other opioids, mostly in the West, Afghanistan's poppy farmers have figured out that in a broken country where there are no jobs, and the de facto government has no money, poppy guarantees survival.



Image Courtesy: [IE](#)

- **Thriving industry in Afghanistan:**
  - Afghanistan's illicit narcotics industry thrived under the puritanical first Taliban regime, it flourished through two decades of democracy, and it continues to do so under the new Taliban regime.
  - Eighty percent of the world's opiates come from Afghanistan.
- **Poppy Cultivation:**
  - **Land:** In 2021 (October and November are the sowing season), it increased by 32 per cent over the previous year.

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- Last year, poppy was sown on 233,000 hectares, and in some places, farmers even replaced traditional crops with poppy.
- **Climate:** If the harvest (in spring) had not been affected by a drought that hit many parts of Afghanistan, there would have been a bumper crop.



Image Courtesy: [IE](#)

- **Price spike:**

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- A ban on cultivation imposed by the Taliban in April 2022, exempted the standing crop and harvest, and sent the price of opium shooting.
- **Alternatives:**
  - The 2021 harvest of 6,200 tonnes, 10 per cent less than in 2021, could be converted into 350-380 tonnes of export-quality heroin.

### **Global Scenario**

- The supply source for this huge underground economy is now concentrated in three areas:
  - Afghanistan,
  - South-East Asia (mostly Myanmar) and
  - Latin America (Mexico and Colombia).
- Together, they supply nearly all the world's illicit opium and heroin, but Afghanistan stands out among this group, accounting for around 90% of global illicit opium production in recent years.

### **Impact on India**

- **Rising health costs:**
  - Among illicit narcotics, opiates are also the most costly in terms of treatment, medical care and, arguably, drug-related violence.
  - In addition, heroin is the drug most associated with injection, which brings about a host of acute and chronic health problems, including the transmission of blood-borne diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.
  - 45% of Heroin in India originates from Afghanistan.
- **Stability and security:**
  - Beyond its health impact, the illicit opiate industry also has a detrimental effect on stability and security in a number of places, including through the funding it provides for insurgents in production areas, particularly in Afghanistan.
- **Terrorist angle:**
  - There is 'deep concern about links between illicit drug production, trafficking and involvement of terrorist groups, criminals and transnational organized crime.'

### **Reasons Behind the Drug Menace in India**

- Misguided Youth and Peer Pressure psychology

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- Lack of awareness about socio-legal and health consequences
- Proximity with Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle:
  - **Golden Triangle:**
    - It includes the regions of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand.
    - It is Southeast Asia's main opium-producing region and one of the oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.
  - **Golden Crescent:**
    - It includes Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.
    - It is a principal global site for opium production and distribution.

### **Benefits**

- **Farmer's income increase:**
  - The income of farmers from opium sales more than tripled from \$425 million in 2021 to \$1.4 billion in 2022
  - 29 per cent of the Afghan agricultural sector's total value in 2022, higher by 20 percentage points over the previous year.
- **Employment generation:**
  - As a labour intensive crop, poppy was a great source of employment in rural Afghanistan, and led to other trickle-down economic activities. Distributing the work of revenue collection was also a way to keep the factions within from rebelling.

### **Challenges being faced in Afghanistan**

- **Financial:** Still international outcasts and with no access to global funding, they are scrambling to raise money by levying taxes, as humanitarian aid keeps Afghanistan going.
- **Regional concern:**
  - Russia and Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbours view drugs as a top concern, more perhaps than the threat of religious extremism, radicalisation, and terrorism.
  - India has voiced concerns about it from time to time.
  - At the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation security meetings, the threat of terrorism and drug trafficking from Afghanistan are discussed as inter-related threats to regional and global security.

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**Way Ahead**

- **International cooperation:** Foster international cooperation for fighting the enduring problem of drug trafficking. The development of international accountability mechanisms and best practices would greatly increase interception capacity.
- **Global Monitoring:** Enhance expert access to the dark web in order to take down online markets and platforms. Implement real-time data monitoring systems for promptly detecting and addressing drug market changes.
- **People-centered Approach:** Implement an integrated, people-centred and human-rights based approach to empowering African societies to develop sustainable solutions to drug use.
- **Public-private Partnerships:** Improve government response to drug trafficking on the internet by forging public/private partnerships with internet service providers, tech companies, shipping and mailing companies.
- **Awareness-Raising and Communication:** Use fact-based information to raise awareness of the potential harm from non-medical use of cannabis. Need to close the gap between perception and reality by educating young people and safeguarding public health.

**Know about Opium**

- Opium comes from the sap in unripe poppy-seed pods.
- The sap dries into a brown latex that contains alkaloids which produce a host of narcotic and pharmaceutical drugs, including heroin, methamphetamine, morphine and codeine.

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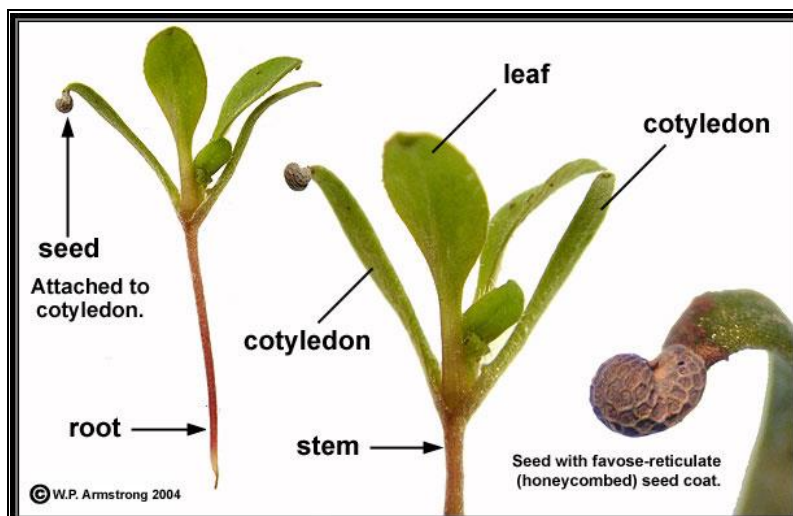


Image Courtesy: Opium

Source: [IE](#)

### Facts in News

**Ela Bhatt:**

GS-1

### In News

- Recently, Elaben Bhatt, noted **Gandhian** and **leading women's empowerment** activist passed away in Ahmedabad.

### About

- Popularly known as **Elaben**
- After graduation, Elaben joined the **Textile Labour Association** (or Majoor Mahajan)
- She was also a **Member of the Rajya Sabha** and of the **Planning Commission** of India in the 1980s.
- **Achievements:**
  - Founded **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** as a small organization in 1972

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- Pioneering work in organising the informal sector for **self-employment and empowerment of women** not only in India but across South Asia.
- Served as an **advisor to the World Bank**, and addressed the **United Nations General Assembly**.
- Was the Chairperson of **Sabarmati Ashram** and the Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi-founded **Gujarat Vidhyapith**.
- **National and International Awards:**
  - Padma Bhushan,
  - the Ramon Magsaysay Award,
  - the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

Source: [IE](#)

### **Facts in News**

#### **Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO):**

#### **GS-2**

#### **Context**

- Goa hosts **Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO) Asia Pacific Conference**.

#### **About Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO)**

- It is the **global voice of the air traffic management (ATM) industry** and is shaping our future skies.
- Its members support over **90% of the world's air traffic** and include air navigation service providers, airspace users and operators, manufacturers and aviation industry suppliers.
- The organization looks on **global Air Traffic Management performance** by connecting the industry to share knowledge, expertise and innovation.

#### **About Airports Authority of India**

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- Airports Authority of India (AAI) is responsible for the **provision of Air Navigation Services** over the Indian continental airspace and adjoining oceanic airspace, delegated to **India by ICAO**.
- AAI also functions as the major airport operator in India, responsible for management of 133 Airports which include 24 International Airports, 78 Domestic Airports, 10 Custom Airports and 21 Civil Enclaves.
- AAI's vision is to be World's leading Airport Developer, Operator and Air Navigation Service Provider with a mission to enhance air connectivity across the nation and be an environment conscious sustainable organization using the state of the art and indigenous technology for cost effective, modern, safe airport operations and air navigation services.

**Source:** [PIB](#)

**Facts in News**

**Twin Transition:**

(GS-3 Indian Economy)

**In News**

- Recently, the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** stated that the 'twin transition' approach can help leaders bring the **digital and sustainability agendas** together to future-proof their organizations.

**Twin Transition Approach**

- **About:**
  - It recognizes that there is a huge and largely untapped opportunity for **technology and data to drive sustainability goals**.
  - The strategy **combines digital and sustainability** to unlock huge benefits in terms of efficiency and productivity.
  - Optimizes digital assets and infrastructures to reduce environmental impact
- **Benefits:**
  - Can make a positive impact by '**greening**' **technology, data assets and infrastructures** while accelerating sustainability across the organization.

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## (INSTITUTE FOR IAS/IPS AND TNPSC EXAMINATIONS)

- Organizations can **harness the power of digital** to make a positive impact on the **environment**.

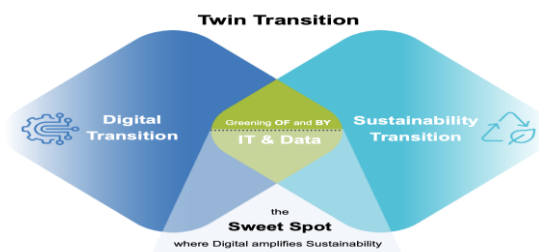


Image Courtesy: [WEF](#)

### World Economic Forum

- Established in **1971** as a not-for-profit foundation
- It is the International Organization for **Public-Private Cooperation**.
- The Forum engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Source: [WEF](#)

### **Facts in News**

#### **Cordy Gold Nanoparticles (Cor-AuNPs):**

( Gs-3 Bio-TEchnology )

#### In News

- Recently, a collaborative experiment by scientists from four Indian institutions has earned an **international patent from Germany** for developing **Cordy Gold Nanoparticles (Cor-AuNPs)**, which can make drug delivery in the human body faster and surer.

#### About Cordy Gold Nanoparticles (Cor-AuNPs)

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- These nanoparticles, derived from the synthesis of the extracts of Cordyceps militaris and gold salts, could make drug delivery in the **human body faster and safer**.
- Cordyceps militaris is a high value **parasitic fungus**. **Gold salts are ionic chemical** compounds of gold generally used in medicine.
- Wild Cordyceps mushrooms are found in the eastern Himalayan belt.

### **Significance**

- **Biosynthesised nanogold particles** indicate a new application of nanoparticles in the development of therapeutic drugs which can be delivered as ointments, tablets, capsules, and in other forms.

Source: [TH](#)

### **PESA Act & Conversions :**

(GS-2 Government policies & Interventions )

### **In News**

- Recently, Madhya Pradesh's Chief Minister stated that PESA Act will help curb conversions and marriages for tribal land.

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**More about the news**

- **Issue:**
  - Many times by deception, trickery, marriages done by means of allurements to our tribal sisters' daughters, land is given in their name and called tribal lands.
  - Sometimes even the means of conversion is used to achieve the purpose.
- **Use of PESA to curb this practice:**
  - State CM said that the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, which gives more power to gram sabhas, will ensure that conversions and marriages done by "alluring" tribal women to get land notified as tribal land is stopped.
    - He said that Gram sabhas will intervene when land is taken away from someone, emphasizing that conversions will not be allowed to happen in the state.
  - He also announced rules for enforcement of the Act in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Not against any community:**
  - He also made it clear that initiative was not against any community, but aimed at empowering the tribal community.
- **Highest tribal population:**
  - The state has the highest tribal population in the country and that the rules under PESA would help in the development of tribal communities.

**Tribals & issue of Conversions**

- **About:**
  - Tribals in India follow their own aboriginal religion and more than 89% of the tribals follow Hindu religion.
  - Due to their tact with other Hindu communities, they have turned to Hinduism.
- **Tribals of India & the problem of religious conversion:**
  - **Issue:**
    - The overall helpless condition of the tribals due to poverty, illiteracy, little opposition to conversion, lack of control over conversion, enticing offers and social status besides the tribal community's desire to improve economic condition are some

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of the factors responsible for the religious conversion of the tribals.

- As a result, in different parts of India tribals of certain areas and several main tribal community groups have converted themselves to Christianity & other religions in the last hundred and fifty years.
- **Influence of Christianity:**
  - The influence of Christianity on the tribals began in the Khasi of Meghalaya in 1813; in Urano of Chooa Nagpur in 1850 and in the Bhils of Madhya Pradesh in 1880.
    - The tribals have been facing the problem of religious conversion for a long time.
- **Problem for society as a whole:**
  - The religious conversion among the tribals has also created certain influences on the tribal communities which has become problematic for the tribal community and the Indian society as a whole.
  - It has resulted in westernization, urbanization and industrialization of cultural practices, ritual, occupation, tradition causing harmful repercussions of tribal ethnicity and values.

**Anti-conversion laws in India**

- **About:**
  - There are a few states (Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand) which have **enacted upon anti-conversion law in India.**
- **Aim:**
  - The basic aim of the legislation was to prevent the individual and communities from converting one's religion of their forefathers to another religion mainly weaker or influential sectors of society namely women, children, backward classes and untouchables.
- **Major Criticisms of Anti Conversion Law:**
  - **Right to Choice of religion:**
    - The Anti-Conversion law enacted a restriction on conversion to one's choice of religion, practice, propagate and promote so converted religion and thereby infringes the right to privacy of individuals.
  - **Forced prosecutions:**

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- Religious leaders of minority communities faced apprehension of being arrested and prosecuted under anti-conversion law.
  - For example, Catholic nuns and four other tribal women were detained based on suspicion of inducing conversion.

**About Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996**

- **About:**
  - PESA allows gram panchayats to decide matters related to minor forest produce, land and small water bodies along with implementation of government schemes and maintaining records of migrant labourers for curbing bonded labour in these scheduled areas.
- **Background:**
  - The **73rd and the 74th Amendments** to the Indian Constitution passed in **1992** took the **three-tier Panchayati Raj governance structure to rural and urban parts of the country**
    - It came into force in April **1993**.
  - However, **scheduled areas**, predominantly inhabited by the **tribal population**, were **exempted** from the new amendments.
  - Given **low human development indicators**, there was a huge demand to empower local governance in the scheduled area as well.
  - Thus Parliament enacted special legislation called **Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) in 1996**
    - It came into force on 24th December **1996**.
- **Objectives:**
  - To **extend the provisions of Part IX** of the Constitution relating to the Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas with **certain modifications**.
  - To provide **self-rule** for the bulk of the tribal population.
  - To have **village governance with participatory democracy** and to make the Gram Sabha a nucleus of all activities.
  - To evolve a **suitable administrative framework** consistent with traditional practices.
  - To **safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs** of tribal communities.
- **Applicability:**
  - It is now applicable in the **Fifth Schedule areas**, which deals with

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the **administration of the districts** dominated by the **tribal communities**.

- It is in force in 10 states of the country.
  - **Six States** namely Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Telangana have notified PESA Rules.
  - The **remaining four States** namely Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha should also frame PESA Rules and **start implementing them soon**.
- The **Gram Sabhas under PESA Act** were entrusted with **wide-ranging powers to:**
  - Enforce prohibition or to regulate or restrict the sale and consumption of any intoxicant.
  - Ownership of minor forest produce.
  - Prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled Areas and to take appropriate action to restore any unlawfully alienated land of a Scheduled Tribe.
  - Manage village markets by whatever name is called.
  - Exercise control over money lending to the Scheduled Tribes.
  - Exercise control over institutions and functionaries in all social sectors.
  - Control over local plans and resources for such plans including tribal sub-plans.

**Source: TH**

### **Revamped Digital Personal Data Protection Bill:**

(GS-2 Government policies & Interventions )

#### **In News**

- The government is **close to finalising the revamped Bill** and will come out with a **final draft version soon**.

#### **Background**

- The data protection Bill has been in the **works since 2018** when a panel led by **Justice B N Srikrishna** had prepared a draft version of the Bill.

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- It is **India's first attempt to domestically legislate** on the issue of data protection.
- **In August 2022, the government withdrew the earlier Personal Data Protection Bill** from Parliament after putting in nearly four years and having gone through multiple iterations including deliberations by a Joint Committee of Parliament.
- **It aims at regulating** online space including separate legislation on data privacy, the overall internet ecosystem, cyber security, telecom regulations, and harnessing non-personal data for boosting innovation in the country.

**Major provisions of the revamped Bill**

- **High penalties**
  - Companies dealing in personal data of consumers that fail to take reasonable safeguards to prevent data breaches could end up facing penalties as **high as around Rs 200 crore**.
    - Penalties are expected to vary on the basis of the nature of non-compliance by **data fiduciaries** (entities that handle and process personal data of individuals).
  - **Companies failing to notify people** impacted by a data breach could be fined around **Rs 150 crore**.
  - Those failing to **safeguard children's personal data** could be fined close to **Rs 100 crore**.
  - In the **previous version of the Bill**, withdrawn earlier this year, the penalty proposed on a company for violation of the law was Rs 15 crore or 4 percent of its annual turnover, whichever is higher.
- **The Data Protection Board**
  - It is an adjudicating body proposed to enforce the provisions of the Bill which is likely to be empowered to impose the fine after giving the companies an opportunity of being heard.
- **Personal data**
  - The new Bill will only deal with safeguards around personal data and is learnt to have excluded non-personal data from its ambit.
    - Non-personal data essentially means any data which cannot reveal the identity of an individual.

**Do you know?**

- **Data Principal:** The individual whose data is being stored and processed is

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called the data principal in the PDP Bill.

- **Data Transfer:** Data is transported across country borders in underwater cables.
- **Data localisation:** It is the act of storing data on any device physically present within the borders of a country.

**Criticism of the previous Bill**

- **Pushback from big tech companies:** It faced major push back from a range of stakeholders including big tech companies such as Facebook and Google, and privacy and civil society activists.
  - They have questioned the **provision of data localisation**, under which it would have been mandatory for companies to store a copy of certain sensitive personal data within India, and the export of undefined “critical” personal data from the country would be prohibited.
- **Too many delays in the Bill:** it is a matter of grave concern that India, one of the world’s largest Internet markets, did not have a basic framework to protect people’s privacy.
- **No relevance of Localised Data:** Few critics point out to the fact that even if the data is stored in the country, the encryption keys may still be out of reach of national agencies.
- **Open Ended Definitions:** National security or reasonable purposes are open-ended terms; this may lead to intrusion of the state into the private lives of citizens.
- **Against the concept of Free Market:** Protectionist regime suppresses the values of a globalised, competitive internet marketplace, where costs and speeds determine information flows rather than nationalistic borders.

**Significance of the revamped Bill**

- **Strong safeguards:** Fines for data misuse prescribed in the previous version of the Bill were not seen as an effective deterrent.
  - The higher penalties being proposed now will prompt entities to build strong safeguards to protect data and enforce fiduciary discipline.
- **Companies would face punitive actions** in the nature of financial penalties in the event of misuse of data and data breaches.

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- The upcoming data protection Bill will put an **end to misuse of customer data with companies facing financial consequences.**
- **There will also be a strict or purpose limitation** of data collected by companies and the time till which they can store it under the new Bill.
- **Data fiduciaries will be required to stop retaining personal data** and delete previously collected data after the initial purpose for which it was collected was fulfilled.

### Conclusion

- The prime challenge is to **balance between the growth opportunities posed by Free Data and Right to Privacy as Fundamental Right as declared by Puttaswamy Judgement 2017.** In this context, India must **promote Data Localisation with care** and by more scientific and organic categorisations. The **open ended definitions must be clearly defined.**

Source: [IE](#)

### **India-Norway Relations:**

( GS-2 Indian & Foreign relation)

### In News

- Norway's Ambassador to India recently said that the bilateral trade between India and Norway has **doubled to \$2 billion in the last two years.**
  - He recently took part in the silver jubilee celebration of the **National Institute of Ocean Technology.**



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**Upcoming Areas of Cooperation in India Norway Relations**

- **Climate investments:**
  - Norway is planning to invest in climate investments, clean energy and ocean technology worldwide.
  - Norway would **invest \$1 billion from its climate investment fund** in five years worldwide.
    - Substantial part of the investments will take place in **India**. India is one of the countries with a large **potential for solar energy**.
- **Wind Energy:**
  - Norway is working with the **National Institute of Wind Energy** to expand Wind energy infrastructure in India.
    - The problem in India, when it came to wind energy, was that **only Tamil Nadu and Gujarat** had stable wind to make it viable.
- **Ship-breaking industry in India:**
  - Norway has the **fifth largest commercial fleet in the world**, and ship recycling was crucial to keep up a modern fleet, both for environmental as also for competitive reasons.
  - Norway is cooperating closely with India over this.
- **Hong Kong Convention:**
  - The Hong Kong Convention is aimed at ensuring that **ships, when being recycled** after reaching the end of their operational lives; **do not pose any unnecessary risk to human health and safety or to the environment**.
  - **India has joined the Hong Kong Convention**.
  - It will be a **binding international legal instrument**.
- **Academic relations:**
  - There is an academic relation between the **Indian Institute of Technology-Madras** and the **Institute of Wind Energy in Chennai** with institutions in **Norway**.
- **Digitising historical monuments:**
  - The Norwegian company, **Piql**, was involved in creating a digital archive for Indian monuments such as the **Taj Mahal**.
  - The company was also involved in digitising historical monuments such as **Dholavira in Gujarat** and the **Bhimbetka Caves in Madhya Pradesh**.

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**Norway-India relations**

- **History**
  - Ties between Norway and India have deep historical roots.
  - As early as the 1600s, a **Danish-Norwegian trading station** was established in Tranquebar (Tharangambadi), which today lies in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.
  - **Norway's first Consulates in India opened in Kolkata and Mumbai** in 1845 and 1857, respectively.
  - **In 1952, the "India fund" was established** with the aim to provide development assistance with a focus on fisheries.
- **Consulate General**
  - The Consulate General in Mumbai re-opened its doors in 2015.
  - It had been closed since the 1970s.
- **India Strategy**
  - In 2018 the Norwegian government launched a new 'India Strategy'.
  - The India Strategy outlines **five thematic priorities**:
    - Democracy and a rules-based world order
    - The oceans
    - Energy
    - Climate and Environment
    - Research, higher education and global health.
- **Ocean nations**
  - Norway and India are both ocean nations seeking to develop the vast economic, scientific and ecological potential of the oceans.
  - In 2019, Norway and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing a structured and strategic cooperation on the oceans.
  - This cooperation is based on our shared interest in the blue economy and the sustainable use of marine resources, as well as a desire to advance scientific knowledge about our oceans.
- **Climate change**
  - Norway considers India a critical partner in addressing global climate, environment and resource challenges, and continuously seeks to increase cooperation in support of the Paris agreement and the SDG-agenda.
- **Bilateral Trade**
  - Total bilateral trade increased from US\$ 974.22 million in 2013-2014 to US\$ 1,202.06 million in 2017-2018.

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Source: [TH](#)

**World Population Reaches 8 Billion: UN :**

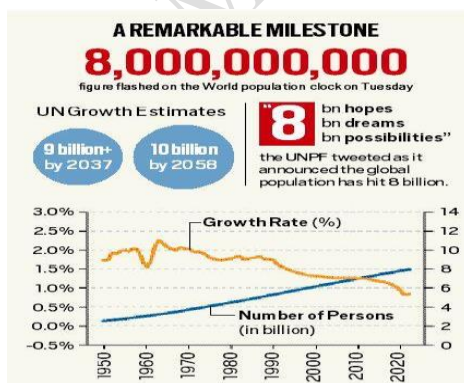
**(GS1 Population & Associated issues)**

**In News**

- Recently, the United Nations Population Fund, stated that the world's population has reached 8 billion.

**More about the news**

- **Reasons for the growth:**
  - This unprecedented growth is due to the gradual increase in human lifespan owing to improvements in public health, nutrition, personal hygiene and medicine.
  - It is also the result of high and persistent levels of fertility in some countries, the United Nations said.
- **Reaching 9 billion:**
  - The UN said that it took the global population 12 years to grow from 7 billion to 8 billion.
  - It will take approximately 15 years — until 2037 — for it to reach 9 billion.
    - It is a sign that the overall growth rate of the global population is slowing.
- **Projections of the peak:**
  - The UNFPA projects world population to peak at 10.4 billion in the 2080s and stay there until the end of the century.



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- **Trends of growth:**
  - **Slowing growth:**
    - According to the UN, falling mortality rate first led to a “spectacular population growth, but as fewer children were born generation to generation, growth started to slow.
  - **Impact of Per Capita income:**
    - Countries with the highest fertility levels tend to be those with the lowest income per capita as per UN.
  - **International migration:**
    - International migration is now the driver of growth in many countries, with 281 million people living outside their country of birth in 2020.
    - All South Asian nations — India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka — have seen high levels of emigration in recent years.
- **India’s “youth bulge”:**
  - UNFPA has noted that India has its largest ever adolescent and youth population.
  - According to UNFPA projections, India will continue to have one of the youngest populations in the world till 2030 and is currently experiencing a demographic window of opportunity, a “youth bulge” that will last till 2025.
  - It noted that India’s fertility rate has hit 2.1 births per woman — replacement-level fertility — and is falling.
- **India surpassing China:**
  - As of 2022, more than half the world’s population lives in Asia, China and India being the two most populous countries with more than 1.4 billion people each.
  - According to the United Nations Population Fund, while India’s population growth is stabilising, it is “still growing at 0.7% per year” and is set to surpass China in 2023 as the world’s most populous country.
  - China’s population is no longer growing and “may start declining as early as 2023”, the UN stated.

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### • **Challenges:**

- Rapid population growth can make challenges of hunger and poverty steeper.
- Rapid population growth makes eradicating poverty, combating hunger and malnutrition, and increasing the coverage of health and education systems more difficult.

### Challenges for India & Way ahead:

- A population of more than 1.4 billion will require the unflinching focus of policymakers on areas fundamental to human well-being — **education, nutrition, healthcare, housing, and employment.**
- **Productivity and economy:**
  - The youth will have to be equipped with **skills** that are indispensable to the knowledge **economy.**
  - People’s productivity will have to increase for any given per capita income.
  - Will need policies to increase jobs so that labour force participation rate increases for both men and women.
- **Climate change:**
  - The **climate crisis** and other ecological imperatives will mean that the footprints of many activities are kept light.
- **Democratic challenges:**
  - Most importantly, the challenges will spur **debate, discussion, even dissension, and require that diverse voices** are heard.

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- India's **democratic traditions** and the strength of its institutions will be needed to navigate the way forward from here.
- **Elderly population:**
  - The 65+ category is going to grow quite fast and it faces several challenges. Provisioning of social security is obviously a big challenge. This will stretch the resources of future governments.
  - If the aged stay within the family set-up, the burden on the government could be reduced. "If we go back to our roots and stick around as families, as against the western tendency to go for individualism, then the challenges would be less
- **State-wise focus:**
  - Much more needs to be done on this, of course, in large parts of the country, including in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, whose TFR is higher than the national average and where gender discrimination has deep social roots.
- **Choice to women:**
  - To actually realise Population Control, educating women and giving them freedom to make choice and implement it, should be first to have attention by the Government.
  - State must ensure contraceptives are accessible, affordable and available in a range of forms acceptable to those using them.

**World Population Day:**

- World Population Day is observed annually on **July 11** every year
- It aims to highlight the problems of overpopulation and raise awareness about the effects of overpopulation on the environment and development.
- This year's World Population Day [July 11, 2022] falls during a milestone year, when we anticipate the birth of the Earth's eight billionth inhabitant.
- World Population Day was established by the **Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme in 1989.**
  - It was inspired by the public interest in Five Billion Day, the approximate date on which the world's population reached five billion people on July 11, 1987.

Source: [UN](#)

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**Birth Anniversary of Birsa Munda:**

(GS-3 Inclusive Growth & related Issues)

**In News**

- Recently, the President of India visited **Ulihatu village in Jharkhand** on the **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** and paid respects before the statue of **Bhagwan Birsa Munda**.

**Key Points**

- The history of freedom struggle also includes **several streams of struggles by the tribal communities**.
  - Bhagwan Birsa Munda and Sidhu-Kanhu of Jharkhand, Tantia Bhil and Bhima Nayak of Madhya Pradesh,
  - Alluri Sitarama Raju of Andhra Pradesh,
  - Rani Gaidinliu of Manipur and
  - Saheed Laxman Nayak of Odisha.
- **Revolutionary warriors of Madhya Pradesh:**
  - Kishore Singh, Khajya Nayak, Rani Phool Kunwar, Sitaram Kanwar, Mahua Kol, Shankar Shah and Raghunath Shah.
  - Revered as the '**Gandhi of Chhindwara**', Shri Badal Bhoi had chosen the path of non-violence for the freedom struggle.
- **Significance of tribal communities:**
  - The tribal communities have been **instrumental in enriching the cultural heritage** of Chambal, Malwa, Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand and Mahakoshal regions of Madhya Pradesh.
  - The tribal community gives **equal importance to humanity and nature**. They give priority to the community over individuality, cooperation over competition and equality over distinctiveness.
  - Most of the tribal areas have been **rich in forest and mineral wealth**. In today's time of **climate change and global warming**, everyone needs to learn from the lifestyle of tribal society and their determination towards forest conservation.
  - **Equality between men and women** is a feature of the tribal society. **Gender-ratio** in tribal society is **better than** that of the general population.

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**Bhagwan Birsa Munda**

• **Early Life:**

- He was an Indian freedom fighter, religious leader and folk hero from the Munda Tribe of the **Chhota Nagpur Plateau** area.
- Born on 15th November **1875 in Ulihatu** of the erstwhile Bengal Presidency which is now in the **Khunti district of Jharkhand**.
- He learned about Hindu religious teachings from a Vaishnav monk and studied ancient scriptures along with the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

• **Founder of New religion Birsait:**

- It believed in One God and encouraged them to revert to their original religious beliefs.
- People of the Munda and Oraon community joined the sect and posed a challenge to British conversion activities of tribals.
- Through the religion, Munda preached a strong Anti – British sentiment and mobilized thousands of tribal folk to form guerrilla armies to attack the Raj.
- He was referred to as '**Dharti Abba or Father of Earth**' by his followers.
- In March 1900, while fighting the British alongside his guerilla army, Munda was arrested in Jamkopai forest in Chakradharpur. A few months later, on 9 June, he passed away while in custody.

• **Munda Rebellion:**

- It was the tribal movement led by Munda against the oppressions of the British Raj.
- The movement was referred to as '**Ulgulan**' or the '**Great Tumult**' and aimed to establish Munda raj.
- Munda used traditional symbols and language to rouse people and urged them to destroy the **dikus**.
- Dikus was the name given to the outsiders like the British, moneylenders and traders and it was believed that the dikus were responsible for all the miseries.
- Birsa and his rebellions started to attack the symbols of the outsiders like police stations and churches and raided the property of moneylenders and zamindars.

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- Birsa Munda was arrested by the British in March 1900 while he was sleeping with his tribal guerilla army at Jamkopai forest in Chakradharpur (Jharkhand).
- Birsa died of cholera in jail at the age of 25 and with his death, the Munda rebellion movement faded out.
- **Outcomes of the Rebellion:**
  - After his death, the British government introduced the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908, which **prohibited the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals (Dikus)**.
  - The British learned the lesson not to interfere with the faith and beliefs of the tribals in India and after that, they kept a lenient attitude towards the tribals of India.

### Conclusion

- The holistic national development and the development of the tribal community are **interlinked**. Development of tribal areas in the spirit of harmony is beneficial for all.
- Efforts should be made to **maintain the identity of tribal communities**, increase the sense of self-pride among them and at the same time benefit from the fruits of development.

Source: [PIB](#)

### **Gaslighting:**

(GS-1 Effects of Globalization on Indian society)

### In News

- The act of gaslighting **isolates people from society** and distorts their reality.

### Key Points

- **Background:**

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- In 1938, playwright Patrick Hamilton wrote a thriller play called the Gas Light, which tells the story of a man who attempts to drive his wife insane in order to steal from her.
  - He convinces her that she was going insane, to the point where she was made to believe that the noises from the attic and the flickering gas light were imagined by her, while in reality, he was responsible for it.
- **Origin of Term:**
  - **Psychologists R. Barton and J. A. Whitehead** coined the term “gaslighting” in 1969 as they analysed involuntary hospitalisation as a form of abuse.
  - Rarely used after this, the term was **popularised by psychotherapist Robin Stern in 2007** and has now become a ubiquitous term.

### Gaslighting and it's Working

- **Definition:**
  - Gaslighting is a type of psychological abuse. One person or a group manipulates another, making them question or doubt their own mental health.
- **The workings of the phenomenon:**
  - Gaslighting is a phenomenon wherein **techniques of manipulation** are used to control people in politics and interpersonal relationships.
  - Stern explained that in order for such abuse to exist the “mutual participation” between the “gaslighter” (perpetrator) and the “gaslightee” (victim) is imperative.
- **Experience:**
  - When a person is gaslighted they experience confusion, anxiety and loss of trust in themselves.
  - If successful in the act of gaslighting, the perpetrator can isolate the victim from society and even from their closest social circles to the extent that the gaslightee starts believing that the gaslighter is the only person they can trust.

### Approaches

- There are various methods used by gaslighters to manipulate their victims into questioning their realities.

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- Under **countering**, the perpetrator questions the victim's memory.
- The perpetrator acts like they don't understand the conversation or refuses to listen, convincing the victim that they must have misunderstood.
- By trivialising the victim's experiences or feelings, the perpetrator makes sure that the victim starts questioning their own character.
- The perpetrator also tends to **deny taking responsibility** for their actions of hurting the victim by blaming the victim for causing the situation that resulted in abuse by the gaslighter.
- Moreover, they **divert the focus of a discussion**, when the gaslighter starts questioning the gaslighter's credibility.
- Perpetrators can also use **negative stereotypes**, based on the victim's gender, class, caste, race or ethnicity to lower their self-esteem.

### **Impact of the Gaslighting**

- It highlights the importance of intimate relationships in the phenomenon, ignoring the gender-based inequalities that make it a **common feature of domestic violence**.
- Perpetrators of such abuse, use the already present structural inequalities and stereotypes, and institutional vulnerabilities to **control their victims**.
- Persistent gaslighting can be **catastrophic for the mental health** of the person on the receiving end causing him/her to believe they deserve the abuse.
- The impact can **last long after the gaslighter is out of the victim's life** and very often leads to a lifetime of self-doubt and difficulty making decisions.

### **How to protect self from Gaslighting**

- Pay attention to what the person does, not what they say. Gaslighters say one thing, but their actions say another.
- Don't listen to someone who constantly tells you "you're crazy" or makes similar comments that make you routinely question yourself.
- Don't believe anyone who tells you that others, especially your family and/or friends, agree with them and not you. Gaslighters will often use those closest to you as ammunition.
- Remember that it's not you; the gaslighter is 100% responsible for their behavior.

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- Present incontrovertible evidence and be direct with the gaslighter when they try to deny or evade the truth, as long as you are in a position of safety when doing so.

### **Conclusion**

- Gaslighting is a **serious issue** which can be difficult to recognise especially when one is involved in an intimate relationship.
- Moreover, it is possible for a person to get used to such behaviour from their partners, **mistaking it for love**.
- The first step in abusive relationships is to become **aware of one's own role in gaslighting**, the ways in which one's behaviour, desires, and fantasies may lead to idealising the gaslighter and seeking their approval.

Source: [TH](#)

### **Tirupati's Megalithic Burial Sites:**

**GS1**

### **In News**

- Most of the megalithic burial sites in Tirupati are found to be in a state of neglect.

### **More about the news**

- Tirupati district is dotted with anthropomorphic burial sites, said to be the largest as a collection in Andhra Pradesh.
- Anthropomorphic sites are those marked by a representation of human form above the megalithic burials.
- However, most of them are in a state of neglect, with neither the government nor the local residents caring to protect what could become a cherished heritage.

### **More about the Megalithic structures in the region**

- **Significance of the region:**
  - Compared to other districts, the erstwhile combined Chittoor district (Tirupati district was carved out of it in April 2022) has an array of megalithic structures, found almost in every mandal.

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- This could be an indication to the presence of humans living in groups during the megalithic period (300–500 BC) in this region.
- **Mallayyagaripalle's 'pillared dolmen':**
  - **Location:**
    - The most prominent one is the '**pillared dolmen**' of the **megalithic era**, found at **Mallayyagaripalle**, nestling on a **hillock** between Chandragiri and Dornakambala, 20 km from Tirupati.
  - **Timeline:**
    - The structure locally referred to as '**Pandava Gullu**' or '**Pandavula Banda**' in memory of the Pandavas, is estimated to be 2,500 years old.
  - **Burial chamber:**
    - The Mallayyagaripalle structure is a cist burial chamber.
    - Such chambers are built by arranging slabs neatly broken from huge stones at a time when there were no proper tools.
- **Monument at Kullur:**
  - There is another endangered megalith monument in Palem village near Kallur, which resembles a bull's horn.
  - It is locally called as '**Devara Yeddhu**'.
- **Other:**
  - **A menhir:** a tall or grand structure erected in memory of a dead person – found at Boyapalle.
  - '**Slab circles**': An arrangement of three or seven slabs in a circular fashion, found in Eguva Gunthalacheruvu of Annamayya district.



**Challenges faced by these megalithic monuments**

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- The pillared dolmen with rock art beneath the capstone at Mallayagaripalle came under threat owing to granite mining in the vicinity.
- The sites have suffered repeated damage due to clandestine excavation by treasure hunters.
- Also, the neglect around few sites are indicative of official apathy like,
  - Fixing of Electric posts very close to the site,
  - The installation of a mobile tower, etc

**Megaliths**

- It is a huge, often undressed stone used in various types of **Neolithic (New Stone Age) and Early Bronze Age monuments**.
- Works about the megalithic people's staunch **belief in life after death** and the **travel** embarked by soul to other worlds.
  - The megalithic people used to keep food and tools inside the chamber for use by the dead person which is indicative of this belief.

Source: [TH](#)

**Ancient link between Kashi and Tamil Land:**

( GS -1 Art & culture: )

**In News**

- The month-long **Kashi Tamil Sangamam** is going to begin in **Varanasi**.

**Kashi Tamil Sangamam**

- **Organized by:** the Ministry of Education, Government of India
- Some 2,400 people from Tamil Nadu will be taken to Varanasi in groups for visits and trips to Ayodhya and Prayagraj.
- **Objective:**
  - To bring the two knowledge and cultural traditions (of the North and South) closer, create an understanding of our shared heritage and deepen the people-to-people bond between the regions.
  - This is in sync with the National Education Policy, 2020 which emphasises “on nurturing a generation that is **modern and in sync**

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**with the 21st-century mindset, while being rooted in the Indian culture and ethos”.**

**Linkages between Kashi and Kanchi**

- The connection between the two centers of knowledge (Kashi and Kanchi) is evident in the **similar themes in literature**, and the presence of the name Kashi in every village in Tamil Nadu.
- Since ancient times, higher education in Southern India was **not considered complete** without a visit by the scholar to Kashi.
- **Kashinath** is a popular name in Tamil Nadu.
- Besides the Kasi Viswanathar temple in Tenkasi, there are **hundreds of Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu** that bear the name of Kashi — there are some 18 of them in the area around Chennai alone.
- People from Rameswaram would take a dip in the Koti teertha (in the temple) before visiting Kashi for darshan; and they would **bring back (Ganga) water from Kashi** for abhiseka at the temple in Rameswaram.

**History of ties between Kashi and Tamil Nadu**

- **King Parakrama Pandya:**
  - He ruled over the region around Madurai in the 15th century
  - Legend has it that **he** wanted to build a temple to Lord Shiva, **and traveled to Kashi** to bring back a lingam.
  - While returning, the king stopped to rest under a tree — but when he tried to continue his journey, the cow carrying the lingam refused to move.
  - Then he installed the lingam there, a place that came to be known as **Sivakasi**.
  - For devotees who could not visit Kashi, the **Pandyas** had built the **Kasi Viswanathar Temple** in what is today **Tenkasi** in southwestern Tamil Nadu.
- **Adhivir Ram Pandyan:**
  - Much later, another king, Adhivir Ram Pandyan, after returning from a pilgrimage to Kashi, constructed another Shiva temple in **Tenkasi** in the **19th century**
- **Sant Kumara Gurupara:**

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- He was from Thoothukudi district and had negotiated with the princely state of Kashi to get a **place for the consecration** of Kedarghat and Vishvesvaralingam in Varanasi.
- He also composed **Kashi Kalambagam**, a collection of grammar **poems on Kashi**.

Source: [IE](#)

**National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM):**

( GS-2 Health)

**In News**

- The new **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** has now been brought under the Drug Prices Control Order, which fixes ceiling prices for these essential formulations based on average cost to retailers.

**About National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)**

- It is one of the key instruments in a balanced healthcare delivery system of a country which inter alia includes accessible, affordable quality medicine at all the primary, secondary, tertiary levels of healthcare.
- The first National List of Essential Medicines of India was prepared and released in 1996.
- It focuses on three aspects - cost, safety and efficacy.
  - It comprised 384 drugs across 27 categories.
- **Purpose :** The primary purpose of NLEM is to promote rational use of medicines considering the three important aspects i.e., cost, safety and efficacy.
  - It also helps in optimum utilisation of healthcare resources and budget; drug procurement policies, health insurance; improving prescribing habits; medical education and training for UG/PG; and drafting pharmaceutical policies.

Source: [IE](#)

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**Vostro and Nostro Accounts:**

(Gs-3 Indian Economy & Related issues)

**In News**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed the opening of nine Special Vostro Accounts with two Indian lenders — UCO and IndusInd Bank — to facilitate overseas trade in rupee.

**About Vostro account**

- It is an account that a domestic bank holds for a foreign bank in the domestic bank's currency — which, in the case of India, is the rupee.
- In the case of trade with Russia, payments in rupee for the export and import of goods will go to these Vostro accounts. The owners and beneficiaries of this money will be the exporters and importers in both the countries.
- The banks will keep the record of money transferred.

**What led to creation of the Vostro accounts?**

- In July , the RBI put in place a mechanism to settle international trade in rupees “in order to promote growth of global trade with emphasis on exports from India and to support the increasing interest of the global trading community in the rupee”.
- The central bank's move has come in the wake of increasing pressure on the Indian currency in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and sanctions by the US and the EU.

**Do You Know ?**

- There are two kinds of accounts: **Vostro and Nostro**
  - Both Vostro and Nostro are technically the same type of account, with the difference being who opens the account and where.
- So, if an Indian bank like the SBI wants to open an account in the United States, it will get in touch with a bank in the US, which will open a Nostro account and accept payments for SBI in dollars.
  - The account opened by the Indian bank in the US will be a Nostro

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account for the Indian bank, while for the US bank, the account will be considered a Vostro account.

- Literally, Nostro means 'ours' and Vostro means 'yours' in Latin. Therefore, the accounts opened by IndusInd and UCO are Vostro, and the ones opened by Russia's Sberbank and VTB Bank are Nostro accounts

Source:[IE](#)

### **Facts in News:**

#### **No Money For Terror (NMFT) Conference :**

#### **GS-3 Internal Security:**

#### **In News**

Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India is organising the 3rd Ministerial 'No Money for Terror' Conference on 18th and 19th of November in New Delhi.

#### **About No Money For Terror (NMFT) conference**

- It aims to progress the discussions on **combating terrorist financing** held by the international community in the previous two **Conferences in Paris (2018) and Melbourne (2019)**.
- **Focused Areas:** Global trends in terrorism and terrorist financing, use of formal and informal channels of funds for terrorism, emerging technologies and terrorist financing and requisite international co-operation to address related challenges.
- The Conference intends to bring together representatives of 75 countries and international bodies for extended deliberations over two days.
- It also intends to include discussions on technical, legal, regulatory and cooperation aspects of all facets of terrorism financing.

Source:[PIB](#)

### **Unsung Martyrs of Mangarh:**

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**(GS-1 Modern Indian History ; Significant Events )**

**In News**

- The courageous tribal martyrs **led by Govind Guru** fought the British rulers in the early 20th century.

**Govind Guru**

- **Birth:**
  - Born on 20th December, 1858, in a nomadic community in the Dungarpur-Banswara region of Rajasthan.
- **Influence of:**
  - Govind Guru was influenced by the teachings of **Swami Dayanand Saraswati** to work for the socio-religious upliftment of people from the Bhil community.
- **Worked for bettering tribal communities:**
  - While the colonial state was engaged in an organised loot of India's resources, Govind Guru drew from Indian traditions and ideals to promote **harmony amongst the tribal communities**.
- **Samp Sabha:**
  - He was 25 when he founded the Samp Sabha in 1883.
  - The word samp means interaction and giving up evil practices.
  - It was formed to bring harmony between tribal communities.
  - From 1903 onwards, Mangarh hill became famous for an annual congregation of the Bhils and other tribal groups in the region.



Image Courtesy: [forwardpress](https://www.forwardpress.com)

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- **Background:**

- At that time, the demand for self-rule was gathering currency amongst the people of the country.
- The divide-and-rule policy of the British, the Bengal Partition and the drain of wealth from the country had dented the moral foundation of British rule.
- Govind Guru demanded that the colonial state reduce the revenue rate during famines and stop encroaching on the religious freedom of tribal communities and harming their culture.
- The Bhils and other tribals were engaged in a long standoff with the British.

- **Against British exploitation:**

- On November 17, 1913, a full moon day, Mangarh hill witnessed a mass gathering of more than 1.5 lakh Bhils.
- They swore allegiance to their guru and sought to fulfil their spiritual desires.
- The gathering also resolved to find ways to end the British hegemony, especially the unjust revenue regime.
- **'Bhuretia Nahi Manu Re'** (I will not accept the tyrannical rule of white people), the song of the tribal people has, since then, become an anthem of sorts for them.
- Govind Guru's calls for protesting against the injustice of the colonial rulers **laid the foundation of the Civil Disobedience Movement.**

- **British Reaction:**

- Sensing trouble from the congregation, the British deputed seven companies to surround the Mangarh hill and **tried to suppress the tribals** with the fear of bullets and cannons.
- But the brave tribals could not be subdued. Their awakened consciousness and new-found spirituality had raised their confidence and the desire to protect the motherland overwhelmed the fear of the bullet.
- The British ordered a mass shooting, and because of this inhuman act, more than 1,500 tribal freedom fighters died on November 17.
- The **moral legitimacy of the British kept on eroding**, especially after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.

- **Result:**

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- People began to see a stake in the country's freedom. The spirit of taking ownership of the country's welfare has passed down to people after the country gained Independence.

**Managarh Dham ki Gaurav Gatha**

- The event was held on November 1.
- Mangarh Dham will be developed as a **joint project of the governments of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.**
- It will be a national memorial showcasing tribal legacy and their rich cultural heritage.
- This will be a significant milestone in recognising tribal contribution in nation-building.

**About Bhil Tribe**

- The word Bhil is derived from “**Veel**”, which means “bow” in the Dravidian language.
- The Bhil tribe is called “**Dhanush Purush of India**” because they are highly adept at learning Dhanush.
- Bhils are a group of tribal Indians scattered throughout India from Gujarat in the west to Tripura in the Far East.
- As of 2013, they were the **largest tribal group in India** with the majority living in the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.
- Bhils have a rich and unique culture. The Bhilala subdivision is known for its Pithora painting.
- **Ghoomar** is a traditional folk dance of the Bhil tribe.
  - Ghoomar is the symbol of femininity.
  - The young women take part in this dance and declare that they are stepping into women's shoes.

**Panch Pran**

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India gave a call for Amrit Kaal's “**Panch Pran**”.
- This involves:
  - removing traces of the colonial mindset,
  - taking pride in our roots,

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- inculcating unity and a sense of duty and
- improving the well-being of the nation.
- **Importance of tribal communities:**
  - The role of tribal communities during the freedom struggle and nation-building provides **inspiration** for this endeavour.
  - The **environment-friendly lifestyle** of these communities and their zeal to protect nature offer valuable lessons to people from the elite class and developed countries who are currently discussing ways to reduce carbon footprints.

**Government's Efforts**

- The pro-poor welfare policies, people-centric measures, **Eklavya Model residential schools**, scholarship schemes for students and health schemes of the government have imparted a new meaning to the idea of social justice.
- The government is already setting up **tribal museums** in 10 states — Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, MP, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Kerala — to **raise awareness** about the sacrifices made by tribals during the freedom struggle.
- **Droupadi Murmu** taking over as the President of India is a landmark in the country's history.
- The Union Council of Ministers has **eight tribal ministers**.

Source: [IE](#)

**India-Israel Defence Cooperation**

( GS-2 India & Foreign Relations : International organisations & Groupings )

**In News**

- Israel has been closely working with the Indian defence forces to tailor solutions for their defence needs.

**More about the India-Israel defence Cooperation**

- **Evolution:**

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- The defence cooperation & relationship between India & Israel has evolved over time – from being an **importer** of Israeli tech and equipment, Indian companies are now **collaborating** with **Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI)** on a variety of ventures.
- **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs):**
  - **Heron MK II:**
    - Induction of Heron MK II, a state-of-the-art UAV that can fly at a height of 35,000 feet, cover a radius of 1000 km, see through dense clouds, work in bad weather and fly for 45 hours.
    - It's learnt that MK IIs are being deployed in Leh.
    - MK II can also be used for search and rescue operations.
  - **Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Heron TPs:**
    - Last year, the Indian Army had also taken on lease Heron TPs, a Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) for all-weather missions, from IAI.
    - Heron TP drones are one of the two drones made in Israel that can be armed if needed.
  - **UAVs manufacturing in India:**
    - After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel in 2017, the IAI had signed an agreement with Elcom Systems and Dynamatic Technologies for the manufacture of UAVs in India.
    - The IAI and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) have signed a joint venture whereby IAI will not only offer UAVs to India but also help HAL in manufacturing them in India.
- **Aircrafts:**
  - HAL has signed a memorandum of understanding with IAI to convert civil passenger aircraft into a multi-mission tanker transport (MMTT) for air refuelling with cargo and transport capabilities.
    - The MoU also covers conversion of passenger planes into freighter aircraft.
  - **Upgradation of MiG 21s:**
    - Israel has been upgrading India's aircraft systems such as MiG 21s;
  - **LCA & ALH:**

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- Israel is also cooperating on developing Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) and Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) with Indian aeronautic giants.
- **Missiles & ammunition:**
  - Both government organisations and private industries are committed to co-developing defence systems.
  - New Delhi is also sourcing Firefly loitering ammunition, Spike anti-tank guided missiles, and Spice guidance kits from Tel Aviv.
  - **BARAK 8:**
    - Israel Aerospace Industries and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) have codeveloped a medium-range surface-to-air-missile (MRSAM), named as BARAK 8 Air defence system.
- **Other:**
  - India imports critical defence technologies from Israel such as
    - Searcher, a multi-mission tactical UAV;
    - Air defence systems such as SPYDER-MR;
    - Beyond visual range air-to-air missiles (BVRAAM) such as Python-5, Derby, etc.
  - Indian armed forces use Israeli **Phalcon AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control Systems)**.
- **Joint Exercises:**
  - Military-to-military engagements including joint exercises and defence industry collaboration are on the upsurge.
  - India recently participated in the Blue Flag training event with a C-130J special operations aircraft and Garud commandos.
- **Security & Counter-Terrorism:**
  - There is **cooperation on security issues**, including a **Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism**.

### India-Israel relations

- **History:**
  - India had recognised Israel as far back as **1950** but normalisation took another four decades.
  - **In 1992**, started defence deals, and cooperation in science, technology and agriculture.
  - **The first high-level visits:**

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- In 2000, **L K Advani** became the **first Indian minister to visit Israel**.
- The two countries set up a **joint anti-terror commission** in 2000.
- And in 2003, **Ariel Sharon** became the **first Israeli Prime Minister to visit India**.
- **Economic and Commercial Relations:**
  - The bilateral merchandise trade grew from USD 200 million in 1992 to USD 6.35 billion (excluding defence) during the period 2021-2022, with the balance of trade being in India's favour.
  - **India is Israel's third-largest trade partner in Asia and seventh largest globally.**
  - In recent years, bilateral trade has diversified into several sectors such as **pharmaceuticals, agriculture, IT and telecom, and homeland security.**
  - Israeli companies have been instrumental in transferring technology to India in areas like **renewable energy, telecom, water technologies.**
    - Many of them have also set up R&D centers in India.
  - **The Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** between the two countries is also on cards.
- **Cooperation in Agriculture:**
  - **A three-year joint work program** has been signed between the two countries in 2021 for **the development in agriculture cooperation.**
  - It is aimed at establishing **Centers of Excellence**, intensifying **value chains** and encouraging **private investment.**
  - India has benefited from Israeli expertise and technologies in **horticulture mechanization, orchard and canopy management, micro-irrigation and post-harvest management.**
  - **Israeli drip irrigation technologies** and products are now widely used in India.
  - Some Israeli companies and experts are providing expertise to manage and improve **dairy farming in India** through their expertise in **high milk yield.**
- **Science & Technology:**
  - The two countries have established a **Joint Committee on S&T**, established under the S&T Cooperation Agreement signed in 1993.
  - **India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F)** has been set up to secure cooperation between the Department

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of Science and Technology (DST), the Government of India, and the Israel Innovation Authority, Government of Israel to promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D projects.

- It will address the challenges in the agreed '**Focus Sectors**'.
- **Energy:**
  - **Tamar and Leviathan gas fields** off the coast of Israel were explored recently and India has been one of the first countries to bid for an exploration license in order to extract and import natural gas from the fields.
  - **India's ONGC Videsh, Bharat PetroResources, Indian Oil and Oil India** were awarded an exploration license by the Israeli government, a clear sign of ongoing diversification in ties between the two countries.

Source: TH

**G20 Bali Leaders' Declaration :**

( GS-2 Agreements Involving India &/or Affecting India's Interests )

**In News**

- The G20 summit was recently concluded in Bali, Indonesia.

**More about the news**

- **India's Presidency:**
  - Indonesia handed over the G20 presidency to India for the coming year as the Bali summit of the grouping ended with the member states finalising the joint declaration.
- **Bali Leaders' Declaration:**
  - **War in Ukraine:**
    - The declaration stated that the war in Ukraine is causing economic difficulties and insecurity worldwide.
    - It also termed the threat of using nuclear weapons in the war as "inadmissible".
    - **Most members** strongly condemned the war in Ukraine and stressed it is causing **immense human suffering and exacerbating existing fragilities** in the global economy -
      - Constraining growth,

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- Increasing inflation,
- Disrupting supply chains,
- Heightening energy and food security and
- Elevating financial stability risks, **said the declaration.**
- **Threats to security:**
  - The G20 declaration also called upon the international community to “step up” efforts to counter
    - Money laundering,
    - Terrorism financing and
    - Proliferation financing
  - The declaration also urged the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and FATF Style Regional Bodies to “lead global action” to respond to these threats.
- **Multilateral Trading System (MTS):**
  - The leaders also said the “rules-based, non-discriminatory, free, fair, open, inclusive, equitable, sustainable and transparent multilateral trading system (MTS) with the **WTO [World Trade Organisation] at its core**, is indispensable” to advancing inclusive growth among the member states.
- **Background of the declaration:**
  - U.S. President Joe Biden chaired an emergency meeting of the western bloc in Bali after a **missile from the Ukrainian battlefield landed in Przewodow in eastern Poland** near the Polish border with Ukraine.

**Know about G20**

- **Origin:**
  - The G20 was formed in 1999 in the backdrop of the financial crisis of the late 1990s that hit E
  - Its aim was to secure global financial stability by involving middle-income countries.
  - **As stated by the official G20 Website:**
    - “On the advice of the G7 Finance Ministers, the G20 **Finance Ministers and Central**
- **Objectives:**
  - Policy coordination between its members in order to achieve global economic stability, sustain
  - To promote financial regulations that reduce risks and prevent future financial crises; and
  - To create a new international financial architecture.

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- **Members & guests:**

- **Members:**

- Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America, European Union.
    - Spain is also invited as a permanent guest.

- **Others:**

- Each year, the Presidency invites guest countries, which take full part in the G20 exercises.



- **Together, the G20 countries include:**

- 60 percent of the world's population,
    - 80 percent of global GDP, and
    - 75 percent of global trade.

- **Presidency of G20 & Troika:**

- The presidency of the G20 rotates every year among members.
  - The country holding the presidency, together with the previous and next presidency-holder, form the Troika.

- **Working of G20:**

- The G20 has **no permanent secretariat**.
  - The agenda and work are coordinated by representatives of the G20 countries, known as Sherpas.
  - India recently said **ex-NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant** would be the G20 Sherpa after Piyush Goyal.

- **Meetings and Summits:**

- Since 1999, an annual meeting of finance ministers has taken place.
  - The first G20 Summit took place in 2008 in Washington DC, US.
  - In addition to Summits, the Sherpa meetings (that help in negotiations and building consensus) are held.
  - **The Finance Track:**

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- Within the G20 process, Finance Track includes the meetings held among Finance and ministries.

- **Criticisms:**

- The G-20 has been criticized for various reasons like:
  - Lack of transparency,
  - Encouraging trade agreements that strengthen large corporations,
  - Being slow to combat climate change, and
  - Failing to address social inequality and global threats to democracy.
- Membership policies:
  - The G-20's membership policies have come under fire, too.
  - Critics say the group is overly restrictive, and its practice of adding guests, such as those

- NATO countries called for an **emergency meeting** to determine who exactly fired the missile.

### India's action Plan for its Presidency

- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, India will **strengthen international support** for priorities of vital importance to **developing countries** in diverse **social and economic sectors**, ranging from
  - Energy, agriculture, trade, digital economy, health and environment to
  - Employment, tourism, anti-corruption and women empowerment, including **in focus areas** that impact the **most vulnerable and disadvantaged**.
- **Criticisms:**
  - It has been criticised that this **plan lacks specificity**.
  - India has **lost a chance** to nudge the **G20 and regional organisations** towards its focus areas.
- **Confronting global challenges:**
  - Currently, there are **five challenges** plaguing the world that the G20 can attempt to fix.
    - First and most pressing is the in-your-face **Russia–Ukraine conflict**.
    - The second challenge is of **rising prices**, particularly of **food**.
    - The third challenge is **energy**.
      - Russia is teaching the world that while sanctions against it could impact its economy in the future, but in the short term, these sanctions are failing.

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- As rising food and energy prices lead to inflation, the fourth challenge is **the manner in which countries are attempting to fix the problem.**
- The fifth challenge is the **threat of stagflation.**

Source: TH

**Old Pension Scheme vs New Pension Scheme:**

( GS 2 & 3 Government Policies & Interventions : Indian Economy & related Issues )

**In News**

- Recently, some of the political parties are promising to switch to the Old Pension Scheme.

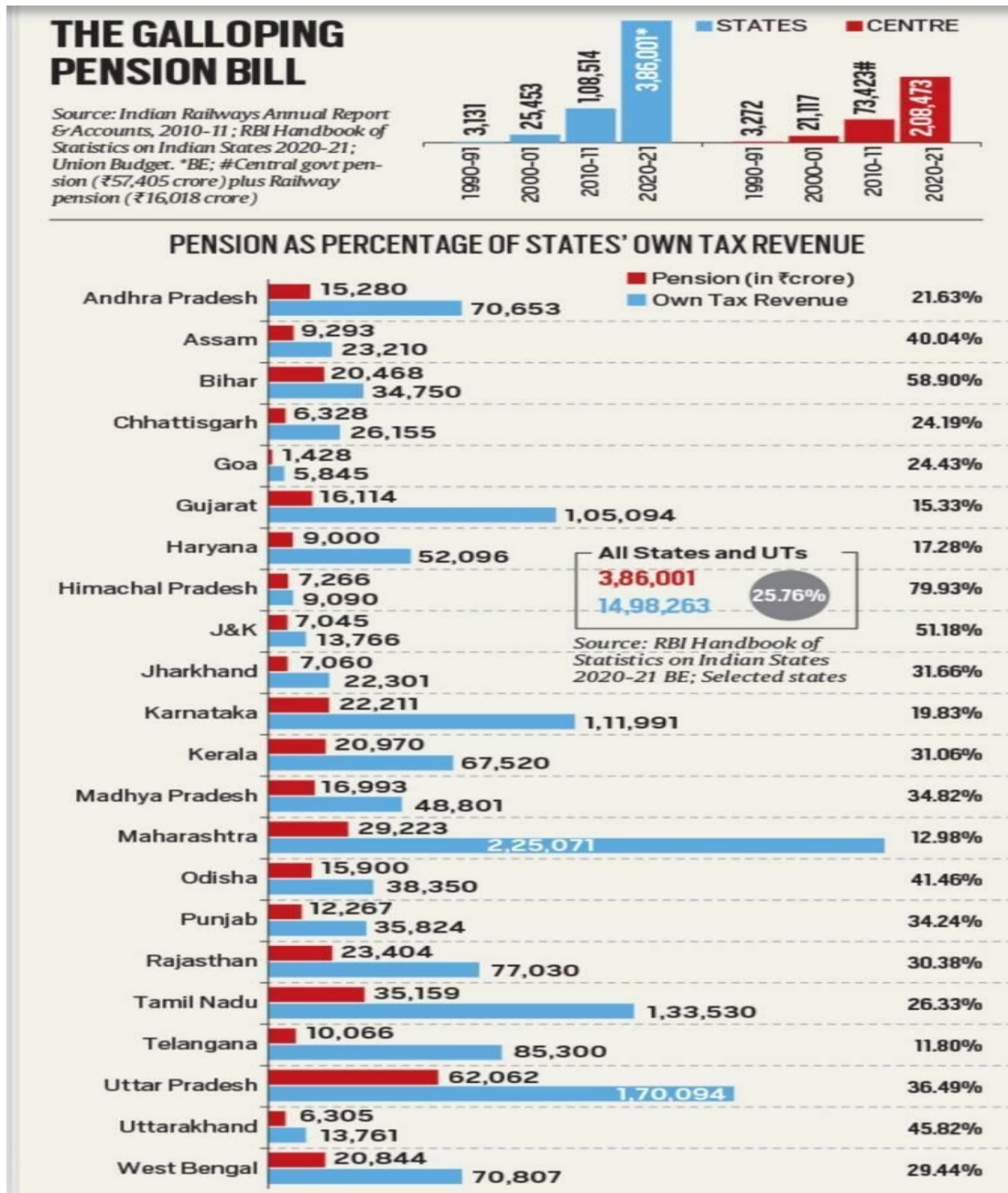
**Comparison between the Old and New system**

- **Old System**
  - Pension to government employees at the Centre as well as states was **fixed at 50 per cent of the last drawn basic pay.**
- **New System**
  - New pension system came into effect for those **joining government services from January 1, 2004.**
  - It laid in its promise of an **assured or 'defined' benefit to the retiree.**
  - It was hence described as a **'Defined Benefit Scheme'.**
  - **Example** - if a government employee's basic monthly salary at the time of retirement was Rs 10,000, she would be assured of a pension of Rs 5,000.
    - The monthly payouts of pensioners also increased with hikes in dearness allowance or DA announced by the government for serving employees.
  - **What is DA?**
    - It is calculated as a percentage of the basic salary.
    - It is a kind of adjustment the government offers its employees and pensioners to make up for the steady increase in the cost of living.

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- DA hikes are announced twice a year, generally in January and July.

## Major issues associated with the OPS



- **No specific corpus:** The main problem was that the pension liability remained unfunded, that is, there was no corpus specifically for pension, which would grow continuously and could be dipped into for payments.

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- **The pay-as-you-go scheme created** inter-generational equity issues meaning the present generation had to bear the continuously rising burden of pensioners.
- **OPS was also unsustainable:** pension liabilities would keep climbing since pensioners' benefits increased every year; like salaries of existing employees, pensioners gained from indexation, or what is called 'dearness relief' (the same as dearness allowance for existing employees).
  - Better health facilities would increase life expectancy, and **increased longevity would mean extended payouts.**
- **Burden on centre and states:** Over the last three decades, pension liabilities for the Centre and states have jumped manifold.
  - In 1990-91, the Centre's pension bill was Rs 3,272 crore, and the outgo for all states put together was Rs 3,131 crore.
  - By 2020-21, the Centre's bill had jumped 58 times to Rs 1, 90,886 crore; for states, it had shot up 125 times to Rs 3, 86,001 crore.
- **Bad economics and bad politics**
  - In 30 years, the cumulative pension bill of states has jumped to Rs 3, 86,001 crore in 2020-21 from Rs 3,131 crore in 1990-91.
  - Overall, pension payments by states eat away a quarter of their own tax revenues.
  - If wages and salaries of state government employees are added to this bill, states are left with hardly anything from their own tax receipts.
- **Inter-generational equity**
  - There is also the larger issue of inter-generational equity. Today's taxpayers are paying for the ever-increasing pensions of retirees.

**Do you know?**

- **Old Age Social and Income Security (OASIS) project**
  - In 1998, the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment commissioned a report for an Old Age Social and Income Security (OASIS) project.
  - It was formed under the **S A Dave committee.**
  - The OASIS project was not meant to reform the government pension system but its primary objective was **targeted at unorganised sector workers who had no old age income security.**
- **Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) or the Employee Pension**

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**Scheme (EPS)**

- Taking the **1991 Census numbers**, the committee noted that less than 11 percent of the estimated total working population of 31.4 crore, had some post-retirement income security; this could be government pension, Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), or the Employee Pension Scheme (EPS).
- The rest of the workforce **had no means of post-retirement economic security.**

**New Pension Scheme**

- It was the **NDA government under A B Vajpayee** that took up the gauntlet on pension reform.
- **The New Pension System proposed by the Project OASIS report** became the basis for pension reforms and what was originally conceived for unorganised sector workers, was adopted by the government for its own employees.
- The NPS was for prospective employees; it was made **mandatory for all new recruits joining government service from January 1, 2004.**
- **Contributions:**
  - The defined contribution comprised **10 percent of the basic salary and dearness allowance** by the employee and a matching contribution by the government this was Tier 1, with contributions being mandatory.
  - In 2019, the government increased its contribution to 14 percent of the basic salary and dearness allowance.
- **Schemes under the NPS are offered by nine pension fund managers**
  - It is sponsored by SBI, LIC, UTI, HDFC, ICICI, Kotak Mahindra, Adita Birla, Tata, and Max.

**Way forward**

- **This does bring state governments some short-term gains:** they save money since they will not have to put the 10 percent matching contribution towards employee pension funds.
- **For employees it will result in higher take-home salaries:** since they too will not set aside 10 percent of their basic pay and dearness allowance towards pension funds.

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- **Bad politics:** Contrast this with the bulk of the workforce which has no old age income security, but which also does not have much electoral salience.

Source: [IE](#)

**Defending Demonetisation :**

( GS- 3 Indian Economy & Related Issues ,Planning Mobilization of Resources)

**In News**

- Recently, the Union Finance Ministry told the Supreme Court (SC) that demonetisation in 2016 led to a **phenomenal growth in digital transactions, shrunk fake currency and saw more income tax payers.**

**Government's Response to SC**

- **Impact of Demonetisation:**
  - **Bridging formal informal divide:** The withdrawal of ₹500 and ₹1000 banknotes, which had at the time formed more than 80% of the currency in circulation, was a critical part of a policy push to expand the formal economy and thin the ranks of the informal cash-based sector.
  - **Transient effect:** The overall impact of the withdrawal of legal tender of the specified banknotes on economic growth was just for some time.
  - **Actual growth:** On the other hand, **real growth rate** was 8.2% in the financial year 2016-2017 and 6.8% in the financial year 2017-2018, both being more than the decadal growth rate of 6.6% in the pre-pandemic years.
  - **Unaccounted income increase:** Income tax authorities detected a significant amount of unaccounted income.
  - **Tax system aware citizenry:** Demonetisation nudged the public to be tax-compliant. The number of Permanent Account Numbers (PAN) increased. Income tax payers multiplied while fake currency faded out.
  - **Formal economy:** It was one of the significant steps in the enhanced formalisation of the economy with the aim of expanding opportunities for millions living on the periphery of the economy.

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- **Post Demonetisation:**

- The volume of digital payment transactions had increased from 1.09 lakh transactions of value of ₹6,952 crore in the entire year of 2016 to 730 crore transactions of the value of more than ₹12 lakh crore in the single month of October 2022.

### Demonetisation

- **Background:**

- The preceding five years had seen a **massive increase** in the circulation of ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes.
  - A steep rise of 76.4% for ₹500 and
  - 109% for ₹1,000 from 2010-2011 to 2015-16.
- On 8th November 2016, the Government of India announced the demonetisation of all ₹500 and ₹1,000 banknotes of the Mahatma Gandhi Series.
- It also announced the issuance of new ₹500 and ₹2,000 banknotes in exchange for the demonetised banknotes.
- **There were three main economic objectives behind demonetisation:**
  - Fighting black money,
  - Fake notes and
  - Creating a cashless economy by pushing digital transactions.

### Outcomes of the Exercise

- **Black money:**

- Among those targets, the biggest one was tackling black money.
- Black money refers to cash that is not accounted for in the banking system or cash for which tax has not been paid to the state.
- According to RBI data, almost the entire chunk of money (more than 99 percent) that was invalidated came back into the banking system.
- Of the notes worth Rs 15.41 lakh crore that were invalidated, notes worth Rs 15.31 lakh crore returned.
- Thus, data suggests that demonetisation was a failure in unearthing black money in the system. Meanwhile, instances of black money seizures continue.

- **Fake Notes:**

- RBI's annual report, submitted that Rs.15.44 lakh crore worth of currency was demonetised.

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- The withdrawn money amounted to 86.4% of the currency in circulation at the time. Only Rs.16,000 crore out of the Rs.15.44 lakh crore was not returned.
- Only .0027% fake currency was “captured” following demonetisation.
- **Digitisation of economy:**
  - As per RBI report, demonetisation has made India a lesser cash-based economy.
  - In the initial days of trouble conducting business in the face of an acute cash crunch, more and more entities had to shift to digital to do business.
    - After the return of the cash, the growth in digital payment had been modest.
- **Supported in the Pandemic:**
  - The creation of digital infrastructure post-demonetisation helped India in coping with the pandemic.
  - As the tools for faceless transactions were mostly in place, it became easier to move towards contactless transactions.

**Major Issues associated with the demonetization exercise**

- **No separate Acts:**
  - Demonetisation in 1946 and 1978 were implemented through separate Acts debated by Parliament.
  - In 2016, it was done through a mere notification issued under provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- **Central Bank had rejected key justifications:**
  - The Central Board of the RBI gave its approval to the scheme but also rejected, in writing, two of the key justifications — black money and counterfeit notes.
- **Other:**
  - 11 crore people stood in queue to change their own money.
  - Farming community was at a loss. It was sowing season.
  - Wholesale markets shut down. Prices crashed. Retail saw a “calamitous” drop in sales.
  - Industry halted and 15 crore daily labourers were left without work.
  - Some say demonetisation broke the back of the rural economy where cash was dominated and disrupted supply chains.
  - It is estimated that 1.5 million jobs were lost.

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**Conclusion**

- Many are still to shift or adopt digital payment systems, maybe because it is **more convenient to pay cash** for purchase of fruits, vegetables or a few items of grocery from a store, or due to other reasons including voucher payment.
- While there certainly has been a **discernible uptick in digital payments**, it is doubtful whether the elaborate exercise to unearth black money — the stated and primary goal of demonetisation — was worth it.

Source: [TH](#)

**Health and Climate Change :**

(GS-3)

**In News**

- Recently, the Lancet has released a report which shows **how climate change is affecting global health.**

**Major Highlights of the report**

- **Global phenomenon:** Climate change is not an isolated incident or occurrence, but a global phenomenon, leaving its impact on almost every aspect of life, sweeping in its train nations across the world, irrespective of whether they contributed to it or not.
- **COVID-19:** Countries and health systems continue to contend with the health, social, and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Russia's invasion of Ukraine** and persistent fossil fuel overdependence has pushed the world into global energy and cost-of-living crises.
- **Increased Heat wave days:** rapidly increasing temperatures exposed people, especially vulnerable populations (adults above 65 years old and children younger than one) to 3.7 billion more heat wave days in 2021 than annually in 1986–2005.
- **Rise in infectious diseases:** The changing climate is affecting the spread of infectious disease, raising the risk of emerging diseases and co-epidemics.
  - For instance, it records that coastal waters are becoming more suited for the transmission of Vibrio pathogens.

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- It also says that the number of months suitable for malaria transmission has increased in the highland areas of the Americas and Africa.
- **Additional deaths:** The WHO has predicted that between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 2, 50,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.
- **Food security:** Higher temperatures threaten crop yields directly, with the growth season shortening for many cereal crops.
  - Extreme weather events disrupt supply chains, thereby undermining food availability, access, stability, and utilisation.
  - The prevalence of undernourishment increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and up to 161 million more people face hunger in 2020 than in 2019.
- **Dependence on fossil fuel:** The war has led many countries to search for alternative fuels to Russian oil and gas, and some of them are still turning back to traditional thermal energy.

**Do you know?**

- **89.3% of the global population, some 8.4 billion people, could be at risk of malaria by 2078**, compared with 75.6% of the population at the end of the last century.
- **The IPCC report projects** that in the coming decades, climate changes will increase in all regions.
  - **An increase of 1.5°C** would be associated with increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons and shorter cold seasons.
  - **While at 2°C of global warming**, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health

**Major Challenges cited by the report**

- **Health at the Mercy of Fossil Fuels:** It points out that the world's reliance on fossil fuels increases the risk of disease, food insecurity and other illnesses related to heat.
- **Environmental determinants of health:** According to the WHO, climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health: clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter.

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- **Climate change is undermining many of the social determinants** for good health, such as livelihoods, equality and access to health care and social support structures.
- **These climate-sensitive health risks are disproportionately felt** by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including women, children, ethnic minorities, poor communities, migrants or displaced persons, older populations and those with underlying health conditions.
- **Mental health:** each year since 2008, an average of more than 20 million people worldwide are forced to move because of weather-related events. The impacts on mental health caused by such trauma and loss are harder to quantify than the effects on physical health.

**Way Forward/ Suggestions**

- **A transition to clean energy** forms would undeniably be the sustainable way ahead.
- **A health-centred response** to the coexisting climate, energy, and cost-of-living crisis provides an opportunity to deliver a healthy, low-carbon future.
- **The governments' commitment** to assess and address the threats from climate change, are positive signs.
- **Improvements in air quality** will help prevent deaths resulting from exposure to fossil fuel-derived ambient PM2.5.
- **The stress on low-carbon travel and increase in urban spaces** would result in promoting physical activity which would have an impact on physical and mental health.
- **It calls for an accelerated transition to balanced and more plant-based diets**, as that would help reduce emissions from red meat and milk production, and prevent diet-related deaths, besides substantially reducing the risk of zoonotic diseases.
- **The report calls for global coordination, funding, transparency, and cooperation** between governments, communities, civil society, businesses, and public health leaders, to reduce or prevent the vulnerabilities that the world is otherwise exposed to.

Source: [TH](#)

**National Press Day :**

**(GS-2 Government Policies& Intervention)**

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**In Context**

- India celebrates 16th November as National Press Day every year.

**More about the Day**

- **About:**
  - National Press Day is observed in honor of the Press Council of India.
  - The day is meant to mark the presence of the free and responsible press in India.
- **Evolution of authority of maintaining the ethics of journalism:**
  - **First Press Commission, 1956:**
    - In the year 1956, the First Press Commission decided to form a body bestowed with statutory authority, meant to fulfill the responsibility of maintaining the ethics of journalism.
  - **The Press Council of India, 1966:**
    - In 1966, on 16th November, the PCI was formed and following this, the National Press Day has been celebrated ever since on 16th November, every year to commemorate the establishment of the council.

**Press Council of India (PCI)**

- **Statute:**
  - The PCI was established under the **PCI Act of 1978** for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the press and of maintaining and improving the standards of **newspapers and news agencies** in India.
- **Responsibilities:**
  - The Press Council of India is responsible for examining the quality of reportage from the Indian media, while also keeping a check on other journalistic activities.
- **Functions:**
  - Helping newspapers maintain their independence;
  - Build a code of conduct for journalists and news agencies;
  - Help maintain “high standards of public taste” and foster responsibility among citizens; and
  - Review developments likely to restrict flow of news.
- **Chairperson & members:**

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- The Press Council of India is traditionally chaired by a retired Supreme Court Judge and 28 additional members of which 20 are members of the media outlets operating in India.
- Five members are nominated from the Houses of the Parliament and the remaining three represent cultural, legal and literary fields.

**Significance of Press Freedom**

- **Independence of Press:**
  - The freedom of the press is an essential aspect to maintain the independence of the press.
- **Voice of the voiceless:**
  - This ensures the integrity of the press as it is often referred to as the voice of the voiceless, a connecting link between the all-powerful rulers and those who are being ruled.
  - The goal of the press is to bring to light any injustice faced by the people and highlights the malaise of the system.
- **One of the four pillars of democracy:**
  - It is meant to help the government find solutions to these problems, while strengthening the values of the democratic system of governance.
  - For this very reason, the press is often referred to as one of the four pillars of a strong democracy and is the only aspect where the common citizen can directly participate in.
    - The other three pillars are the Executive, Legislative, and the Judiciary – a gang of select few.

Source: ET

**Arvind Virmani: Full-time Member of NITI Aayog :**

**GS -2**

**In News**

- Recently, the government has appointed senior economist **Dr Arvind Virmani** as a full-time member of the NITI Aayog.
  - At present there are **three members**: Dr V K Saraswat, Professor Ramesh Chand and Dr V K Paul.

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**About National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog)**

- **About:**
  - It was set up in 2015 to **replace Planning Commission**.
  - It is an **Executive Body** (acts as a **think tank** and **advisory body**)
- **Objective:**
  - To foster the spirit of **Cooperative and Competitive federalism** through structured support initiatives on a continuous basis.
- **Composition of NITI Aayog:**
  - **Chairperson:** Prime Minister of India
  - **Governing Council** consists of the Chief Ministers of all the States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories in India.
    - The NITI Aayog's governing council is the premier body tasked with evolving a shared vision of national priorities and strategies with the involvement of the States and Union Territories.
    - It presents a platform to discuss **inter-sectoral, inter-departmental** and **federal issues**.
  - **Regional Councils** will be created to address particular issues and possibilities affecting more than one state.
    - These will be **formed for a fixed term and summoned by the PM**.
    - These will be **chaired by the Chairperson of the NITI Aayog** or his **nominee**.
  - **Special invitees:** Eminent experts, specialists with relevant domain knowledge, which will be nominated by the Prime Minister.
- **Full-time organizational framework:**
  - Prime Minister as the Chairperson:
  - Vice-Chairperson (appointed by the Prime Minister)
  - **Members:**
    - Full-time
    - Part-time members on a rotational basis: Maximum of 2 members from foremost universities, leading research organizations, and other innovative organizations in an ex-officio capacity.
  - **Ex Officio members:**
    - Maximum of 4 members of the Council of Ministers which is to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

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- **Chief Executive Officer:**
  - The CEO will be appointed by the Prime Minister for a fixed tenure. He will be in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.
- **Key Initiatives and Recent Achievements:**
  - Aspirational Districts Scheme.
  - 3 Documents: 3-year action agenda, 7-year medium-term strategy paper and 15-year vision document.
  - Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policies (**MAFAP**) programme in India
  - Promoted **Zero Budget Natural Farming**.
  - Promoting ‘Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati’ programme under Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (**PKVY**).
  - Village Storage Scheme

**His achievements**

- He has served as the **Chief Economic Advisor** in the Ministry of Finance during the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government from 2007-09.
- He was a **member of the Reserve Bank of India’s Technical Advisory Committee** on Monetary Policy from February 2013 to August 2016.
- He has also served at the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, Washington DC.
- **He has written several books:**
  - The Sudoku of India’s Growth.
  - From Unipolar To Tri polar World: Multi-polar Transition Paradox.
  - Propelling India from Socialist Stagnation to Global Power.
  - Accelerating Growth and Poverty Reduction – A Policy Framework for India’s Development.

**Source: IE**

**Patan Patola**

**(Gs-1 Art & culture)**

**In News**

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- Recently ,Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted 'Patan Patola Dupatta' (scarf) to Italian PM Giorgia Meloni.



**About Patan Patola**

- The **(Double Ikat) Patan Patola textile** woven by **Salvi family** in Patan area of Northern Gujarat is so well crafted that it becomes a feast of colours, with front & reverse being indistinguishable.
- The ancient art of double ikat or Patola woven in pure silk dates back to the **11th century**.
- The Patola fabrics bear an **equal intensity of colours and design** on both sides.
  - This peculiar quality has its origins in an intricate and difficult technique of dyeing or knot dyeing, known as 'bandhani', on the warp and weft separately before weaving.
- Ikat weaves are also found in Odisha's famous Sambalpuri sarees, which, unlike Patola, are woven in cotton yarn too, as is the Pochampally saree from Andhra Pradesh.

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Source:[IE](#)

**Carbon Border Adjustment Tax:**

( Gs-3 Biodiversity & environment)

**In News**

- At COP27 India, China, Brazil, South Africa opposed the ‘**carbon border tax**’.

**About Carbon Border Adjustment Tax**

- The European Union has proposed a policy — called the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism** — to tax products such as cement and steel that are extremely carbon intensive, with effect from 2026.
- It is a duty on imports based on the amount of carbon emissions resulting from the production of the product in question.
  - As a price on carbon, it discourages emissions. As a trade-related measure, it affects production and exports.
- **Opposition** : BASIC, a group constituting Brazil, India, South Africa and China, and therefore large economies that are significantly dependent on coal, has for several years voiced common concerns and reiterated their right to use fossil fuel in the interim during their countries’ eventual transformation to clean energy sources.
  - They jointly stated that carbon border taxes, that could result in market distortion and aggravate the trust deficit amongst parties, must be avoided.

Source:[TH](#)

**U.K.-India Young Professionals Scheme :**

( GS-2 India & Foreign Relation )

**In News**

- The newly elected United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the UK-India Young Professionals Scheme for young Indian professionals.

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**About U.K.-India Young Professionals Scheme**

- Under the scheme, the UK will offer 3,000 places to 18–30 year-old degree holders holding Indian nationalities to live and work in the UK for up to two years.
  - India is the first visa-national country to benefit from such a scheme
- The scheme will commence in early 2023 and be on a reciprocal basis.
- **Relevance** : The U.K. government called the launch of the program a “significant moment” for the U.K.-India relationship but also the U.K.’s links to the Indo Pacific.

Source: [IE](#)

**Facts in News**

**Rhodes scholarship:**

( GS 2 Government Policies & intervention )

**In News**

- Recently, five Indian students have been selected for the **Rhodes Scholars-Elect for India 2023**.

**Rhodes Scholarship**

- **About:**
  - It is the **world’s oldest graduate fellowship** (first awarded in **1902**).
  - **Based at:** the University of Oxford
  - It is a **fully funded**, full time, **postgraduate** award.
  - Students from **anywhere** in the world can apply for a Rhodes Scholarship.
- **Procedure:**
  - The candidates were selected after a competitive examination application process and one round of preliminary interviews.
  - It is considered among the **world's most prestigious** international scholarship programs.
- **Benefits:**

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- The students will head to Oxford University in October 2023 to join a cohort of more than 100 scholars hailing from around the world to undertake **fully sponsored** post-graduate studies.

**The Rhodes Trust**

- It is an educational charity.
- It brings together and develops **exceptional people** who are impatient with the way things are and have the courage to act.

Source: [IE](#)

**Women's participation in the armed forces**

**GS 1**

**In News**

- The Supreme Court directed the Centre and the Indian Air Force to consider **granting Permanent Commission (PC)** to 32 retired women Short Service Commission (SSC) officers based on **their suitability** with the purpose of **giving them pensionary benefits**.
  - The court refused to order their reinstatement in service.

**Background :**

- The court was **hearing pleas by some women Short Service Commission Officers** from India Air Force seeking Permanent Commission and consequential benefits.

**Supreme Court's Observations**

- The bench said the women IAF officers, **if found eligible by the IAF** for grant of permanent commission, will be entitled to **grant of one-time pensionary benefit** from the date when they would have completed 20 years in service if it had continued.
  - These women's IAF officers' pensions will be equivalent to the officers who went on to serve for 20 years.

- **Babita Puniya case:**

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- Apex court relied on the 2020 Babita Puniya case, which said that the armed forces have **discriminatory recruitment practices for women** who were being **excluded from positions that they were otherwise entitled to**.
- It paved the way for an increase in the intake of women officers into the defense forces.
- Women in the armed forces have the option to serve a full career, which earlier was restricted to a maximum of 10 or 14 years.

**Scenario of Women's participation in India's Armed forces**

- **Evolution:**
  - The armed forces, traditionally thought of as a male bastion, have in the past 30 years seen success in the induction of women, though the journey has not been smooth.
  - The military opened its doors to women in 1992 when the Air Force inducted its first batch.
- **Limited combat roles:**
  - **In 2008**, a permanent commission was extended to women in streams of Judge Advocate General (JAG) and Army Education Corps.
  - **In 2015**, India also opened new combat air force roles for women as fighter pilots.
  - Women have been allowed in combat in the Air Force, but we are yet to see women in combat roles in the army and navy.
    - Even though women have been in the forces since 1992 all roles and career options are not offered to them.
- **Significance of inducting women in defence forces in India:**
  - Women officers will be given **equal opportunity to contribute** to the nation.
  - The armed forces play an important role and need to **promote gender equality in the forces**.
  - Providing women with a more **challenging and fulfilling career**.
  - It would **change the "regressive mindset"** for not allowing women in the armed forces.
  - It will **challenge a strong stereotype** that assumes that domestic obligations rest solely on women.
- **Challenges:**

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- Military's universal perception is that it would lead to **“operational, practical and cultural problems”**.
- Officers in combat branches have to **fight together & there is no privacy** which could be an issue for a female.
- It's **tough to maintain proper living conditions for women** in combat situations, especially given social norms in India.
- It is often seen as a challenge by society for women to meet the **requirements of service** owing to their prolonged **absence during pregnancy, motherhood and domestic responsibilities**.

**Way ahead**

- The women of the Armed Forces are undoubtedly viewed as role models for all women and the Supreme Court along with the Indian Government have played a stimulating character in achieving this end.
- The Armed Forces must take a proactive approach themselves in ensuring gender equality rather than waiting for courts to intervene.

**More about PC & SSC**

- **Short Service Commission:** It provides an option to women for joining the Army and serving as a Commissioned Officer for 10/14 years. After 10 years, a woman officer can either opt for a PC or opt-out or have the option of a 4 years extension, during which they can resign any time.
- **Permanent Commission:** It means a career in the Army till the retirement age. For PC, the entry is through National Defence Academy (NDA), Pune, Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun and OTA, Gaya.
  - **Permanent Commission for Women:**
    - The Ministry of Defence has taken steps to ensure the implementation of the grant of PC to women officers in the Armed Forces.
    - Indian Air Force:
      - All Branches, including Fighter Pilots, are open for female officers.
    - Indian Navy:
      - All non-sea going Branches/Cadre/Specialisation has been

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opened for induction of women officers through SSC.

- Indian Army:
  - Women officers are granted PC in the Indian Army in all the ten branches where women are inducted for SSC.
- **Recent Developments** :After the Supreme Court paved the way for women to take the National Defence Academy (NDA) exam last year, the first batch of 19 cadets have joined the tri-services academy in Khadakwasla, Pune.

Source:[ET](#)

### **India-Norway Cooperation on Green Maritime Sector**

**Gs 2 International organisations & groupings ; agreements Involving India &/or Affecting India's Interest**

#### **In News**

Recently, the 8th Norway-India **Joint Working Group Maritime meeting** was held in Mumbai.

#### **Indo-Norway joint effort for GREEN MARITIME Sector.**

- **Background** : Maritime trade with Norway dates back to 1600.
  - Norway has the technical expertise in Maritime sector and India has huge potential for development of Maritime sector and large pool of trained seafarers, which make both countries natural complementary partners.
  - The 7th JWG on Maritime was held in Oslo in 2019 and issues regarding cooperation in Shipbuilding, enhancing skills of seafarers and environment friendly ships were discussed.
- **Recent Developments:** During the 8th Meeting Discussion was held on use of **alternative fuels** like green ammonia and hydrogen for futuristic shipping.
  - The Norwegian Green Shipping Programme has been successful and the experience and expertise was shared in the meeting.
- Norway stated that it is committed to India for zero emission solutions.
- The Indian side has requested Norway to extend Ship Board training and Ship Board training in the area of Polar Water Navigation.

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- The Norwegian delegation will take part in **INMARCO**, the Green Shipping Conclave, and the Maritime ShEO conference.
  - The Maritime ShEO conference is supported by Norway and focused on maritime diversity and sustainability, including gender equality in the maritime industry.
- **Other Projects:**
  - **Green Voyage 2050 Project:** India Norway is part of Green Voyage 2050 project, both parties agreed on willingness, devotion, partnership and capacity building for achieving common goals.
  - **Hong Kong Convention:** India is a signatory to Hong Kong Convention for Recycling of Ships.
    - In the 8th meeting, India requested that EU regulation should not hinder recycling to non-European countries which are compliant as per International Convention.

### **Maritime Industry in India**

- India has **12 major and 200 non-major/intermediate ports** (under state government administration).
  - Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust is the largest major port in India, while Mudra is the largest private port.
- India is one of the **world's top 5 ship recycling countries** and holds **30% share in the global ship recycling market**.
- Approximately **95% of the country's trade by volume** and 68% by value is moved through Maritime Transport.
- The overall **installed capacity** of the major ports in India has increased over 76% to reach 1,561 MTPA in Mar 2021, vis-a-vis 872 MTPA in March 2014.

### **Challenges of Maritime Industry**

- **Unsustainable extraction from marine resources**, such as unsustainable fishing, exploited by illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.
- **Physical alterations and destruction of marine and coastal habitats** and landscapes due largely to coastal development, deforestation, and mining.

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- **Unplanned and unregulated development** in the narrow coastal interface and nearshore areas has led to the marginalization of poor communities, and loss or degradation of critical habitats.
- **Marine pollution**, for example, in the form of excess nutrients from untreated sewage, agricultural runoff, and marine debris such as plastics.
- **Impacts of climate change**, for example, in the form of both slow-onset events like sea-level rise and more intense and frequent weather events.
- **Other Factors:** Ineffective governance institutions, inadequate economic incentives, technological advances, lack of or inadequate capacities, lack of full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and other legal instruments, and insufficient application of management tools have often led to poorly regulated activities.

### Initiatives of India

- MoPSW (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways) is working diligently to develop the Maritime Sector as a goal of Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030.



- **Sagarmala Project:** Vision of the Sagarmala Programme is to reduce logistics cost for export-import and domestic trade with minimal infrastructure investment.
- **Coastal Economic Zones (CEZ):**

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- The government identifies 14 CEZs in the National Perspective Plan for Sagarmala Programme.
- CEZs aims to promote exports by providing infrastructure and facilities to entrepreneurs to set up businesses and industries near Ports.
- **Indian Ocean Rim Association:** India has been taking active participation in the IORA for promotion of the blue economy in Indian Ocean littoral states.
- **Matsya Sampada Yojana:**
  - It is a flagship scheme for focused and sustainable development of the fisheries sector in the country.
  - It will bring about the Blue Revolution by harnessing fisheries potential in a sustainable, responsible, inclusive and equitable manner.
- **Polymetallic Nodules (PMN):** India has received the sanction from International Seabed Authority for deep-sea mining in the Central Indian Ocean.

### Way Ahead

- India needs to **develop maritime trade** among BIMSTEC nations and tie-ups / MoUs with other maritime countries.
- There is clear potential to further **improve the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)** in the shipping ecosystem by a **more comprehensive integration of technology**.
- **Modernizing** Major Ports infrastructure through **PPP model**.

Source: [PIB](#)

**CSE's India 2022: An Assessment of Extreme Weather Events report**

**GS 3 Biodiversity and Environment**

### In News

- Recently, the report by the **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** found that in just nine months of 2022, India witnessed some form of natural disaster almost every day.
  - India recorded extreme weather events on 241 of the 273 days between January 1 and September 30, 2022.

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**About the assessment**

- The assessment provides a **comprehensive overview of the state of extreme weather in India** across a major part of the year.
  - The report provides **season-wise, month-wise, and region-wise analysis** of extreme weather events and their associated loss and damage.
- **CSE has sourced its data from two key Indian government sources:** the IMD and the Disaster Management Division (DMD) of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

**Do you know?**

- **What are Extreme weather events?**
  - **The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** defines extreme weather events as those that are “rare at a particular place and time of year”.
  - **While India does not have an official definition, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) classifies** lightning and thunderstorm, heavy to very and extremely heavy rainfall, landslide and floods, cold wave, heat wave, cyclones, snowfall, dust and sandstorms, squalls, hail storms and gales as extreme weather events.

**Major Highlights of the report**

- **A disaster almost every day:**
  - India has seen close to a **disaster every day in the nine months** of this year from heat and cold waves, cyclones, and lightning to heavy rains, floods, and landslides.
- **Loss and damage under-estimated:**
  - These disasters have claimed 2,755 lives, affected 1.8 million hectares of crop area, destroyed over 416,667 houses, and killed close to 70,000 livestock.
  - This estimation of loss and damage is probably an underestimate as data for each event including **losses of public property or crop loss has not been collated or estimated.**
- **State-wise assessment:**
  - **Madhya Pradesh** saw the highest number of days with extreme weather events.

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- **Himachal Pradesh** saw the highest number of human fatalities (359 deaths).
- **Assam** reported the highest number of damaged houses and animal deaths.
- **Karnataka** accounted for more than 50 percent of the crop area affected in the country.
- **Region-wise assessment:**
  - The **central and north-western regions** reported the highest number of days with extreme weather events at 198 and 195, respectively.
  - In terms of human lives lost, **central India** topped the list with 887 deaths, followed by the **east and northeast** (783 deaths).
- **Warmest, wettest, driest:**
  - In 2022, India recorded its **seventh wettest January since 1901**.
  - This March was also the **warmest ever and the third driest in 121 years**.
  - **Eastern and north-eastern India** saw its warmest and driest July in 121 years. The region also recorded its second-warmest August and fourth-warmest September in 2022.
- **Nature of the event**
  - All types of extreme weather have been seen in the past nine months; **lightning and storms** were spread over 30 states and claimed 773 lives.

**Major gaps in the report**

- **Loss and damage assessment is not done properly:** While a realistic estimate can be made about the number of days the country recorded extreme weather events from the IMD releases, major gaps remain when it comes to loss and damage assessment.
- **CSE researchers say that the data itself is not comprehensive:** For instance, media reports suggest widespread crop loss in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat during the monsoon season (June-September), but the Centre's cumulative loss and damage report for the season claims that there have been no losses in these states.
- **The absence of a robust public database on extreme weather events** in the country poses difficulties in the evaluation of disaster situations and its impacts.

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**Way forward**

- The report highlights the **need for managing these extreme events.**
- Need of the hour is to **move beyond the management of the disaster to reducing risks and improving resilience.**
- **We need to improve the systems for flood management,** deliberately building drainage and water recharge systems on the one hand and investing in green spaces and forests so that these sponges of water can be revitalized for the coming storms.

**Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)**

- It is a **public-interest research and advocacy organisation** based in New Delhi.
- CSE researches into, lobbies for and **communicates the urgency of development** that is both **sustainable and equitable.**
- CSE's efforts are specifically designed to **create awareness about problems and propose sustainable solutions.**
- **CSE's Pollution Monitoring Laboratory** is an independent, analytical laboratory that monitors toxic contamination of the environment and uses the results of this monitoring to advocate for improved regulation of the use of toxins in the country.

**Source:TH**

**Spring hurricanes in Arctic to intensify: NASA**

**Gs 3 – Conservation ; Environmental Pollution & Degradation**

**In News**

Recently, NASA stated that rapid warming due to climate change has **severely affected the Arctic**, with frozen parts of the Earth receding drastically.

**About the Study:**

- A study by NASA, “The influence of recent and future climate change on spring Arctic cyclones” looked into the influence of both recent and future climate change on major characteristics of Arctic cyclones during spring (March and April).

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**Key Findings**

- Spring Arctic cyclones will intensify by the end of this century because of sea ice loss and rapidly warming temperatures.
- **Patterns:** Hurricanes threaten North American coastlines every year and they appear to be intensifying,
- **Main cause: Climate Change**
  - Ocean heat, air humidity, wind — all these ingredients factor into hurricane formation. And all are affected by climate change.
- **Temperature:** The global mean temperature is currently at 1.15 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial (1850-1900) levels and the last eight consecutive years were the eight hottest years of humanity.
- **Weather:** The changing weather could increase risks for Arctic ecosystems, communities, and commercial and industrial activities.
- **Cyclones:** Cyclone wind speeds could increase up to 38 mph, depending on storm characteristics and the region's environmental conditions.
- **Spring represents** an important period for sea ice-atmosphere interactions.
  - Sea ice loss and rapidly warming temperatures will lead to stronger storms that carry warmer air and more moisture into the Arctic.
- **Impact :** The exacerbated cyclone conditions may affect a greater area of sea ice and ocean and other components of the Arctic system for a longer duration in a warmer climate
  - More intense storms will be a hazard to shipping activities, oil and gas drilling and extraction, fishing, and Arctic ecosystems and biodiversity.
- **Future Prospects :** Scientists need more details about Arctic cyclones to form more accurate predictions of how the storms will influence sea ice that is already declining, as well as how the loss of ice will affect storm intensity.

**Cyclones**

- Cyclones, also known as hurricanes and typhoons, are synoptic weather events that transport heat and moisture into the Arctic and have complex

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impacts on sea ice and the local and global climate.

- Arctic cyclones are low-pressure systems of varying size (around 200—1,500 kilometres in radius) and are often associated with large changes in temperature and humidity, strong winds, and heavy persistent precipitation.

Source: [DTE](#)

## Semiconductor and electronics manufacturing industry in India

### Gs 3- Indian Economy & Related Issues

#### In News

- The **25th edition of Bengaluru Technology Summit, Karnataka's annual tech exposition** was recently attended by the Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology.
  - He highlighted the potential of India's Semiconductor and electronics manufacturing industry.

#### Potential of the Semiconductor and electronics sector in India

- India has a great scope to emerge as a sizable player in electronics and semiconductor products manufacturing as part of **China-plus-one diversification strategy**.
  - **China Plus One**
- The strategy is also known simply as Plus One, is the **business strategy to avoid investing only in China and diversify** business into other countries.
- For the **last 20 years**, western companies have invested in China, drawn in by their low production costs, and enormous domestic consumer markets.
- **Growth:**
  - The country's electronics and semiconductor products manufacturing sector has witnessed a quantum growth in the last almost a decade.
  - **Import & manufacturing:**

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- In 2014 some 92% of the mobile devices sold in the country were imported while in 2022 some 97% of mobile devices were manufactured in the country.
- **Potential:**
  - In 2014, the country's electronics ecosystem that comprises manufacturing, designing, innovation and production pegged \$10 billion, and in 2022 it grew to \$75 billion and expected to cross \$300 billion by 2025-26.
- **FDI in the sector:**
  - Electronics and semiconductor sector captured 66% of the FDI that came to India in the last three years.
- **Sector specific production:**
  - The electronic devices industry is segmented as Mobile Phones (24%), Consumer Electronics (22%), Strategic Electronics (12%), Computer Hardware (7%), LEDs (2%) and Industrial Electronics (34%) comprising Auto, Medical and other industrial electronic products.
- **Demand:**
  - Technology transitions such as the rollout of 5G networks and IoT are driving the accelerated adoption of electronics products.
  - Initiatives such as '**Digital India**' and '**Smart City**' projects have raised the demand for IoT in the electronics devices market and will undoubtedly usher in a new era for electronic products.

### Challenges

- **China's monopoly in the sector:**
  - Elaborating on the opportunities for India currently, he said electronics and semiconductor products today was a **\$1.5 trillion industry** with **China solely accounting for almost 75% of it** and having enjoyed a monopoly in the sector for **over two decades** now.
- **India as a part of Global Value Chains (GVCs):**
  - India is hopeful of becoming part of Global Value Chains (GVCs) for **logic semiconductors, chip sets and other electronic products**, said the Minister.
    - **Chip shortages:**
      - However, the **pandemic** has brought tectonic changes in the global electronics and semiconductor industry

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and they **triggered huge chip shortages** and a shift in GVCs.

- **Chip production is a resource-intensive and expensive process**
- **Lagging-edge vs cutting-edge technology:**
- **Water intensive:** Chip-making also requires **gallons of ultrapure water** in a single day.
- **Power supply issues**

### **Initiatives taken by Government**

- India Semiconductor Mission
- Semicon India programme
- Production Linked Incentive scheme

### **Conclusion and Way Ahead**

- India must seize the opportunity and become an attractive alternative destination for semiconductor manufacturing.
- Government policies should also focus on assuring and securing access to foreign technology suppliers through trade and foreign policy to ensure a global level of collaboration.
- The initial funding should focus on areas like design and R&D, for which India already has an established talent pool.

### **Facts in News**

#### **Army First Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) squadron**

#### **Gs 3 Defence**

#### **In News**

Recently ,The Army has moved its first Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) squadron to Missamari, Assam, in the eastern sector near the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

- The Air Force raised its first LCH squadron at Jodhpur in October 2022.

#### **About Army First Light Combat Helicopter (LCH)**

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- It is India's first indigenously designed and developed attack helicopter.
- It is also the first dedicated attack helicopter operated by the Army.
- The Army LCH will be armed with a 20 mm nose gun, 70 mm rockets, helicopter-launched anti-tank guided missile and a new air-to-air missile different from the 'Mistral-2' from MBDA on the IAF LCH.

**Light Combat Helicopter (LCH)**

- The twin-engine LCH designed and developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is a 5-8 tonne class dedicated combat helicopter conceptualised after the 1999 Kargil conflict.
- The helicopter has a combat radius of 500 km and a service ceiling of 21,000 feet which makes it ideal to operate at high-altitude areas including Siachen glacier.
- In March 2020, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved procurement of 15 Limited Series Production (LSP) variants of LCH at the cost of ₹3,887 crore along with infrastructure sanctions worth ₹377 crore.
  - Of the 15 helicopters, 10 are for IAF and five for the Army.

Source: [TH](#)

**National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme(NMMSS)**

**GS 2- education**

**In Context**

The last date for submission of applications for NMMSS for the year 2022-23 is 30th November 2022.

**About NMMSS**

- It is the Central Sector Scheme which was launched in 2008, after getting approval from CCEA, with the objective to award scholarships to meritorious students of economically weaker sections to arrest their drop out at class VIII and encourage them to continue their education at secondary stage.
- One lakh fresh scholarships are awarded to selected students of class IX every year and their continuation / renewal in classes X to XII for study

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in State Government, Government-aided and Local body schools under the scheme.

- The amount of scholarship is Rs. 12000/- per annum from 1st April 2017 (earlier it was Rs. 6000/- per annum).
- **Eligibility** : Students whose parental income from all sources is not more than Rs. 3,50,000/- per annum are eligible to avail the scholarships. The students must have a minimum of 55% marks or equivalent grade in Class VII examination for appearing in the selection test for award of scholarship (relaxable by 5% for SC/ST students).
  - The students should be studying as regular student in a Government, Government-aided and local body school. Students of NVS, KVS and residential schools are not entitled for the scholarship. There is reservation as per State Government norms.
- **Disbursal of Scholarship:** The scheme is fully on board the National Scholarship Portal (NSP) from 2018-19.
  - NMMSS scholarships are disbursed directly into the bank accounts of selected students by electronic transfer through the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) following DBT mode.

Source: [PIB](#)

### **Facts in News**

#### **Red-Crowned roofed turtle**

#### **GS 2 Species**

#### **In News**

India has put forward a proposal to better protect a species of freshwater reptile called the red-crowned roofed turtle (Batagur kachuga) under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

#### **About**

- **Scientific Name** : Batagur kachuga
- The turtle, native to India and Bangladesh, is at a high risk of extinction
- It inhabits large swift-flowing rivers with sandy bottoms.
- **Threats** : It is highly susceptible to major hydrological projects and their impacts on river flow dynamics and nesting beaches, and water pollution

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- Overharvesting the animal for illegal consumption and illegal international trade are other reasons for its extinction threat.
- **Protection Status :**
  - It is already classified as **critically endangered** under the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.
  - It is included in CITES Appendix II
  - It is protected under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 (amended).

**CITES**

- CITES is an agreement regulating the movement across international borders of certain wild animal and plant species.
- The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices as per the degree of protection they need:
  - Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction
  - Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction but (where trade must be controlled)
  - Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES parties for assistance in controlling the trade

Source: [DTE](#)

**Facts in News**

**National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) :**

( GS-3 Indian Economy & Related Issues )

**In News**

The Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs has urged the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) to expand its operations and explore ways to crowd in private capital for projects under the National Infrastructure Pipeline, PM Gati Shakti and National Infrastructure Corridor.

**About NIIF**

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- It is an Indian-government backed entity established to provide long-term capital to the country's infrastructure sector.
- Budget 2015 set the ball rolling for its creation and NIIF was set up as an alternative investment fund (AIF) in December 2016
- It is is a collaborative investment platform for international and Indian investors
- It invests across Infrastructure and Growth Equity.
- It has developed into an internationally credible and commercially viable investment platform, backed by several highly respected global and domestic investors who have invested alongside the Government of India in NIIF Funds.
- NIIF's first bilateral fund - an "India Japan Fund" with contribution from GoI has been proposed through an MoU between National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited (NIIFL) and Japan Bank for International Development (JBIC).

Source: [PIB](#)

## **Baliyatra**

( GS-1 Art & culture )

### **In News**

- Recently, the Prime Minister In his **address to the Indian diaspora in Bali** on the side-lines of the **G20 summit** mentioned the **annual Baliyatra on the banks of the Mahanadi in Cuttack**, which celebrates the **ancient trade relations between India and Indonesia**.
  - This year's Baliyatra also found a place in the **Guinness World Records** for achieving an impressive feat of origami, the **creation of beautiful paper sculptures**.

### **About Baliyatra**

- **Historical significance**
  - It is one of the **country's largest open-air fairs**.
  - It is organised every year to commemorate the **2,000-year-old maritime and cultural links** between ancient **Kalinga (today's**

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- Odisha**) and Bali and other South and Southeast Asian regions like Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Burma (Myanmar) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
- The origins of the festival, which begins on **Kartik Purnima (full moon night in the month of Kartik)** can be traced back more than 1,000 years.
  - **The Bay of Bengal region** had several ports, and **sadhavas (traders)** traditionally began their voyage across the sea on this auspicious day, when the winds were favourable for the boats, known as boita, to sail.
  - **Popular items of trade between Kalinga and Southeast Asia**
    - It included pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, silk, camphor, gold, and jewellery.
  - **Significance of the festival**
    - **Cultural dimension:** Even today, thousands of people across Odisha sail decorative miniature boats made of banana stems, paper, or thermocol to celebrate boita bandana, or the worshipping of the boats.
    - **Commercial dimension:** It is a time when people purchase everything from automobiles and electronic devices to local artisanal products at prices that are comparatively low.

**Source:**[IE](#)

**Cerebrotendinous xanthomatosis (CTX) :**

**( GS-3 Science & Techonology)**

**In News**

- Recently, **Hyderabad researchers** found a remedy to stop progression of rare genetic disease.

**About CTX**

- **Data:**
  - **Only four CTX cases** have so far been medically documented in India.
- **About the disease:**
  - It is a **lipid-storage skin disease** with **no known medical cure** but its progression can be stopped.

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- It is a **rare autosomal recessive genetic disorder** caused by an abnormality in the **CYP27A1 gene**.
  - The lack of this enzyme **prevents cholesterol** from being converted into a **bile acid called chenodeoxycholic acid**.
- It **starts with diarrhoea in infancy** and progresses to cataract in childhood and neurodegeneration in adolescence or adulthood.
- **Recent remedy**
  - The doctors-researchers team stopped the disease progression by **administering two capsules of cholic acid daily** as a specific drug for three months and subsequent diagnosis showed that the levels of cholesterol (a chemical sterol that makes lipids) have decreased resulting in **drastic control over juvenile diarrhoea**.

**Source:** [TOI](#)

**Review Jurisdiction of Supreme Court of India:**

(GS-2 Executive & Judiciary)

**In News**

- The Centre recently moved the Supreme Court seeking a review of its order prematurely **releasing six convicts** serving life imprisonment for the **assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991**.

**About**

- A judgement of the Supreme Court **becomes the law of the land**, according to the Constitution.
- It is **final** because it **provides certainty for deciding future cases**.

**What is a review petition and when can it be filed?**

- **Article 137:** the Constitution gives, under Article 137, the Supreme Court the power to review its judgments or orders. This provision forms the legal basis for the filing of a “review petition”.
  - A review petition must be filed within 30 days of pronouncement of the judgement.

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- Except in cases of death penalty, review petitions are heard through “circulation” by judges in their chambers. They are usually not heard in open court.
- Lawyers in review petitions usually make their case through written submissions, and not oral arguments. The same judges who passed the original verdict usually also hear the review petition.

**On what grounds can a petitioner seek a review of an SC verdict?**

- There are narrow, specific grounds on which a review petition can be entertained. Therefore, the court has the power to review its rulings to correct a “patent error” — but not “minor mistakes of inconsequential import”.
- **In a 2013 ruling, the Supreme Court itself laid down three grounds** for seeking a review of a verdict it has delivered:
  - **The discovery of new and important matter** or evidence which, after the exercise of due diligence, was not within the knowledge of the petitioner or could not be produced by him.
  - **Mistake or error** apparent on the face of the record
  - **Any other sufficient reason.**
    - The court here specified that any sufficient reason means a reason that is **analogous to the other two grounds.**

**Source:IE**

**Financial Consumer Protection (FCP):**

**(Gs: 2 Government policies & Interventions)**

**In Context**

- Recently, the OECD released a draft of the proposed revisions to their 2011 High-level **Principles on Financial Consumer Protection (FCP).**

**More about the news**

- OECD’s principles:
  - The OECD is working on how to **enhance financial consumer protection**, which includes determining what is required to help consumers gain the **confidence, knowledge, information, security**

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**and choices** they need to enable them to **fully participate in financial markets.**

- OECD's principles deal with three cross-cutting themes — financial well-being, digitalisation and sustainable finance.
- OECD's 2011 principles on FCP covered **10 thematic areas** reflecting the
  - Market and consumer issues,
  - Equitable and fair consumer treatment,
  - Disclosures and transparency, and
  - Financial education.
- In 2022, two additional principles were included:
  - Access and inclusion and
  - Quality financial products.
- The updated principles also recommend
  - Intervention by regulators in certain high risk products,
  - Cultivating appropriate firm culture and
  - Using behavioural insights to better consumer outcomes.

### **About the Financial Market**

- About:
  - The Financial Market is a place where **financial products and services are bought and sold on a regular basis.**
    - It deals in the purchase and sale of different types of **investments, financial services, loans, etc.**
- Financial markets in India:
  - There are two main types of financial markets in India where the majority of trading is happening.
    - The first one is the money **market** and the second one is the capital **market.**
  - Banks and financial institutions are a part of the financial market.
- Financial Consumer Protection (FCP):
  - Financial Consumer Protection (FCP) includes determining what is required to help consumers gain the confidence, knowledge, information, security and choices they need to enable them to fully participate in financial markets.
- Need of FCP:
  - The RBI's financial inclusion index shows that an **increasing number of people are entering financial markets.**

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- FCP is central to ensuring that they continue to stay.

**Significance of effective Financial Consumer Protection (FCP) in India**

- Disclosures and transparency:
  - About:
    - An effective FCP regime must ensure **adequate and easy to understand disclosures** to consumers.
  - For India:
    - However, an **information dump for mere compliance** defeats this purpose, especially **in India where financial literacy is not pervasive**.
  - SEBI's guidelines:
    - Therefore, **regulators such as SEBI** prescribe certain financial service providers to assess customer suitability and undertake risk profiling before providing services.
  - Global practice:
    - Countries such as the UK and New Zealand have introduced guidance to identify and provide fair treatment to “vulnerable financial consumers”.
    - At present, India does not recognise this concept.
- Newer areas for intervention:
  - About:
    - FCP must consider the **increasing number of digital channels** consumers use to **interact with financial products and services**
    - It should also consider the **impact of greater use of artificial intelligence** and other **emerging technologies**.
  - For India:
    - With the rising number of UPI transactions and the largely unregulated status of cryptocurrencies, FCP will continue to be relevant.
  - RBI guidelines:
    - RBI released guidelines on digital lending, mandating entities providing digital lending services to have a grievance redress officer, assess a borrower's creditworthiness before extending credit, and allow a borrower to exit without penalty.
- Sustainability of financial investments:

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- About:
  - There is growing consumer demand for sustainable financial investments.
  - Financial services providers are incorporating environmental, social and governance factors into their operations, products and services.
  - FCP recommends improved transparency to help consumers make informed choices.
- SEBI's BRSR:
  - SEBI has transitioned from “**business responsibility reporting**” to “**business responsibility and sustainability reporting**” (**BRSR**) to promote responsible corporate governance vis-a-vis climate change.
    - Eligible companies under BRSR must provide ESG related disclosures, including a sustainability performance report.
    - This allows investors to make an informed decision.
  - Similar disclosures must be introduced in other market segments.
- Greenwashing:
  - The 2022 draft also warns against “greenwashing”.
    - This is aligned with an expert report presented at COP27.
  - Financial regulators must monitor that Indian corporations are not misleading consumers with false claims regarding progress towards climate targets.

### Way Ahead

- The current regulatory landscape is **sectoral and fragmented**, resulting in regulatory arbitrage, as witnessed in the case of digital gold.
- Regulators must take a coordinated approach to protect consumers.

### Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

- Foundation:
  - The forerunner of the **OECD** was the **Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC)**, which was formed to administer American and Canadian aid under the **Marshall Plan** for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II.



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**Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI):**

- About:
  - SEBI is a **statutory body** established on April 12, 1992 in accordance with the provisions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.
- Aim:
  - To protect the interests of investors in securities and to promote the development of, and regulate the securities market.
  - It is the regulator of the securities and commodity market in India owned by the Government of India.

Source: [IE](#)

**India-Russia Bilateral Coordination at UN:**

(GS-2 India & Foreign Relation : Effect of policies & Politics of Developed & developing Countries on India's interests)

**In News**

- India and Russia recently **agreed to “deepen cooperation”** on **counter-terrorism issues** and **enhance bilateral coordination at the United Nations.**

**More about the UN consultation between India and Russia**

- About:
  - It is the **third such UN consultation** between India and Russia in the past year.
  - Background:
    - Recently India **abstained from yet another vote at the UN General Assembly** that called for **reparations to be paid by Russia for the war in Ukraine.**
    - Apart from a few procedural votes, **India has refused to support any vote at the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly and other UN agencies** that have criticised Russia since the Russian President first ordered strikes on Ukraine.

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- Significance of this bilateral consultation:
  - The bilateral consultations reaffirmed mutual commitment to further strengthen bilateral coordination and constructive cooperation at the UN platform on the basis of its Charter
  - It is also in line with the special and privileged strategic partnership between Moscow and New Delhi.
- Other issues of discussion:
  - On UNSC:
    - Both sides held wide-ranging discussions on issues on the **UN Security Council agenda** and recent developments.
    - The two sides also discussed India's presidency of the UNSC in December 2022, which will be India's last month in the UNSC, as its **two-year elected tenure comes to an end.**
  - On India's concerns on UN peacekeeping:
    - During the talks, "special attention" was also paid to the **problems of UN peacekeeping.**
      - It is an area where India has frequently raised concerns at the UN, especially after the **deaths of Indian personnel in 2022.**
  - Global issues:
    - Both countries also discussed the situation in **Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Myanmar,** and the conflict on the **Armenia-Azerbaijan border.**

### **India-Russia Relations**

- India and Russia have a history of strong strategic, military, economic, and diplomatic relationships.
- Political Relations:
  - The Annual Summit meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation is the highest institutionalized dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between India and Russia.
  - So far 20 Annual Summit meetings have taken place alternatively in India and Russia.
- Intergovernmental Commissions:
  - There is regular high-level interaction between the two countries.
  - The IRIGC (India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission):

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- It is the main body that conducts affairs at the governmental level between both countries. Both countries are members of international bodies including the **UN, BRICS, G20 and SCO**.
- Two Inter-Governmental Commissions:
  - One on **Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC)**, co-chaired by EAM and the Russian DPM, and
  - Another on **Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC)** co-chaired by Russian and Indian Defence Ministers, meet annually.
- Trade and Economic Relations:
  - Both sides revised targets of increasing bilateral investment to US \$50 billion and bilateral trade to US \$30 billion by 2025.
    - India's merchandise imports from Russia include petroleum oil and other fuel items, fertilizers, coffee and tea, spices, nuclear reactors, and animal and vegetable fats, among others.
- Nuclear Energy:
  - Russia recognizes India as a country with advanced nuclear technology with an impeccable non-proliferation record.
  - Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) is being built in India with Russian cooperation.
- Space Cooperation:
  - Both sides cooperate in the peaceful uses of outer space, including satellite launches, GLONASS navigation system, remote sensing and other societal applications of outer space.
- Science & Technology:
  - **The Working Group on Science and Technology functioning under IRIGC-TEC, the Integrated Long Term Programme (ILTP) and the Basic Science Cooperation Programme** are the three main institutional mechanisms for bilateral Science and Technology cooperation.
- Cultural Cooperation:
  - There is a strong tradition of Indian studies in Russia.
  - There is strong interest among Russian people in Indian dance, music, yoga and Ayurveda.
- Defence and Security Cooperation:

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- India has longstanding and wide-ranging cooperation with Russia in the field of defence.
- **BrahMos Missile System** as well as the licensed production in India of **SU-30 aircraft** and **T-90 tanks** are examples of such flagship cooperation.
- Both sides concluded agreements on the supply of **S-400 air defence systems**, construction of frigates under **Project 1135.6** and shareholders agreement on the formation of a joint venture to manufacture **Ka-226T helicopters** in India.
- The two countries also hold exchanges and training exercises between their armed forces annually termed **INDRA**.

**India's Stand on Russia's War with Ukraine & way ahead**

- India's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been **distinctive among the major democracies** and among U.S. strategic partners.
- Despite its discomfort with Moscow's war, New Delhi has adopted **studied public neutrality toward Russia**.
- It has abstained from successive votes in the **UN Security Council, General Assembly, and Human Rights Council** that condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine and thus far has refused to openly call out Russia as the instigator of the crisis.
- India has been under **immense indirect pressure from Western nations** that have openly condemned Russia's military aggression against Ukraine.
- India has been pressing for the **resolution of the crisis through diplomacy and dialogue**.

Source: TH

**Regulatory Framework for Promoting Data Economy**

**GS-3 Inclusive Growth & Related Issues**

**In News**

- Recently, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) **released its recommendations** on 'Regulatory Framework for Promoting Data

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Economy Through Establishment of Data Centres (DCs), Content Delivery Networks (CDNs), and Interconnect Exchanges (IXPs) in India’.

### **Background**

- National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP) 2018 envisages “Evolving enabling regulatory frameworks and incentives for promoting the establishment of International Data Centres, Content Delivery Networks, and Independent Interconnect exchanges in India”.
- Accordingly, the Authority suo-moto issued a detailed Consultation Paper (CP) on the subject.

### **Salient features of the Recommendations**

- **Data Centres:**
  - Authority has recommended bringing out the Data Centre Incentivization Scheme (DCIS) for establishing Data Centres (DCs) and Data Centre Parks (Dc Parks). DCIS to have two list of incentives –
    - Certain Centre specific fiscal and non-fiscal incentives can be rolled out by the Central Government.
    - The other in the form of a guideline to the States; leaving flexibility to States to announce fiscal incentives through their policies.
  - Operationalizing a Data Centre specific portal on National Single Window System (NSWS) for -
    - Time-bound single window clearances with provision for deemed approval after elapse of prescribed timelines for non-critical category permissions
    - Mandatory online registration of new DCs/DC Park operators without any obligation or registration fees. This will be purely for statistical and record purposes.
    - Issue of notifications, announcement of schemes & benefits, facility to interact and respond to queries of potential investors, and grievance redressal of existing and prospective DC/DC Park operators.
- **A national level DC Readiness Index (DCRI) framework** to be implemented by the Central Government to rank Indian states as per their

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suitability to promote the DC sector. An indicative list of parameters and their weightages for ranking the States has been suggested.

- **Establish DC Economic Zones (DCEZs)** - Out of suggested list of 33 SEZs which are located in areas with abandon power and water, one SEZ can be identified each in State of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Haryana, UP, MP, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Odisha, for either converting them into DCEZs or for carving out zones out of these SEZs for establishing DCs/DC parks.
- **Promoting Green DCs:**
  - Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) along with Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC) should be entrusted with the task of framing certification standards of green DCs in India.
  - Government should form a scheme to invite Requests for Proposal (RFP) on an experimental basis for new technology/methods/processes that can be adopted for promoting green DCs.
- **Capacity Building:**
  - National Telecom Institute for Policy Research & Training (NTIPRIT) under Department of Telecommunication (DoT), MeitY, All India Council for technical Education (AICTE) and Telecom Sector Skill Council (TSSC) should closely collaborate with DC industry to develop tailor-made short and long-term courses.
- **Content Delivery Networks (CDNs)**
  - CDNs play an important role in the value chain of content delivery ecosystem.
  - The internet traffic, which was earlier being delivered by ISPs alone, is now being delivered by ISP and CDN combined.
  - ISPs perform load balancing, traffic engineering and offers guaranteed quality of service to end users.
  - CDN Players also leverage various techniques like load balancing, caching, optimization, use of security protocols, etc. for ensuring better delivery of content to end users in association with TSPs.
  - CDN players are major contributors to the network traffic and can affect the overall quality of service.
  - Accordingly, TRAI, in its consultation process, had discussed various CDN-ISP interconnection and collaboration related policy and regulatory concerns.

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- To address these issues, TRAI has recommended that CDN players should be registered with DoT through a simple online registration process. The suggestive draft for guidelines for registration of CDN players along with registration form and registration certificate has been recommended with a one-time registration fee of Rs 10,000.
- The incentives recommended for DCs should also help in proliferation of CDNs in the country and this would in turn provide a boost to the digital infrastructure ecosystem, including CDNs and IXPs.
- Interconnect Exchanges Providers (IXPs):
  - Currently, IXPs are required to obtain Internet Service Providers (ISPs) license which has several onerous licensing conditions related to subscriber verification, security etc which are not relevant to them.
  - This creates artificial entry barriers.
  - To address this issue and promote setting up of more IXPs, especially in Tier-II and Tier-III cities, TRAI has recommended that a separate authorization in Unified License may be created for IXPs with terms and conditions that are much less onerous than ISP license authorization.

### **Addressing Demand Side Issues of Digital Data Infrastructure**

- **Data digitization, sharing and monetization** – A statutory body Data Digitization and Monetization Council (DDMC) for steering the data digitization drive be prescribed at the Centre,
- **Data Ownership** – Government should put in place a data sharing and consent management framework on lines of DEPA framework to provide telecom subscribers consent based option to share their KYC data with recipient TSP when they port their numbers.
- **Data Ethics** – DDMC should also be entrusted with the responsibility of putting in place an overarching framework for ethical use of data both by Government as well as by corporate in India. The framework should address the generic as well as vertical sector specific requirements.

### **Data Economy**

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- The data economy is the global digital ecosystem in which the producers and consumers of data—businesses and individuals—and government and municipal agencies gather, organize, and share accumulated data from a wide variety of sources.
- By connecting unconnected data across industry boundaries, organizations can glean richer business insights, tap into unexplored markets, serve citizens and consumers alike with data-driven products and services, and monetize their data by sharing it externally with key customers and suppliers.
- Benefits:
  - More than half (53%) of business leaders say that participating in the data economy has led them to create new business models.
  - Another benefit of the data economy is faster innovation. Traditional companies are facing unprecedented pressure from their digitally native counterparts to innovate and respond quickly to evolving customer preferences and market trends.
  - Participating in a data economy can improve rates of customer acquisition and retention—gaining new customers and retaining current ones—while 42% of respondents cite increased revenue as an important business benefit.

### Way Ahead

- The Central Government should **prepare guidelines listing out the incentives** for the Data Centres and DC Parks for the states that have scanty DC footprints, in line with other advanced states.
- Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) should be entrusted for **developing different India-specific building standards for construction** of DCs and to develop India specific standard-based certification framework for the DCs.

Source: [PIB](#)

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**National Bio Energy Programme :**

**Gs-3**

**In News**

- Recently, the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** organized a seminar on the National Bio Energy Programme in **New Delhi** in partnership with **UNIDO** and **GEF** as part of **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**.

**Introduction**

- **Biomass is simply organic matter:** that means it comes from anything that's alive or been alive, including animal waste, crop waste, garden waste and so on.
- India is endowed with **abundant renewable energy resources** and their use should be encouraged in every possible way.
- **Rural India generates enormous quantities of bio-waste** including animal waste, kitchen leftovers, crop residue, market waste and faecal sludge.
- **Biogas is an environment friendly fuel** and its utilization contributes to reduction of carbon emissions and pollution.

**Major highlights of the seminar**

- They unveiled the compendium of the **National Bio Energy Programme** and launched the **Biourja and Biogas portals**.
  - **BioUrja portal** has been developed as a **single window platform** to register and submit online applications for grant of **Central Financial Assistance (CFA)** to Waste to Energy projects, Biomass Briquette/Pellet manufacturing plants and Biomass (non-bagasse) based cogeneration projects.
  - **Biogas portal** provides an overview on biogas related information.
- It described waste as a source of wealth and emphasized the concept of 'kachre-se-kanchan'.

**About National Bioenergy Programme**

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- **The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has notified the National Bioenergy Programme in November 2022.
- MNRE has continued the National Bioenergy Programme for the period from FY 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- The Programme has been recommended for implementation in two Phases:
  - **The Phase-I** of the Programme has been approved with a budget outlay of Rs. 858 crores.

**The National Bioenergy Programme will comprise the following sub-schemes:**

- **Waste to Energy Programme**
  - It is Programme on Energy from Urban, Industrial and Agricultural Wastes /Residues to support the setting up of large Biogas, BioCNG and Power plants.
  - **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)** will be the implementing agency for the program.
- **Biomass Programme**
  - It is a Scheme to Support Manufacturing of Briquettes & Pellets and Promotion of Biomass (non-bagasse) based cogeneration in Industries to support setting up of pellets and briquettes for use in power generation and non-bagasse based power generation projects.
- **Biogas Programme**
  - To support setting up of family and medium size Biogas in rural areas.

**Advantages of Bioenergy**

- It helps in providing **clean cooking through biogas.**
- **Co-firing in thermal power plants** by utilizing **biomass pellets and briquettes** and **BioCNG for transport.**
- **Setting up of biogas plants** for clean cooking fuel, lighting, meeting thermal and small power needs of users which results in GHG reduction, improved sanitation, women empowerment and creation of rural employment.

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- **Organic enriched Bio-manure:** The digested slurry from biogas plants is a rich source of manure which shall benefit farmers in supplementing / reducing the use of chemical fertilizers.
- **It is carbon neutral:** As a natural part of photosynthesis, biomass fuels only release the same amount of carbon into the atmosphere as was absorbed by plants in the course of their life cycle.
- **It reduces the overreliance of fossil fuels:** Not only is there a limited supply of fossil fuels, but fossil fuels come with environmental baggage, including the release of large amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and the pollutants that result from removal, transportation and production.
- **Less expensive than fossil fuels:** While fossil fuel production requires a heavy outlay of capital, such as oil drills, gas pipelines and fuel collection, biomass technology is much cheaper. Manufacturers and producers are able to generate higher profits from a lower output.

#### **Disadvantages of Bioenergy**

- **Biomass energy is not as efficient as fossil fuels:** Some biofuels, like Ethanol, are relatively inefficient as compared to gasoline. In fact, it has to be fortified with fossil fuels to increase its efficiency.
- **It is not entirely clean:** While biomass is carbon neutral, the use of animal and human waste escalates the amount of methane gases, which are also damaging to the environment. Additionally, the pollution created from burning wood and other natural materials can be considered just as bad as that resulting from burning coal and other types of energy resources.
- **Can lead to deforestation:** Since wood is one of the most used sources of biomass energy, vast amounts of wood and other waste products have to be burned to produce the desired amount of power. While currently there is enough wood waste already, there is a risk of deforestation in the future.
- **Biomass construction plants don't come cheap:** The harvest, transportation and storage of organic matter can be costly and go beyond what other renewable sources need such as solar power.

#### **Government initiative**

- **GOBAR-Dhan** was launched by the Government of India in 2018 as a part

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of the Biodegradable Waste Management component under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) (SMB-G) to positively impact village cleanliness and generate wealth and energy from cattle and organic waste.

- **SATAT** is an initiative aimed at providing a Sustainable Alternative towards Affordable Transportation as a developmental effort that would benefit both vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs.
  - This initiative holds great promise for efficient municipal solid waste management and in tackling the problem of polluted urban air due to farm stubble-burning and carbon emissions.

### Way forward

- **Rural household:** The benefits of utilization of surplus biomass should reach the rural household by way of an additional source of income for farmers.
- **The extra push in the form of a 20 per cent higher standard CFA** (central financial assistance) pattern for the north-eastern region and Gaushala/shelter was the need of the time to create inclusiveness in an applied manner.
- **Other benefits include:**
  - Support to national commitments in achieving **climate change goals**
  - **Reduction in import** of natural gas and crude oil
  - **Buffer** against crude oil/gas price fluctuations.

Source: [PIB](#)

### **New Doctrine for Indian Air Force (IAF):**

### **GS-3 Various Security Agencies & their Mandate:**

### **In News**

The Indian Air Force (IAF) needs a **revised guiding document** to help it navigate ahead smoothly.

### **Key Points**

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- **Need for Doctrinal Guidance:**
  - Presently it is debatable whether some breakthrough or efforts for indigenisation are being guided by some long-term institutionalised thinking and planning.
  - Because for longer and permanent effects, doctrinal guidance is required.
- **Guidance must include:**
  - Ideas influenced by past experience,
  - Present capability and
  - Capacity of technological research and
  - Development and manufacturing,
  - Human resource availability and
  - An organisational environment that encourages free thinking and
  - A deliberation of fresh ideas.
- **Need to change IAF's Old doctrine:**
  - India's intent to **dominate conflict escalation** is reflected in its 2012 airpower doctrine.
  - It goes beyond outlining merely what airpower is, in terms of its roles, and explains to a far greater extent what airpower is for.
  - In contrast to the previous IAF doctrine, and, indeed, most Western airpower doctrine, the 2012 version makes a much **clearer connection between airpower and national security**.
  - The IAF doctrine does not go as far as some previous British airpower doctrine, which suggests that control of the air is an end in itself.
  - It is time that the doctrine of the Indian Air Force (IAF) — it is of 2012 vintage — is reviewed and made public to guide the future development and application of India's air power.
- **Incorporate:**
  - Technology has progressed exponentially.
  - Artificial intelligence and machine learning are being refined to mimic human cognitive abilities and intuition.
- **Roles and Functions in aspect of Space:**
  - The roles and missions of the IAF would have to be re-assessed since space will be a major, if not a central, player in future conflicts.
  - The **weaponization of space** must be accepted, the Outer Space Treaty notwithstanding.

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### **Learning from the USA**

- America's nuclear asymmetry, post the Second World War was lost when the USSR was on a par.
- To counter this, the U.S. brought in the Revolution in Military Affairs, seen so vividly in the 1990-91 Gulf War.
- This turnaround took **dedicated research teams** under programmes that had continuity from 1965, and **political backing** under different Presidential administrations.

### **Way Ahead for IAF**

- An **inter-ministerial endeavour** is needed, but this has to be institutionalised through a published doctrine.
- With depleting fighter strength, Indian Air Force looks to speed up Su-30 fleet modernisation
- New Doctrine should cater to:
  - The loss of air superiority has, and will, spell doom for a nation that chooses to neglect it; the IAF's doctrine must expound on this aspect as an imperative despite the high financial commitment required.
  - For acceleration of fresh thought, personnel have to feel secure — they have to have the psychological high ground in order to be vocal with their ideas. The IAF's new doctrine must accept this, even as it acknowledges that new technology would result in an information overload which actually accentuates stress in human resources.
  - A doctrinal alignment for expeditionary movements of raw materials must find a place in the document.
  - The IAF doctrine must underscore that 'national defence' is a national endeavour and should not be filtered through a prism of the political dispensation at the helm.
- A call on how air power, with its niche strike, Airborne Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and precision attack capabilities would be merged in the drive towards jointness would be an imperative.

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- Working on **Theatrisation** should not be slowed or stopped due to this.
- With India trying to cement its place as a regional power of reckoning, these combat support assets are also vital for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief that are important cogs in military diplomacy and foreign policy.
  - Neglecting them would be to India's disadvantage, more so because they are critical too in sustaining kinetic power.

Source: [TH](#)

**Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT):**

**GS-2 Governance**

**In News**

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has recently approved appointments to fill 23 vacancies, including 11 as judicial members and 12 as administrative members, in the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT).

**About Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT)**

- Legislature
  - **The Armed Forces Tribunal Act 2007**, was passed by the Parliament and led to the formation of AFT.
  - The Tribunal shall transact their proceedings as per the Armed Forces Tribunal (Procedure) rules, 2008.
- Functions
  - **It has the power provided for the adjudication or trial by Armed Forces Tribunal of disputes and complaints** with respect to commission, appointments, enrolments and conditions of service in respect of persons subject to the Army Act, 1950, The Navy Act, 1957 and the Air Force Act, 1950.
  - It can further **provide for appeals** arising out of orders, findings or sentences of courts- martial held under the said Acts and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- Bench
  - Besides the **Principal Bench in New Delhi**, AFT has **Regional Benches** at Chandigarh, Lucknow, Kolkata, Guwahati, Chennai, Kochi, Mumbai, Jabalpur, Srinagar and Jaipur.

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- Appointments
  - The Judicial Members are retired **High Court Judges** and Administrative Members are retired Members of the Armed Forces who have held the rank of **Major General/ equivalent** or above for a period of three years or more.
  - **Judge Advocate General (JAG)** who have held the appointment for at least one year are also entitled to be appointed as the Administrative Member.
- Other features
  - **All proceedings** in the Tribunal will be in **English**.
  - The Tribunal will normally follow the procedure as is practiced in the High Courts of India.

**Source: IE**

**Narco Test :**

**(GS 3 Science & Technology)**

**In News**

- It has recently come to spotlight after a Delhi Court **ordered a Narco Test** for Aaftab Amin Poonawala in the bone-chilling Shradha Walkar killing case.
  - The Court took into consideration **international norms on human rights, the right to a fair trial, and the right against self-incrimination** under **Article 20(3)** of the Constitution.

**What is a Narco Test?**

- **In a narco or narco-analysis test:** a drug called **sodium pentothal** is injected into the body of the accused, which transports them to a hypnotic or sedated state, in which their imagination is neutralised.
  - In this **hypnotic state**, the accused is understood as being **incapable of lying**, and is **expected to divulge information that is true**.
- **Sodium pentothal or sodium thiopental** is a fast-acting, short duration anesthetic, which is used in larger doses to sedate patients during surgery.
  - It belongs to the **barbiturate class of drugs** that act on the central nervous system as depressants.

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- **Truth serum:** Because the drug is believed to weaken the subject's resolve to lie, it is sometimes referred to as a truth serum, and is said to have been used by intelligence operatives during **World War II**.

**What is a Polygraph Test?**

- A test such as this is said to have been **first done in the 19th century** by the **Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso**, who used a machine to measure changes in the blood pressure of criminal suspects during interrogation.
- A polygraph test is **based on the assumption** that physiological responses that are triggered when a **person is lying** are different from what they would be otherwise.
- A polygraph test **does not involve injecting drugs into the body**; rather instruments like cardio-cuffs or sensitive electrodes are attached to the suspect, and variables such as blood pressure, pulse rate, respiration, change in sweat gland activity, blood flow, etc., are measured as questions are put to them.
- **A numerical value is assigned to each response** to conclude whether the person is telling the truth, is deceiving, or is uncertain.

**What is the need of such a test?**

- Investigating agencies have sought to employ these tests in investigation, which are sometimes seen as being a softer alternative to torture or third degree to extract the truth from suspects.
- However, **neither method has been proven scientifically to have a 100% success rate**, and remain contentious in the medical field as well.

**Related Case and Guidelines**

- Selvi & Ors vs State of Karnataka & Anr' (2010)
  - A Supreme Court Bench ruled that no lie detector tests should be administered except on the basis of consent of the accused.
- Guidelines for the Administration of Polygraph Test on an Accused
  - It was published by the National Human Rights Commission in 2000 which says that the subject's consent should be recorded before a judicial magistrate.

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**Can the results of these tests be considered as “confessions”?**

- **No it cannot be considered as a confession** because those in a drugged-induced state cannot exercise a choice in answering questions that are put to them.
- However, **any information or material subsequently discovered with the help of such a voluntarily-taken test can be admitted as evidence.**

Source: [IE](#)

**Melocanna Baccifera:**

**GS-3 species**

**In News**

- Recently, a study spanning 13 years has given information about flowering in Melocanna baccifera.
  - Melocanna baccifera flowers almost fully synchronically every 48 years.

**Outcomes of the recent study**

- Bamboo death and Rat floods
  - It has long fascinated researchers for its association with the occurrence of bamboo death, rat floods and **famines in northeast India.**
  - It is called ‘Muli’ in northeast India.
- Population boom in rats
  - Researchers detected a correlation between the sugar content in the fruit of Melocanna baccifera and the frenzied feeding and population boom in rats during ‘**Mautam**’, the **cyclical, mass bamboo flowering** that occurs once in 48 years.

**About Melocanna Baccifera**

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- It is one of two bamboo species belonging to the **Melocanna** genus.
- It is the **largest fruit-producing bamboo**.
- It **grows up to 10–25 m tall**.
- It is **native to Bangladesh, Myanmar, India, and Thailand**.
- It is an **invasive species** that can occupy large areas due to its long and vigorous rhizomes and, in flowering, for its fruits that are easy to germinate.

Source: [TH](#)

### **Excellence in Leadership in Family Planning (EXCELL) Awards-2022**

#### **GS 2**

#### **In News**

India is the only country to have received the Leadership in Family Planning (EXCELL) Awards-2022 in the 'country category' at the International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP )

#### **About**

- The award is a recognition of India's efforts towards ensuring access to quality family planning choices based on right information & reliable services.
- India has made outstanding progress not only in improving access but also adoption of modern contraceptive methods enabling couples to make informed choices about family planning.

#### **About EXCELL Awards**

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- The EXCELL Awards have been bestowed by the ICFP since the inception of the conference in 2009, as a way to publicly recognize extraordinary individuals, organizations and countries who have made significant contributions to the family planning field, and whose work deserves to be highlighted and used to inspire meaningful dialogue within the community.
  - The ICFP has served as a strategic inflection point for the global reproductive health community, providing a global stage for more than 120 countries worldwide, organisations, and individuals to make important commitments and celebrate achievements as the world's largest scientific conclave on family planning and reproductive health.

Source:[pib](#)

### **Facts in News**

#### **International Tourism Mart (ITM) for the NorthEast:**

**(GS-3 Indian Economy & related issues)**

#### **In News**

The Ministry of Tourism is organizing the 10th International Tourism Mart (ITM) for the NorthEast Region .

- Objective of ITM 2022 is to highlight tourism potential of the Northeast region in domestic and international markets.

#### **About ITM**

- The International Tourism Marts are organised in the North-Eastern States on rotation basis. Mizoram is hosting this Mart for the first time.
  - The earlier editions of this mart have been held in Guwahati, Tawang, Shillong, Gangtok, Agartala, Imphal and Kohima.
- The Mart aims to bring together the tourism business fraternity and entrepreneurs from the eight North Eastern States. The event has been planned and scheduled to facilitate interaction between buyers, sellers, media, Government agencies and other stakeholders to create a buzz

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**Do You Know ?**

- The **eight states of North East** India are blessed with scenic natural beauty, rich biodiversity, rare wildlife, historical sites, distinct cultural and ethnic heritage and warm and welcoming people.
- The region offers unforgettable Wildlife Tourism, Tea & Golf Tourism, River tourism, Religious & Spiritual Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Cultural & Culinary Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Agro & Rural Tourism and Offbeat Destinations.
- Northeast India is home to many wildlife sanctuaries like **Kaziranga National Park famous for the one-horned rhinoceros.**
- The **mighty Brahmaputra** flows through the **length of Assam** where tourists can enjoy memorable river cruises and the flowing rivers of Arunachal Pradesh which feed the Brahmaputra offering incredible white water rafting experiences.
- The region is **endowed with diverse tourist attractions.**

Source: [PIB](#)

**'No Money for Terror' (NMFT) Ministerial Conference**

**(GS-2 Agreements Involving India &/or Affecting India's Interests)**

**In News**

- The Prime Minister recently addressed the **'No Money for Terror' (NMFT) Ministerial Conference on Counter-Terrorism Financing.**

**India's stand at the Conference**

- **Standing against Nations using terrorism as a tool of foreign policy:**
  - Prime Minister strongly asked to **avoid any ambiguity** in dealing with terrorism and also warned against nations that use terrorism as a tool of foreign policy.
    - He emphasised that **“Only a uniform, unified and zero-tolerance approach can defeat terrorism.”**
  - **State support of terrorism:**
    - The Prime Minister highlighted **state support** as one of the major sources of **political, ideological and financial support to terrorism.**

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- **Terror financing:**
  - Throwing light on the difference between **fighting a terrorist and fighting terrorism**, the Prime Minister said that a terrorist may be neutralised with weapons and immediate tactical responses but these tactical gains will soon be lost without a **larger strategy aimed at hurting their finances**.
- **Organised crime:**
  - The Prime Minister underlined **organised crime as another source of terror funding**
  - He emphasised deep **links between criminal gangs and terrorist outfits**.
- **Global institutions against terrorism:**
  - Highlighting the complex environment, the Prime Minister stressed that the **United Nations Security Council, Financial Action Task Force, Financial Intelligence Units, and the Egmont Group**, are boosting cooperation in the **prevention, detection and prosecution** of illegal fund flow.
  - PM also highlighted that the framework is helping the war against terror in multiple ways over the past two decades.
- **Impacts on the local economy:**
  - He said that the long-term impact of terrorism is particularly hard on the poor and the local economy, be it **tourism or trade**.

**About No Money For Terror (NMFT) conference**

- **NMFT in India:**
  - It was the **third** Ministerial ‘No Money for Terror (NMFT)’ Conference on 18th and 19th of November.
  - The conference was hosted by the **Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi**.
- **Aim:**
  - It aims to progress the discussions on combating terrorist financing held by the international community in the previous two Conferences in **Paris (2018) and Melbourne (2019)**.
- **Focused Areas:**
  - Global trends in terrorism and terrorist financing,
  - Use of formal and informal channels of funds for terrorism,
  - Emerging technologies and terrorist financing and
  - Requisite international co-operation to address related challenges.

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- It also intended to include discussions on **technical, legal, regulatory and cooperation aspects** of all facets of terrorism financing.
- **Global presence:**
  - The Conference intended to bring together **representatives of 75 countries and international bodies** for extended deliberations over two days.

### **Terrorism**

- **About:**
- An offence to **intimidate a population or to compel a government or an international organisation** to do or abstain from doing any act, which causes:
  - Death or serious bodily injury to any person.
  - Serious damage to public or private property, including a place of public use, a State or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment.
  - Damage to property, places, facilities, or systems resulting in or likely to result in a major economic loss.
  - It encompasses a range of complex threats like organized terrorism in conflict zones, foreign terrorist fighters, radicalised 'lone wolves', etc.
- **Factors Responsible for the Growth of Terrorism:**
  - State-sponsorship and safe havens.
  - State-of-the-art communication systems.
  - Access to advanced technology.
  - Networking of terrorist groups with the criminal underworld.
- **Impacts:**
  - It poses a major threat to international peace and security and undermines the core values of humanity, peace and growth.
  - In addition to the devastating human cost of terrorism, in terms of lives lost or permanently altered, terrorist acts destabilise governments and undermine economic and social development.
  - Terrorist acts often defy national borders.
  - Terrorist attacks using **CBRNE materials (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives)** have catastrophic consequences on communities and infrastructure.

### **India's efforts in combating terrorism**

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- **Constitutional backing:**
  - India has been at the forefront of global action against terrorism and has always played an active role in the global promotion and protection of human rights.
  - Terrorism is a crime against humanity and violates most Fundamental Human Right, namely the Right to Life (**Article 21**).
- **Acts & agencies:**
  - **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System:**
    - It vastly improves the capability of Border Security Force (BSF) in detecting and controlling the cross border crimes like illegal infiltration, smuggling of contraband goods, human trafficking and cross border terrorism, etc.
  - **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967:**
    - It enables more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations and for dealing with terrorist activities, and other related matters.
  - **National Investigation Agency:**
    - It is India's counter-terrorist task force and is empowered to deal with terror-related crimes across states without special permission from the states.
  - **Policy of Zero-Tolerance Against Terrorism:**
    - India calls for zero-tolerance against terrorism and focuses on developing a common strategy to curb it.
- **India's action plan at UNSC:**
  - In January 2021, at the **20th anniversary of the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1373**, India presented an **eight-point action plan to deal with the scourge of terrorism**.
    - Summoning the political will to unhesitatingly combat terrorism.
    - Decrying double standards in the fight against terrorism.
    - Reform of the working methods of the Committees dealing with Sanctions and Counter-Terrorism.
    - Firmly discouraging exclusivist thinking that divides the world and harms the social fabric.
    - Enlisting and delisting individuals and entities under the UN sanctions regimes objectively not for political or religious considerations.
    - Fully recognising and addressing the link between terrorism and transnational organized crime.

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- Combating terrorist financing.
- Immediate attention to adequate funding to UN Counter-Terrorism bodies from the UN regular budget.

Source: [TH](#)

## Agricultural Education in India & the role of ICAR

### GS-2 Government Policies and interventions

#### In Context

- Recently, the Kerala High Court set aside the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor of the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS).

#### More about the News

- **The court as listed two specific violations for not accepting the appointment:**
  - The search committee recommended a single name and not a panel of three names; and
  - In the search committee, the State government included the Director-General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) instead of a nominee of the UGC.
- **Issue:**
  - **Breaking the equilibrium:**
    - Over the past five decades, the ICAR was successful in facilitating agricultural education as a national expert body and without overstepping into the constitutional jurisdiction of the State governments.
    - The Kerala High Court's judgment threatens to disrupt this delicate equilibrium maintained over the past five decades.
  - **Jeopardising the uniformity in agricultural education:**
    - The judgment also threatens to jeopardise the ICAR's ongoing efforts to ensure a minimum level of uniformity in agricultural education in the country, including in the appointment of Vice-Chancellors.
  - **Substituting the role of the ICAR:**

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- ICAR's Model Act stipulates the constitution of the search committee for Vice-Chancellors with three members:
  - The Director-General of ICAR;
  - One nominee of the government; and
  - One nominee of the Chancellor.
- But the Kerala High Court judgment has made the presence of an ICAR representative invalid and necessitates its replacement with a UGC representative.
- Essentially, the court has sought to substitute the role of the ICAR with the UGC's regulations.
- What is at stake is not just the spirit of federalism but also the unique status conferred to agricultural education by the Constitution.

**Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**

- **About:**
  - It is the apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.
  - It is the largest network of agricultural research and education institutes in the world.
- **Ministry:**
  - It is an **autonomous** organization under the **Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.**
- **HQ:** New Delhi.
- **President of ICAR:**
  - The Union Minister of Agriculture serves as its president.
- **National Agricultural Education Accreditation Board (NAEAB):**
  - ICAR provides accreditation to agriculture universities, colleges and programmes, through its accreditation unit, National Agricultural Education Accreditation Board (NAEAB).
  - The accreditation serves only as a badge of quality assurance.
  - It is not mandatory, is not a form of affiliation or recognition and does not give approval to open an institute or a program.

**Evolution of agricultural education in India**

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- **Opinions of constituent assembly:**
  - Few members in the constituent assembly suggested that the Union government must play a central role in agriculture.
  - But, T.T. Krishnamachari suggested that “beyond taking certain powers for the purpose of co-ordination, Centre is not capable of handling this vast problem [of agriculture]”.
- **Agricultural Education as a part of State List:**
  - Thus, agriculture was included in the List II (State List) in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
  - More importantly, agricultural education was detached from the other streams of higher education and attached to the occupied field of agriculture in List II.
    - Education was included in List III (Concurrent List).
  - **Implications of the move:**
    - The legal implication of the exclusion of agricultural education from Concurrent List is that agricultural universities have historically been **facilitated by the ICAR**.
  - **DARE:**
    - After independence, the **Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE)** was set up in **1973** in the **Ministry of Agriculture**.
    - The major functions of DARE were to facilitate **agricultural research and education, coordinate between the Centre and the States**, and attend to matters related to the ICAR.
- **Yashpal Committee recommendations:**
  - The committee to Advise on **Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education** (Yashpal Committee, 2009) has recommended setting up of a constitutional body – **the National Commission for Higher Education and Research**.
    - It would be a unified supreme body to regulate all branches of higher education including agricultural education.
  - **Presently, regulation of agricultural education is the mandate of**
    - ICAR,
    - Veterinary Council of India (Veterinary sub-discipline) and
    - Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (Forestry sub-discipline).

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**University Grants Commission (UGC)**

- **About:**
  - It is a statutory body set up by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India in accordance to the UGC Act 1956
- **Responsibility:**
  - It is charged with coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education in India.
  - It provides recognition to universities in India, and disbursements of funds to such recognized universities and colleges.
- **Headquarter & regional centres:**
  - The headquarters are in New Delhi.
  - It has six regional centres in Pune, Bhopal, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Guwahati and Bangalore.
- The types of universities regulated by the UGC include:
  - **Central universities, or Union universities:**
    - These are established by an act of parliament and are under the purview of the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education.
  - **State universities:**
    - These are run by the state government of each of the states and territories of India and are usually established by a local legislative assembly act.
  - **Deemed university, or "Deemed to be University":**
    - It is a status of autonomy granted by the Department of Higher Education on the advice of the UGC.
  - **Private universities:**
    - These too are approved by the UGC. They can grant degrees but they are not allowed to have off-campus affiliated colleges.

Source: [TH](#)

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**Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2022**

**GS-2 Government Policies and Interventions**

**In News**

- Recently, the latest draft of the data protection law, the **Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022 (DPDP Bill, 2022)**, has been made open for public comments.

**Key Points**

- **Background:**
  - The data protection Bill has been in the works since 2018 when a panel led by **Justice B N Srikrishna** had prepared a draft version of the Bill.
  - It is India's first attempt to domestically legislate on the issue of data protection.
  - The government made revisions to this draft and introduced it as the **Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 (PDP Bill, 2019)** in the Lok Sabha in 2019.
  - Due to delays caused by the pandemic, the Joint Committee on the PDP Bill, 2019 (JPC) submitted its report on the Bill after two years in December, 2021.
  - The report was accompanied by a new draft bill, namely, the Data Protection Bill, 2021 that incorporated the **recommendations of the JPC**.
  - However, in August 2022, citing the report of the JPC and the “extensive changes” that the JPC had made to the 2019 Bill, the government withdrew the PDP Bill.
  - Now, the government is expected to introduce the Bill in Parliament in the budget session of 2023.
- **Aim:**
  - Regulating online space including separate legislation on data privacy, the overall internet ecosystem, cyber security, telecom regulations, and harnessing non-personal data for boosting innovation in the country.
- **Reason for so many changes:**
  - **Harm to privacy:**

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- Constant interactions with digital devices have led to unprecedented amounts of personal data being generated round the clock by users (data principals).
- When coupled with the computational power available today with companies (data fiduciaries), this data can be processed in ways that increasingly impair the autonomy, self-determination, freedom of choice and privacy of the data principal.
- **Inadequate present laws:**
  - The current legal framework for privacy enshrined in the Information Technology Rules, 2011 (IT Rules, 2011) is wholly inadequate to combat such harms to data principals, especially since the right to informational privacy has been upheld as a fundamental right by the Supreme Court (**K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India [2017]**).
  - It is inadequate on four levels;
    - The extant framework is premised on privacy being a statutory right rather than a fundamental right and does not apply to processing of personal data by the government;
    - It has a limited understanding of the kinds of data to be protected;
    - It places scant obligations on the data fiduciaries which, moreover, can be overridden by contract
    - There are only minimal consequences for the data fiduciaries for the breach of these obligations.

**Scope of Present Bill**

- The DPDP Bill, 2022 applies to all processing of personal data that is carried out digitally.
- This would include both **personal data collected online and personal data collected offline** but is digitised for processing.
- In effect, by being completely inapplicable to data processed manually, this provides for a **somewhat lower degree of protection** as the earlier drafts only excluded data processed manually specifically by “small entities” and not generally.
- As far as the **territorial application of the law** is concerned, the Bill covers processing of personal data which is collected by data fiduciaries

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within the territory of India and which is processed to offer goods and services within India.

**Major provisions of the revamped Bill**

- **High penalties:**
  - Companies dealing in personal data of consumers that fail to take reasonable safeguards to prevent data breaches could end up facing penalties as high as around Rs 200 crore.
    - Penalties are expected to vary on the basis of the nature of non-compliance by data fiduciaries (entities that handle and process personal data of individuals).
  - Companies failing to notify people impacted by a data breach could be fined around Rs 150 crore.
  - Those failing to safeguard children's personal data could be fined close to Rs 100 crore.
  - In the previous version of the Bill, withdrawn earlier this year, the penalty proposed on a company for violation of the law was Rs 15 crore or 4 percent of its annual turnover, whichever is higher.
- **The Data Protection Board**
  - It is an adjudicating body proposed to enforce the provisions of the Bill which is likely to be empowered to impose the fine after giving the companies an opportunity of being heard.
- **Personal data**
  - The new Bill will only deal with safeguards around personal data and is learnt to have excluded non-personal data from its ambit.
    - Non-personal data essentially means any data which cannot reveal the identity of an individual.

**Significance of the revamped Bill**

- **Strong safeguards:** Fines for data misuse prescribed in the previous version of the Bill were not seen as an effective deterrent.
  - The higher penalties being proposed now will prompt entities to build strong safeguards to protect data and enforce fiduciary discipline.
- **Companies would face punitive actions** in the nature of financial penalties in the event of misuse of data and data breaches.

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- The upcoming data protection Bill will put an **end to misuse of customer data** with companies facing financial consequences.
- There will also be a **strict or purpose limitation of data collected** by companies and the time till which they can store it under the new Bill.
- Data fiduciaries will be required to stop retaining personal data and delete previously collected data after the initial purpose for which it was collected was fulfilled.

### **Way Ahead**

- While protecting the rights of the data principal, data protection laws need to ensure that the compliances for data fiduciaries are not so onerous as to make even legitimate processing impractical.
- The challenge lies in **finding an adequate balance** between the **right to privacy of data principles and reasonable exceptions**, especially where government processing of personal data is concerned.
- Given the rate at which technology evolves, **an optimum data protection law design needs to be future proof** — it should not be unduly detailed and centred on providing solutions to contemporary concerns while ignoring problems that may emerge going forward.
- The law needs to be designed for a framework of rights and remedies that is readily exercisable by data principals given their unequal bargaining power with respect to data fiduciaries.

### **Data Protection Bill, Globally**

- **About:**
  - An estimated 137 out of 194 countries have put in place legislation to secure the protection of data and privacy.
  - Africa and Asia showing 61% (33 countries out of 54) and 57% adoption respectively
  - Only 48% of Least Developed Countries (22 out of 46) have data protection and privacy laws.
- **EU Model:**
  - The **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** focuses on a comprehensive data protection law for processing of personal

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data.

- It has been criticised for being excessively stringent, and imposing many obligations on organisations processing data, but it is the template for most of the legislation drafted around the world.
- In the EU, the **right to privacy is enshrined as a fundamental right** that seeks to protect an individual's dignity and her right over the data she generates.
- The **European Charter of Fundamental Rights** recognises the right to privacy as well as the right to protection of personal data, and is backed by a comprehensive data protection framework, which applies to processing of personal data by any means, and to processing activities carried out by both the government and private entities.
- There are **certain exemptions** such as national security, defence, public security, etc, but they are clearly defined and seen as exclusions on the periphery.
- **US Model:**
  - **Privacy protection** is largely defined as “**liberty protection**” focused on the protection of the individual's personal space from the government.
  - It is viewed as being somewhat narrow in focus because it enables collection of personal information as long as the individual is informed of such collection and use. The US template has been viewed as inadequate in key respects of regulation.
  - There is **no comprehensive set of privacy rights or principles** in the US that, like the EU's GDPR, addresses the use, collection, and disclosure of data. Instead, there is limited sector-specific regulation.
  - The approach towards data protection is different for the public and private sectors.
  - The activities and powers of the government vis-a-vis personal information are, however, sufficiently well-defined and addressed by broad legislation such as the Privacy Act, the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, etc.

Source: [TH](#) + [IE](#)

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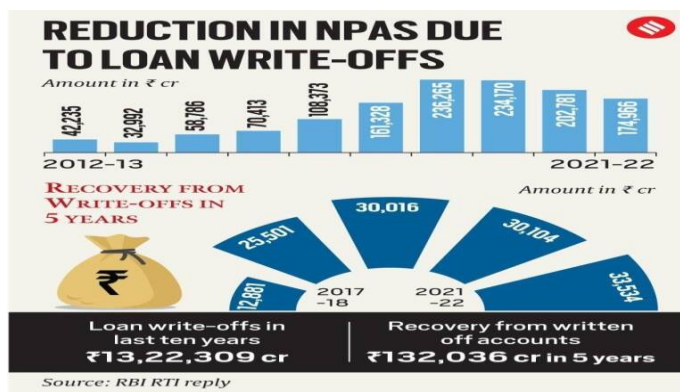
**Problem of Non-performing assets (NPAs)**

**GS-3 Indian economy**

**In News**

- Recently, according to data furnished by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, the **mega write-off exercise** has enabled banks to reduce their non-performing assets (NPAs) or defaulted loans by Rs 10,09,510 crore (\$123.86 billion) in the **last five years**.
  - But, banks have been able to **recover only 13 percent of it so far**.

**About the news**



- This huge write-off would have been enough to wipe out 61 per cent of India's estimated gross fiscal deficit of Rs 16.61 lakh crore for 2022-23.
- The banking sector reported a decline in gross NPAs to Rs 7, 29,388 crore, or 5.9 per cent of the total advances as of March 2022.
  - Gross NPAs were 11.2 per cent in 2017-18.
- **Once a loan is written off by a bank, it goes out from the asset book of the bank.**
  - The bank writes off a loan after the **borrower has defaulted on the loan** repayment and there is a very low chance of recovery.
  - The lender then moves the defaulted loan, or NPA, out of the assets side and reports the amount as loss.
- **Public sector banks** reported the maximum share of write-offs at Rs 734,738 crore accounting for nearly **73 per cent of the exercise**.

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**What is NPA?**

- A loan becomes an NPA when the **principal or interest payment remains overdue for 90 days.**

**Types of NPA**

- **Sub Standard:** A sub-standard asset is one that is classified as an NPA for a period not exceeding twelve months.
- **Doubtful:** A doubtful asset is one that has remained as an NPA for a period exceeding twelve months.
- **Loss:** A loss asset is one where loss has already been identified by the bank or an external institution, but it is not yet completely written off, due to its recovery value, however little it may be.

**Why do banks write off loans?**

- After a loan turns bad, a bank writes it off when **chances of recovery are remote.**
- It helps the bank **reduce not only its NPAs but also taxes** since the written off amount is **allowed to be deducted from the profit before tax.**
- After write-off, banks are supposed to **continue their efforts to recover the loan using various options.** They have to make **provisioning** also.

**Causes for Banking NPA**

- **Financial crisis**
  - Before the financial crisis of 2008 India's economy was in a boom phase.
  - During this period banks lent extensively to corporates in the expectation that the good times will continue in future.
- **Earning of the corporates**
  - Low earnings affected their ability to pay back loans. This is one of the most important reasons behind the increase in NPA of public sector banks.
- **Relaxed lending norms**
  - Another major reason for rising NPA was the relaxed lending norms for corporate houses.
  - Their financial status and credit rating were not analysed properly.

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- **Public Sector banks**
  - It provides a major portion of the credit to industries and it is this part of the credit distribution that forms a great portion of NPA.
- **The priority sector lending (PSL) sector**
  - This has contributed substantially to the NPAs. Priority sectors include agriculture, education, housing, MSMEs.
- **Credit default by promoters**
  - There are also cases of credit default by promoters, where the funds have been diverted by over-invoicing imports, sourced via a promoter owned subsidiary abroad or exporting to shell companies and then declaring that they defaulted.

**Issues with NPA**

- **Provisioning**
  - The bad loans lead to banks having to save a part of their operating revenue to account for bad loans which is called Provisioning.
  - The technical term used for provisioning is Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) or Capital to Risk (weighted) Assets Ratio (CRAR).
- **Less profitable**
  - The banks are required to provision for bad loans out of their operating income.
  - The concerned bank becomes less profitable because it has to use some of its profits from other loans to make up for the loss on the bad loans.
- **Risk-averse**
  - The officials of such banks hesitate from extending loans to business ventures that may remotely appear risky for the fear of aggravating an already high level of non-performing assets (or NPAs).
- **Downfall in the share markets**
  - Any reduction in the perceived valuation of the banks might lead to loss of share value of the banks, leading to general downfall in the share markets. This could result in wiping out shareholders' wealth from the financial markets.
- **Rising Bad Loans**
  - In spite of various efforts, a substantial amount of NPAs continue on the balance sheets of banks primarily because the stock of bad

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loans as revealed by the Asset Quality Review is not only large but fragmented across various lenders.

**Way forward**

- The writing off NPAs is a **regular exercise carried by banks** to clean up the balance sheet.
- **It is primarily intended at cleansing the balance sheet** and achieving taxation efficiency.
- **In Technically Written Off accounts:** loans are written off from the books at the Head Office, without foregoing the right to recovery.
- **Write-offs are generally carried out against accumulated provisions** made for such loans.
  - Once recovered, the provisions made for those loans **flow back into the profit and loss account of banks.**
- **Steps Taken for NPA**
  - Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)
  - Strengthening of Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest (SARFAESI Act) and Debt Recovery Tribunals
  - Setting up of dedicated Stressed Asset Management Verticals (SAMVs) in banks for large-value NPA accounts etc.
  - Existing ARCs have been helpful in the resolution of stressed assets, especially for smaller value loans.
  - However, considering the large stock of legacy NPAs, additional options/alternatives are needed.

Source: [IE](#)

**Collapse of FTX Cryptocurrency Exchange**

**GS-3 Indian Economy:**

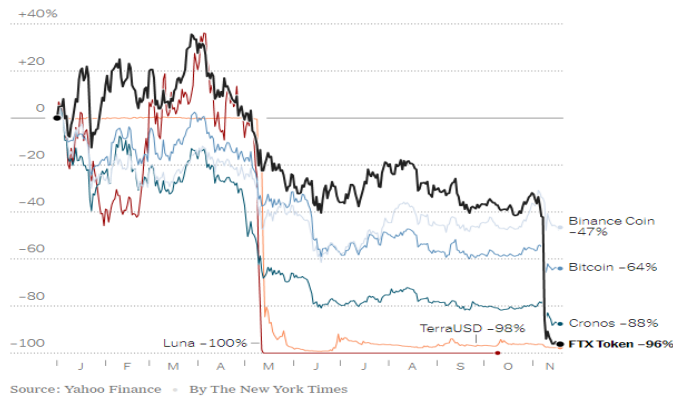
**In News**

- A sharp decline in the prices of Bitcoin, the collapse of the Terra Luna network and new crypto-tax regulations in India have compounded miseries for investors and the overall industry.
  - However, the sudden market meltdowns turned more intense after the **shocking FTX crash.**

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## About the news

Change in Crypto Prices This Year



- **FTX was one of the largest and fastest-growing crypto exchanges in the world, largely tapping into the crypto derivatives market.**
  - **Before the collapse, it was the second-largest cryptocurrency exchange globally and, along with Binance, accounted for a majority of global cryptocurrency trades.**
- This event **dragged Bitcoin's price to a two-year low.**

## What's the platform used for?

- **FTX is set up as two verticals:**
  - One can be accessed by **global users**, and the other is **specifically built in compliance with U.S. law.**
  - **FTX.US**, catered to U.S. residents as they could not legally trade on the FTX International platform.
  - FTX claimed to have over **one million customers in 2021.**
- FTX International **offered investors an option to trade in tokenized stocks**, which are **digital coin-based derivatives** of shares of actual companies.
- It also allowed users to bet on **expected valuations of pre-IPO companies**. Such features attracted users to the platforms.

## Major challenges

- The latest crypto crash affected not just FTX users, but also traders investing in top cryptocurrencies like **Bitcoin and Ether.**

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- **Investors holding large reserves of the exchange's own FTT token took a hard hit** as it lost most of its value in just hours.
- **About 130 affiliated firms** are now part of the bankruptcy proceedings.

**How different is this from the Luna, Celsius, and Voyager collapses?**

- **Terra [LUNA] is a cryptocurrency project** (not a platform) which collapsed in May this year.
  - Formerly one of the top cryptocurrencies by market capitalization, its LUNA cryptocurrency and Terra USD [UST] **stable coin lost over 90% of their value.**
- **This caused liquidity shortages** that prompted **lending platforms like Celsius and Voyager** to suspend withdrawals, which hastened their own collapse and legal woes.
- **FTX is a crypto exchange** rather than a lending platform.

**Way Forward**

- **The volatile crypto market from here could face more regulation,** according to some experts.
- **Crypto companies are deeply intertwined:** they invest in one another, buy one another's tokens and lend tokens and capital to one another which means the collapse of FTX could continue to topple others.
- **This fallout makes a strong case for why we need decentralised systems like Defi.** We will see an increase in transparency and widespread adoption of a decentralised system.
- **This crash will force Web3 firms to build better solutions** and develop effective rules for evaluating systematic risk.
- **The incident has brought up the need for regulations in the sector:** The step taken by Binance to launch an **industry recovery fund** to help projects during a liquidity crunch is a positive step in that direction.

**Source: TH**

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## **India's Long-term Climate Action Strategy**

( GS-3 Conservation , environmental pollutions and degradation)

### **In News**

- Recently, India submitted its **long-term climate action strategy** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the UN Climate Conference (**COP27**).

### **Background**

- The Paris Agreement of 2015 **required countries to submit a plan** demonstrating how they would switch their economies from being reliant on fossil fuel to clean energy sources.
- This was to include measures to be taken to keep temperatures from rising beyond 2°C, and preferably keep it at 1.5°C by the end of the century and becoming carbon neutral or achieving net zero.
- India has committed to being **net zero by 2070**. The deadline to make a commitment was 2020 but the pandemic meant deadlines were extended.
- India is now in a group of about 60 countries — the Paris Agreement has over 190 signatories — to have **submitted a strategy document to the UN**.

### **CoP 27**

- COP27 was labelled as an “**implementation**” conference, in the sense that countries were determined to solve outstanding questions on climate finance.
- This refers to money that developed countries had committed to developing countries to help them turn their economies away from fossil fuels, build infrastructure resilient to climate shocks and access technologies to enable widespread use of renewable energy.
- **Conference of Parties(COP):**
  - It is the supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC.
  - **Aim:** The agreement seeks to limit global warming to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5°C, compared to pre-industry levels.
  - **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** To achieve the targets under the agreement, the member countries have to submit

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the targets themselves, which they believe would lead to substantial progress towards reaching the Paris temperature goal.

- Initially, these targets are called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).
- They are converted to NDCs when the country ratifies the agreement.

**The elements of India's low emissions strategy**

- India's strategy underlines the **use of nuclear power and hydrogen** as critical to transition India into a carbon-neutral economy.
- The **Long-Term Low-Carbon Development Strategy** underlines India's right to an equitable and fair share of the global carbon budget.
- The remaining budget for a 50% likelihood to limit global warming to 1.5°C, 1.7°C and 2°C is 380 GtCO<sub>2</sub> (nine years at 2022 emissions levels), 730 GtCO<sub>2</sub> (18 years) and 1,230 GtCO<sub>2</sub> (30 years).
  - One gigatonne (Gt) CO<sub>2</sub> is a billion tonnes of carbon dioxide.
- The **journey to net zero is a five decade long** one and India's vision is therefore evolutionary and flexible, accommodating new technological developments and developments in the global economy and international cooperation.
- India's plan is to **maximise the use of electric vehicles**: Ensure that by 2025 the percentage of ethanol blended with petrol increases to 20% from the existing 10% and make a 'strong shift' of passenger and freight vehicles to public transport.
- India will also focus on **improving energy efficiency**: By the Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme, expand the National Hydrogen Mission, increase electrification, and enhance material efficiency and recycling.
  - The PAT scheme refers to an emissions trading scheme where industries such as aluminium, fertilizer, iron and steel, that are extremely carbon intensive, have to reduce their emissions by a fixed amount or buy energy saving certificates from firms that have exceeded reduction targets.
  - This scheme has been on since 2012 and has so far prevented 60 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from being emitted.

**NDCs and these Commitments**

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- The NDCs, which India must periodically update, are voluntary commitments by countries to reduce emissions by a fixed number relative to a date in the past to achieve the long-term goal of climate agreements of preventing global temperature rising beyond 1.5°C or 2°C by the end of the century.
- Thus, India's most updated NDC commits to ensuring that half its electricity is derived from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 and reducing the emissions intensity by 45% below 2005 levels by 2030.
- They are concrete targets unlike the low-carbon strategy which is qualitative and describes a pathway.

**Issues**

- **Funding:**
  - Of nearly **\$100 billion annually committed** in 2009, which was to have been arranged for by 2020, less than a third has come in.
  - Much of this, and this has been pointed out by several countries including India, is in the form of loans or come with conditions that increase the economic burden on developing countries.
- **Clear delivery:**
  - There is a demand that developed countries must come up with a new target, described in negotiations as a **New Collective Quantified Goal**, with a clear path of delivery and a higher amount, to the tune of “trillions of dollars” to account for increased costs of energy transition.
- **Loss and Damage:**
  - This is a proposal to compensate the most vulnerable countries and developing countries who are facing the brunt of climate change for the damage that has already incurred.
  - The European Union was resistant to announcing a fund this year, on the grounds that it would take years to materialise and there were other options to get money flowing where it was most needed.
- **Action plans falling short:**
  - It's been at least two-and-a-half decades since the world decided to restrain its greenhouse gas emissions.
    - Latest assessments suggest that current action plans of countries to meet climate goals are falling woefully short.
- **Rising emissions:**

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- In absolute terms, the annual global emissions are still rising, now touching almost 50 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.
- In the decade between 2010 and 2019, the global emissions grew by over one percent on average.
  - This is significantly slower than the growth in the previous decade, of about 2.6 percent, but for meeting climate targets, it is not good enough.
- **Global issues:**
  - **Economic:**
    - Amid a deepening energy crisis and prevailing economic gloom, there is little appetite among countries to scale up climate action.
  - **Ukraine war:**
    - The energy and economic crisis caused by the Ukraine war is threatening to undo even the small gains made.
- **Possibility of increase:**
  - Moreover, even if the growth in emissions is halted immediately, or is made to decline, it does not solve the problem.
  - This is because the warming of the planet is the result of accumulated emissions in the atmosphere and not the current emissions.
    - Carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, remains in the atmosphere for about 100 years, so the effect of any immediate decline in emissions would have an impact only after several decades.
  - As a result, the average global temperatures have risen faster in the last one decade than any time earlier.
- **Inadequate & unfair response:**
  - The response in terms of emission cuts has been inadequate.
  - **The rich and industrialised countries:**
    - These were the main polluters and hence mainly responsible to bring down emissions, have not met their collective targets.
  - **Developing countries:**
    - Countries like China or India, which were not major emitters till sometime back, have seen their emissions rise steeply.

**Global picture**

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- **EU:**
  - As a bloc, the European Union has done relatively better on climate goals, with the United Kingdom, which is struggling with an economic downturn right now, halving its emissions from 1990 levels, UN data shows.
- **USA:**
  - The United States, the world's leading emitter until it was overtaken by China in the mid-2000s, has been a major laggard, cutting its emissions by only about 7 percent from 1990 levels.
- **India & China:**
  - China's emissions have risen by almost four times, and India's by about three times, during this period.

**Way Ahead**

- **Approaching the action plans:**
  - First, climate change is a global problem and it requires **cooperation** between all nations.
  - Second, it needs rules that are **fair and just**, for the poor and the rich alike.
  - Third, science is clear that **humans are responsible** for the global temperature rise and that this increase will lead to more and more variable and extreme weather events, much like what we are seeing now.
  - Four, it is possible to estimate each country's responsibility for the **stock of emissions** already in the atmosphere — the historical cumulative emissions that have “forced” climate change impacts.
  - And fifth, countries that have not yet contributed to the emissions will do so in the future, simply because the world has reneged on the need to make global rules that would apply fairly to all.
- **Suggestion by Emissions Gap Report:**
  - For a realistic chance to keep global warming within 1.5 degree Celsius, annual emissions would need to drop from the current level of about 50 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent to about 33 billion tonnes by 2030 and 8 billion tonnes by 2050, according to the newest Emissions Gap Report.
  - Even for meet the 2-degree target, emissions have to come down to about 41 billion tonnes by 2030 and 20 billion tonnes by 2050.
  - This would require drastic action from all the major emitters.

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Source: [TH](#)

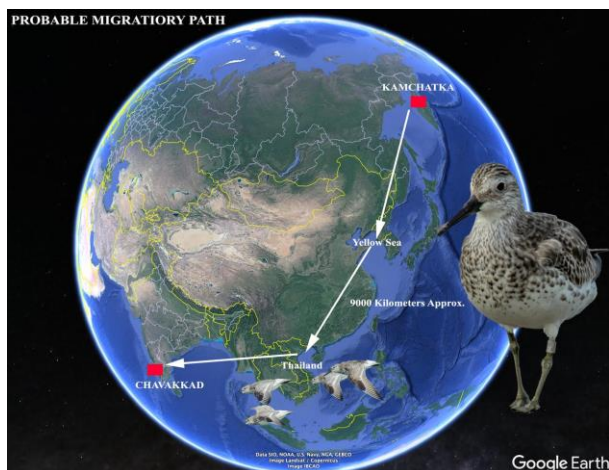
## Great Knot

GS 3 species

### In News

A great knot from Russia has found its way to Kerala's coast, flying over 9,000 km for a winter sojourn.

- Great knots to be re-sighted in India among the nearly thousand ones tagged with MOSKVA rings in the Kamchatka peninsula in eastern Russia.



### The migratory path of the Great Knot

### About Great knot

- **Scientific Name:** *Calidris tenuirostris*
- It is a small wader.
- It is the largest of the calidris species
- **Habitat:** Grassland, Marine Neritic, Marine Intertidal, Marine Coastal/Supratidal.
  - This species breeds in northeast Siberia, Russia, wintering mainly in Australia, but also throughout the coastline of South-East Asia and on the coasts of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula.

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- **Threats Information:** Loss of intertidal stopover habitats in the Yellow Sea region is thought to be a key driver in the population declines of shorebirds
  - It is also potentially threatened by climate change.
  - Recent evidence shows a very rapid population decline caused by the **reclamation of non-breeding stopover grounds**, and under the assumption that further proposed reclamation projects will cause additional declines in the future.
- **Protection Status:** It is listed as an 'endangered' species by the IUCN.
  - It is listed in Appendix I of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Source: [TH](#)

### **Nicobari Hodi Craft**

#### **GS-1 Art and Culture**

#### **In News**

The Geographical Indications Registry has received an application from the Tribal Development Council, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, seeking the Geographical **Indication (GI) tag** for the **Nicobari hodi craft**.

- This is the first application from the Union Territory seeking a tag for one of its products.

#### **About Nicobari Hodi Craft**

- The hodi is the **Nicobari tribe's traditional craft**. It is an outrigger canoe, very commonly operated in the Nicobar group of islands.
- The **technical skills for building a hodi** are based on **indigenous knowledge** inherited by the **Nicobarese from their forefathers**.
- The hodi is built using either locally available trees or from nearby islands, and its design varies slightly from island to island.
- The tuhet, a group of families under a headman, consider the hodi an asset. Hodi races are held between islands and villages.

Source: [TH](#)

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**Facts in News**

**“Friendshoring”**

**GS 2 India & Foreign Relation**

**In News**

America plans to pursue a ‘**friendshoring**’ approach to diversify away from countries that present geopolitical and security risks to the supply chain and deepen economic integration with trusted trading partners like India,

**About ‘Friendshoring’**

- The term, a cousin of “reshoring” and “onshoring” and a sibling to “nearshoring,” is shorthand for the practice of **relocating supply chains to countries** where the **risk of disruption from political chaos** is low.
- The approach involves partnering with developing countries to grow local **industries and connect** them to the **global supply chain**.
- **Objectives:** To reduce risks to the supply chains on which the US and its partners rely by not allowing countries to use their dominance in key raw materials, technologies, and products to exert geopolitical advantage.
- **Indian Context:** For India to benefit more from friendshoring, it must participate more deeply in regional blocs like the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)
  - Although India joined the grouping, it has for now opted out of the trade pillar, which is one of the four pillars of this bloc that aims to enhance supply chain resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness.

**Source:** [IE](#).

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**Sufism**

**GS-1 Literature , Art & culture**

**In News**

- In ‘**In Search of the Divine: Living Histories of Sufism in India**’, Rana Safvi weaves together a narrative that combines history and geography, myth and **contemporary practices of Sufism**.

**Key Points From the Book**

- **Shrines being brought to life with writing:**
  - Rana Safvi has attempted the daunting task of mapping out the Sufi traditions in the subcontinent.
  - Intertwining personal testimony with a taxonomy of the different **silsilahs of Sufism**, Safvi weaves together a narrative that combines history and geography, myth and contemporary practice.
  - The description of the **Sarkhej Roza**, a shrine in Gujarat: “These square panels were patterned in three ways: geometric, curvilinear, or a combination of both. Floral motifs were also used to heighten the sense of being in a garden — as that is how paradise is also described.
  - In the tomb of **Sheikh Ghaus Gwaliori**, there are over a hundred panels with one screen consisting of both geometrical and stylized designs.”
- **Orders:**
  - The book offers valuable source material on the history of Sufism in India, its various orders:
    - Chishti,
    - Qadiriyya,
    - Suhrawardiyya,
    - Naqshbandi.
- **Pan India presence:**
  - The shrine of **Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakar** (1188-1266) in Pakpattan,
  - **Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti’s** (1143-1236) resting place in Ajmer,

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- The mausoleum of **Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya** (1238-1325) in Delhi, and even as far south as Nagore in present day Tamil Nadu, where **Hazrat Syed Shahul Hameed** (d. 1570) was welcomed by the king of Thanjavur with a land grant to build a khanqah, or seminary.
- The last named saint is revered as “Nagore Andavar” by locals and is one among thousands of examples where **Hindus and Muslims continue to share sacred spaces** in India.

### Sufism

- **Meaning of Sufi:**

- It literally refers to “the act of wearing wool,” perhaps referring to the shawls worn by the itinerant preachers who traveled the length and breadth of the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia.

- **Practice:**

- The philosophy of Sufism believes in one God and regards every individual and everything else as part of Him.
- The Sufi saints preached that '**God is one**', **all is in God** , 'nothing is beyond outside Him' and 'one can find God by renouncing everything except loving devotion to God.'

- **Sufism in the Indian Subcontinent:**

- The Sufi movement **started in Persia** and evolved into a well developed movement by the **11th century**.
- Sufism found its way into India during the eleventh and twelfth centuries when many Sufi saints came to India particularly in Multan and Lahore of the Indian subcontinent.

- **Bifurcated into Orders:**

- During this time, the Sufis were organized in **orders (silsilahs)**.
- The orders were generally led by a prominent mystic who lived in **Khanqah (hospice)** along with his disciples.
- The connection between the Pir (teacher) and his murids (disciples) was a vital part of the Sufi system.
- Every Pir nominated a successor or wali to carry on his work.
- **The Sufi orders are divided into two groups:**
  - **Ba-shara**, which followed the Islamic Law (shara) and
  - **Be-shara**, which was not bound by it (shara).
  - Both types of orders prevailed in India, the latter being followed more by wandering saints and qalandars.

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**Different Sufi Orders**

- The Sufis organized into several orders or silsilahs. **Abul Fazal** mentioned fourteen such orders. Some of them became quite popular in India.
- **The Chisti Order:**
  - The most popular one in India.
  - It **originated outside India** and its founder saint was **Khawaja Abdul Chisti**.
  - In India, it was introduced by **Khawaja Muinuddin Chishti**.
    - Muinuddin Chishti was born in Persia.
    - He visited different places of Islamic learning in Central Asia and, finally, reached India in 1200 A.D.
    - He settled himself at **Ajmer** and became very popular all over Northern India.
    - **Both the Hindus and Muslims** paid homage to him.
    - The Mughal emperor, Akbar paid homage at his Dargah.
  - Among his disciples were **Sheikh Hamiduddin** of Nagaur and **Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki**.
  - **Shaikh Farid or Baba Farid** was also a famous Chisti Saint. He raised the Chisti order to the status of an all-India organization.
  - The most famous Chisti Saint was **Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya** who was the disciple of Baba Farid.
    - He settled himself near Delhi.
    - He had the chance of watching the reigns of several Sultans of Delhi.
    - Amongst his followers was noted writer **Amir Khusrau**.
  - Another famous Saint was **Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmud**, popularly known as Nasiruddin Chirag-i-Dilli (The Lamp of Delhi).
- **Suhrawardi Order:**
  - Established by **Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi** at Baghdad.
  - The Suhrawardi order of the sufis became popular in the **North Western part of India**.
  - The first popular Saint of this order was **Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya** who settled down at Multan.
    - He **differed** from Chisti saints in several respects.
    - He **didn't observe** simplicity.

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- He led a **comfortable life** and received wealth and land from his rich disciples.
- He emphasized the **external form of Islam**.
- He **did not believe** in fasting, self-mortification etc. with a view to purify souls.
- **Shaikh Sharfuddin Yahya Manairi** propagated Sufi-doctrines in Bihar.
  - He was a good scholar and compiled several books.
  - He laid great stress on the **services of humanity**.
- **The Qadri Order:**
  - The Qadrisilalah was popular in **Punjab**.
  - **Shaikh Abdul Qadir** and his sons were supporters of the Mughals under Akbar.
  - The Pirs of this order supported the concept of **Wahadat al Wajud** (this doctrine postulates that **God and His creation are one**).
  - Among the famous Sufis of this order was **Miyan Mir** who had enrolled the Mughal Princess Jahanara and her brother **Dara Shikoh** as his disciples.
- **Naqshbandi Order:**
  - The Naqshbandi order of the Sufis was introduced in India by **Khwaja Baqi Billah**.
    - Khawaja Baqi Billah opposed the listening of Sama (religious music) and the practice of pilgrimage to the tombs of saints.
    - He opposed interaction with Hindus and Shias.
    - He criticised the withdrawal of the Jizyah and the ban on cow slaughter (by Akbar).
    - He maintained that the relationship between man and God was that between the slave and the master and not the relation of a lover and beloved.
    - He tried to harmonise the doctrines of mysticism and the teachings of Islam.
  - His successor was **Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi**.
  - This order emphasized an observance of the **laws of Shariat** and denounced all innovations which were added afterwards to Islamic doctrines.

**Contribution of the Sufi Movement**

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- **Unity:** The contribution of the Indian Sufis to society lies in their sincere and dedicated struggle to **find unity for the heterogeneous elements** in the society.
- **Promoted hetro-ethnicity:** They appreciated the multi-racial, multi-religious and multilingual pattern of Indian society.
- **Peaceful:** Their efforts were directed towards the creation of a healthy social order free from dissensions, discords and conflicts.
  - Like the Bhakti saints who were engaged in breaking down of barriers within Hinduism, the Sufis too infused a new liberal outlook within Islam.
  - The interaction between early Bhakti and Sufi Ideas laid the foundation of more liberal movements of the fifteenth century.
- **Influence on Hinduism:** Sufism influenced Hindu society and religion.
  - The saints of Bhakti-cult like Kabir, Nanak, Dadu Dayal were certainly influenced by Sufi saints.
  - Many Bhakti saints were influenced by monotheism of Islam.
  - Efforts were made by several of them to remove the barriers of caste. Probably, the concept of Guru or the preceptor among the saints of Bhakti Cult was also influenced by the concept of Pir among the Sufis.
- **Helping oppressed:** A notable contribution of Sufis was their service to the poorer and downtrodden sections of society.
  - While the Sultan and Ulema often remained aloof from the day to day problems of the people, the Sufi saints maintained close contact with the common people.
  - Nizamuddin Auliya was famous for distributing gifts amongst the needy irrespective of religion or caste.
- **Brotherhood:** The Sufi movement encouraged equality and brotherhood. In fact, the Islamic emphasis upon equality was respected far more by the Sufis than by the Ulema.

### **Conclusion**

- Sufis helped the spread of Islam in India by emphasizing **social equality** of all the people.
- Sufis were guides to good life. They **bridged the gulf** between our societies.

**Source:** [IE](#)

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**India's First Suicide Prevention Policy**

**Government Policies & Interventions : Issues Relating to Development :  
Management of Social Sector :Health**

**In News**

- Recently the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced a National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

**More about the policy**

- **About:**
  - The newly launched National Suicide Prevention Strategy is the first of its kind in the country.
  - The suicide prevention policy comes with time-bound action plans and multi-sectoral collaborations to achieve reduction in suicide mortality by 10% 2030.
- **The strategy broadly seeks to:**
  - Establish effective surveillance mechanisms for suicide within the next three years,
  - Establish psychiatric outpatient departments that will provide suicide prevention services through the District Mental Health Programme in all districts within the next five years, and
  - To integrate a mental well-being curriculum in all educational institutions within the next eight years.
- **The policy envisages:**
  - **Developing guidelines for responsible media reporting of suicides, and**
  - Restricting access to means of suicide.
- **Community & societal support:**
  - The stress is on developing community resilience and societal support for suicide prevention.
- **In line with global strategy:**
  - The UN's **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.4** aims to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one-third, through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and well-being.
    - One of the indicators for this is the suicide rate.

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- While the strategy is in line with the **WHO's South East-Asia Region Strategy for suicide prevention**, it says it will remain true to India's cultural and social milieu.

**More about Suicide**

- **What is suicide?**
  - Suicide is when people harm themselves with the goal of ending their life, and they die as a result.
  - A suicide attempt is when people harm themselves with the goal of ending their life, but they do not die.
- **Data on suicide deaths in India:**
  - In India, more than one lakh lives are lost every year to suicide, and it is the top killer in the 15-29 years category.
  - In the past three years, the suicide rate has increased from 10.2 to 11.3 per 1,00,000 population, the document records.
  - The most common reasons for suicide include family problems and illnesses, which account for 34% and 18% of all suicide-related deaths.
- **Treatments and Therapies:**
  - Brief Interventions
  - **Safety Planning:**
    - Personalized safety planning has been shown to help reduce suicidal thoughts and actions.
  - **Follow-up phone calls:**
    - Research has shown that when at-risk patients receive further screening, a Safety Plan intervention, and a series of supportive phone calls, their risk of suicide goes down.
- **Psychotherapies:**
  - **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):**
    - It can help people learn new ways of dealing with stressful experiences.
    - CBT helps individuals recognize their thought patterns and consider alternative actions when thoughts of suicide arise.
  - **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT):**
    - It has been shown to reduce suicidal behavior in adolescents.

**Government of India Initiatives**

- **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), 1982:**

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- To ensure the availability and accessibility of minimum mental healthcare for all in the foreseeable future, particularly to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the population.
- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 - Decriminalising suicide attempts:**
  - It was passed in 2017, came into effect in May 2018 and **replaced the Mental Health Act of 1987.**
  - To the joy of most Indian medical practitioners and advocates of mental health, the **act decriminalised suicide attempts in India.**
  - It also included WHO guidelines in the categorisation of mental illnesses.
  - The most significant provision in the act was “advanced directives”, which allowed individuals with mental illnesses to **decide the course of their treatment** and also **appoint someone to be their representative.**
  - It also **restricted** the use of **electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)**, and banned its use on **minors**, finally introducing measures to tackle stigma in Indian society.
- **Manodarpan Initiative:**
  - It is an initiative under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
  - It aims to provide psycho-social support to students for their mental health and well-being.
- **Kiran Helpline:**
  - The helpline is a giant step **towards suicide prevention**, and can help with **support and crisis management.**
  - The helpline aims to provide early screening, first-aid, psychological support, distress management, mental well-being, and psychological crisis management and will be managed by the **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD).**

**Issues & way ahead**

- **Focus not up to the mark:**
  - The recent National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report stated that 1.64 lakh people died by suicide in 2021.
  - This is 10 per cent higher than the COVID deaths in India 2020, and 6.8 times the maternal death (23800) in 2020.
  - Yet, we have had so much more focus and efforts on COVID protocols and maternal health as compared to suicide prevention.

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- **Need for collaborative efforts:**
  - Given that suicide is a complex issue, tackling it will necessarily require inter-sectoral collaboration.
  - The 2021 NCRB data shows that family issues (33.2 per cent), unemployment/indebtedness/career problems (7.7 percent), health concerns (18.6 percent) are some of the major causes.
  - To work on prevention, we need the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, the MoHFW, among others, to work collaboratively.
- **Requirement of an effective implementation:**
  - The strategy should now be passed on to the States for them to develop locally relevant action plans; and then cascade to the district, primary health and community levels.
  - Further efforts are now required to prevent suicides as a public health priority.
  - Suicides impact all sections of the society and thus require concerted and collaborative efforts from individuals and the community at large.

**Source: TH**

**Development Project on the Great Nicobar Island:**

**GS 2 -Government Policies & Interventions ; Development Processes & Development Industry**

**In News**

- Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change gave environmental clearance for the development project on the Great Nicobar Island.
  - The port is expected to be commissioned by 2027–28.

**More about the news**

- **The development project consists of:**
  - A “greenfield city” has been proposed
  - An International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT),
  - A greenfield international airport,
  - A power plant, and

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- A township for the personnel who will implement the project.
- **Infrastructure management:**
  - The port will be controlled by the Indian Navy.
  - The airport will have dual military-civilian functions and will cater to tourism as well.
  - Roads, public transport, water supply and waste management facilities, and several hotels have been planned to cater to tourists.
- **Total island area under the project:**
  - A total 166.1 sq km along the southeastern and southern coasts of the island have been identified for project along a coastal strip of width between 2 km and 4 km.
  - Some 130 sq km of forests have been sanctioned for diversion, and 9.64 lakh trees are likely to be felled.

**Significance of the Project**

- **National security:**
  - The proposal to develop Great Nicobar was first floated in the 1970s, and its **importance for national security and consolidation of the Indian Ocean Region** has been repeatedly underlined.
  - **Increasing Chinese assertion in the Bay of Bengal and the Indo-Pacific** has added great urgency to this imperative in recent years.
- **Economic and strategic importance:**
  - The island has a lot of tourism potential, but the government's greater goal is to leverage the locational advantage of the island for economic and strategic reasons.
  - **Location:**
    - Great Nicobar is **equidistant from Colombo to the southwest and Port Klang and Singapore to the southeast.**
    - It is positioned close to the **East-West international shipping corridor**, through which a very large part of the world's shipping trade passes.
- **Cargo transshipment:**
  - The proposed **International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT)** can potentially become a hub for cargo ships travelling on this route.

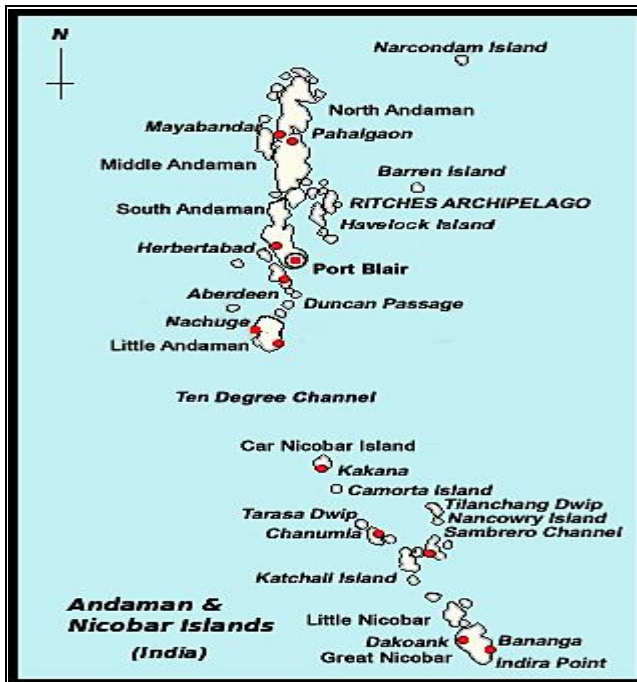
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- The proposed port will allow Great Nicobar to participate in the regional and global maritime economy by becoming a major player in cargo transshipment.
- **Job generation:**
  - More than 1 lakh new direct jobs and 1.5 lakh indirect jobs are likely to be created on the island over the period of development.

**The Island**

- **The Andaman and Nicobar Islands:**
  - The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are a **cluster of about 836 islands** in the eastern Bay of Bengal, the two groups of which are separated by the 150-km wide **Ten Degree Channel**.
  - The Andaman Islands lie to the north of the channel, and the Nicobar Islands to the south.
  - Great Nicobar, the southernmost of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has an area of 910 sq km.
- **Great Nicobar island:**
  - **India's southernmost point:**
    - **Indira Point on the southern tip of Great Nicobar Island** is India's southernmost point, less than 150 km from the northernmost island of the Indonesian archipelago.
  - **Protected area:**
    - Great Nicobar is home to two national parks and a biosphere reserve.
  - **Inhabitants:**
    - The island is inhabited by the Shompen and Nicobarese tribal peoples, along with ex-servicemen from Punjab, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh who were settled on the island in the 1970s.
  - **Flora & fauna:**
    - The Great Nicobar Island has tropical wet evergreen forests, mountain ranges reaching almost 650 m above sea level, and coastal plains.
    - Fourteen species of mammals, 71 species of birds, 26 species of reptiles, 10 species of amphibians, and 113 species of fish are found on the island, some of which are endangered.
    - The leatherback sea turtle is the island's flagship species.

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**Ecological concerns regarding the developmental project**

- **Ecologically important and fragile region:**
  - The proposed massive infrastructure development in an ecologically important and fragile region, including the felling of almost a million trees, has alarmed many environmentalists.
- **Impacting coral reefs & mangroves:**
  - The loss of tree cover will not only affect the flora and fauna on the island, it will also lead to increased runoff and sediment deposits in the ocean, impacting the coral reefs in the area, they have cautioned.
  - Coral reefs, already under threat from warming oceans, are of enormous ecological importance.
  - Environmentalists have also flagged the loss of mangroves on the island as a result of the development project.

**Government response & way ahead:**

- **Relocation of reefs:**
  - India has successfully translocated a coral reef from the Gulf of Mannar to the Gulf of Kutch earlier.

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- The Zoological Survey of India is currently in the process of assessing how much of the reef will have to be relocated for the project.
- **Conservation of the leatherback turtle:**
  - The government has said that a conservation plan for the leatherback turtle is also being put in place.
- **Only small percentage of area to be disturbed:**
  - The project site is outside the eco-sensitive zones of **Campbell Bay and Galathea National Park**.
  - The Centre has said that the development area is only a small percentage of the area of the island and its forest cover and that 15 percent of the development area itself will be green cover and open spaces.
- **Official Shompen Policy of 2015:**
  - Apart from that, emphasis needs to be given to the official Shompen Policy of 2015 which noted that the welfare and integrity of these people should be given priority with regard to large-scale development proposals and they should be taken care of.

**Source: IE**

**Norms to Curb Fake Reviews on e-commerce Sites**

**GS 2 ;Government Policies & Interventions**

**In News**

- The **Department of Consumer Affairs** has recently announced new regulations to protect consumers from ‘**fake and deceptive reviews**’.
  - It is a part of the **Bureau of Indian Standards** norms that will be implemented from **November 25**.

**Major Guidelines**

- **Voluntary Action:**
  - E-commerce platforms will need to voluntarily **disclose paid customer reviews of products and services**.
  - The e-commerce Company or restaurant will have to **develop a code of practice, necessary terms and conditions for**

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**accessibility**, and ensure that the content does not contain financial information.

- **Identity:**
  - Reviews should not be misleading, and the identities of the reviewers **should not be disclosed** without their permission.
- **Purchased review:**
  - If a review is purchased or you are rewarding the person for writing the review, then that has to be **clearly marked** as a purchased review.
- **Application:**
  - The **standard, IS 19000:2022**, will apply to all organisations that publish consumer reviews online. These will include suppliers of products and services which collect reviews from their customers, third parties contracted by suppliers or independent third parties.
- **The BIS has defined reviews as solicited and unsolicited:**
  - The person responsible for handling the review in any organisation will be called the **review administrator**.
  - Solicited review refers to consumer reviews requested by the **supplier or review administrator**.
- **Time period:**
  - If a product gets a 4-5 stars rating, the organization will have to inform the **period in which the data was collected**, and if an average was calculated.

**Need of such a regulation**

- Reviews posted online play a significant role in **making purchase decisions** and **consumers exceedingly rely** on reviews posted on e-commerce platforms to see the **opinion and experience of users who have already purchased** the good or service.

**Significance of the move**

- **Increased transparency:** The new guidelines for online reviews are designed to drive increased transparency for both consumers and brands and promote information accuracy.
- **Protection of consumers:** Regulations are aimed at protecting consumers from fake and deceptive reviews.

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- **Building Trust:** Given that e-commerce involves a virtual shopping experience without any opportunity to physically view or examine the product, it is essential that reviews are genuine, authentic and trustworthy.
- **Penalty:** If they indulge in unfair trade practices, then under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) or a consumer court can take penal action. CCPA usually treats such cases as a 'class' and the consumer commission as individual cases.

**Way forward**

- **The government will first set up a mechanism for voluntary compliance,** and will make it mandatory if the menace continues to grow.
- Some countries are making rules, and some are making legal provisions, but **India is the first country to make a standard.**

**Bureau of Indian Standards**

- It is the **National Standard Body of India.** The **Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016,** has been implemented since 2017.
- It is **responsible for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization,** marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- **BIS has its Headquarters at New Delhi.** It has **5 Regional Offices (ROs)** located at Kolkata (Eastern), Chennai (Southern), Mumbai (Western), Chandigarh (Northern) and Delhi (Central).
- The standards and certification scheme of BIS apart from **benefitting the consumers and industry also support various public policies** especially in areas of product safety, consumer protection, food safety, environment protection, building and construction, etc.
- It has worked towards specifically addressing **various national priorities** and other government initiatives like **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Digital India, Make in India and ease of doing business** through its activities of standardization and certification.
- **The activities of BIS can be broadly grouped under the following heads:**
  - Standards formulation

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- International activities
- Product Certification
- Hallmarking
- Laboratory services
- Training services - National Institute of Training for Standardisation
- Consumer Affairs and Publicity

Source: **TH**

### **Rani Lakshmibai**

Gs-1

#### **In News**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has remembered Rani Lakshmibai on her Jayanti. Shri Modi said that her courage and monumental contribution to our nation can never be forgotten.

#### **About Rani Lakshmibai**

- **Early Life:** She was born on 19 November 1828 in Kashi.
  - Lakshmibai's childhood name was 'Manikarnika'. She was affectionately addressed as 'Manu'.
  - Manu's father used to work with Peshwa Sahib of Bithur.
  - From childhood, Manu started learning about using weapons.
  - She became proficient in horse riding and fencing under the guidance of Nana Saheb and Taty Tope.
- **Married Life:** In the year 1842, Manu got married to the King of Jhansi, Gangadhar Rao and after marriage, she got the name 'Lakshmibai'. she gave birth to a son.
  - Her son lived for a few months and then passed away.
  - After some time, the king of Jhansi died, and state management's responsibility fell to Rani Lakshmibai, which she managed efficiently.
- **Conflict with the British:** The British, under the **doctrine of Lapse**, ordered the merger of Jhansi into the British Empire and assured the queen of pension.
  - Rani Laxmibai did not agree to this contract in any way.

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- She made it clear to the Britishers that she will never surrender Jhansi to them. She took this pledge.
- The brave queen guarded the pride of Jhansi until her last breath
- **Legacy :** The devotion of the queen towards the motherland, awakened the spirit of freedom among thousands of people. She inspired many women to participate in the freedom movement. She sacrificed her life for the dignity and freedom of her people. No doubt, She was a true queen and a brave fighter

### Doctrine of Lapse

- Lord Dalhousie who was the Governor-General from 1848 to 1856 devised a policy that came to be known as the Doctrine of Lapse.
- The doctrine declared that if an Indian ruler died without a male heir his kingdom would “lapse”, that is, become part of Company territory.
- One kingdom after another was annexed simply by applying this doctrine: Satara (1848), Sambalpur (1850), Udaipur (1852), Nagpur (1853) and Jhansi (1854).
- Finally, in 1856, the Company also took over Awadh.

Source: [PIB](#)

### **Lachit Borphukan :**

**Gs-1 Personalities:**

### In News

- Recently, the Assam Chief Minister launched an event to mark the **400th anniversary of Lachit Barphukan**, a celebrated general of the Ahom dynasty.

### Lachit Borphukan

- **Born:** on November 24, 1622 in **Charaideo**, the first capital of the Ahom kings.
- Excelled in the art of **Guerrilla Warfare**.
- Led two battles **against** an alien **Mughal army**.
  - **Battle of Alaboi:**

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- Fought on August 5, **1669** in the Alaboi Hills near Dadara in North Guwahati.
- **Aurangzeb had ordered the invasion** in 1669 under his ally **Rajput Raja Ram Singh I** who led a combined Mughal and Rajput army.
- Borphukan engaged in **guerrilla warfare**, assaulting the invaders and then falling back until Ram Singh I unleashed his entire forces on the Ahoms, defeating them in the Battle of Alaboi.
- **Naval battle in Saraighat in 1671:**
  - Lachit Borphukon's **valorous leadership** led to the decisive defeat of the Mughals.
  - According to historical accounts, Lachit is said to have **tricked the Mughals by feigning an attack in front**.
  - As the fleet advanced on the **river Brahmaputra**, the main Ahom fleet attacked from behind, sealing a victory for the locals.
- **Death:** 25th April 1672.



Image Courtesy: [TN](#)

### **Ahom Dynasty**

- Ruled for more than **600 years** between the 13th and 19th centuries.
- **One of the longest dynastic reigns** in the subcontinent
- **Areas:** Large parts of what is now Assam, and parts of what are

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neighbouring states today.

- **Achievements:** Instrumental role in **thwarting more than 15 attempts** of the Mughals and other rulers of the Delhi Sultanate to conquer the region.

Source: [TH](#)

### **PM-KISAN Scheme:**

#### **GS- 3 Agriculture**

#### **In News**

- The number of farmers who received funds under the Union government's Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme **fell by two-thirds from the scheme's launch in 2019 till now.**

#### **About PM-KISAN scheme**

## Falling numbers

The table shows the number of farmers who received the first and 11th instalment funds from PM-KISAN. A look at select major States:



Figures in lakh

States	1st instalment	11th instalment	% decline
Maharashtra	109.98	37.51	65.9
Madhya Pradesh	88.63	0.12	99.9
Bihar	83.38	6.83	91.8
Gujarat	63.13	28.41	55.0
Andhra Pradesh	55.68	28.2	49.4
Tamil Nadu	46.08	23.04	50.0
Chhattisgarh	37.7	2	94.7

- **Objective:**
  - Under the scheme an income support of 6,000/- per year in three equal installments will be provided to all land holding farmer families. The family includes husband, wife and minor children.

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- The fund will be directly transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.
- **Funding:**
  - It is a **Central Sector scheme** with 100% funding from Government of India. It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- **Identification of beneficiaries**
  - State Government and UT administration will identify the farmer families which are eligible for support as per scheme guidelines.
- **Eligibility:**
  - Small and marginal farmers are eligible for PMKSNY.
  - Farmer families that hold cultivable land can apply for the benefits of this plan.
  - A beneficiary should be an Indian citizen.
  - Farmers from both rural and urban regions can be enlisted.
- **Exclusion Categories:** The following categories of beneficiaries of higher economic status **shall not be eligible for benefit under the scheme:**
  - All Institutional Landholders.
  - Farmer families in which one or more of its members belong to the following categories
  - Former and present holders of constitutional posts
  - Former and present Ministers/ State Ministers and former/present Members of Lok Sabha/ Rajya Sabha/ State Legislative Assemblies/ State Legislative Councils, former and present Mayors of Municipal Corporations, former and present Chairpersons of District Panchayats.
  - All serving or retired officers and employees of Central/ State Government Ministries /Offices/Departments and its field units Central or State PSEs and Attached offices /Autonomous Institutions under Government as well as regular employees of the Local Bodies (Excluding Multi Tasking Staff /Class IV/Group D employees)
  - All superannuated/retired pensioners whose monthly pension is Rs.10,000/-or more (Excluding Multi Tasking Staff / Class IV/Group D employees) of above category
  - All Persons who paid Income Tax in last assessment year

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- Professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Chartered Accountants, and Architects registered with Professional bodies and carrying out their profession by undertaking practices.

Source: [TH](#)

### **Blue Diamond Affair**

#### **GS 2 India & Foreign Relations**

#### **In News**

Recently, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Thailand's prime minister signed agreements to expand diplomatic relations between the two countries.

- The relations were restored only earlier this year, three decades after a high-profile jewelry theft, also known as the **Blue Diamond Affair**.

#### **About Blue Diamond Affair**

- Saudi Arabia downgraded its diplomatic relations with Thailand over the theft that led to a string of mysterious killings and became known as the Blue Diamond affair.
  - It all started with the theft of jewelry and other valuable gems from the palace of Prince Faisal bin Fahd, the eldest son of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, in 1989.
  - A Thai worker employed as a servant at the palace, stole precious gems worth \$20 million from Prince Faisal's home, which also included a rare 50-carat blue diamond, which is still missing.
  - The ensuing diplomatic repercussion was thus named after the gem.
- **Impacts:**
  - It resulted in loss of jobs for thousands of Thai migrant workers.
  - Saudi Arabia stopped issuing work visas for Thais and discouraged its own citizens from visiting Bangkok.
- **Present Saudi-Thailand relations:** Recent The high-level meeting also saw the two leaders agreeing on the appointment of ambassadors "in the near future" and to strengthen economic and trade relations

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- As the two countries turned a new page in their relationship, Saudi restarted direct flights to Thailand in February.
- Since January 2022, many friendly exchanges have taken place between the two countries — one being an agreement between state-owned energy firms Saudi Aramco and Thailand's PTT for cooperation in carbon capture and crude oil sourcing.
- **Recent Developments:** In October 2022, Thailand hosted the controversial Saudi-backed circuit, LIV Golf Invitational.
  - In November 2022, Saudi Investment Minister Khalid al-Falih attended a business forum in Bangkok meeting agriculture firms.
- **Relevance:** Restoration of ties has benefits for both countries, as the two leaders inked agreements pledging to increase trade and investment.

Source: [IE](#)

## **Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace Disarmament, and Development**

*GSI Awards Miscellaneous*

### **In News**

- Former Vice-President Hamid Ansari presented the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament, and Development of 2021 to Pratham.

### **About**

- Pratham is an NGO functioning in the field of education. The award is in recognition of Pratham's work in ensuring quality education for children of the country, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **About Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace Disarmament, and Development**

- The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development was instituted in the memory of the former prime minister by a trust in her name in 1986.
- It consists of a monetary award of Rs 25 lakh along with a citation.
- It is given to individuals or organizations who work towards ensuring international peace and development, ensuring that scientific discoveries are used to further the scope of freedom and better humanity, and creating a new international economic order.

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Source: [TH](#)

## **Gandhi Mandela Award**

*GS1 , Awards ,Miscellaneous*

### **In News**

- The **14th Dalai Lama** was recently conferred the **Gandhi Mandela Award 2022** at **Thekchen Choeling in Dharamshala's McLeodGanj** by Himachal Pradesh Governor.
  - He has been conferred with the **peace prize** for the qualities of non-violence and compassion and he has been called a **“universal ambassador of peace”**.

### **What is the Gandhi Mandela Award?**

- The Gandhi Mandela Foundation is a **non-profit organization** registered as a **government of India Trust**.
- It was formed with the **motive to promote Mahatma Gandhi's and former President of South Africa Nelson Mandela's values of non-violence**.
  - It has constituted an **international prize**, the Gandhi Mandela Award.
- The foundation instituted the award on the **150th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, MK Gandhi**.

### **Who gets the award and how are they selected?**

- The award is given to personalities who have carried forward the legacies of Gandhi and Mandela by making significant contributions in the fields of **Peace, Social Welfare, Culture, Environment, Education, Healthcare, Sports, and Innovation**.

### **Which other peace prize the Dalai Lama received?**

- He is the recipient of the **1989 Nobel Peace Prize**. The Dalai Lama has developed his philosophy of peace from a great reverence for all things living and upon the concept of universal responsibility embracing all mankind as well as nature.

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Source: [IE](#)

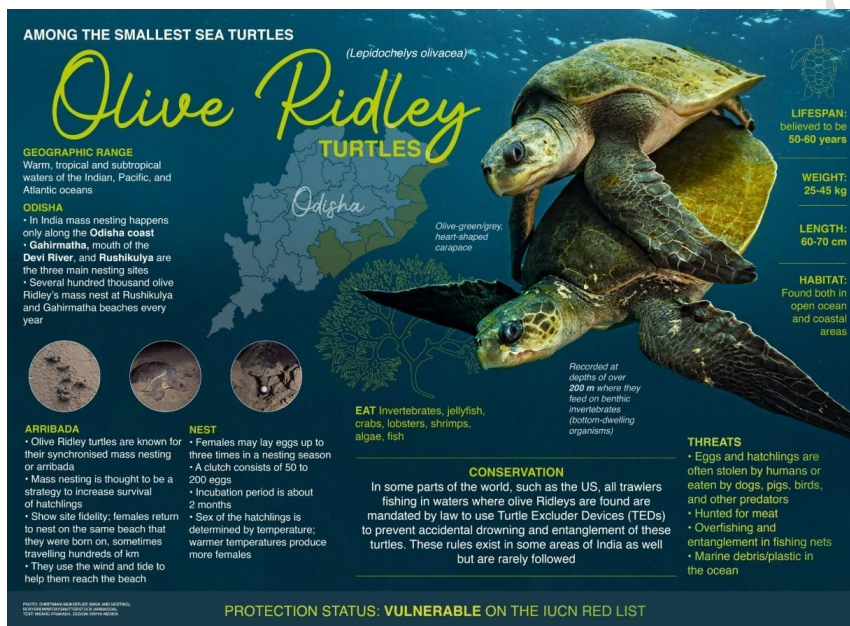
## Olive Ridley Turtles

*GSI , Species in News*

### In News

- A large number of **Olive Ridley turtles** have started arriving for mating at the **Gahirmatha marine sanctuary in Odisha**.

### About Olive Ridley turtles



- **Scientific name:** *Lepidochelys olivacea*; also known as the **Pacific ridley sea turtle**.
- **Location:** Found in warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- **Features:**
  - One of the **smallest sea-turtles** on the earth.
  - **Olive green** colour of their shell.
  - They can grow up to **two-and-a-half feet** in length and weigh **30-45 kilograms**.
  - **Food:** Mainly **shrimp, crab, molluscs, fish and crabs**.

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- Known for their unique mass nesting called **Arribada** (which means 'arrival by the sea' in Spanish), where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- They hatch in **45 to 60 days**.
- **Gender:** determined by the **temperature** at which they are hatched.
  - A **male** turtle is born if the egg hatches at a temperature **below 29** degrees Celsius.
  - Above that, the hatchling is a **female**.
- **Sea Turtles in India:** There are **five species** of sea turtles in Indian waters viz.,
  - Leatherback,
  - Loggerhead,
  - Hawksbill,
  - Green and
  - Olive Ridley.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - IUCN Red List: **Vulnerable**
  - Schedule I of Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
  - CITES Appendix I
- **Nesting sites:**
  - Rushikulya rookery coast (Odisha),
  - Gahirmatha beach (Bhitarkanika National park) and
  - Mouth of the Devi River.
- **Threats:**
  - More frequent and intense **flooding and cyclones**
  - **Sex ratio** is getting **skewed** because of global warming.
  - **Hunted** for meat and shell.
  - **Anthropogenic** factors like fishing trawlers etc.

**Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary**

- It is a marine wildlife sanctuary **located in Odisha**.
- It is the **world's largest nesting beach for Olive Ridley Turtles**.
- It extends from **Dhamra River** mouth in the north to **Brahmani river** mouth in the south.
- Gahirmatha was declared a **turtle sanctuary in 1997** by Odisha after considering its ecological importance and as part of efforts to save the sea turtles.

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Source: [IE](#)

**Geoheritage value of Ram Setu**

*GS 3 Conservation*

**In News**

Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) gave the Centre four weeks' time to file a response **clarifying its stand on a plea seeking national heritage status** for the 'Ram Setu'.

**About Ram Setu**

- Linear coral ridge also called **Adam's Bridge**.
- Separates the shallow sea consisting of the **Gulf of Mannar in the south and Palk Bay in the north**.
- Runs between Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu and Thalaimannar in Sri Lanka.

**Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project (SSCP)**

- **History:** The British proposed creating a channel to **link the Palk Strait with the Gulf of Mannar**
- **Inaugurated in:** 2005
- The SSCP, if completed, is expected to **considerably reduce the navigation time** between the east and west coasts of India.
- **Concerns:**
  - The central, eastern and north-eastern parts of the Palk Bay may be impacted by waves of higher energy.
  - The area is also **vulnerable to cyclonic storms**.
  - Finding safe places for **dumping dredged material** without harming terrestrial or marine ecosystems
  - Threatened by discharge from thermal plants, brine run-off from salt pans, and illegal mining of corals.

**Need for Protection**

- The **coral reef** platforms between Thoothukudi and Rameswaram in the Gulf of Mannar were notified as a **marine biosphere reserve** in 1989.

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- More than 36,000 species of flora and fauna reportedly live there, flanked by mangroves and sandy shores which are considered conducive for turtles to nest.
- This is also a breeding ground for fish, lobsters, shrimps and crabs.
- Of the 600 recorded varieties of fish in the region, 70 are said to be commercially important.

Source: [TH](#)

### **Hwasong-17**

#### ***GS 3 Defence***

#### **In News**

- Recently, **North Korea** test fired its massive new Hwasong-17 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

#### **About Hwasong-17**



- The Hwasong-17 is **nuclear-armed** North Korea's **biggest missile yet**, and is the **largest road-mobile, liquid-fuelled ICBM** in the world.
- Its diameter is estimated to be between **2.4 and 2.5 metres**.
- It is launched directly from a **transporter, erector, and launcher (TEL) vehicle**.
- The weapon could travel as far as **15,000 km**.

#### **What is 38 North?**

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- It is a **U.S.-based programme** that monitors North Korea.
- Its name refers to the **38th parallel north** which passes through the **Korean peninsula** and from 1945 until the start of the **Korean War in 1950** divided the peninsula into **North and South Korea**.

**What is an Intercontinental ballistic missile?**

- ICBM is a ballistic missile with a **range greater than 5,500 kilometres**.
- It is primarily designed for **nuclear weapons delivery**.
- **ICBMs are differentiated by having greater range and speed than other ballistic missiles:**
  - Intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs)
  - Medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs)
  - Short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs)
  - Tactical ballistic missiles (TBMs).
    - Short and medium-range ballistic missiles are known collectively as the **theatre ballistic missiles**.
- **Russia, the United States, China, France, India, the United Kingdom, and North Korea** are the only countries known to have operational ICBMs.

Source: [IE](#)

**Appointment of Election commissioners**

*GS 2*

**In News**

- Recently, the Supreme Court mooted the idea of including the Chief Justice of India in the appointment committee of CEC to ensure “**neutrality**”.

**More about the news**

- **The petition:**
  - **On appointment:**
    - The Bench is examining a series of petitions seeking **functional independence for Election Commissioners**.

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- They have sought an **“independent, neutral mechanism”** for their appointment, outside the control of the government.
- **Protection from removal:**
  - The Election Commissioners should have the **same level of protection from removal** as the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC).
  - The CEC, **like an apex court judge**, can be removed from office only through a special majority of the Parliament whereas the Election Commissioners depend on the “pleasure” of the President to stay in office.
- **Supreme Court’s opinion on appointment procedure:**
  - The SC suggested that the least intrusive will be a system where there is a presence of the Chief Justice in the appointment committee.
- **Issues:**
  - **No law for the appointment of election commissioners:**
    - The court said **Article 324** of the Constitution, dealing with the appointment of election commissioners, had **envisaged the enactment of a law to provide for the procedure for such appointments**, but the government had not done this yet.
    - In the absence of a law, the “silence of the Constitution is being exploited by all”, said the court.
  - **Issue of incompleteness of tenure:**
    - The SC said that although the CEC’s tenure is six years under ‘The Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Conditions Of Service) Act, 1991’, no CEC has completed his tenure since 2004.

**Composition of Election Commission of India**

- **About:**
  - The Election Commission of India consists of the chief election commissioner and a number of other election commissioners, as fixed by the President.
  - Originally the commission had only a Chief Election Commissioner.

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- It currently consists of the Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.
- **Constitutional Provisions (Article 324 to Article 329 (Part XV))**
  - **Article 324:** Entails the provisions related to the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners.
    - The President of India appoints the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners.
    - President also determines the conditions of service and tenure of office of the election commissioners and the regional commissioners.
    - The Constitution has not prescribed the qualifications (legal, educational, administrative or judicial) of the members of the Election Commission.
- **Tenure and Removal:**
  - The chief election commissioner and other election commissioners hold office for a **term of six years** or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
  - They can resign at any time or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.
  - The process and the grounds for removal of the chief election commissioner are the same as that of a judge of the Supreme Court.
  - He can be removed by the president on the basis of a resolution passed to that effect by both the Houses of Parliament with the special majority, either on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity. Thus, he does not hold his office till the pleasure of the president, though he is appointed by him.
- **Independence:**
  - The chief election commissioner is provided with the security of tenure.
  - The service conditions of the chief election commissioner cannot be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.
  - Any other election commissioner or a regional commissioner cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the chief election commissioner.
  - Some flaws in safeguarding the independence and impartiality of the election commission are also noted, viz.,
    - The Constitution has not specified the term of the members of the Election Commission.

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- The Constitution has not debarred the retiring election commissioners from any further appointment by the government.

**Election Commission of India**

- **Establishment:**
  - The Election Commission of India was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950.
- **Functions & Powers:**
  - It is a permanent and independent body responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
  - Power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice president of India is vested with the election commission.
    - It is not concerned with the elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states.
      - For this, the Constitution of India provides for a separate State Election Commission.
- **Other Constitutional provisions:**
  - **Article 325:** No person to be ineligible for inclusion in, or to claim to be included in a special electoral roll on the ground of religion, race, caste or sex.
  - **Article 326:** Elections to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies of States to be on the basis of adult suffrage.
  - **Article 327:** Power of Parliament to make provision with respect to elections to legislature.
  - **Article 328:** Power of Legislature of a State to make provision with respect to elections to such Legislature.
  - **Article 329:** Bar to interference by courts in electoral matters.

**Source: TH**

**India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting**

*GS 2 ,Important International Institutions*

**In News**

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- The maiden **India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting** was recently held at **Siem Reap in Cambodia** to commemorate the **30th Anniversary of India-ASEAN relations**.

**More about the meet**

- **India's proposals:**
  - The Defence Minister of India made two proposals for **expanding the scope and the depth of the India-ASEAN** (Association of SouthEast Asian Nations) defence relations. These include:
    - An **initiative for women in United Nations Peacekeeping (UNPK)** operations and,
    - Initiative on **marine plastic pollution**.
  - **India-ASEAN Initiative for women in UNPK operations:**
    - It includes the conduct of **tailor-made courses for women peacekeepers of ASEAN member states** at the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in India.
    - It also includes the conduct of a **'Table top Exercise' in India for women officers** from ASEAN incorporating facets of UNPK challenges.
  - **Initiative on marine plastic pollution:**
    - **About:**
      - It includes **channelising of the energy of the youth towards addressing the critical issue of marine pollution**.
    - **Role of India's National Cadet Corps (NCC):**
      - Minister informed the ASEAN members of the significant work done by the NCC in the cleaning of Indian beaches and raising awareness about plastic pollution in the coastal community.
      - **Coordination with NCC:**
        - He suggested coordination **between the NCC and the equivalent youth organisations of ASEAN countries** for a collective effort in this direction in the region.
    - **India-ASEAN marine pollution response centre:**
      - The minister proposed the establishment of an **India-ASEAN marine pollution response centre at Chennai** by the **Indian Coast Guard** to address and

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supplement **regional efforts to deal with marine pollution incidents.**

- **India's Act East Policy:**
  - The minister also emphasised that the **centrality of ASEAN** in the Indo-Pacific region is the cornerstone of India's Act East Policy.

**Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN):**

- **About:**
  - It is a **political and economic organization** aimed primarily at **promoting economic growth and regional stability** among its members.
- **Foundation:**
  - It was founded in **1967** by the **five South-East Asian nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.**
  - Brunei Darussalam joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999, making up ten Member States of ASEAN.
  - **Current members:**
    - Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- **ASEAN Plus Three:**
  - It is a forum that functions as a coordinator of co-operation between the ASEAN and the three East Asian nations of **China, South Korea, and Japan.**
- **ASEAN Plus Six:**
  - The group includes ASEAN Plus Three as well as **India, Australia, and New Zealand.**
- **ASEAN Summit:**
  - It is the highest policy-making body in ASEAN comprising the Head of States or Government of ASEAN Member States.
  - Summit is **held twice annually.**
  - The **First ASEAN Summit was held in Bali, Indonesia in 1976.**

**Significance of ASEAN for India**

- **India-ASEAN strategic partnership:**

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- The India-ASEAN strategic partnership has been strengthened by virtue of flourishing **cultural and civilisational links** and enhanced **people-to-people cooperation**.
- **ASEAN led Mechanisms:**
  - India shares a deep connection with ASEAN and has continued its active engagement in many areas contributing to **regional peace and stability**, particularly through **ASEAN led mechanisms**, such as:
    - **East Asia Summit.**
    - **ASEAN Regional Forum.**
    - **ADMM-Plus.**
      - The ADMM Plus is an annual meeting of Defence Ministers of 10 ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries and eight dialogue partner countries - Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States.
- **Maritime Connectivity & Security:**
  - India is surrounded by the Indian Ocean and ASEAN Countries have borders with Indo-Pacific waters.
    - This opens up plenty of opportunities for India and other countries to work on maritime security, trade, and better supply chain networks.
  - India is consciously working with ASEAN towards a **vision of an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific** in tandem with initiatives such as
    - The **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**,
    - To ensure **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**.
  - India and some of the ASEAN countries are also members of the recently launched **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)**.
- **Checks Chinese Dominance:**
  - Maritime cooperation in terms of connectivity, safety and security has gained high attention in the **backdrop of China's advancements in the South China Sea**.
  - India will gain better positioning against China's increasing dominating presence in the area.
- **Act East Policy & Indo-Pacific:**

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- Indo-Pacific is an interconnected geography where ASEAN is at its core.
- Both ASEAN and India believe that **openness, inclusiveness, rules-based order, freedom of navigation and peaceful settlement of disputes** lie at the very core of the Indo-Pacific.

**More about the United Nations Peacekeeping mission**

- **About:**
  - The U.N. Peacekeeping mission is a joint effort between the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support, and aims to assist host countries to transition from situations of conflict to peace.
- **Aim:**
  - U.N. Peacekeepers provide security as well as political and peace building support to conflict-ridden countries.
- **The three basic principles that guide U.N.'s Peacekeeping missions are:**
  - Consent of the parties
  - Impartiality
  - Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate
- **Women peacekeepers:**
  - According to the UN, of around 95,000 peacekeepers in 2020, women comprised 4.8% of military contingents and 10.9% of formed police units.
  - **From India:**
    - For the first time in the history of UN peacekeeping, India sent an all-female Formed Police Unit (FPU) to be deployed in Liberia in 2007 after a civil war ravaged the African nation.

Source: [AIR](#)

**India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (AI-ECTA):**

*GS 2 ,India & Foreign Relations*

**In News**

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- The **Australian Parliament recently approved** the free trade agreement inked with India paving the way for the rollout of the pact from January 2023.
  - The agreement is likely to **push the bilateral trade to USD 45-50 billion** in the next five-six years from the **present USD 31 billion**.

**More in news**

- This was the **third such agreement** signed by this government, after the **Mauritius and UAE trade pacts**.
- The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) **needed ratification by the Australian Parliament** before its implementation.
  - In India, such pacts are **approved by the Union Cabinet**.
    - This is the **first agreement with a developed country after a decade**.

**Major highlights on AI-ECTA**

**Deal Sealed**

“Thank you PM @AlboMP! The entry into force of IndAus ECTA will be greatly welcomed by our business communities, and will further strengthen the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,”  
**PM NARENDRA MODI**

**BREAKING:** Our Free Trade Agreement with India has passed through parliament  
**ANTHONY ALBANESE, PM, Australia**

Bilateral trade seen above **\$45-50 b** in 5 years vs **\$31 b** now

Additional **10 lakh jobs** to get created in India  
India's goods exports to rise by **\$10 b** by FY27

Australia to end duty on **100%** of tariff lines  
Steel, aluminium, fabric to get cheaper raw materials

- **Data on trade:**

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- India's goods exports to Australia stood at USD 8.3 billion and imports from the country aggregated to USD 16.75 billion in 2021-22.
- **Duty-free access:**
  - It would provide duty-free access to Indian exporters of over 6,000 broad sectors including textiles, leather, furniture, jewellery and machinery in the Australian market.
  - Australia will open 100 per cent of their lines (products) with no restriction on even quota. This is the first time Australia has done this for any country.
  - Australia is offering zero-duty access to India for about 96.4 per cent of exports (by value) from day one. This covers many products that currently attract 4-5 per cent customs duty in Australia.
- **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA):**
  - The Australian Parliament has also approved an amendment to the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), a move which would **help the Indian IT sector** in operating in that market.
  - It would **stop the taxation on the offshore income** of Indian firms providing technical support in Australia.

**Significance of the pact**

- **Labour-intensive sectors:**
  - They would gain immensely from textiles and apparel, few agricultural and fish products, leather, footwear, furniture, sports goods, jewellery, machinery, and electrical goods.
- **Job opportunities:**
  - It will be a great job opportunity for Indians when Australian investment comes here.
- **More visas:**
  - India has got visas for Indian chefs and yoga instructors and also got a commitment that every child going to study in Australia will get an opportunity to work there depending on the level of education.
- **Beneficial for farmers:**
  - The pact will help farmers **growing grapes** for making wine to explore more business opportunities in Australia.

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- There are 6,000 grape farmers in India who grow grapes for wine purposes. It will help attract investments, and new farmers can also come into the sector.
- **Increased Exports:**
  - The agreement has opened vistas of opportunities for domestic exports as over 98 per cent of the tariff lines will have tariff advantage from day one.
- **Duty-free imports:**
  - We will also get duty-free imports of critical raw materials like coal, alumina, manganese, copper, nickel, wool, hides and skin. It will impart further competitiveness to our manufacturing and exports.
- **Indian IT sector is the biggest gainer of that amendment:**
  - The move may lead to savings of about USD 200 million each year for over 100 Indian IT firms operating in Australia.

### Way Forward

- **The FTA is a win-win for both.** On one hand it would open up the Indian market for quality Australian wines, and on the other it would help the Indian wine industry evolve further benefiting from the expertise and investment from their Australian counterparts.

### What is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)?



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- A free trade agreement is a **pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports** among them.
- Under a free trade policy, goods and services can be bought and sold across international borders with little or **no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions to inhibit their exchange.**
- The concept of free trade is the **opposite of trade protectionism or economic isolationism.**

**Key Benefits of Free Trade Agreements**

- Reduction or elimination of tariffs.
- Intellectual Property Protection.
- Development of product standards.
- Supplying services in the FTA partner country.
- Fair treatment for investors.

Source: **IE**

**India- UAE Relations**

**GS 2 Agreements Involving India &/or Affecting India's Interests**

**In News**

- Recently, the External Affairs Minister of India met with his UAE counterpart and noted that bilateral trade has **shown appreciable growth** under the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).**

**Key Highlights**

- **Minutes:**
  - Cooperation in the areas of energy, food security, trade and defence.
  - Reviewed the continuous progress in bilateral relations across different domains, since the 14th Joint Commission meeting held by them in September 2022.
  - Appreciated the progress in bilateral relationship, especially in trade, investment, consular matters, education and food security.
    - Trade has shown appreciable growth under the CEPA.

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- Exchanged views on the global situation and various regional hotspots.
- **Exports and Imports:**
  - India's exports to the UAE between April and September this year were about \$16 billion, an **increase of 24 per cent year-on-year**, while India's imports increased 38 per cent to reach \$28.4 billion in the same period.

**India- UAE Relations**

- **Diplomatic:**
  - India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) established diplomatic relations in 1972.
  - UAE opened its Embassy in Delhi in 1972 & India opened its Embassy in Abu Dhabi in 1973.
  - The traditionally strong bilateral relations enjoyed by India & UAE received impetus with the visit of PM Modi to UAE on 16-17 August 2015 that marked the beginning of a new strategic partnership between the two countries.
  - Modi's last visit to the UAE was in August 2019, when he received the UAE's highest award, 'Order of Zayed'.
- **Economic & Commercial Relations:**
  - India and UAE have shared trade links through the centuries.
  - Trade, which was dominated by traditional items such as dates, pearls and fishes, underwent a sharp change after the discovery of oil in the UAE (oil exports began from Abu Dhabi in 1962).
  - The real impetus, however, started after Dubai positioned itself as a regional trading hub by the early 1990s and about the same time, the economic liberalisation process started in India.
  - Bilateral trade in FY 2021-22 was about US\$ 72 billion. UAE is India's third largest trade partner and second largest export destination.
  - UAE's FDI in India has increased over the past few years and currently stands at over \$12 billion.
- **Cultural Relations:**
  - The importance given to Indian culture by the UAE was further highlighted in April, 2019 when India participated as the Guest of Honour Country in Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2019.

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- Indian cinema/ TV / radio channels are easily available and have good viewership; major theatres/cinema halls in the UAE screen commercial Hindi, Malayalam and Tamil films.
- The Emirati community also participates in our annual International Day of Yoga events and various schools of yoga & meditation centres are running successfully in the UAE.
- **Technology partnerships:**
  - India and the UAE have signed a number of digital innovation, technology partnerships, and also plans for ISRO and UAESA to cooperate on missions like the Red Moon mission.
  - The Emirates has offered “golden visa” residency permits for doctors, engineers, PhD scholars and specialists in high-end technology fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), Big Data, virology and epidemiology, and brought over the former ISRO chief K. Radhakrishnan to their space agency.
- **Defence and Security Cooperation:**
  - Bilateral Defence Interaction between India and UAE has been steadily growing in accordance with other aspects of the bilateral relationship.
  - There have been regular high level & functional level exchanges between the two countries.
  - The ships of the Navies of both countries have regularly made port calls enhancing bilateral defence co-operation.
  - India and UAE signed a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2017, and hold annual defence dialogues.
  - More recently, UAE is a key part of the Indian Ocean Region dialogue.
  - Both sides take part in military exercises with each other and there have been several Military chiefs visits.
- **Mediation:**
  - An interesting aside is the role the UAE says it has played in mediation between India and Pakistan, and over the past 3 years, Dubai has facilitated meetings between interlocutors including NSA Doval and Pakistan military officials.
- **Indian Community:**
  - The Indian expatriate community of approximately 3.4 million is the largest ethnic community in UAE constituting roughly about 35% of the country's population.

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**Issues /Challenges in the Ties**

- **Recent Turbulence in relations:**
  - It is caused by the comments on Prophet Mohammed by Nupur Sharma and Naveen Kumar Jindal
- **Balancing geopolitics:**
  - India with Iran (also played out over Yemen) and UAE with China.
- **Energy pricing:**
  - As an OPEC country UAE is on the side of the debate, where India as a major oil consumer is arguing for a cap on prices- this has seen some heated words between oil ministers in the past
- **India and UAE are yet to renegotiate their air services agreement,** which has become a thorn in ties, because the UAE wants to increase the number of flights to India and the number of destinations, but India continues to cap these to protect Indian airlines.
- **Treatment of Indian labour:**
  - This frequently flares up as Indians aren't granted citizenship in the UAE, and conditions at Indian labour camps become a matter of concern.
  - During the pandemic much of the labour to the gulf has had to return, and remittances are likely to be slashed in the next few years
- **Treatment of minorities in India is becoming a big issue:**
  - After the CAA protests, social media controversies, now the Hijab Ban has raised concerns in Gulf countries, and the OIC issued a very strong statement. And conversely, although very few, less than 100 Indians based in the Gulf joined ISIS, or earlier Al Qaeda, the export of radicalisation is always a concern
- **Legal Issues:**
  - Legal problems have in the past dampened foreign investments from coming to India.
  - Checks and regulations are needed, better streamlining of the procedures and processes help in avoiding such problems.

**India-UAE CEPA trade deal**

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- The new strategic economic agreement will increase bilateral trade in goods to \$100 billion in five years (2022-27) of the signed agreement and increase trade in services to \$15 billion.
- CEPA is a kind of free trade pact that covers negotiation on the trade in services and investment, and other areas of economic partnership.
- **The Agreement is a comprehensive agreement which will cover:**
  - Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin,
  - Trade in Services,
  - Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT),
  - Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures,
  - Dispute Settlement,
  - Movement of Natural Persons,
  - Telecom,
  - Customs Procedures,
  - Pharmaceutical products,
  - Government Procurement,
  - IPR, Investment,
  - Digital Trade and Cooperation in other Areas.
- It will include a digital trade element, which is a first of its kind for both countries.
- The United Arab Emirates is India's third largest trading partner and second largest export destination.
  - The UAE is also the eight largest investor in India with an estimated investment of US\$ 18 billion.

**Significance of the deal**

- **Enhanced market access:** The agreement will provide significant benefits to Indian and UAE businesses, including enhanced market access and reduced tariffs.
- **The CEPA will boost bilateral trade** from the current \$60 billion to \$100 billion in the next 5 years.
- India welcomed investment from the Gulf country into Jammu and Kashmir that would open new routes for regional trade and connectivity and advance the collective interests of India, Israel, the UAE and the United States.
- The **deepening of the relationship** with the UAE would also help Indian exporters gain access to other West Asian countries, Africa and some parts of Europe.

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- **Digital trade:** Early harvest agreement would likely include a chapter on digital trade which would be aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two countries on digital trade in the future.
  - Digital trade is likely to include frameworks on paperless trading, digital payments and online consumer protection, as well as address issues such as intellectual property rights in digital trade, and challenges to small and medium enterprises.
- The UAE hopes to get **enhanced market access** in India for its petrochemicals, metals and dates.
- Indian goods will flow to the other GCC countries as the UAE has no customs barriers.
- **Energy ties:** UAE is India's third largest supplier of crude oil and second largest supplier of LPG and LNG. Renewable energy is the next stop for bilateral energy ties.
- It may also give a **boost to India's jewellery exports**.
- It is expected to create **new jobs**, raise living standards, and provide wider social and economic opportunities in both nations.

**Issues/ Challenges of Trade Deal**

- **Lack of negotiations:**
  - A free trade agreement with the GCC comprising Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain as its members was first envisaged in 2007, but got stuck after a couple of rounds of negotiations.
- **Lacking Global Giant Experience:**
  - Despite being a US \$2.5 trillion economy, Indian businesses are small in size. In fact, none of the Indian business giants come close to the big global conglomerates that have the capacity, infrastructure and experience to handle huge investments.
- **Procedural Issues:**
  - Including lack of planning, lack of complete information, bureaucratic bottlenecks continue to remain a challenge for foreign investors despite significant efforts by the government in this direction to make investments easy and convenient.
- **Legal Issues:**
  - Legal problems have in the past dampened foreign investments from coming to India. For example, the investments from UAE's Etisalat and Etihad had got stuck in legal problems, thus

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dampening investor enthusiasm. While checks and regulations are needed, better streamlining of the procedures and processes help in avoiding such problems.

• **Political Will:**

- There are challenges pertaining to political diversions, especially when an election year is approaching.
- India has a tendency to become focused inward and in the process, ignore foreign policy.
- The UAE with an appetite for large-scale investments needs to be continuously engaged.

**Conclusion**

- The UAE today is India's closest partner in the Arab world and fortunately, there is enough resilience in bilateral ties to withstand the recent convulsions.
- India and UAE continue to forge closer partnership in these areas, building on their close and friendly relations and historical people-to-people connect. India-UAE has a strong energy partnership which is now acquiring a new focus on renewable energy.
- It will take a sustained public diplomacy effort to further improve the relations

Source: [IE](#)

**Nagoya Protocol**

**GS 3 Conservation Biodiversity and Environment**

**In Context**

- Mexican indigenous groups are yet to **benefit under Nagoya Protocol**.

**About Nagoya Protocol**

- The **Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits** Arising from their Utilization (ABS) is a supplementary agreement to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

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- It provides a transparent **legal framework for the effective implementation** of one of the **three objectives of the CBD**: the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.
- The **Nagoya Protocol on ABS was adopted on 29 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan** and entered into force on 12 October 2014, 90 days after the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification.
- It is supplementary to the **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)**.

### Coverage

- The Nagoya Protocol applies to genetic resources that are covered by the CBD, and to the benefits arising from their utilization.
- The Nagoya Protocol also covers traditional knowledge (TK) associated with genetic resources that are covered by the CBD and the benefits arising from its utilization.

### Importance

- The Nagoya Protocol will create greater legal certainty and transparency for both providers and users of genetic resources by:
  - Establishing more predictable conditions for access to genetic resources.
  - Helping to ensure benefit-sharing when genetic resources leave the country providing the genetic resources
  - By helping to ensure benefit-sharing, the Nagoya Protocol creates incentives to conserve and sustainably use genetic resources, and therefore enhances the contribution of biodiversity to development and human well-being.

### India Signatory to Protocol

- India signed the **Nagoya Protocol in 2011** and ratified it in October 2012.
- The ratification by India was done at the **11th Conference of Parties (COP)** to the CBD, which was conducted in Hyderabad.

Source: [DTE](#)

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**UN's Champions of the Earth Award**

**GS 3 Biodiversity and Environment**

**In News**

- Indian wildlife biologist **Dr. Purnima Devi Barman** is among the honourees of this year's **Champions of the Earth award**.
  - Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with **United Nation's Champions of the Earth Award 2018**.
  - PM Modi is the third Indian to receive this award after **Tulsi Tanti**, Chairman of the Suzlon Group, and **Afroz Alam**, a lawyer who led the clean-up at Mumbai's Versova beach.

**About Champions of the Earth award**

- **UNEP's Champions of the Earth** honours individuals, groups, and organizations whose actions have a transformative impact on the environment.
- The annual Champions of the Earth award is the **UN's highest environmental honour**.
- It recognizes outstanding leaders from government, civil society, and the private sector.
- Since its **inception in 2005**, the annual Champions of the Earth award has been awarded to trailblazers at the forefront of efforts to protect our natural world.
- The Champions of the Earth award will celebrate visionaries in three categories:
  - Inspiration and action
  - Entrepreneurial vision
  - Science and innovation

Source: [TH](#)

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## **Project Unnati**

### **GS 2 Government Policies & Interventions**

#### **In News**

- The Union Rural Development Ministry wants to **link the performances of the States under the Unnati project with its labour budget** for the upcoming financial year.

#### **Project Unnati**

- **About:**
  - Unnati project is a **skilling project launched in 2020 intended to upgrade** the skill base of the **Mahatma Gandhi NREGA** beneficiaries, and thereby improving their livelihoods.
  - Under the project, the selected candidates are skilled using **three established training programmes** — the **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY)**, the **Rural Self Training Institute (RSETI)** and the **Krishi Vigyan Kendra**.
  - This project is meant for **providing training for one adult member** (of age 18-45 years old) of a household who has **completed 100 days of work** under **Mahatma Gandhi NREGA** in the previous financial year from the year of commencement of the project.
- **Features:**
  - The household from which candidates are selected for the training, continue to enjoy 100 days of work under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.
  - The candidates undergoing training are paid a stipend for a **maximum period of 100 days** and for one program per household as per the wage rate prevailing in the concerned State/UT as per the provisions of the project.
  - Full expenditures towards a stipend, against wage loss compensation, are entirely borne by the **Central Government**.
  - Total of **2,00,000 beneficiaries** shall be imparted training under this project in a span of three years in 26 States and 2 UTs.

#### **Significance**

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- The whole purpose of the project is to connect the **rural people to various available livelihood opportunities** and lead them to **self-reliance** and sustainable development.
- It is improving the livelihoods of the **neediest Mahatma Gandhi NREGA beneficiaries** by providing a skill, either for self-employment or wage employment.

### Scheme's performance

- The performance so far has been **far below this 20% target**.
- In the 2020-21 financial year for example, 71 lakh households worked for 100 days in the country under the MGNREGS but **only 8,658 persons** received training under the **Unnati project**.
- Similarly, in 2021-2022, the number of eligible households stood at 59 lakh, but **only 12,577 persons** were trained.
- The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic that coincided with the launch of the project is also blamed for its tardy implementation.

Source: [TH](#)

### **India's Abstention in CITES vote on reopening ivory trade**

#### **GS 3 Conservation**

### In News

- Recently, India decided **not to vote against a proposal to re-open the international trade in ivory** at the ongoing conference of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**.
  - The proposal to allow a regular form of controlled trade in ivory from Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, **was defeated 83-15** in Panama City.

### Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Agreement

- **Aim:**
  - To ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.

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- **Protection:**
  - Today, it accords varying degrees of protection to **more than 37,000 species of animals and plants**, whether they are traded as live specimens, fur coats or dried herbs.
- **Enforceability of the Convention:**
  - CITES is an international agreement to which States and regional economic integration organisations adhere voluntarily.
  - States that have agreed to be bound by the Convention ('joined' CITES) are known as Parties.
  - Although CITES is **legally binding** on the Parties – in other words they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws.
  - Rather it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.
- **Permit System:**
  - All import, export and re-export of species covered under CITES must be authorised through a permit system.
- **Appendix:**
  - CITES **Appendix I** lists species threatened with extinction — import or export permits for these are issued rarely and only if the purpose is not primarily commercial.
  - CITES **Appendix II** includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction but in which trade must be strictly regulated.
  - Every two years, the Conference of the Parties (CoP), the supreme decision-making body of CITES, applies a set of biological and trade criteria to evaluate proposals from parties to decide if a species should be in Appendix I or II.
- **Memberships:**
  - For many years CITES has been among the conservation agreements with the largest membership, with **now 184 Parties**.
  - India became the 25th party — a state that voluntarily agrees to be bound by the Convention — in 1976.

### **Status of the International Ivory Trade**

- Globally banned in 1989 when **all African elephant** populations were put in CITES **Appendix I**.

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- The populations of **Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe** were transferred to Appendix II in 1997, and **South Africa's** in 2000 to allow two “one-off sales” in 1999 and 2008 of ivory stockpiled from natural elephant deaths and seizures from poachers.
- Subsequently, **Namibia's proposal** for allowing a regular form of controlled trade in ivory by delisting the elephant populations of the four countries from Appendix II was **rejected** at CoP17 (2016) and CoP18 (2019).

Source: [IE](#)

### **Credit-deposit Ratio**

#### **GS 3 Indian Economy & Related Issues**

#### **In News**

- Recently, as per the RBI data, the Credit-Deposit (CD) ratio of the Northern and Western Regions declined in 2022 while that of the North-Eastern, Eastern, Central and Southern Regions improved.

#### CD ratio region wise

Credit-deposit ratio of scheduled commercial banks according to place of utilisation (in %)

Region	2021	2022
Northern	78.2	77.7
North-eastern	46.1	46.4
Eastern	43.9	44.7
Central	51.3	53.1
Western	78.1	77.5
Southern	86.3	87.6

#### **What is credit-to-deposit (CTD) or loan-to-deposit ratio (LTD)?**

## Formula and Calculation for LDR

$$\text{LDR} = \frac{\text{Total Loans}}{\text{Total Deposits}}$$

- The credit-deposit ratio broadly means the **ratio of assets and liabilities of the banks**.
- It is **used for measuring a bank's liquidity** by dividing the bank's total loans disbursed by the total deposits received.
- **It indicates how much of a bank's core funds are being used for lending** which is the main banking activity
- CTD ratio helps in **assessing a bank's financial health**.
  - **A higher ratio indicates** that the loans disbursed are more than the deposits and vice-versa.

### Limitations

- The LDR **does not measure the quality of the loans** that a bank has issued.
- The LDR **also does not reflect the number of loans that are in default** or might be delinquent in their payments.

### Importance

- **If the ratio is too low:** banks may not be earning as much as they should and it also indicates that banks are not mobilizing their resources fully.
- **If the ratio is too high:** it means that banks might not have enough liquidity to cover any unforeseen fund requirements, which may cause an asset-liability mismatch.
  - **A very high ratio is considered alarming** because, in addition to indicating pressure on resources, it may also hint at capital adequacy issues, forcing banks to raise more capital.

Source: [BL](#)

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## **Sukhatal Lake**

### *GS 3 Conservation Places in News*

#### In News

- The **Uttarakhand High Court** recently directed the State to stop all construction activities on the lake bed and posted the matter for further hearing.

#### About Sukhatal Lake

- It is a **freshwater lake located in Nainital**.
- The lake is surrounded by **dense pine and oak forests**.
- These verdant forests are the **home to a number of migratory birds** who visit this place from all over the globe.

#### Why is Sukhatal important?

- It is believed that Sukhatal is a **feeder lake for Naini Lake**, as it acts as upstream storage for Naini Lake during monsoon by **holding the runoff from catchment** of water that would have otherwise flown out, **thereby increasing erosion and silt deposition in Naini Lake**.
- **Encroachment and dumping of construction and other waste** have led to unprecedented deterioration of Sukhatal lakebed and its ability to recharge Naini Lake.

Source: [IE](#)

## **Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act**

### *GS 2 Government Policies & Interventions*

#### In News

- Recently, the Union Government has proposed to introduce **61 amendments** to the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act 1960**.

#### More about the news

- **About:**

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- The **draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, (Amendment) Bill-2022** has been prepared by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- **Key provisions of the draft:**
  - **Imprisonment for killing the animal:**
    - The draft proposes a maximum 5-year imprisonment, along with a fine, for killing an animal. For this, a new clause has been proposed.
  - **Gruesome cruelty:**
    - The **Act defines gruesome cruelty** as “an act that leads to **extreme pain and suffering** to the animals which may cause lifelong disability or death”.
    - Gruesome cruelty shall be punishable with a **minimum fine of Rs 50,000** which may be **extended up to Rs 75,000** or the cost **may be decided by judicial magistrate** in consultation with the **jurisdictional veterinarians** whichever is more or **with the imprisonment of one year** which may extend up to three years or with both
  - **Bestiality:**
    - The draft includes ‘bestiality’ as a crime under the new category of ‘**gruesome cruelty**’.
  - **Community animals:**
    - In the case of community animals, the local government shall be responsible for their care.
    - The draft proposals introduce the community animal as - any animal born in a community for which no ownership has been claimed.
      - It excludes wild animals as defined under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (53 of 1972)**.
- **Five freedoms to animals:**
  - The draft also proposes the insertion of a new Section 3A, which provides ‘five freedoms’ to animals.
    - It shall be the duty of every person having charge of an animal to ensure that the animal in his care or under his charge has:
      - Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition;
      - Freedom from discomfort due to environment;
      - Freedom from pain, injury and diseases;

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- Freedom to express normal behaviour for the species;  
and
- Freedom from fear and distress.

**Constitutional protection for animals**

- The Constitution of India establishes a duty on both the State as well as on people to ensure security and conservation of animals at all costs.
  - **Article 48A:**
    - According to Article 48A, it is the responsibility of the State to improve the strength of animals and safeguard the wildlife of the country. It shall strive to enhance the population of animals and ensure that they are protected from all attacks.
  - **Article 51A(g):**
    - According to Article 51A(g), it is the Fundamental Duty of every citizen to protect and improve forests and wildlife and to have compassion for all living creatures.
  - **Article 21:**
    - Due to the expansive interpretation taken by the courts, the rights of the animals are also protected under Article 21 of the Constitution.
    - Every species has a right to life and security, in accordance with the law of the land, and this right is not merely limited to human beings but is expanded to include within its ambit animals and birds as well.

**Key provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**

- **About:**
  - **The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (hereinafter PCA Act, 1960)** is the first enacted law for safeguarding the rights and protecting the animals from pain and suffering inflicted by humans.
- **Some of the main features of the Act are as follows:**
  - **Definition:**
    - The Act has established the definition of animals to include any living creature other than human beings and different forms of animals.
  - **Offences & punishments:**

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- In order to protect the animals from lifetime agony and pain, the Act has set forth punishments for offenders **who cause unnecessary suffering and cruelty towards animals.**
- The Act further discusses **different forms of cruelty inflicted on animals**, its exceptions and the process of killing a suffering animal, when cruelty has been imposed, to avoid any further suffering for that animal.
- **Guidelines for experimenting on an animals:**
  - The Act underlines the guidelines to be followed while experimenting on an animal for scientific purposes and exhibition of performing animals along with their offences.
- **Animal Welfare Board of India:**
  - One of the features that the Act specifies is the establishment of the **Animal Welfare Board of India (hereinafter AWBI).**

**Key provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**

- **About:**
  - The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 aims to preserve the wildlife species of both fauna and flora and establishes reserved places for their survival.
  - The Act also lays down restrictions on various animal species to be hunted down.
- **Some of the salient features with respect to safeguarding the interest of animals are:**
  - **Prohibition of hunting:**
    - The Act prohibits the hunting of animals mentioned under Schedule I, II, III and IV.
  - **Setting up of following boards:**
    - **National Board for Wildlife & State Board for Wildlife:**
      - It is a statutory body established under the Act that is responsible for advising the government on wildlife conservation, reviewing and approving various projects relating to wildlife, promoting the conservation and development of wildlife.
      - A separate State Board for Wildlife has also been directed to be set up in each state under the said Act.
    - **Central Zoo Authority:**

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- It is yet another body incorporated under the Act.
- **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau:**
  - It was constituted under the Act to fight the ever-growing crime rates against wildlife in the country

### **Way Ahead**

- The increasing number of cases of cruelty against animals merely shows the insensitive yet gruesome nature of people.
- It is high time when we need to understand that the word is a linkage between many prevalent communities including animals. Without their existence, humans would cease to exist.
- Therefore, considering the substantial role played by animals in our lives, we **need to sensitise** those who wilfully hurt animals.
- **Proper implementation of laws** is the need of the hour in addition to instilling the compassionate feeling in an individual.

Source: [IE](#)

### **Fixing India's Malnutrition Problem**

*Government Policies & Interventions Issues ,Arising out of their Design & Implementation ,Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions & Bodies for Protection & Betterment of these Sections Health*

### **In Context**

- Experts have suggested several approaches to address the problem of chronic malnutrition.

### **Malnutrition**

- **About:**
  - It refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients.
  - It is a chronic problem and a longstanding challenge for the public administration of India.
- **The term malnutrition addresses 3 broad groups of conditions:**
  - **Undernutrition:**

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- It includes wasting (low weight-for-height), stunting (low height-for-age) and underweight (low weight-for-age)
- Together, the stunted and wasted children are considered to be underweight, indicating a lack of proper nutritional intake and inadequate care post-childbirth.
- **Micronutrient-related malnutrition:**
  - It includes micronutrient deficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals) or micronutrient excess; and
- **Overweight:**
  - It includes obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers).

**Various reports on Malnutrition in India**

- **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2022:**
  - India ranked 107 out of 121 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2022.
  - The GHI is an important indicator of nutrition, particularly among children, as it looks at stunting, wasting and mortality among children, and at calorific deficiency across the population.
- **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5):**
  - India's National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) from 2019-21 reported that in children below the age of five years, 35.5% were stunted, 19.3% showed wasting, and 32.1% were underweight.
- **The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 report:**
  - Undernutrition in India is also a gendered problem.
  - According to The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 report, in 2016, nearly 51.4 percent of women of reproductive age in India were suffering from anemia.
    - Almost 50 percent of women are facing severe undernutrition and Anaemia.

**Measures Taken to Tackle Malnutrition**

- **Poshan Abhiyan:**
  - It is a **multi-ministerial convergence mission** with the vision to ensure the **attainment of malnutrition free India by 2022.**

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- The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) is implementing **POSHAN Abhiyaan**.
- **Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN) 2.0 scheme:**
  - It now includes the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, which seeks to work with adolescent girls, pregnant women, nursing mothers and children below three.
- **Integrated Child Development Services:**
  - It represents one of the world's largest and unique programmes for early childhood care and development.
  - The beneficiaries under the Scheme are children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers
  - The Ministry of Women and Child Development is the implementing agency.
- **Mid-Day Meal Scheme:**
  - The Mid-day Meal Scheme is a school meal programme in India designed to better the nutritional standing of school-age children
  - It covers all school students studying in Classes 1 to 8 of government schools, government-aided schools, special training centres, including madrasas supported under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.
- **National Food Security Mission:**
  - It was launched in 2007-08 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
  - It focuses on the sustainable increase in the production of targeted crops through area expansion and productivity enhancement.
- **National Nutrition Mission:**
  - It is the government's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
  - **Aim:**
    - To reduce stunting and wasting by 2 percent per year (total 6 per cent until 2022) among children and anemia by 3 percent per year (total 9 per cent until 2022) among children, adolescent girls and pregnant women and lactating mothers.
  - The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** is the nodal ministry for implementation.

**Issues with addressing the problem of malnutrition**

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- **Inadequate funding & implementation:**
  - Gaps remain in how the already existing centrally-sponsored schemes are funded and implemented.
  - The budgets being allocated are nowhere near the scale of the funds that are required to improve nutrition in the country.
- **Manpower constraints:**
  - Over 50% Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) posts were vacant in Jharkhand, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, pointing to severe manpower constraints in successfully implementing the scheme of such importance.
- **No routine in social audits:**
  - Social audits that are meant to allow for community oversight of the quality of services provided in schools are not carried out routinely.
- **Issues with cash transfers:**
  - Cash transfers seem to be a favoured solution for several social sector interventions in India today, and this includes the health and nutrition sectors.
  - But evidence of the impact of cash transfer on child nutrition in India is limited so far.
  - The effect of cash transfers is also limited in a context where food prices are volatile and inflation depletes the value of cash.
- **Social Factors:**
  - Equally, there are social factors such as 'son preference', which sadly continues to be prevalent in India and can influence household-level decisions when responding to the nutrition needs of sons and daughters.

**Suggestions & way ahead**

- **Need of a comprehensive programme:**
  - A comprehensive programme targeting adolescent girls is required if the intergenerational nature of malnutrition is to be tackled.
- **Cash transfers:**
  - Cash transfers can also be used to incentivise behavioural change in terms of seeking greater institutional support.
  - Food rations through PDS and special supplements for the target group of pregnant and lactating mothers, and infants and young children, are essential.

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- **Fixing the pre-existing schemes:**
  - Fixing the pre-existing schemes is the obvious answer to addressing India's multi-dimensional nutrition challenge.
  - Getting the already existing schemes right requires greater involvement of local government and local community groups in the design and delivery of tailored nutrition interventions.
- **Keeping it a top priority:**
  - The need of the hour is to make addressing child malnutrition the top priority of the government machinery, and all year around.

Source: [TH](#)

### **Nyingma Sect**

*GSI Art and Culture, Art Forms Literature , Architecture*

#### **In News**

- Recently, the **Nyingma sect** has identified a boy from Spiti in Himachal Pradesh as the reincarnation of the **late Taklung Setrunga Rinpoche**, a scholar known for his knowledge of **Tibetan Tantric school**.

#### **Nyingma Sect**

- **About:**
  - The Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism is the **oldest amongst the four schools** and the second largest after **Gelugpa sect**.
  - Nyingma in Tibetan means “ancient” and has roots going back to the **8th century** when the indigenous Bon religion was strongly adhered to by Tibetans.
  - The Nyingma sect is also known as the **Red Hat sect** because its Lamas wear red robes and hats.
  - Its **teachings** are mainly based on those of Padmasambhava, called Guru Rinpoche and Shantarakshita who were brought to Tibet through the rule of the **Emperor Trisong Detsen** from 742 to 797 CE.
  - Taklung Setrunga Rinpoche was a profound scholar renowned for his expertise in **Tibetan Tantric school**.
- **History of Nyingma School:**

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- In the 7th century, Buddhism found its way to Tibet when the Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo, married the Chinese Princess, Wen Cheng.
- The Princess had brought along her Buddha statue which is today preserved at Jokhang Temple in Lhasa.
- Later on in the 8th century, when Tibetans preferred their Bon religion, the King, on advice of the scholar-monk Master Shantarakshita, brought the great Padmasambhava to drive away the demons hampering the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet.
- By the middle of the 9th century, Buddhism was widely spread in the region.
- A large collection of Buddhist scriptures were translated into Tibetan and the Samye Monastery was built around 779 CE. Up to the 11th century, Nyingma was the sole sect of Buddhism in Tibet.
- It is the **only** sect in Tibetan Buddhism that **did not assume political power**.
- **Teachings of the Nyingma Sect:**
  - Buddhist teachings are classified into **nine yanas** with '**Dzogchen**' being most important.
    - Dzogchen (Great Perfection) philosophy revolves around **pure awareness** which can be achieved through meditation and learned from a Dzogchen master.
  - This **Vajrayana tradition** involves use of ritual, symbols and tantric practices to achieve nirvana.
  - Therefore Nyingma stresses on teachings attributed to Padmasambhava, the Dzogchen doctrines as well as Tantric practices.
  - The Nyingma School is also associated with **Termas (hidden treasures)**.
    - When Buddhism was declining during the rule of king Langdarma, Padmasambhava and his disciples hid numerous scriptures, ritual objects and relics in caves and rocks on mountains.
    - Over time, when they were discovered by Tertons (treasure revealers) either physically or revealed to their mind (Mind Terma), the teachings were compiled into Rinchen Terdzo, a multi-volume book.

Source: [TH](#)

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**Autonomy of Election Commission of India (ECI)**

**GS 2**

**In News**

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) held that, “**Election Commissioner shouldn’t be a ‘yes-man’**”.

**Supreme Court’s Stand**

- **Present:**
  - The court gave the government 24 hours to produce the file of appointment of former IAS officer Arun Goel as Election Commissioner.
  - The court asked the government how it had appointed Mr. Goel as Election Commissioner when an application questioning the prolonged vacancy was already pending before the Constitution Bench.
- **Problem:**
  - SC is looking at the manner in which you are appointing Election Commissioners and whether the manner of appointment can put in a person who can act independently in his post.
  - Why Centre only considered bureaucrats for Election Commissioners.

**Centre’s Stand**

- The Election Commission of India had worked “perfectly fine” all these years.
- Elections were held on time and there was no need to question the system of appointment.
- The court should only intervene if a challenge had been raised against any specific appointment of Election Commissioner.
- The independence of the executive was as sacrosanct as the independence of the judiciary.

**Election Commission of India**

- **About:**

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- The Election Commission of India was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950.
- It is a permanent and independent body responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
- Power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice president of India is vested with the election commission.
- It is not concerned with the elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states.
  - For this, the Constitution of India provides for a separate State Election Commission.
- **Composition:**
  - The Election Commission of India consists of the chief election commissioner and a number of other election commissioners, as fixed by the President.
  - Originally the commission had only a Chief Election Commissioner.
  - It currently consists of the Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.
- **Constitutional Provisions (Article 324 to Article 329 (Part XV))**
  - **Article 324:** Entails the provisions related to the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners.
    - The President of India appoints the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners.
    - President also determines the conditions of service and tenure of office of the election commissioners and the regional commissioners.
    - The Constitution has not prescribed the qualifications (legal, educational, administrative or judicial) of the members of the Election Commission.
  - **Article 325:** No person to be ineligible for inclusion in, or to claim to be included in a special electoral roll on the ground of religion, race, caste or sex.
  - **Article 326:** Elections to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies of States to be on the basis of adult suffrage.
  - **Article 327:** Power of Parliament to make provision with respect to elections to legislature.

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- **Article 328:** Power of Legislature of a State to make provision with respect to elections to such Legislature.
- **Article 329:** Bar to interference by courts in electoral matters.
- **Tenure and Removal:**
  - The chief election commissioner and other election commissioners hold office for a term of six years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
  - They can resign at any time or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.
  - The process and the grounds for removal of the chief election commissioner are the same as that of a judge of the Supreme Court.
  - He can be removed by the president on the basis of a resolution passed to that effect by both the Houses of Parliament with the special majority, either on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity. Thus, he does not hold his office till the pleasure of the president, though he is appointed by him.
- **Independence:**
  - The chief election commissioner is provided with the security of tenure.
  - The service conditions of the chief election commissioner cannot be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.
  - Any other election commissioner or a regional commissioner cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the chief election commissioner.
  - Some flaws in safeguarding the independence and impartiality of the election commission are also noted, viz.,
    - The Constitution has not specified the term of the members of the Election Commission.
    - The Constitution has not debarred the retiring election commissioners from any further appointment by the government.
- **Powers and Functions of the Election Commission:**
  - Determining the territorial areas of the electoral constituencies throughout the country on the basis of the Delimitation Commission Act.
  - Preparing and periodically revising electoral rolls and registering all eligible voters.

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- Notifying the dates and schedules of elections and scrutinising nomination papers.
- Granting recognition to political parties and allot election symbols to them.
- Registering political parties for the purpose of elections and granting them the status of national or state parties on the basis of their poll performance.
- Acting as a court for settling disputes related to granting of recognition to political parties and allotment of election symbols to them.
- Appointing officers to inquire into disputes related to electoral arrangements.
- Determining the code of conduct to be observed by the parties and the candidates at the time of elections.
- Preparing a roster for publicity of the policies of the political parties on radio and TV in times of elections.
- Advising the president on matters related to the disqualifications of the members of Parliament.
- Advising the governor on matters related to the disqualifications of the members of the state legislature.
- Cancelling polls in the event of rigging, booth capturing, violence and other irregularities.
- Supervising the machinery of elections throughout the country to ensure free and fair elections.
- Advising the president whether elections can be held in a state under the president's rule in order to extend the period of emergency after one year.

**Issues**

- **No law for the appointment of election commissioners:**
  - The court said Article 324 of the Constitution, dealing with the appointment of election commissioners, had envisaged the enactment of a law to provide for the procedure for such appointments, but the government had not done this yet.
  - Chief Election Commissioners' terms have fallen from over eight years in the 1950s to less than three hundred days since 2004.
- **Issue of Short tenures of Chief Election Commissioners:**

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- Although the CEC's tenure is six years under 'The Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Conditions Of Service) Act, 1991', no CEC has completed his tenure since 2004.
- **Independence:**
  - Is the independence of the Election Commissioner really there or just in the spirit?
  - Election Commissioners may be honest, but can have definite political leaning which makes them less independent.

**Way Ahead**

- The country needs Election Commissioners (ECs) who would **not shirk from even taking on the Prime Minister** if required, and not just "weak-kneed" yes-men.

Source: [TH](#)

**Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute**

*GS 3 Internal Security*

**In News**

- The killing of six people in Assam police firing comes ahead of the **second phase of talks between the two states** to resolve their boundary dispute, and there are concerns its shadow will loom large over the negotiations.

**Background**



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- **Colonial Era:** During the British rule, undivided Assam included present-day **Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram.**
  - Meghalaya was **carved out in 1972.**
  - Its boundaries were demarcated as per the **Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969**, but has held a different interpretation of the border since.
- In 2011, the Meghalaya government had identified **12 areas of difference with Assam, spread over approximately 2,700 sq km.**
- **Gopinath Bordoloi committee:** Some of these disputes stem from recommendations made by a 1951 committee headed by then Assam chief minister Gopinath Bordoloi.
  - It recommended that **Blocks I and II of Jaintia Hills (Meghalaya) be transferred to the Mikir Hill (Karbi Anglong) district of Assam, besides some areas from Meghalaya's Garo Hills to Goalpara district of Assam.**
    - **The 1969 Act is based on these recommendations** which Meghalaya rejects claiming these areas originally belong to the Khasi-Jaintia Hills.
    - Assam says Meghalaya **does not have the requisite documents** to prove these areas historically belonged to Meghalaya.

**What is the border dispute?**

- Assam and Meghalaya have a longstanding dispute in **12 stretches of their 884-km shared border.**
  - The two states had **signed a pact** recently **resolving the dispute in six out of 12 areas.**
- Both states have recently decided to **form regional committees.** The second round of discussions for the remaining six phases was to commence by the end of this month.
- **Disputed areas for resolution identified in the first phase are:**
  - Three areas contested between **West Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya and Kamrup in Assam.**
  - Two between **RiBhoi in Meghalaya and Kamrup-Metro.**
  - One between **East Jaintia Hills in Meghalaya and Cachar in Assam.**
- Both sides submitted reports based on **five mutually agreed principles:**
  - Historical perspective

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- Ethnicity of local population
- Contiguity with boundary
- Peoples' will
- Administrative convenience.

**What are the 12 locations?**

- Upper Tarabari, Gazang reserve forest, Hahim, Langpih, Borduar, Boklapara, Nongwah, Matamur, Khanapara-Pilangkata, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, Khanduli and Retacherra.

**Way Forward**

- **The Assam-Meghalaya pact was seen as a major achievement:** As Assam's border disputes with other states in the Northeast have remained unresolved despite multiple rounds of talks.
  - Now, the firing threatens to derail the upcoming talks.

**Inter-state border disputes in India**

- **Karnataka-Maharashtra**
  - The dispute is over the **Belgaum district**.
  - The area came under Karnataka in 1956 when states were reorganized and till then it was under the Bombay presidency.
- **Assam-Mizoram**
  - The border dispute between Assam and Mizoram is a legacy of two British-era notifications of 1875 and 1933.
  - The 1875 notification differentiated **Lushai Hills from the plains of Cachar** and the other demarcated boundary between Lushai Hills and Manipur.
  - Assam, on the other hand, wants the boundary demarcated in 1986 (based on the 1933 notification).
- **Haryana-Himachal Pradesh**
  - **The Parwanoo region** has had the spotlight over the border dispute between the two states.
  - It is next to the Panchkula district of Haryana and the state has claimed parts of the land in Himachal Pradesh as its own.
- **Himachal Pradesh-Ladakh**
  - Himachal and Ladakh lay claim to **Sarchu**, an area on the route

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between Leh and Manali.

- Sarchu is in between Himachal's Lahul and Spiti district and Leh district in Ladakh.
- **Arunachal Pradesh-Assam**
  - Arunachal's grievance is that the re-organisation of North Eastern states unilaterally transferred several forested tracts in the plains that had traditionally belonged to **hill tribal chiefs and communities** to Assam.

Source: **IE**

### **I2U2 Grouping**

*GS 2 International Organisations & Groupings*

#### **In News**

- Recently, India and the UAE held talks on **food security cooperation** under the I2U2.

#### **About I2U2**

- **I2U2 stands for:**
  - India
  - Israel
  - UAE
  - USA
- It is also referred to as the '**West Asian Quad**'.
- **Aim of I2U2 grouping:**
  - Its stated aim is to discuss common areas of mutual interest, to strengthen the economic partnership in trade and investment in respective regions and beyond.
  - **Six areas of cooperation have been identified by the countries mutually:**
    - Water
    - Energy
    - Transportation
    - Space
    - Health
    - Food security

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**Significance**

- The countries will look to **modernise infrastructure, explore low carbon development avenues for industries, improve public health, and promote the development of critical emerging and green technologies.**
- It empowers **partners and encourages them to work** more closely together, which will lead to a more stable region.
- The US regards India as a **big consumer market** as well as a massive producer of high-tech and highly sought-after goods.

**Criticisms**

- The formation of this group is criticised for having the USA's hidden agenda to **"contain" Iran** in the geopolitics of West Asia.
- India never ever got entangled in the **intra-regional issues in West Asia** and critics want India to refrain from being part of this alliance.

**Abraham Accords**

- The Abraham Accords of 2020 had led to **Israel formally normalising diplomatic ties with the UAE** and two other countries in the region, marking an important shift in the stance of West Asian countries on Israel.

Source: [TH](#)

**Arittapatti Biodiversity Heritage Site**

**GS 3 Biodiversity and Environment**

**In Context**

- Recently, the Tamil Nadu Government issued a notification declaring **Arittapatti Biodiversity Heritage site** the first biodiversity heritage site in the State.

**More about the Arittapatti Biodiversity Heritage site**

- **About:**

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- The state government notified **193.215 hectares of area** spread across **Arittapatti and Meenakshipuram villages** in **Madurai district** as '**Arittapatti Biodiversity Heritage Site**'.
  - The declaration was made under the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**.
- **First in the state:**
  - This is the **first Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)** notified in Tamil Nadu.
- **Wildlife:**
  - Arittapatti village, known for its ecological and historical significance, **houses around 250 species of birds** including **three flagship raptor species** -
    - Laggar Falcon , Shaheen Falcon, and Bonelli's Eagle—and wildlife such as Indian pangolin, python, and slender loris.
  - It is also home to wildlife such as the **Indian Pangolin, Slender Loris and pythons**.
- **Chain of seven hillocks:**
  - The village Arittapatti consists of a chain of seven barren granite hillocks. The distinctive landscape of rocky hills acts as a watershed and supports 72 lakes, 200 natural spring pools, and three check dams.
    - The **Anaikondan tank**, built during the reign of **Pandiyans kings in the 16th century** is one among them.
- **Other structures:**
  - The site also features various megalithic structures, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, Jain Beds, and 2,200-year-old rock-cut temples, lending it historical value.

**Biodiversity Heritage Sites**

- **About:**
  - **Biodiversity heritage sites** are well-defined areas that are unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems with high diversity of wild and domesticated species, presence of rare and threatened species, and keystone species.
- **Statute:**
  - The significance and aims of BHS are outlined in **Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act of 2002**.

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- As per provision under **Section 37(1) of 'Biological Diversity Act, 2002'**: The State Government may, from time to time in consultation with the local bodies, notify in the Official Gazette, areas of biodiversity importance as under this Act.
- **First BHS of India:**
  - Nallur Tamarind Grove in Bengaluru, Karnataka was the **first Biodiversity Heritage Site of India**, declared in 2007.
- **Significance:**
  - Creation of BHS may not put any restriction on the prevailing practices and usages of the local communities, other than those voluntarily decided by them.
  - The purpose is to enhance the quality of life of the local communities through conservation measures.

Source: [TH](#)

Iron Dome

GS 3 Defence

**In News**

- Recently, according to data from Israeli military diplomats, the **Iron Dome air defense system** has intercepted over 3,000 projectiles in the last 10 years.

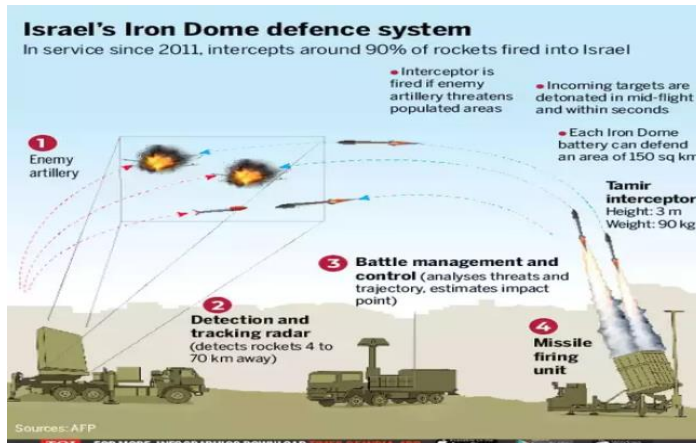
**What is the Iron Dome?**

- **Background:**
  - The genesis of the Iron Dome goes back to the **2006 Israeli-Lebanon war**, when Hezbollah fired thousands of rockets into Israel.
  - The Iron Dome was **deployed in 2011**.
- **Development:**
  - It is developed by **Israel Aerospace Industries** and **Rafael Advanced Defense Systems**.
- **Features:**
  - It is a **short-range, ground-to-air, air defence system** that includes a radar and Tamir interceptor missiles that track and neutralise any rockets or missiles.

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- It is used for countering rockets, artillery & mortars (C-RAM) as well as aircraft, helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.
- It is capable of being used in all weather conditions, including during the day and night.



### What makes it so effective?

- The Iron Dome has **three main systems** that work together to **provide a shield** over the area where it is deployed, handling multiple threats.
- It has a **detection and tracking radar** to spot any incoming threats, a **battle management and weapon control system (BMC)**, and a missile firing unit.

### Other Air Defence Systems

- **S-400 missile system:**
  - Missile defence system developed by Russia.
  - Capable of intercepting all missiles (long, medium & short range).
  - Can intercept 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighter aircrafts, drones, cruise & ballistic missiles.
  - **Range:** 300-400 kms.
  - India has S-400 which also caters to the three threats (rockets, missiles and cruise missiles).
- **Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD):**
  - American anti-ballistic missile defense system.
  - Designed to shoot down short, medium & intermediate-range ballistic missiles.

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- **Range:** Greater than 200 km.

Source: [IE](#)

### **Agni-3 nuclear-capable ballistic missile**

#### **GS 3 Defence**

#### **In News**

Recently, India carried out a successful launch of Agni-3 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile from A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha.

#### **About Agni-3**

- The test of Agni-3 was a part of routine user training launches which are performed under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command.
- **Agni-3** was first tested on 9 July **2006**. However, it was not a successful launch.
- The missile test-fired successfully on its second flight which took place in **2007**.
- The missile also performed as per the standards in its third consecutive launch which took place in **2008**.
- The 16-meter-long missile, weighing more than 48 tonnes, has a range of over 3000 kilometers and is capable of carrying a payload of over 1.5 tonnes.
- **Capability:** Due to its high range of circular error probable(CEP), the Agni-3 missile is known as the world's most accurate strategic ballistic missile of its range class.
  - With a high range of efficiency in its target, the warhead can be a lethal weapon for the enemy.
  - The accuracy of the nuclear warhead also provides an opportunity of deploying a larger number of nuclear forces using less fusion material.
- **Significance:** Agni series of missiles **constitute the backbone of India's nuclear weapons delivery** which also includes the **Prithvi short-range ballistic missiles and fighter aircraft**.

Source: [IE](#)

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**Pangolins**

**GS 3 Species in News**

**In News**

- The **19th Conference of Parties (COP19)** to the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** urged countries to remove references to parts and derivatives of pangolins from the official **pharmacopoeia (Drug-making)** to help save the species.

**About Pangolins**



• **Description:**

- The pangolin is the **most trafficked animal in the world**.
- Pangolins are **mammals**. They are the **only mammals wholly-covered in scales** and they use those scales to **protect themselves from predators in the wild**.
- Pangolins eat **ants, termites and larvae** and are often known as the scaly anteater.

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- **Eight species** of pangolins are found on two continents namely **Asia and Africa**. They range from **Vulnerable to Critically Endangered**.
  - **Indian pangolin (Manis crassicaudata)** and **Chinese pangolin (Manis pentadactyla)** are found in India.
- **Protection:**
  - It is listed under the **Schedule I Part I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
  - It is listed in **Appendix I of CITES** in accordance with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List.
  - Indian pangolin – **Endangered**; Chinese pangolin – **Critically Endangered**.
- **Geographical location:**
  - **There are eight species of pangolins in the world** of which the Indian Pangolin (Manis crassicaudata) and the Chinese Pangolin (Manis pentadactyla) are found in India.
    - The Indian Pangolin is distributed in other parts of the country as well as **Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan**.
- **Threats:**
  - Poaching for its meat and scales, which are used and consumed by local people, but are also increasingly traded internationally.

Source: [DTE](#)

### **A short history of FiFa World Cup balls**

#### **GS 2 Miscellaneous**

#### **In News**

- Fifa claims that **Al Rihla**, the official match ball for the Qatar World Cup, travels faster than any other in the tournament's history.

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### About Al Rihla

- **Name and design:** In Arabic, **Al Rihla** means ‘the journey’.
  - The name is believed to be a reference to a travelogue written by **Ibn Battuta**, the 14th-century explorer who traveled around **Asia, Europe, and Africa**.
  - **Al Rihla** is the first World Cup ball to be made exclusively with **water-based inks and glues**, as sustainability was a key priority for the makers.
  - Its **bold and vibrant colour** is **inspired by Qatar’s culture, architecture**, iconic boats, and flag.
  - The main design features of the ball are a CRT core and a speed shell.
- Al Rihla provides a vital element for the detection of tight offside incidents as an inertial measurement unit (IMU) sensor is placed in the center of the ball.
  - This sensor sends ball data to the video operation room 500 times per second, allowing a very precise detection of the kick point.

### Early years of Fifa World Cup balls

- The **first World Cup in 1930** had no official ball. Before the final, hosts Uruguay and Argentina sparred over the choice of the match ball and

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reached a compromise that the first half would be played with Argentina's choice Tiento, followed by the T-model, preferred by Uruguay in the second half.

- Curiously, Uruguay overturned a 1-2 deficit to win 4-2 with their preferred ball and became champions.



- **In 1950**, the World Cup returned after a 12-year break, owing to World War II, with Duplo T, which did not have laces. It had valves through which the ball could be inflated with a pump and a needle.



- **Adidas entered the scene in 1970:** In Mexico in 1970, Adidas came into the picture for the first time, introducing a 32-panel black-and-white design for its iconic Telstar. The visibility of the ball on television improved considerably as a result.
- **At West Germany 1974**, Adidas became an official partner of Fifa as the company's name featured on the ball for the first time.
- **As the World Cup returned to Mexico in 1986**, Adidas introduced Azteca, the first fully synthetic ball to be used in the history of the World Cup.
  - The ball retained its shape after being kicked and fared much better than leather balls in water resistance and durability.

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- **France 1998** saw multicolored balls in use for the first time. Tricolore had the colors of the French flag — red, white, and blue — adorning the triads.



- At South Africa in 2010, Adidas produced the most controversial World Cup ball of all time — Jabulani.
  - The manufacturer reduced the number of panels to eight to make the ball more round .



- After the troubles with Jabulani, when Brazil 2014 came around, Adidas sent out samples of the Brazuca to teams and players well in advance for the feedback.

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- The ball, made of six polyurethane panels, fared much better than Jabulani.
- In the last World Cup in Russia, Adidas reinvented the classic Telstar model of 1970 with a brand-new panel design.



Source: [IE](#).

### 100 years since the discovery of Mohenjo Daro

*GSI*

#### In News

- Exactly a century ago, in 1922, humanity **rediscovered Mohenjo Daro**.

#### About Mohenjo-daro

- **Location:**
  - Mohenjo-Daro or the “**Mound of the dead**” lies in Larkana district of Sindh (Pakistan), about 5 km away from the Indus.
- **Contribution of discovery:**
  - It was discovered by archeologists **Rakhaldas Banerji and Sir John Marshall**.
- **Significance of the site:**
  - It is one of the **largest of the Indus Valley Civilization sites**.
  - **Construction marvel:**
    - The site is famous for its elaborate **town planning with street grids** with brick pavements, developed water supply, drainage, and covered sewerage systems, homes with toilets, and monumental buildings.

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- Its excavations revealed findings like the Great Bath, Great Granary, a large assembly hall, temple-like structure, the seal of Pashupati and a bust of a bearded man.
- It is the most glaring example of town planning in the Harappan civilization.
- **The city is divided into citadel and lower city.**
  - It is clear that the citadel (for such it evidently was) carried the religious and ceremonial headquarters of the site.
  - In the lower town were substantial courtyard houses indicating a considerable middle class.
- **Relationship with Harappa:**
  - Its relationship with Harappa, however, is uncertain—i.e., if the two cities were contemporaneous centres or if one city succeeded the other.
- **Sculptures:**
  - Aesthetically the most notable work of figurative art from the city is a famous bronze of a young dancing girl, naked save for a multitude of armlets.
  - Among innumerable terra-cottas the most expressive are small but vigorous representations of bulls and buffalo.
- **Decline:**
  - The evidence suggests that Mohenjo-daro suffered more than once from devastating floods of abnormal depth and duration.
  - The civilization went into decline in the middle of the second millennium BC for reasons that are believed to include catastrophic climate change.
- **Legacy:**
  - Mohenjo-daro was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site** in 1980.

### **The Indus River Valley Civilization**

- **About:**
  - The **Indus River Valley Civilization** ( 3300-1300 BCE) also known as the Harappan Civilization, was extended from modern-day northeast Afghanistan to Pakistan and northwest India.
  - It is the **oldest recorded civilisation** of the Indian subcontinent.

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- The civilisation was a contemporary of Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations with whom it had trade contacts.
- **It is often separated into three phases:**
  - The Early Harappan Phase from 3300 to 2600 BCE,
  - The Mature Harappan Phase from 2600 to 1900 BCE, and
  - The Late Harappan Phase from 1900 to 1300 BCE.
- **Centres of civilization:**
  - The Indus civilization is known to have consisted of two large cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, and more than 100 towns and villages, often of relatively small size.
  - The southern region of the civilization, on the Kathiawar Peninsula and beyond, appears to be of later origin than the major Indus sites.
- **Features:**
  - **Technology:**
    - Important innovations of this civilization comprise **standardized weights and measures, seal carving, and metallurgy with copper, bronze, lead, and tin.**
  - **City planning:**
    - The Indus cities are noted for their **urban planning, a technical and political process** concerned with the use of land and design of the urban environment.
    - They had baked **brick houses, elaborate drainage systems, water supply systems, and clusters of large, nonresidential buildings.**
  - **Pottery:**
    - The pottery of the Indus cities has all the marks of mass production.
    - Larger pots were probably built up on a turntable.
  - **Governance:**
    - It is deduced that Civilisation was governed by the class of merchants.
- **Trade and external contacts:**
  - Timber and precious woods, ivory, lapis lazuli, gold, and luxury goods such as carnelian beads, pearls, and shell and bone inlays, including the distinctly Indian kidney shape, were among the goods sent to **Mesopotamia** in exchange for silver, tin, woolen textiles, and grains and other foods.

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- The wide range of crafts and special materials employed must also have caused the establishment of economic relations with peoples living outside the Harappan state.
- **Decline of Civilization:**
  - The IVC declined around 1800 BCE however the certainty behind the collapse is debatable.
  - **Different theories are:**
    - Aryans invasion of IVC led to the fall of the civilisation.
    - Several tectonic disturbances and changing course of the rivers are the two major factors cited by the historians for the disappearance of the civilisation.
    - Various scholars believe that natural factors like geological and climatic reasons are behind the decline of the IVC.

Source: TH

### **Decline in Child Marriage in India**

**GS 2 ,Government Policies & Interventions ,Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of Population & their Performance**

#### **In News**

- According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), India has seen a **steady decline in the prevalence of child marriage** from 47.4% in 2005 to 23.3% in 2021.

#### **Key Points**

- **India:**
  - **India** has seen a **steady decline** in the prevalence of the practice from 47.4% in 2005 to 23.3% in 2021.
  - Eight States have a higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average:
    - West Bengal, Bihar and Tripura top the list with more than 40% of women aged 20-24 years married below 18
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has warned that **pandemic-induced economic hardship** could roll back the gains made so far.

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- Financial distress triggered by the closure of businesses and loss of employment during lockdowns imposed to check the spread of COVID-19 over the past two years has resulted in child marriage rearing its ugly head in Rajasthan, where the social malaise is culturally endemic.
- **Indian States:**
  - Among the bigger States, West Bengal and Bihar have the highest prevalence of girl child marriage.
  - States with a large population of tribal poor have a higher prevalence of child marriage.
  - In Jharkhand, 32.2% of women in the age bracket 20-24 got married before 18, infant mortality stood at 37.9%, and 65.8% of women in the 15-19 age bracket are anaemic.
  - Assam too has a high prevalence of child marriage (31.8% in 2019-20 from 30.8% in 2015-16).
  - Some States have shown a reduction in child marriages, like
    - Madhya Pradesh (23.1% in 2020-21 from 32.4% in 2015-16),
    - Rajasthan (25.4% from 35.4%) and
    - Haryana.
  - States with high literacy levels and better health and social indices have fared much better on this score.
    - In Kerala, women who got married before the age of 18 stood at 6.3% in 2019-20, from 7.6% in 2015-16.
    - Tamil Nadu too has shown improved figures with 12.8% of women in the age group 20-24 years getting married before 18 compared to 16.3% in 2015-16.
  - **Rajasthan:**
    - **Rajasthan** has witnessed 1,216 child marriages since 2018-19.
    - National Commission for Women and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) launched a probe into child trafficking and prostitution in rural Rajasthan following media reports about girls being sold on stamp paper to settle debts based on the orders of a khap panchayat in Pander village in Bhilwara district.

**Primary Reasons for Child Marriage**

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- **Poverty:** If a family is struggling financially, marrying off one of their daughters can mean one less mouth to feed and one less child to educate.
- **Safety:** For families living in dangerous environments, like a refugee camp or war zone, child marriage can actually seem like a safer option.
- **Tradition:** Child marriage is deeply imbedded in some cultural traditions, where it is viewed as a normal and reasonable practice.
- **Social Insecurity:** Many people have this perception that a married woman is much safer from societal offences than an unmarried woman. Unmarried women are viewed with malafide intentions that lead to crimes against them.
- **Avoiding share in Ancestral Property:** Generally in rural areas parents think that all their ancestral property belongs to their sons and if they marry their daughters at an early age then they will be out of the share.
- **Avoiding expenditure on Female Education:** Usually families discriminate between boys and girls. Female children are considered a burden as they do not need to work and have to look after the household chores before and after marriage.

**Impacts of Child Marriage**

- **Human rights violation:** Child marriage is a violation of human rights and dignity, which unfortunately still has social acceptance.
- **Harmful impacts:** It has a serious impact on the education, health, and safety of the children.
- **Reduces Education Rates For Girls:** Child marriage typically marks the end of a girl's education. Once she's married, she's expected to take care of her husband and start having children, leaving little time for school or a career.
- **Traps families in a cycle of poverty:** Child marriage might seem to make financial sense in the short term for struggling parents, but it can actually trap families in a cycle of poverty.
- **Contributes to higher fertility rates:** Younger brides are more likely to have larger families because they have more child-bearing years during married life. They also usually face a greater inequality with their husbands, resulting in the wife having little to no say in when or how many children to have.
- **Inabilities to Plan or Manage Families:** Young girls exercise less influence and control over their children and have less ability to make decisions about their nutrition, health care and household management.

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- **Desire for Male Child:** Due to desire for a male child, young girls and women are forced to conceive as many times as she can till she gives birth to a male child.

### **Laws and Policies**

- **The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929:** It is also known as the Sarda Act. It was a law enacted to restrain the practices of Child Marriage.
  - Its main goal was to eliminate the evils placed on young girls who could not handle the stress of married life and to avoid early deaths.
  - This act defined a male child as 21 years or younger and a female child as 18 years or younger.
- **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006:** Under this act, the marriageable age for a male is prescribed as 21 years and that of a female is 18 years.
  - Child Marriage is prohibited in India as per the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.
- **Hindu Marriage Act, 1956:** Under Hindu Marriage Act, there are no certain provisions for punishing the parents or people who solemnized the marriage.
  - A girl can get the marriage annulled only if she wants to get married before attaining the age of fifteen years and she challenges the marriage before turning eighteen.
- **Muslim Personal Law:** Under the Muslim Laws, there is no bar to child marriage. The couple after marriage has an “option of puberty” known as Khayar-ul-bulugh in which they can repudiate the marriage after attaining the age of puberty.
- **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012:** which aim at protecting children from violation of human and other rights.
- **A parliamentary standing committee** is weighing the pros and cons of raising the age of marriage for women to 21, which has been cleared by the Union Cabinet.

### **Issues**

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- Consequences of child marriage are dire, not only because it violates children's rights, but also because it results in more infant and maternal deaths.
  - Children born to adolescent mothers have a greater possibility of seeing stunted growth as they have low weight at birth. According to NFHS-5, the prevalence of child stunting is 35.5% in 2019-21.
- Data shows that child marriage is a key determinant of high fertility, poor maternal and child health, and lower social status of women.
- Centralised schemes like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, need better implementation on the ground.
- There is so much social acceptance of age-old customs that most people, including the administration, look the other way
- Practices like marrying off all daughters of a family to the sons of another family. In such marriages, the elder sister is usually above 18 years and the ceremony is announced and wedding cards are printed in her name. The underage girls are married off a day earlier or separately the same day.

**Way Ahead**

- **Multi pronged strategy needed:**
  - Eradication of poverty, better education and public infrastructure facilities for children,
  - Raising social awareness on health, nutrition,
  - Regressive social norms and inequalities.
  - Strong laws, strict enforcement,
  - Preparing an ideal situation on the ground to ensure that the girl child — girls with either or below primary level education have experienced higher levels of child marriage.
  - Girl child gets an education and preferably vocational training as well so that she can be financially independent.
- **State's Efforts:**
  - States have launched many initiatives to improve the factors linked to child marriage, from education to health care and awareness programmes.
  - For instance, West Bengal's Kanyashree scheme offers financial aid to girls wanting to pursue higher studies.
  - Bihar and other States have been implementing a cycle scheme to ensure girls reach safely to school;

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- U.P. has a scheme to encourage girls to go back to school.
- **Empowering Girl Child:**
  - The solution lies in empowering girls, creating proper public infrastructure and addressing societal norms.
  - Getting down to the gram panchayat level, ensuring that Child Protection Committees and Child Marriage Prohibition officers are doing the job and activating community support groups.
  - Such efforts can lead to Child Marriage Free Villages like in Odisha which now has over 12,000 such villages.
- **Implementing Committee guidelines:**
  - A series of such interventions — and recommendations of the Shivraj Patil Committee report in 2011 — have helped bring down the percentage of child marriages in Karnataka (from 42% in 2005-06 to 21.3% in 2019-20).

Source: [TH](#)

### **Public Policy Institutions for States**

**GS 2 , Statutory, Regulatory & Various Quasi-judicial Bodies**

#### **In News**

- Recently, States have approached the NITI Aayog, seeking its help to set up their **own public policy institutions** to boost development and drive inclusive growth.

#### **Key Points**

- **State's demand:**
  - Rajasthan, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh have approached the NITI Aayog, seeking its help to set up their own public policy institutions to boost development and drive inclusive growth.
  - Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Maharashtra -- have made similar requests to constitute state institutions for transformation, or SITs, along the lines of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog
- **Reason for state institutions demand:**
  - To give effect to the **commitment of cooperative federalism**

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**State Support Mission**

- The State Support Mission has been conceived in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for making **India a developed country, or Viksit Bharat by 2047.**
- In July, NITI Aayog started working on a **State Support Mission to assist states prepare development strategies.**
- As part of the effort, the Maharashtra Institution for Transformation, or **Mitra**, was set up along the lines of NITI Aayog.
- Under the mission, the central body will be supporting states to set up SITs or help the governments to "reimagine" the role of planning departments.
- States are being provided with assistance to reimagine the role of their planning departments. Knowledge partners like the Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management, have been identified, in states, to provide necessary assistance to the SITs.

**Challenges faced by the states currently**

- Most states so far have done little to rejuvenate their planning departments/ boards, which earlier dealt with the Planning Commission and prepared parallel state five year-plans with the Centre.
- Planning departments in most of the states with huge manpower are almost defunct and have no clarity what work they will do.
- Health, education and infrastructure development are the responsibilities of state governments. There is a need for states to plan better to ensure meeting growing demand and ensure ease of doing business.

**Significance of the move**

- **Increasing the role of states in GDP:** The move is in recognition of the fact that except for sectors like defence, railways and highways, the national GDP growth is an aggregation of states rates of growth.
  - Health, education and skilling are primarily with the state government.
- **Sustained economic growth:** State government's role is critical to improving ease of doing business, land reforms, infrastructure development, credit flows and urbanisation.

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- **State support mission:** It will likely extend support to states including experts from IIMs and IITs to fulfil the ambitious target of making India a developed nation by 2047.
- **Lateral entry of professionals** will be encouraged in SITs to undertake high-quality analytical work and policy recommendations.

**Way Ahead**

- SITs can play a crucial role in bringing various stakeholders, such as the private sector, and experts to address important state-specific issues. and work on strategies to carry out development work

**National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog)**

- **About:**
  - It was set up in 2015 to replace the Planning Commission.
  - It is an Executive Body (acts as a think tank and advisory body)
- **Objective:**
  - To foster the spirit of Cooperative and Competitive federalism through structured support initiatives on a continuous basis.
- **Composition of NITI Aayog:**
  - **Chairperson:** Prime Minister of India
  - The **Governing Council** consists of the Chief Ministers of all the States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories in India.
    - The NITI Aayog's governing council is the premier body tasked with evolving a shared vision of national priorities and strategies with the involvement of the States and Union Territories.
    - It presents a platform to discuss inter-sectoral, inter-departmental and federal issues.
  - **Regional Councils** will be created to address particular issues and possibilities affecting more than one state.
    - These will be formed for a fixed term and summoned by the PM.
    - These will be chaired by the Chairperson of the NITI Aayog or his nominee.
  - **Special invitees:** Eminent experts, specialists with relevant domain knowledge, which will be nominated by the Prime Minister.

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- **Full-time organizational framework:**
  - Prime Minister as the Chairperson:
  - Vice-Chairperson (appointed by the Prime Minister)
  - **Members:**
    - Full-time
    - Part-time members on a rotational basis: Maximum of 2 members from foremost universities, leading research organizations, and other innovative organizations in an ex-officio capacity.
  - **Ex Officio members:**
    - Maximum of 4 members of the Council of Ministers which is to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
  - **Chief Executive Officer:**
    - The CEO will be appointed by the Prime Minister for a fixed tenure.
    - He will be in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.
- **Key Initiatives and Recent Achievements:**
  - Aspirational Districts Scheme.
  - 3 Documents: 3-year action agenda, 7-year medium-term strategy paper and 15-year vision document.
  - Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policies (MAFAP) programme in India
  - Promoted Zero Budget Natural Farming.
  - Promoting 'Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati' programme under Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).
  - Village Storage Scheme

Source: [LM](#)

**India, Iran discuss development of Chabahar Port :**

**GS 2 India & Foreign Relations**

**In News**

- Recently, **delegation-level talks** between Iran and India were held where both sides agreed on continued cooperation for the development of the **Shahid Beheshti terminal of the Chabahar port**.

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**Major highlights of the meeting**

- **Bilateral relations:**
  - India and Iran discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations including **political, economic, cultural, and consular engagement.**
  - Both countries exchanged views on **regional and international issues including Afghanistan.**
- **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was also discussed in the meeting:**
  - It is also known as the **2015 Iran nuclear agreement.**
  - Iran agreed on a **long-term deal on its nuclear programme** with a group of world powers known as the **P5+1** (the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany).
  - Under it, Iran agreed to **significantly cut its stores of key components for nuclear weapons** like centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water.

**About Chabahar Port**



- **Location:**
  - It is a seaport in Chabahar located in **southeastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman.**
  - It serves as Iran's only oceanic port, and consists of two separate ports

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named **Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti**.

- It is only about 170 kilometres west of the **Pakistani port of Gwadar**.
- It is the only Iranian port with **direct access to the Indian Ocean**.
- Being close to **Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan** it has been termed the "**Golden Gate**" to these landlocked countries.
- **Background:**
  - India and Iran first agreed to plans to develop Shahid Beheshti port in **2003**, but did not do so on account of **sanctions against Iran**.
  - India is developing the 1st phase of Shahid Beheshti Port. The capacity of the port will reach 8.5 MT at the end of the first phase.
  - India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) operates the Shahid Beheshti terminal.
- **International arbitration process:**
  - India and Iran are discussing establishing an international arbitration process for any dispute settlement pertaining to the strategic Chabahar port in Iran.
  - Under Iran's constitution, such arbitration cannot be referred to foreign courts.
    - International arbitration would require an amendment to the constitution.
- **Significance of Chabahar Port for India:**
  - The port gives **access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations'** southern coast & Central Asia and India can **bypass Pakistan** with the Chabahar port becoming functional.
  - Due to its **location in the Gulf of Oman** and at the entrance of the **Strait of Hormuz** and **enables Iran to have direct entry to the Indian Ocean**.
  - This port will **reduce dependency on the Suez Canal** and reduce transportation time.
  - It will **facilitate India's role in Afghanistan's development**.
  - Chabahar Port is also quite **near the Gwadar Port of Pakistan** being developed by China. It will also **counter the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**.
  - It will help India in **strengthening its maritime power in this region**.

**India-Iran relations**

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- **Diplomatic relationship:**
  - It was established in **1950 with the friendship treaty** after which the visits on the ministerial level have increased.
- **Commercial ties:**
  - India-Iran commercial ties were traditionally **dominated by the Indian import of Iranian crude oil.**
  - In 2018-19 India imported USD 12.11 billion worth of crude oil from Iran.
  - India had stopped buying oil from Iran after the **US administration imposed tough sanctions on Iran.**
    - Iran is keen on re-starting oil supplies to India and has even offered some concessions on the delivery of crude.
- **Trade:**
  - **The bilateral trade during 2019-20 was USD 4.77 billion,** a decrease of 71.99 per cent as compared to the trade of USD 17.03 billion from 2018-19.
  - Indian exports to Iran between 2011-12 and 2019-20 have **grown by 45.60 per cent.**
  - **India's major exports to Iran** include rice, tea, sugar, soya, medicines/pharmaceuticals, man-made staple fibers, electrical machinery, etc.
  - **Major imports from Iran** include inorganic/organic chemicals, fertilizers, cement clinkers, fruits and nuts, leather, etc.
  - Both countries are negotiating a **Preferential Trade Agreement,** on which five rounds of talks have been held so far.
- **People to people contacts:**
  - There is a **high level commitment** in both countries to promote and facilitate people to people contacts.
  - Indian pilgrims visit the Shi'a pilgrimage circuit in Iran (Qom, Mashhad, Hamedan) and Iraq (Najaf and Karbala) every year.

### **Way Forward**

- **India and Iran** need to rebuild their ties affected adversely by recent global events.
- India must try to **remain politically engaged with Iran** for a better appreciation of each other's sensitivities and compulsions and mutual interests.

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- It is extremely important for India to take the lead in creating an **institutional structure with Iran and Afghanistan** and pursue the **Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) gas pipeline project** to ensure energy security.

**India's Overseas Port Investments**

- **Haifa Port:**
  - In 2022, a partnership between Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) and the Gadot Group in **Israel won the lease to privatise Israel's second-largest port.**
- **Colombo Port's West International Container Terminal:**
  - Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd signed an agreement to construct and operate the West Container Terminal (WCT) of the Port of Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- **Sittwe Port:**
  - India constructed the deepwater Sittwe Port in Myanmar in 2016.
  - The port was constructed as part of the **Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project**. This project will link **Myanmar's Sittwe Port** to the Myanmar-India border.
- **Chattogram and Mongla Ports:**
  - In 2018, India and Bangladesh reached a bilateral agreement for the utilisation of the ports of **Mongla and Chittagong in Bangladesh** to promote transshipment.

Source: [TH](#)

**Unemployment Rate in India**

(GS 2 -Government Policies & Interventions; GS 3- Inclusive Growth & Related Issues )

**In News**

- Recently the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) was released by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**.

**More about the news**

- **The unemployment rate:**

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- The unemployment rate in urban areas for persons aged above 15 eased to 7.2% in July-September 2022 from 9.8% a year ago and 7.6% in the previous quarter.
- The unemployment rate was 6.6% for men and 9.4% for women. It was 9.3% and 11.6%, respectively, in July-September 2021.
- **The labour force participation rate (LFPR):**
  - LFPR in urban areas for persons aged 15 and above, increased to 47.9% in July-September 2022, from 46.9% in the corresponding period in 2021.
    - It was 47.5% in April-June 2022.
  - **Women:**
    - The Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA) said in a release that over the past two decades, the LFPR of women has been steadily declining, despite an increase in their educational attainment.
- **The worker-population ratio (WPR):**
  - The worker-population ratio (WPR) also witnessed a marginal increase compared with last year's.

**Basics**

- **The Labour force participation rate (LFPR):**
  - **Definition:**
    - The LFPR essentially is the percentage of the working-age (15 years or older) population that is asking for a job; it represents the “demand” for jobs in an economy.
    - It includes those who are employed and those who are unemployed.
  - **Significance of LFPR in India:**
    - **Comparing with the global LFPR:**
      - Typically, it is expected that the LFPR will remain largely stable.
      - The world over, LFPR is around 60%. In India, it has been sliding over the last 10 years and has shrunk from 47% in 2016 to just 40% as of December 2021.
    - **Low Contribution of women in LFPR:**
      - The main reason for India's LFPR being low is the abysmally low level of female LFPR.
      - In other words, less than one in 10 working-age women in India are even demanding work.

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- Even if one sources data from the World Bank, India's female labour force participation rate is around 25% when the global average is 47%.
- **The Employment Rate (ER):**
  - **Definition:**
    - The ER refers to the total number of employed people as a percentage of the working-age population.
  - **ER to capture the fall in EFPR:**
    - When LFPR is falling as steadily and as sharply as it has done in India's case, it is better to track the Employment Rate (ER).
    - By using the working-age population as the base and looking at the number of people with jobs (instead of those without them), the ER captures the fall in LFPR to better represent the stress in the labour market.
- **The worker-population ratio (WPR):**
  - **Definition:**
    - The WPR is defined as the percentage of employed persons in the population.

**Reasons of unemployment in India**

- **Failure of farm sector & labour market:**
  - One of the key reasons behind rising unemployment last month was the failure of the farm sector to absorb the influx of additional labour.
  - Besides the farm sector letting go of workers, the deterioration in labour market conditions across urban and rural regions also led to higher unemployment.
- **Job opportunity & qualification mismatch:**
  - **India presents a paradox of skill shortages while being labour surplus.**
    - Trucks are idle because of the shortage of drivers. The steel industry needs more metallurgists.
    - The healthcare sector is short of nurses and technicians.
    - The construction sector needs civil engineers, hi-tech welders, bricklayers, and so on.
- **Sector-specific mismatch:**
  - India's economic growth has been largely services led, with a small pool of skills at the upper end, given a glaring failure in mass

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education, while capital intensity has increased in manufacturing overall in spite of our labour abundance.

- **Low participation of women:**
  - One reason is essentially about the working conditions — such as law and order, efficient public transportation, violence against women, societal norms etc — being far from conducive for women to seek work.
  - A lot of women in India are exclusively involved within their own homes (caring for their family) of their own volition.
  - Lastly, it is also a question of adequate job opportunities for women.

**Employment Generation Programmes of the Government**

- **Atma Nirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY):**
  - It was launched in 2020 as part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat package 3.0 to incentivize employers for creation of new employment along with social security benefits and restoration of loss of employment during Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY):**
  - It was launched in 2016 to incentivise employers for creation of new employment.
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**
  - MGNREGA is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- **Aajeevika - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM):**
  - It was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) in 2011.
  - Aided in part through investment support by the World Bank, the Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.
- **Pt. DeenDayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushlya Yojana (DDU-GKY):**
  - DDU-GKY is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), tasked with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the

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incomes of rural poor families and cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.

- **PM- SVANidhi Scheme:**
  - Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme aims to provide collateral free working capital loan to Street Vendors, vending in urban areas, to resume their businesses which were adversely affected due to COVID-1 induced lock-down.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):**
  - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by National Skill Development Corporation.

### Way Ahead

- **Employment and unemployment in India** have always been at the centre of discussion for the government and intellectuals alike.
- Employment in itself comes with some of its own issues, like lack of decent working conditions, exploitation of employees, absence of decent remuneration etc.
- The **quality of education should be the cornerstone** for the government and people alike.
- It is time we take the **Skill development initiative** undertaken by the government to be implemented effectively.

Source: [TH](#)

### **Guru Tegh Bahadur Martyrdom Day**

**GS1 -Art and Culture**

### In News

- November 24 is commemorated as the Shaheedi Divas of **Guru Tegh Bahadur**.

### More about the Guru Tegh Bahadur

- **About:**

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- He was the ninth guru of the Sikhs, who stood up against forcible conversions by the Mughals, and was executed on the orders of Aurangzeb in 1675.
- **Birth:**
  - Tegh Bahadur was born in Amritsar on April 21, 1621, to **Mata Nanki and Guru Hargobind**.
    - **Guru Hargobind** was the sixth Sikh guru, who raised an army against the Mughals and introduced the concept of warrior saints.
- **Early years:**
  - As a boy, Tegh Bahadur was called **Tyag Mal** because of his **ascetic nature**.
  - He spent his early childhood in Amritsar under the tutelage of Bhai Gurdas, who taught him **Gurmukhi, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Indian religious philosophy**, while **Baba Budha** trained him in **swordsmanship, archery, and horse-riding**.
  - He was married to **Mata Gujri** at Kartarpur in 1632, and subsequently left for Bakala near Amritsar.
- **Tyag Mal to Tegh Bahadur:**
  - He was only 13 when he distinguished himself in a battle against a Mughal chieftain.
  - His **bravery and swordsmanship in the battle** earned him the name of Tegh Bahadur.
- **Sermons & philosophy:**
  - His sermons, delivered in a mix of **Sadukhri and Braj languages**, were widely understood from **Sindh to Bengal**.
  - The metaphors he used resonated with people across North India.
  - Guru Tegh Bahadur often alluded to **Panchali (Draupadi) and Ganika** in his preachings.
- **Face-off with Aurangzeb & death:**
  - Aurangzeb was the ruling Mughal emperor at the time.
    - There were conversions, either through a government order or through coercion.
    - It is believed that when people were charged with some crime or misdemeanour, they would be pardoned if they converted.
  - **Protection of valley:**

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- Guru was approached by **Kirpa Das**, a **Kashmiri Brahmin** who sought his protection with a group from the Valley.
- Das told Guru Tegh Bahadur that local chieftains had told him to **convert or face retribution**.
- The guru assured Das and his group of his **protection** and told them to tell the Mughals that **they should first try to convert the guru**.
- **Aurangzeb considered this an open challenge to his authority.**
  - Aurangzeb ordered the public execution of the Guru on November 11, 1675 after the **guru declined to embrace Islam**.
  - He was **tortured to death and beheaded at Chandni Chowk** along with his three companions.
- **Legacy:**
  - At the site of Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution stands **Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib in Delhi's Chandni Chowk**.

**Source: IE**

## **India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**


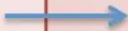
### **GS 2- Important international relations**

#### **In News**

- Recently, India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have decided to pursue resumption of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations.
  - Earlier attempts were made in 2006 and 2008 but were not successful.

#### **What is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)?**

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<b>Free Trade Area</b>	<b>Customs Union</b>	<b>Single Market</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No tariffs between members</li> <li>- No external tariff (checks on country of origin)</li> <li>- Can negotiate own trade deals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No tariffs.</li> <li>- No border checks</li> <li>- Common external tariff</li> <li>- Trade deals for whole customs union</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No tariffs</li> <li>- Common external tariff</li> <li>- Freedom of movement goods and people</li> <li>- Common rules and regulations</li> </ul>
		
<a href="http://www.economicshelp.org">www.economicshelp.org</a>		

- A free trade agreement is a **pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports** among them.
- Under a free trade policy, goods and services can be bought and sold across international borders with little or **no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions to inhibit their exchange.**
- The concept of free trade is the **opposite of trade protectionism or economic isolationism.**

### Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

- **The GCC comprises:**
  - Saudi Arabia
  - UAE
  - Qatar
  - Kuwait
  - Oman
  - Bahrain
- GCC is currently **India's largest trading partner bloc** with **bilateral merchandise trade valued at over 154 billion US dollars** in the financial year 2021-22.
- **Bilateral trade in services** between India and the GCC was worth **14 billion US dollars.**
- GCC countries contribute almost **35 per cent of India's oil imports and 70 percent of gas imports.**
  - **India's overall crude oil imports** from the GCC in 2021-22 were about \$48 billion, while **LNG and LPG imports** in 2021- 22 stood at about \$21 billion.

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- **India's exports to the GCC member countries grew by over 58% to about \$44 billion in 2021-22 against nearly \$28 billion in 2020-21.**

**Pending and successful FTA with India**

- **Pending FTA's - India is trying to negotiate trade deals with the UK, European Union, Canada and Israel.**
- **Successful FTA's**
  - **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) – India and UAE.**
  - **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) – India and Australia.**
  - **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Partnership Agreement (CECPA) – India and Mauritius.**
  - **Asia Pacific Trade Agreement - Bangladesh, China, India, Lao PDR, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka.**
  - **South Asia Free Trade Agreement - India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Maldives.**
  - **Indo Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement - Sri Lanka and India.**
  - **India Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement – Singapore and India.**
  - **Japan India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements – Japan and India.**
  - **India Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements - South Korea and India.**

**Significance of the India and GCC FTA**

- **Trade potential:** The GCC region holds huge trade potential and a trade agreement would help in further boosting India's exports to that market.
- **Oil and gas reserves:** The GCC's substantial oil and gas reserves are of utmost importance for India's energy needs.
- **Good relations:** India shares good relations with most of the countries in the Gulf.
- **India can increase its exports:** GCC is a major import dependent region. India can increase its exports of food items, clothing and several other goods.
  - **Duty concessions under a trade agreement will help in tapping that market.**

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- **India needs to develop a cohesive approach to develop ties in diverse areas** such as renewables, water conservation, food security, digital technology and skills development.

Source: [PIB](#)

### **Draft Aircraft Security Rules, 2022**

#### **GS 3- Indian Economy and related issues**

#### **In News**

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation has notified the draft Aircraft Security Rules, 2022.

#### **About Draft Aircraft Security Rules, 2022**

- The rules will supersede **Aircraft Security Rules, 2011** and were necessary after Parliament passed Aircraft Amendment Act, 2020 in September 2020, giving **statutory powers to BCAS**, along with the **Director General of Civil Aviation and Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau**.
- It will enable the aviation security regulator, **Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)** to impose penalties up to ₹1 crore on airports and airlines for violation of security measures.
  - the BCAS will also be able to suspend or cancel an entity's airport security clearance and security programme.
- In order to deal with **cyber security threats**, the rules also require each entity to protect its information and communication technology systems against unauthorized use and prohibit disclosure of sensitive aviation security information.
- The draft rules now **authorise airports to engage private security agents** instead of CISF personnel at **"non-core areas"** and assign security duties as per the recommendation of the National Civil Aviation Policy, 2016.

#### **Significance**

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- Once the Aircraft Security Rules 2022 are finalised, they will go a long way in ensuring an effective aviation security apparatus in the country.

Source: [TH](#)

## **Facts in News**

### **India Young Water Professional Programme**

#### **GS 2- Government policies and intervention**

##### **In News**

- Department of Water Resources organised the concluding event of the **Young Water Professional Programme** in collaboration with Western Sydney University, Australia and the Indian Institute of Technology,

##### **About India Young Water Professional Programme**

- The **National Hydrology Project, Department of Water Resources** initiated this **innovative 11-month-long programme** with the objective to build the capacity of **Young Water Professionals** and provide them with the required knowledge, skills, attitude, and aptitude to offer their best in the country's water sector by accepting leadership roles and responsibilities.
- This programme focuses on **gender equality and diversity**.
- The first phase of this Programme selected 20 young officers from the **National Hydrology Project's central and state** implementing agencies.
- **Progress and Relevance:** the Australia India Water Centre brought together eight universities and one state government department from Australia and 16 IITs and key universities of India.
  - India and Australia are natural partners and this collaboration to train young water professionals is an important step in the right direction.

Source: [Air](#)

## **Constitution Day**

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**GS 2 – Indian constitution; historical underpinnings and evolution**

**In News**

- 26th November is being celebrated as **Constitution Day** to mark the adoption of the **Indian Constitution** by the Constituent Assembly.

**Key Points**

- **About:**
  - The Constitution of India was adopted by the **Constituent Assembly** on **November 26, 1949** for 'We the people of India'.
- **Celebrated since:**
  - The day began to be celebrated as Constitution Day in **2015**.
  - This day is indeed a historic day for the nation, with the framing of a Constitution for the governance of independent India.
- **Soul of the nation:**
  - An enduring constitution is a rare phenomenon, and acts as the soul of a nation or the defining identity of a country.

**Constitution Day**

- **About:**
  - Constitution Day is also known as '**Samvidhan Divas**'.
  - It is celebrated in the country on 26th November every year to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of India.
  - The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 19th November 2015 notified the decision of the Government of India to celebrate the 26th day of November every year as 'Constitution Day' to promote Constitution values among citizens.
- **Historical Background:**
  - The Constituent Assembly, which was the body meant to draft the Constitution, conducted its **first session on 9 December 1946**.
  - The demand of the Constituent Assembly was made in 1934.
    - **M.N. Roy**, a communist party leader, introduced the idea.
  - It was taken up by the Congress party and finally, in 1940, the demand was accepted by the British government.
  - Before independence, the Constituent Assembly met for the first time on 9 December 1946.

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- **Dr Sachchidananda Sinha** was appointed as the **first president of the Constituent Assembly**.
- The Constituent Assembly took **two years, eleven months and seventeen days** to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution for Independent India.
  - During this period, it held eleven sessions covering a total of 165 days.
    - Of these, 114 days were spent on the consideration of the Draft Constitution.
- Jawaharlal Nehru, the then prime minister, moved the “**Objectives Resolution**” on **13 December 1946**, which was later adopted as the Preamble on January 22, 1947.
- On 29 August 1947, a Drafting Committee was constituted to prepare a Draft Constitution with **Dr B.R. Ambedkar as the Chairman**.
- On 26th November 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India adopted the Constitution of India, which came into effect from 26th January 1950.
- **Significance of the day:**
  - The day aims to bring awareness to the importance of the Indian Constitution as well as its main architect, Dr B R Ambedkar.

**Constitutional Making: Not an easy task**

- **Lengthy Process:** India’s constitution-making project took **about three years** from 1946 to 1949.
- **Difficult conditions:** It was written under extraordinarily difficult conditions:
  - The partition of India which resulted in the displacement of millions of people on both sides of the border.
  - Partition was accompanied by mass deaths, devastation, violence, and brutality.
  - Amid all this, as refugees flowed into Delhi, our dual-purpose assembly — a parliament by morning and a constituent body in the afternoon drafted our enduring founding instrument.
  - One that would remain relevant not just for the turbulence of that present, but also would be meaningful for future generations to come.
- **Inspired From:**

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- The Constitution, had its inspiration in sources like **Tilak's Swaraj Bill of 1895** (which included rights to free speech, free press, equality before law) and the **Declaration of Rights of 1918** (where the Indian National Congress demanded that civil and political rights to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of press and association and for all this to be included in the Government of India Act 1919).
- **Good will of political leaders:**
  - The drafters deployed the considerable political goodwill enjoyed by key national leaders who were members of the assembly to give legitimacy to the Constitution.
- **Balance of bold choices and compromises:**
  - For instance, breaking down traditional privileges like the abolition of princely states and royal titles, and crafting the country as a democracy based on universal adult franchise, and ending discrimination on grounds of caste, or sex or religion.
- **Consensus, People oriented:**
  - It was also the consensus-oriented method that found favour with the Constituent Assembly that has helped our Constitution endure.
  - The framers appreciated the link between consensus in adoption and the legitimacy of the Constitution.

### Way Ahead

- The Constitution should get **due recognition across the educational system**.
- Celebrating November 26 as Constitution Day is fine, but we should not restrict ourselves to symbolism. We should **look at the substantive issues** dealt with by the Constitution, thereby enriching our life.

### Indian Constitution

- It is the longest written constitution in the world.
  - The Constitution of India, with its preamble and 470 articles grouped into 25 parts and 12 schedules
- The Constitution of India was not typeset or printed but was handwritten and calligraphic in both English and Hindi.
- It was entirely handcrafted by the artists of Shantiniketan under the guidance of Acharya Nandalal Bose, with the calligraphy texts done by Prem Behari

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Narain Raizada in Delhi.

- The original copies of the Constitution of India are kept in special helium-filled cases in the Library of the Parliament of India
- The Fundamental Duties of citizens were added to the Constitution by the 42nd Amendment in 1976, upon the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee that was constituted by the Government.
- **Key Features:**
  - Longest written constitution
  - Federalism
  - Parliamentary Form of Government
  - Separation of Powers
  - Fundamental Rights
  - Secularism
  - Single Citizenship
  - Sovereignty
- **Key Amendments Made:**
  - **1st CAA:** Added Ninth Schedule laws that cannot be challenged in courts.
  - **42nd CAA:** Inserted Article 51-A (10 FDs), Socialist, Secular and Integrity added to the Preamble, & new DPSPs added (Article 39, 39A, 43 A, 48A)

Source: [IE](#) + [TH](#)

**Efficacy of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**

**GS 2- Government Policies & Interventions ; Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of Population & their Performance**

**In News**

- Recently, the Union Government has formed a **panel to look into Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)'s efficacy.**

**Key Points about Committee**

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- The **Sinha committee** (named after former Rural Development secretary Amarjeet Sinha) has now been tasked to study –
  - Various **factors behind demand for MGNREGA work**, expenditure trends and inter-State variations, and the composition of work.
  - To look at the **argument that the cost of providing work** has also shot up since the scheme first started.
  - To suggest what changes in **focus and governance structures** are required to make MGNREGA more effective.

**Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**

- **About:**
  - It is a poverty alleviation programme of the Government of India, which provides the legal **Right to Work** in exchange for money to the citizens of the country.
  - On average, every day approximately 1.5 crore people work under it at almost 14 lakh sites.
- **Aim:**
  - It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- **Funding:**
  - It is shared between the Centre and the States.
  - The Central Government bears 100 per cent of the cost of unskilled labour, 75 percent of the cost of semi-skilled and skilled labour, 75 percent of the cost of materials and 6 percent of the administrative costs.
- **Current employment:**
  - There are currently 15.51 crore active workers enrolled under the scheme.
- **Features:**
  - **Legal Right to Work:**
    - The Act provides a legal right to employment for adult members of rural households.
  - **Women:**

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- At least one-third of beneficiaries have to be women. Wages must be paid according to the wages specified for agricultural labourers in the state under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.
- **Time-Bound Guarantee of Work:**
  - Employment must be provided within 15 days of being demanded to fail which an 'unemployment allowance' must be given.
- **Decentralised Planning:**
  - Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are primarily responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring of the works that are undertaken.
  - Gram Sabhas must recommend the works that are to be undertaken and at least 50 per cent of the works must be executed by them.
- **Transparency and Accountability:**
  - There are provisions for proactive disclosure through wall writings, Citizen Information Boards, Management Information Systems and social audits (conducted by Gram Sabhas).

### Significance

- It is a **social security scheme** to generate employment for the rural poor and ensure livelihood for people in rural areas.
- The scheme sees **large-scale participation of women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)** and other traditionally marginalised sections of society.
- It increases the wage rate in rural areas and **strengthens the rural economy** through the creation of infrastructure assets.
- It **facilitates sustainable development** which is very clear by its contribution in the direction of water conservation.
- Over the last 15 years, **three crore assets related to water conservation** have been created through the rural jobs scheme with the potential to conserve more than 2,800 crore cubic metres of water.

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**Challenges**

- **Low Wage Rate:** These have resulted in a lack of interest among workers making way for contractors and middlemen to take control.
- **Insufficient Budget Allocation:** The funds have dried up in many States due to a lack of sanctions from the Central government which hampers the work in peak season.
- **Payment Delays:** Despite Supreme Court orders, various other initiatives and various government orders, no provisions have yet been worked out for calculation of full wage delays and payment of compensation for the same.
- **Corruption and Irregularities:** Funds that reach the beneficiaries are very little compared to the actual funds allocated for the welfare schemes.
- **Discrimination:** Frequent cases of discrimination against women and people from the backwards groups are reported from several regions of the country and a vast number goes unreported.
- **Non-payment of Unemployment Allowance:** There is a huge pendency in the number of unemployment allowances being shown in the Management Information System (MIS).
- **Lack of Awareness:** People, especially women, are not fully aware of this scheme and its provisions leading to uninformed choices or inability to get the benefits of the scheme.
- **Poor Infrastructure Building:** Improper surveillance and lack of timely resources result in poor quality assets.
- **Non Purposive Spending:** MGNREGA has increased the earning capacity of the rural people but the spending pattern of the workers assumes significance because there is hardly any saving out of the wages earned.

**Suggestions**

- There is a need to **carry out social audits** as per rules and effective implementation of the delay compensation system.
- The **participation of women and backwards classes must be increased** by raising awareness and making it more inclusive.
- The people should be **sensitised** to do away with the discrimination against them.

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- Reasons for **poor utilisation of funds** should be analysed and steps must be taken to improve them.
- In addition, actions should be initiated against officers found guilty of **misappropriating funds**.
- Villages must also be allowed to **take control of their own water security**, noting that catchment areas for many villages are on land controlled and owned by the Forest Department.
- The frequency of monitoring by **National Level Monitors (NLMs)** should be increased and appropriate measures should be taken by States based on their recommendations.

Source: [TH](#)

### **Same-Sex Marriage**

#### **GS 2 – Government Policies & Interventions**

##### **In News**

- The Supreme Court recently issued a notice to the Centre on a plea to **grant legal recognition to same-sex marriages** and alliances **between members of LGBTIQ+** community under the **Special Marriage Act**.
  - The petition raised the **absence of a legal framework** which allowed members of the LGBTQ+ community to marry any person of their choice.

##### **What is Same-Sex Marriage?**

- It is the **practice of marriage between two men or between two women**.
- Same-sex marriage has been **regulated through law, religion, and custom** in most countries of the world.
- As of 2022, marriage between same-sex couples is **legally performed and recognized in more than 30 countries**.
  - The most recent country legalising it is **Mexico**.

##### **Arguments in favour of legalising Same-Sex Marriage**

- **The Special Marriage Act of 1954:**
  - It provides a civil form of marriage for couples who cannot marry under their personal law.

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- **Fundamental Right:**
  - Right to marry a person of one's choice is a fundamental right guaranteed under the Constitution of India to each person and has been recognised explicitly by the court.
    - Members of the LGBTQ+ community have the same human, fundamental and constitutional rights as other citizens.
- **Right to equality:**
  - The petitioners have argued that barring them from marriage violates their right to equality.
- **Global practice:**
  - According to global think tank Council of Foreign Relations, same sex marriages are legal in at least 30 countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada and France.

**Arguments against legalising Same-Sex Marriage**

- **Against Biological relation:**
  - Marriage in India can be recognised only if it is between a biological man and a biological woman capable of producing children.
- **Judicial interference:**
  - The government has said that any interference by a court in the marital statute based on personal laws will create havoc in society and will run against the intent of Parliament in framing the laws.
- **Fundamental rights are not absolute:**
  - Fundamental right cannot be an untrammelled right and cannot override other constitutional principles.
- **Unnecessary hype:**
  - The matter is neither of national importance nor has it affected the majority of the population.
- **Absence of civil rights issues:**
  - The 2018 judgment of the Supreme Court decriminalised homosexuality but did not get into civil rights issues.
  - As a consequence, same-sex relationships are legal but civil rights such as marriage, inheritance or adoption, are not guaranteed to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community.
- **Lack of legal framework:**

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- The legal framework governing the institution of marriage in this country does not presently allow members of the LGBTQ+ community to marry the person of their choice.
- Couple cannot protect the family, and matters like adoption, opening a joint bank account or admission of children remain uncertain on account of failure of the law to recognise same sex unions.
- **Section 4 of the Special Marriage Act:**
  - It although permits any two persons to solemnize a marriage, the subsequent conditions in sub Section (c) therein restrict its application only to males and females.
- **Counter to global challenges:**
  - Legalizing same-sex marriage in India would run counter to a number of global challenges.
    - Recently, **Singapore** scrapped criminal penalties for gay sex, but stopped short of allowing marriage.

**Way Forward**

- **NALSA v. Union of India:**
  - Here, Supreme Court categorically held that Indian Constitution protects non-binary individuals and that the protections envisaged under Articles 14, 15, 16, 19 and 21 cannot be restricted to the biological sex of male or female.
- **The issue is a sequel to Navtej Singh Johar (decriminalising Section 377 of IPC) (2018) and K S Puttaswamy (right to privacy) (2017) judgements.**
  - Same sex marriage is a continuation of this constitutional journey.
  - In both the cases the Supreme Court has held that LGBTQ+ persons enjoy the right to equality, dignity and privacy guaranteed by the Constitution on the same footing as all other citizens.
    - So thereby, the right to marry a person of one's choice should extend to LGBTQ+ citizens, as well.

**The Special Marriage Act of 1954**

- All marriages in India can be registered under the respective personal law **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Muslim Marriage Act, 1954, or under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.**

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- The Special Marriage Act, 1954 is an **Act of the Parliament of India** with **provision for civil marriage** for people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, irrespective of religion or faith followed by either party.
- The couples have to **serve a notice** with the relevant **documents to the Marriage Officer 30 days** before the intended date of the marriage.
- **Applicability:**
  - Any person, irrespective of religion.
  - Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, or Jews can also perform marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.
  - Inter-religion marriages are performed under this Act.
  - This Act is applicable to the entire territory of India and extends to intending spouses who are both Indian nationals living abroad.
  - Indian national living abroad.

Source: [IE](#)

### **India's Push for Millets**

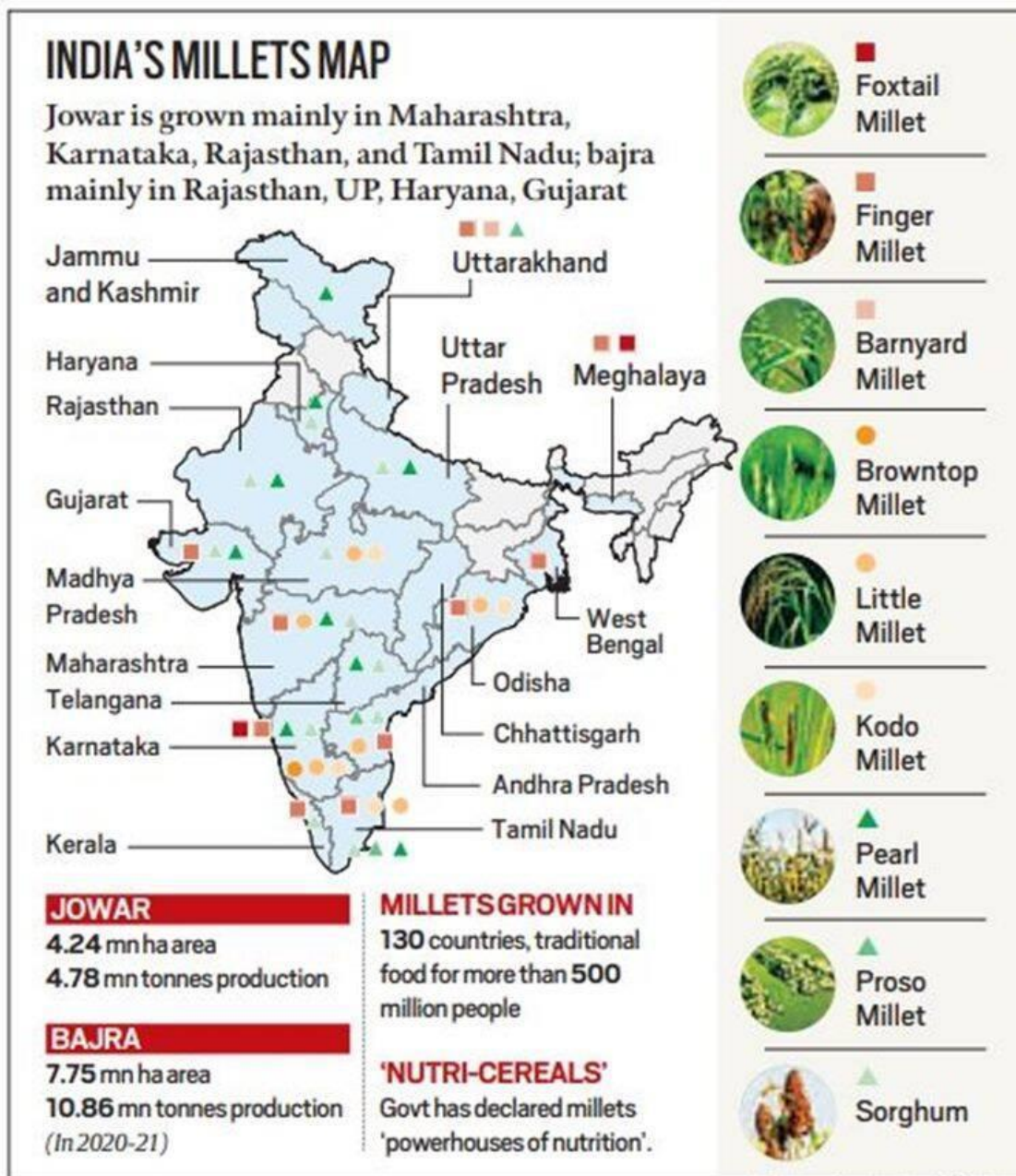
#### **GS-3-Indian economy & Related Issues**

##### **In News**

- Recently, a pre-launch celebration of the **International Year of Millets 2023** was organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of External Affairs.
  - In 2021, the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** adopted a resolution to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets.

##### **What are Millets?**

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• The word millets is used to describe **small-grained cereals** like:

- Sorghum (jowar)
- Pearl millet (bajra)
- Foxtail millet (kangni/ Italian millet)
- Little millet (kutki)
- Kodo millet
- Finger millet (ragi/ mandua)
- Proso millet (cheena/ common millet)

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- Barnyard millet (sawa/ sanwa/ jhangora)
- Brown top millet (korale)
- Millets were among the **first crops to be domesticated**. In India, millets are mainly a **kharif crop**.
- **There is evidence for consumption of millets by the Indus valley people** (3,000 BC) and several varieties that are now grown around the world were first cultivated in India.
  - West Africa, China, and Japan are home to indigenous varieties of the crop.
- **Globally, sorghum (jowar) is the biggest millet crop.**
  - The major producers of jowar are the United States, China, Australia, India, Argentina, Nigeria, and Sudan.
  - Bajra is another major millet crop in which India and some African countries are major producers.

**Main millets states**

- Jowar is mainly grown in **Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, and Madhya Pradesh**.
- **Maharashtra** accounted for the largest area and production of **jowar** during 2020-21.
- **Bajra** is mainly grown in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.
  - The highest bajra producing state is **Rajasthan**.

**Major Challenges**

- **Distribution is negligible**
  - The quantity of coarse grains procured for the Central Pool and distributed under the NFSA has been negligible.
  - The push to distribute coarse grains under the PDS has not gained momentum.
- **Low Stocks**
  - The latest data on stocks with the Food Corporation of India (FCI) show only 2.64 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of coarse grain was available in the Central Pool in comparison, the stocks of rice, wheat, and unmilled paddy were 265.97 LMT, 210.46 LMT, and 263.70 LMT respectively.

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- **Consumption patterns**

- In the latest available NSSO household consumption expenditure survey less than 10 percent of rural and urban households reported consumption of millets.

**Significance of Millet as a crop**

Function	Health consequences	Millet
Water absorbing and bulking property	Energy diluents to formulate low calorie diets	All Millets
Increased transit time of food in the gut	Reduced risk of inflammatory bowel disease.	Sorghum and Finger Millet
Bile acid and steroid binding	Hypocholesterolaemic activity and reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases	Pearl Millet, Sorghum and Finger Millet
Retardation of carbohydrate absorption and impaired glucose tolerance	Management of certain type of diabetes	Sorghum, Pearl Millet and Finger Millet
Binding of toxins	As a detoxifying agent	Sorghum

- **High nutritive value**

- Millets are considered to be **powerhouses of nutrition**.
- They are now regarded as **Nutri Cereals** for the purposes of production, consumption, and trade.
- Millets contain 7-12% protein, 2-5% fat, 65-75% carbohydrates and 15-20% dietary fibre.
  - **Small millets are more nutritious** compared to fine cereals. They contain higher protein, fat and fibre content.

- **Grown globally**

- Millets are now grown in more than 130 countries, and are the traditional food for more than half a billion people in Asia and Africa.

- **Good for the planet**

- They have a low water footprint and are able to survive in the hottest driest climates and will be important in coping with climate change.

- **Millets under PDS**

- Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, eligible households are entitled to get rice, wheat, and coarse grain at Rs 3, Rs 2, and Re 1 per kg respectively.

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- While the Act does not mention millets, coarse grains are included in the definition of food grains under Section 2(5) of the NFSA.
- **MSP for millets**
  - The government declares a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for jowar, bajra, and ragi.
- **Good for the farmer**
  - Millets can increase yields up to 3 fold, have multiple uses (food, fodder, fuel), and are typically the last crop standing in times of drought being a good risk management strategy for farmers.
- **Political significance**
  - Millet is grown mainly in low-income and developing countries in Asia and Africa, and are part of the food basket of about 60 crore people across the globe.

### **Way Forward**

- During 2018-19, three millet crops bajra (3.67%), jowar (2.13%), and ragi (0.48%) accounted for about **7 per cent of the gross cropped area in the country.**
- The Centre is looking forward to **including millets in the PDS in order to improve nutritional support.**
- By proposing the **resolution to celebrate 2023 as the International Year of Millets**, India pitched itself as a leader of this group. This is similar to the Indian initiative on the **121-nation International Solar Alliance.**

Source: [IE](#)

### **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award**

### **Miscellaneous**

### **In News**

- The **Sangeet Natak Akademi** has bestowed special **one-time awards** commemorating 75 years of India's independence on 86 artists, apart from selecting 128 performing artists from various fields for its regular annual awards for the years 2019-21.

### **About Sangeet Natak Akademi Award**

First Floor, DSF Complex, Near Bus stop, Vembar-628906  
email:malaisamyiasacademy@gmail.com

Tel Phone 04638-210270

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- The Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards are the highest national recognition conferred on practicing artists.
- The award carries a purse of ₹1,00,000.
- It is given to artists below the age of 40 years and was introduced with the objective of identifying and encouraging outstanding young talents in diverse fields of performing arts and giving them national recognition early in their life, so that they may work with greater commitment and dedication in their chosen fields.

Source: [TH](#)

## **Garuda Shakti**

### **Gs 3 Defence**

#### **In News**

- A contingent of **Indian Special Forces troops** are currently engaged in a bilateral joint training **Exercise GARUDA SHAKTI** with **Indonesian Special Forces**.

#### **About Garuda Shakti**

- **Exercise GARUDA SHAKTI** is the eighth edition of the series of bilateral exercises under this banner.
- It aims at enhancing understanding, cooperation and interoperability between the Special Forces of both armies.
- **Scope and Focus:** The scope of the joint exercise includes orientation to advance special forces skills, sharing of information on weapons, equipment, innovations, tactics, techniques & procedures and lessons learnt from various operations undertaken, Special Forces Operations in Jungle terrain, strikes on terrorist camps and a validation exercise integrating basic and advance special forces skills apart from gaining an insight into the lifestyle and culture of both countries to foster military cooperation.
- **Significance:** The joint exercise will facilitate both armies to know each other better, and share their wide experiences and combat experience on countering terrorist operations, Regional Security Operations & Peace Keeping Operations in an international environment.

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- The exercise is yet another significant milestone in ensuring cordial relations between the two countries and another step forward towards ensuring regional security.

Source: [PIB](#)

## **Mycobacterium Leprae**

### **Gs 2- Health**

#### **Context**

- A group of researchers have found that **armadillo livers grow** substantially when infected with **Mycobacterium leprae**.
  - Study finds bacteria of the chronic infectious disease reprogrammed certain cells into '**stem-like cells**'.
  - Armadillos are **mammals with their back, head, legs and tail covered in bony plates**. They got the name from their unique look, which translated from Spanish means '**little armoured one**'.



#### **About Leprosy**

- Leprosy, also known as **Hansen's disease**, is a **chronic infectious disease** caused by **Mycobacterium leprae** and **Mycobacterium lepromatosis**.
- **Affected Organs:** Skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes. Leprosy is known to occur at all ages.

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- Leprosy is **curable and early treatment averts most disabilities**. But if left untreated, leprosy can cause progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes.
- **Transmission:** The exact mechanism is not known. It is transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth.
- India, Indonesia, Brazil are among the main countries where leprosy is prevalent.

Source: [DTE](#)