VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

the recitals
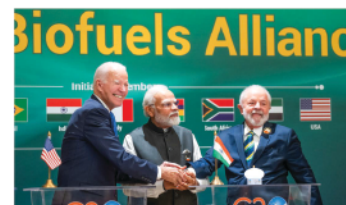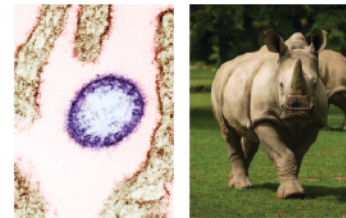
Editor's Cut

- Name of the Nation - India or Bharat
- One Nation, One Election
- Special Session of Parliament
- Women's Reservation Bill 2023
- Draft Indian Telecommunications Bill, 2022
- Immunity to MPs and MLAs
- Rise in Global Debt
- India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council (SPC) Meeting
- Diplomatic Tussle Between India and Canada
- Modi-Biden Meet
- G20 Summit 2023 -New Delhi Leaders' Declaration
- 20th ASEAN-India Summit
- India-Middle East-Europe mega economic corridor
- Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA)

INDEX

INDEX

There is **speculation of an official change in the name of the country** from India to Bharat, even though Article 1 of the Constitution uses the two names interchangeably: "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States."

A Short History of the Nation's Names

1. **MELUHA** — Appears in ancient texts of Mesopotamia to refer to the Indus Valley Civilization
2. **BHARAT/ BHARATVARSHA** — Appears in Puranas as the land between the 'sea in the south and the abode of snow in the north'.
3. **ARYAVARTA** — Appears in the Manusmriti as the land occupied by the Indo-Aryans
4. **JAMBUDVIPA** — Appears in Vedic texts and is still used in a few Southeast Asian countries to describe subcontinent.
5. **HIND/HINDUSTAN** — First used by Persians to refer to the land across river Sindhu.
6. **INDIA** — First used by the Greeks, who transliterated 'Hind' as 'Indus'

- **Bharat:**
  - The roots of "Bharat", "Bharata", or "Bharatvarsha" are traced back to **Puranic literature**, and to the epic **Mahabharata**.
  - Social scientists explained Bharata/ the remote past in the sense of **a religious and socio-cultural entity** [A unity of a common faith and culture - Jawaharlal Nehru]**,** rather than a political or geographical one.
  - 'Bharata' refers to the **subcontinental territory where the Brahmanical system of society prevails.**
  - **Bharata is also the name of the ancient king** of legend who was the ancestor of the **Rig Vedic** tribe of the Bharatas, and by extension, the progenitor of all peoples of the subcontinent.

- **Hindustan:**
  - **The name Hindustan** is thought to have derived from 'Hindu', the Persian equivalent form of the Sanskrit 'Sindhu' (Indus), which came into currency with the Persian conquest of the Indus valley that began in the 6th century BC.
  - **By the time of the early Mughals (16th century)**, the name 'Hindustan' was used to describe the entire Indo-Gangetic plain.
  - In the mid-to-late eighteenth century, **Hindustan often referred to the territories of the Mughal emperor, which comprised much of South Asia**.

- **India:**
  - **The Greeks used 'Indus'** in place of 'Sindhu/Hindu'. By the time the Macedonian king Alexander invaded India in the 3rd century BC, 'India' had come to be identified with the region beyond the Indus.
  - From the late 18th century onwards, **British maps increasingly began to use the name 'India'**, and 'Hindustan' started to lose its association with all of South Asia.
  - **Part of the appeal of the term India may have been its Graeco-Roman associations**, its long history of use in Europe, and its adoption by scientific and bureaucratic organisations such as the Survey of India.
  - **The adoption of India suggests** how colonial nomenclature helped to usher in an understanding of the **subcontinent as a single, bounded and British political territory.**

How did 'Bharat' and 'India' Come into the Constitution of India?

- In his 'Discovery of India', Nehru referred to "India", "Bharata" and "Hindustan", but when the question of naming India in the Constitution arose, **'Hindustan' was dropped and both 'Bharat' and 'India' were retained.**

- **During the Constituent Assembly debates** the "Name and territory of the Union" was taken up for discussion on **September 17, 1949**.

- Right from the time **Article 1** was read out as "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States", **a division arose among the members**. There were quite a few members who were **against the use of the name 'India'**, which they saw as being a reminder of the **colonial past**.

- - **HV Kamath** suggested that the first article should read, "**Bharat, or in the English language, India**, shall be…".
  - **Hargovind Pant**, who represented the hill districts of the United Provinces, made it clear that the people of Northern India "wanted **Bharatvarsha**and nothing else".
- None of the suggestions were accepted, illustrating contrasting visions of the budding nation.
- **The draft Article 1 of the Constitution** - "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States" - was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on **September 18, 1949**.
- The five-day special session of Parliament starts on **September 18, 2023**, and this fuelled speculation of an official change in the name of the country from India to Bharat, especially among Opposition parties.

Recent Attempts of Name Change of the Nation

- **In 2020, the Supreme Court had dismissed a PIL** seeking to remove "India" from the Constitution and retain only Bharat in order to ensure the citizens of this country get over the colonial past.
  - The apex court held that "**India is already called Bharat in the Constitution itself**."
- In his Independence Day address (2022), the Indian PM had spoken about the "**Panch Pran**", **stressing the need to decolonise minds** and taking pride in India's civilisational heritage.
- A government booklet on the Indian PM's upcoming visit to Indonesia for the **20th ASEAN-India Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit** referred to him as the "**Prime Minister of Bharat**".

One Nation, One Election

An eight-member High Level Committee (HLC) has been constituted by the Union Government to look into various aspects (*legal and logistical*) of implementing the 'one nation, one election' plan to synchronize the timing **of Lok Sabha, state assemblies, municipalities, and panchayat elections.**

About The High-Level Committee (headquartered in New Delhi)
It will be headed by the **former President Ram Nath Kovind** and will include as its members- Union Home Minister Amit Shah, former Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Finance Commission Chairman N K Singh, former Lok Sabha Secretary General Subhash C Kashyap, senior advocate Harish Salve.
Its Terms of Reference (ToR) include recommendations regarding-
1)holding simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha), State Legislative Assemblies, Municipalities and Panchayats, & specific amendments to the existing framework of the Constitution of India and other statutory provisions (Like RP Act 1950,1951)
2) if **ratification by states** would be required.
3)possible solutions in a scenario of simultaneous elections emerging out of hung house, adoption of no-confidence motion, defection etc.
4) framework for synchronization of elections and phases and time frame within which such elections must be held if they cannot be held in one go.
5) logistics and manpower required (like VVPATs, EVMs etc.) to conduct such elections.
6) modalities and use of single electoral roll and voter IDs for identifying the voters.
Background
The 'One Nation, One Election' Idea
• The Election Commission in 1983 suggested evolving a system to conduct elections to Lok Sabha and state

legislative Assemblies simultaneously.

- The Justice B P Jeevan Reddy-headed Law Commission in its 170th Report in 1999 recommended simultaneous elections.

- The Prime Minister has been espousing simultaneous elections since 2014 to reduce wastage of public money, and to ensure the smooth flow of development work, which otherwise gets arrested when the model code of conduct is in force.

- The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice chaired by Dr. E.M. Sudarsana Natchiappan (submitted its report in 2015) to the Parliament recommended conducting elections in two phases and provided two conditions for the same-

  i) Motion for an early general election must be agreed to by at least two-thirds of all members of the House; or

  ii) A no confidence motion must be passed by the House, and with no alternative government being confirmed within 14 days of passing a confidence motion.

- The Law Commission stated in its 2018 working paper that at least "**five Constitutional recommendations**" would be required to implement simultaneous elections.

- The issue of holding simultaneous Parliamentary and Assembly elections was referred to the Law Commission in 2022 to develop a workable roadmap and framework for its implementation.

Global Scenario

SOUTH AFRICA
Here, national as well as provincial legislature elections are held simultaneously for five years.

SWEDEN
It has a fixed date for holding polls to its national legislature called 'Riksdag'; the provincial legislature/county council called 'Landsting;' and the local bodies/municipal assemblies called 'Kommunfullmaktige.' All these tiers have a common term of four years.

ENGLAND
The Fixed-Term Parliaments Act, 2011 ensured a five-year interval between general elections. According to the Act, a no confidence motion when presented should also confirm an alternate government within 14 days, failing which early elections will be called. This act was later repealed by the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022.

Need of Simultaneous Elections	Challenges
1. **Reduced Expenditure-** Simultaneous elections will help save the cost of conducting elections. This finance could further be used for public welfare policies.	1. **Constitutional and Legal-** Synchronizing the elections would need amendments to the constitution, Representation of the People Act, 1951 and Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. It will also result in complex legal issues.
2. **Improved Governance and Efficient Policy Implementation**- The policy paralysis that results from the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during election time will be solved	2. **Logistics and Administrative-** Simultaneous elections would require adequate security, deploying additional manpower for conducting and managing elections and about twice as many electronic voting machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines.
3. **Better State Finances**: It helps in controlling the 'freebies' culture. This will further lower the burden on state finances.	3. **Single Party Dominance-** would lead to centralization of the election process, which the party in power can exploit, stifle subaltern voices manifested through small regional parties which is an essence of political diversity and ultimately effect the process of scrutinizing government plans and policies in parliament and state legislative assemblies. Thus, affecting the country's democratic system and federal structure.
4. **Deployment of Security Forces-** It would free the security forces often deployed for prolonged periods on election duties.	
5. **Reduced Political Polarization-** It encourages political parties to focus on broader issues of national and state-level importance rather than divisive local concerns like caste, religion etc., thus promoting a more inclusive and unifying political discourse.	4. **Undermining Local issues-** while campaigning for simultaneous elections, the government and political parties will have more focus on larger national level issues ignoring local problems at grassroot levels.
	5. **Uncertain Political Situations**- like fractured mandate, defections and no-confidence motions that would enforce

6. **Greater Voter Turnout as** simultaneous elections will need the voter to cast his/her vote only once. As per a study, the states which had simultaneous elections in the past there the voter turnout was 70.5%, whereas in other states the voter turnout was just 65.5%. 7. **Policy continuity & Reduced Disruptions**	sudden elections could be a challenge. 6. **Massive Investment and Upgraded Infrastructure** 7. **Presidents Rule-** will have to be imposed whenever a state election will be postponed until the synchronized phase. This will be a blow to democracy and federalism. 8. **Implication for Minority Representation as they** often play a decisive role in regional politics, and simultaneous elections might affect their political participation and representation.

Possible Scheme for Implementation

- The very first step would be constitutional amendments I.e., amending Articles 82, 85, 172, 174 and 356, Representation of People Act, 1951, Procedures of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

  - ✓ **Article 82** provides for the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha based on the census and readjustment of the division of each State into territorial constituencies as determined by a law of Parliament.

  - ✓ **Article 85** deals with the sessions, prorogation, and dissolution of the parliament.

  - ✓ **Article 172** provides for the duration of State Assemblies I.e., for five years unless it is dissolved.

  - ✓ **Article 174** deals with the sessions, prorogation, and dissolution of the state legislative assemblies.

  - ✓ **Article 356** contains provisions for the President's rule in a state in case of constitutional failure.

- As per the suggestion of the Election Commission (EC), the term of Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies could commence and end on predetermined dates.

- No-confidence motions should be moved simultaneously to avoid premature dissolution with a confidence motion for the individual hoping to be the next PM.

Extra Mile: Entrenched Provisions

The provisions that require ratification involve the federal character of the Constitution and are referred to as "entrenched provisions". Article 368 provides for an additional safeguard for amending them. They are:

- ⚖ **Article 54 and 55:** dealing with the election of the President of India.

- ⚖ **Article 73 and 162:** dealing with the extent of executive power of the Union and states.

- ⚖ **Articles 124–147 and 214–231:** dealing with the powers of the Supreme Court and the High Courts.

- ⚖ **Article 245 to 255:** dealing with the scheme of distribution of legislative, taxing, and administrative powers between the Union and the states.

- ⚖ **Article 82:** dealing with the Representation of states in Parliament.

- ⚖ **Article 368 itself.**

- If the House is still dissolved, either the President can run the government for the rest of the term or fresh elections can be held for a House (if the remaining period is long enough) that would last only for the remaining length of time.

- Polls to the Centre and States can happen six months before their term ends to align them together by invoking Sections 14 and 15 of the Representation of People Act (RPA), 1951.

  - ✓ Section 14 & 15 of RPA, 1951 contain provisions related to the notification for general election to the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, respectively.

A special session of parliament was held in the new Parliament building from September 18 to September 22. It witnessed the passage of the historical women's bill and turned out to be one of the most productive sessions in the recent past in terms of time utilization and lengthy debates.

About Parliamentary Sessions

Related Constitutional Provisions

- While there is no fixed schedule as per which the Parliament is convened, **Article 85** of the Constitution specifies that the President must summon each House of the Parliament to meet at least once within six months.
- This provision has been borrowed from the Government of India Act 1935 which allowed the British Governor General to call a session of the central legislature at his discretion but within 12 months. This gap was reduced to six months by the constituent assembly.

Who Plans the Session?

- **Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs** decides the dates and duration of parliamentary sessions. Once a decision has been taken, the committee conveys its decision to the **President** who then summons the Members of Parliament to meet for the session.
  - ✓ At present, this committee consists of ten Ministers from Defence, Home, Finance, Agriculture, Tribal Affairs, Parliamentary Affairs, and Information and Broadcasting.
  - ✓ The Law Minister and the Minister of State for External Affairs are special invitees to the Committee.

Is There Any Fixed Timetable?

- Although there is no provision for a fixed number of sessions in the constitution, by convention,each calendar year consists of three sessions-
  1. **Budget Session** (the longest one)- It is usually from January-end to April-end. It includes a recess for Parliamentary Standing Committees to consider the budget.
  2. **Monsoon Session**- It begins in July and concludes in August.
  3. **Winter Session**- It is the last session of the year, usually held from November to December.

** The Constitution does not forbid the Parliament from meeting frequently, although it does prescribe two sessions every six months for normal sessions.

**The US Congress and Parliaments of Canada, Germany, and the UK are in session throughout the year, and their calendar of sitting days is fixed at the beginning of the year.

Special Session of Parliament

- It refers to a session convened by the government for specific occasions, like commemorating parliamentary or national milestones.
  - ✓ For the two Houses to be in session, they should be chaired by their presiding officers.
  - ✓ Such proceedings are limited in time and procedural devices like question hour are not available to the MPs during such sessions.
- There is no mention of *special session* in the Constitution or in the rulebooks of either House of Parliament. Also, there are no specific guidelines on how or when such a session should be convened.
- However, **Article 352** (added through the 44th constitutional amendment, 1978) which deals with the proclamation of Emergency, refers to a 'special sitting' of the House.
  - ✓ 44th Constitutional amendment specifies that if a Proclamation of Emergency is issued during a time

when the Parliament is not in session, then one-tenth of Lok Sabha MPs can ask the President to convene a **special meeting** to disapprove the Emergency.

Previously Held Special Sessions

1. **1947-** First special session held on the eve of independence to mark the transfer of power from British to India.

2. **1962-** Held during Indo-China war when the Winter Session was advanced to discuss the Chinese aggression.

3. **1972-** Held to mark 25 years of Independence.

4. **1992-** Held to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Quit India Movement.

5. **1997-** Held to commemorate 50 years of independence.

6. **2017-** A midnight special session was held to roll-out Goods and Services Tax (GST).

** The two Houses have also held separate special sittings-

1. A special session was held in Rajya Sabha in 1977 for the extension of President's Rule in Tamil Nadu and Nagaland and in 1991 for approval of President's Rule in Haryana.

2. A special session was held in Lok Sabha in 2008 for a trust vote after the Left withdrew support to the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government led by Manmohan Singh.

The Special Session of Parliament 2023

- The Parliamentary proceedings were shifted to the new Parliament building.

- During this session, the productivity of the Lower House stood at 132% and at 128% for the Rajya Sabha.

- The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act 2023, which grants one-third reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State legislatures, has received approval from the President of India.

EDITOR'S CUT — Women's Reservation Bill 2023

The President of India has given assent to the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act 2023, which provides 1/3rd reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State legislatures.

➤ The Historic Women's Reservation Bill, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023)- the 128th Constitutional Amendment Bill was passed by the Parliament in the recently concluded Special Session.

About The Women's Reservation Bill, 2023

What Is In The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act 2023

It will allow 33% seats of the Lok Sabha, all State Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi to be reserved explicitly for women. For this purpose, the Act introduced the following **articles** in the Constitution-

330A- for reservation of seats for women in Lok Sabha.

332A- for reservation of seats for women in state legislative assemblies.

239AA (ba)- for reservation of seats for women in legislative assembly of Delhi.

334A- includes a sunset provision that would gradually end this affirmative action policy after 15 years.

Objective: To enable greater participation of women as public representatives in policy making at Central and State levels so that they can bring different perspectives and enrich the quality of legislative debates.

Background

- It was the enactment of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution in 1993 which laid the ground for the women's reservation Bill. The two amendments, which introduced panchayats (Article 243D) and urban local bodies (Article 243T) in the Constitution, mandate one-third reservation for women in these bodies.

- In 2006, Bihar became the first State to provide 50% reservation for women in panchayat bodies. At present, more than 20 States have 50% reservation for women at the panchayat level.

- There have been several studies on the effect of reservation on women representation in political bodies and policymaking. For example, a 2001 paper on 'Impact of women leadership on policy decisions' show that women invest more in infrastructure which is directly relevant to their needs like water, fuel, and roads and that they are more likely to participate in the policy-making process if the leader of their village council is a woman.

Chart 1 shows the share of women members in the Lok Sabha over time (in %).

Year	%
1952	4.9
1957	4.5
1962	6.3
1967	5.6
1971	5.6
1977	3.5
1980	5.3
1984	8.2
1985	3.7
1984-85	7.9
1989	5.5
1991-92	7.3
1996	7.4
1998	7.9
1999	9
2004	8.3
2009	10.9
2014	11.4
2019	14.4
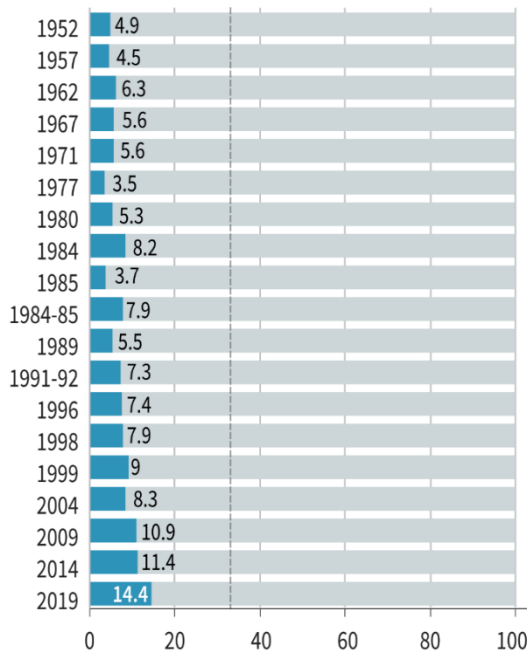
Chart 2 shows the share of women in State Legislative Assemblies over a period of time (in %).
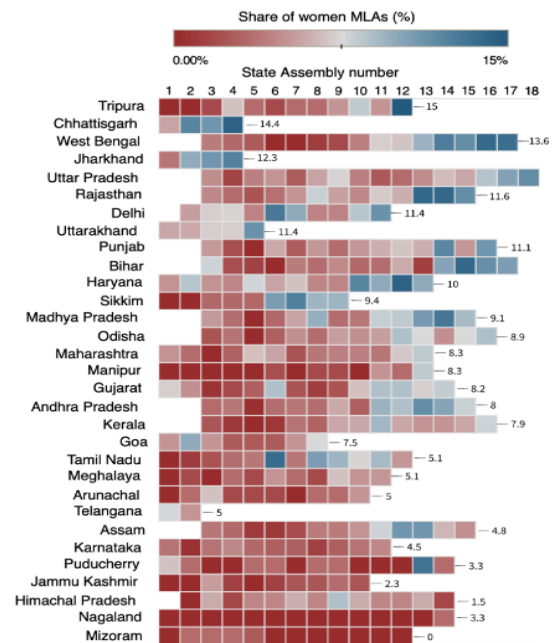
Features

1. **Reservation:** Along with the 1/3rd reservation in Central and State Legislatures, 1/3rd of the seats reserved for SC/STs in the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies and Delhi's Legislative Assembly will also be reserved for women.

2. **Commencement of Reservation:** The bill states that its provisions will come into effect only after the **delimitation exercise** has been conducted based on the figures obtained from the census completed and published after the commencement of The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Bill 2023.

3. **Seat Rotation:** Rotation of the seats reserved will be done after each delimitation exercise.

Previous Attempts for Introducing Women's Reservation

- It was first introduced as the 81st Constitution Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha in 1996 by the Deve Gowda-led United Front government and was referred to a Joint Committee which gave certain recommendations. This bill failed to get the approval of the House and lapsed with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.

- It was introduced again by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 1998, but it lapsed as the government fell in 1999. It was reintroduced in 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2003, but every time it failed to get passed.

- Another attempt was made with the introduction of The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2008 in the Rajya Sabha in 2010. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill, but it was never taken up for consideration in the Lok Sabha and therefore lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.

128th Constitution Amendment Bill 2023 vs 108th Constitution Amendment Bill 2008

1. **Delimitation Exercise**- The current bill makes the implementation of the women's reservation dependent on the delimitation exercise. Therefore, the reservation may not effectively be implemented in Lok Sabha before the general elections of 2029 as the 42nd Amendment froze the delimitation exercise until the results of the first Census after 2000 were published. The 84th Amendment extended it further for 25 years. Thus, delimitation can happen only after the results of the first Census after 2026 have been published. There was no such provision in the previous bill.

2. **Identification of Reserved Seats**- The Bill doesn't specify how one-third seats will be identified and only proposes the rotation of reserved seats although it grants the power to the government to make a law for this purpose whereas in the previous bill, the government had proposed to identify the constituencies to be reserved for women through a draw of lots so that no seat was reserved more than once in 3 consecutive elections.

Significance	Concerns Raised
1. **Increased Representation-** The present Lok Sabha consists of 82 women MPs, once the Bill is implemented, there will be at least 181 women MPs in the Lok Sabha. Same will be the case with the legislative assemblies where women now comprise less than 10% in 20 States and Union Territories.	1. **Delimitation Exercise-** The implementation of the bill gets delayed as it depends on the delimitation exercise which cannot happen until a fresh census is conducted and is published.
2. **Better Policy Making and Improved Governance**- As women can provide diversified ideas for women centric policies.	2. **Delayed Census-** The 2021 census got delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, in the coming elections of 2024 women won't get any reservation. If the census is completed by 2026 then women can reap the benefits of reservation in the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.
3. **Socio-economic significance (Promotes Gender Equality & Women Empowerment):** To address problems like the high rate of crimes against women, the low participation of women in the workforce, poor nutrition levels, and a skewed sex ratio, women must be represented in the decision-making process.	3. **No Separate Quota for OBC and Muslim Women-** Although the bill provides separate quota for women within SC/STs reservation in the Lok Sabha and state legislature seats, there is no provision for providing the same to the OBC and Muslim women.
	4. **Restricts Voter Choice:** Reserving parliamentary seats for women restricts voter choice.
	5. **Rotating Reserved Constituencies-** in each election might reduce an MP's incentive to work for their constituency.
	6. **Representation in Rajya Sabha**- The bill is entirely silent on representation of women in Rajya Sabha.

Women's Representation in Other Countries

- Countries like France, Korea, and Nepal, have passed quotas as high as 50% of the candidate list.

- Countries with party quota laws include Argentina, Mexico, and Costa Rica, which also have over 36% female representation in their national legislatures.

- Through voluntary (non-legislated) quotas by political parties, nations like South Africa, Sweden, and Germany have attained comparable levels of female representation.

- With 44.8% of its current National Assembly made up of women, South Africa is a great case study.

- Seats are reserved based on the principles laid down by The Delimitation Act, 2002.
- As per the Act, constituencies in which seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) shall be distributed in different parts of the State and located (as far as practicable) in those areas where the proportion of their population to the total is comparatively large.
- The constituencies in which seats are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes (STs), are located (as far as practicable) in areas where the proportion of their population to the total is the largest.

Women's Reservation in Panchayats

- Article 243D of the Constitution has a provision for the reservation of seats for SCs, STs, and women in Panchayats and it states that women are required to hold no less than one-third of the seats reserved for SCs and STs.
- According to government data, the percentage of women elected representatives in PRIs was more than 50%, in at least 18 states (Uttarakhand, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Rajasthan, MP, etc.).
- The highest proportion of women representatives was in Uttarakhand (56.02%) and the lowest was in UP (33.34%).
- Overall, there were 45.61% women representatives in PRIs in the country.

Draft Indian Telecommunications Bill, 2022

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has decided to drop certain provisions from the draft Indian Telecommunication Bill 2022 due to objections by some ministries on specific provisions.

About The Draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022

The draft bill seeks to consolidate the Indian Telegraph Act 1885, Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933, and The Telegraph Wires, (Unlawful Protection) Act 1950 which currently govern the Indian Telecommunications sector.

Objective- To consolidate and amend the existing laws governing the expansion and operation of telecommunication services, telecom networks and infrastructure, in addition to assignment of spectrum.

Key Provisions of the Bill

1. **Inclusion of Over-the-Top (OTT) apps under Telecommunication Services**

- Providers of new-age OTT communication services like WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram will be covered under the **licensing regime** and will be subjected to similar rules as other telecom operators like Airtel, Jio etc.
- It has been a long pending demand from Telecom service providers (TSP) seeking a level-playing field with OTT apps over communication services such as voice calls, messages, etc. as operators have to incur high costs of licenses and spectrum, while OTT players use the existing infrastructure to offer free services.

2. **Spectrum Assigning Framework-**

- **Spectrum Allocation Mechanisms:** Spectrum will primarily be given through auction but for specific functions related to the government and public interest, like defence, transportation and research, spectrum will be assigned through the administrative process.
  - ➢ Presently, spectrum assignment is done through a combination of government policies and judicial decisions.

- **Spectrum Management in Bankruptcy:** If a telecom entity in possession of spectrum goes through bankruptcy or insolvency, the assigned spectrum will revert to the Government.
- **Government's Role for Regulatory Flexibility:** Government will be empowered to defer, convert into equity, write off or grant relief to any licensee under extraordinary circumstances, including financial stress, consumer interest, and maintaining competition, among other things.
  - ➢ Spectrum relates to the radio frequencies allocated to the mobile industry and other sectors for communication over the airwaves.

3. 'Right of Way' for Telecom Infrastructure-

- It lays down a framework in which a public entity in possession of a land has to grant 'Right of Way (RoW)' permission expeditiously, unless it gives substantive ground for refusal.
  - ➢ Right of Way is a pre-requisite for establishing telecommunication networks and improvement of telecommunication services.
- RoW will be enforceable at the state and at the municipal corporation levels.
- It will help in addressing the bottlenecks in the rapid expansion of telecom infrastructure and smooth roll-out of 5G services throughout the country.

4. **Telecommunication Development Fund (TDF)-**

- The Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), created under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, will now be expanded into the "TDF" by adding further objectives of underserved urban areas, R&D, skill development, etc.
  - ➢ USOF consists of the taxes collected by the Centre from telecom companies to ensure funding and development of communication services in <u>rural and remote areas at affordable prices.</u>
- All amounts payable towards the USOF under licenses granted prior to the date of the new Bill, shall be diverted to the TDF. This amount will be first credited to the Consolidated Fund of India, which shall then be utilized by the Central Government for the purposes of the TDF.

5. **Preventing Cyber Frauds-** The identity of the person sending a message/calling through telecom services will be available with the user receiving it. The Bill also enables a legal framework for preventing harassment of users from unsolicited calls and messages.

6. More Power to Central Government-

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act (TRAI Act) mandates the **telecom department** to seek TRAI's recommendations before issuing a new license to a service provider. *The proposed Bill does away with this provision.*
  - ✓ There won't be any requirement for DoT to send back the recommendation for reconsideration by TRAI if it cannot accept any of TRAI's recommendations.

7. **Registration**- An entity shall have to obtain only a registration, not a license for providing telecommunication infrastructure. This will simplify the setting up of infrastructure.

8. **Breach of Terms and Conditions (T&C)-** The Government will be empowered to take punitive actions for breach of contract which may include suspension, revocation, curtailment of the duration of the license, imposition of financial penalties, giving directions to the entity, etc.

9. **Dispute Resolution**- It empowers the Central Government to set up an alternate dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism such as arbitration, mediation or other processes of dispute resolution.

10. **Interception of communication:** The central government may intercept, monitor, or block messages or a class of messages between two or more persons on certain grounds. These actions must be in the interest of national security, friendly relations with other countries, public order, or prevention of incitement of offence.

11. **Suspension of Services-** It allows the Government to address any situations of public emergency, public safety, or national security concerns by **time-bound limited suspension** of transmission of messages, or of provision of telecommunication networks or services, while ensuring the rights of the citizens of India. It may prescribe standards for telecom equipment, infrastructure, network, and services.

12. **Decriminalization of Offences-** It decriminalizes certain offences by removing imprisonment, and levying only fines, as well as compounding multiple offences.

Contentious Provisions

1. **Insolvency Proceedings**- This drew objections from the Ministries of Finance, Corporate Affairs and Commerce and Industry as assigned spectrum will revert to government if in the event of insolvency proceedings against a telecom service provider, the company doesn't pay back its dues owed to the government.

2. **Relief Measures**-

- In September 2021, DoT had offered a **moratorium to telecom firms**, whereby they deferred payment of their **adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues for four years**.

  ➢ AGR is the usage and licensing fee that telecom operators are charged by the DoT. It is a percentage of the **telecom operators' revenue** that is fixed by agreements between the companies and the DoT.

- DoT had also added a provision that in future, if service providers were under financial stress, it would have the power to offer them a relief package in terms of making deferred payments, waiving off penalties and interest.

  ➢ Finance Ministry objected to this provision stating that such measures have revenue implications for the government and such matters should be examined on a case-by-case basis and any relief offered should be based on inter-ministerial consultations and Cabinet approval rather than a blanket legal provision.

3. **Curtailment of TRAI's Powers**

4. **Internet-Based Telecommunication Services**- A difference of opinion has also emerged between the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) over the inclusion of internet-based communication services like WhatsApp and Google Meet in the definition of Telecommunication. It argued that these services fall under MeitY's jurisdiction and should not be regulated under the telecom Bill and that the DoT can only regulate the carriage layer, that is telephony, wireless communications, and private sector licenses, etc.

  ✓ Internet-based telecommunication services are the ones which are delivered over the internet. For example- WhatsApp messaging service, telegram etc.

Extra Mile: Telecom Sector in India
India has the second-largest telecommunications market in the world. India's telecom industry includes Radio and television broadcasting, Cable and satellite carriers and providers, Internet service providers (ISPs), Wired and wireless telecommunications carriers, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), Radar and satellite operations.   • The telecommunications sector ranks as the third-largest recipient of FDI, accounting for 6.44% of the total FDI inflow. It directly supports 2.2 million jobs and indirectly contributes to an additional 1.8 million employment opportunities.   • India has an overall tele density of 85.11%. 100% FDI has now been allowed in the Telecom sector under the automatic route.   India is on its way to becoming the second-largest smartphone market globally by 2025 with around 1 billion installed devices

Immunity to MPs and MLAs

A seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court (SC) headed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) will be re-examining a 1998 verdict of SC in the *P.V. Narsimha Rao v. State* case, granting immunity to a Member of Parliament (MP) or a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from prosecution in criminal courts for taking/accepting a bribe to make a vote in the House.

Constitutional Provisions Granting Immunity to MPs/MLAs

Constitutional Provision	Immunity
Article 105 is an absolute privilege given to the MPs which can be used only on the premises of parliament and not outside. **Article 105(2)-** It provides immunity to an MP (Article 194(2) for MLA) from any proceedings in any court **for anything said or any vote given** by him in Parliament, or any committee and **holds no person liable for any report**, paper, votes or proceedings in a publication by or under the authority of either House of Parliament.	• These provisions exempt MPs/MLAs from any legal action for any statement made or act done in the course of their duties. • For example, a defamation suit cannot be filed against an MP or an MLA for his statement in the House. • It also extends to certain non-members, like the Attorney General of India or a Minister who may not be a member but speaks in the House. ** If a member exceeds his limit of free speech, then the Speaker of the House deals with it and not the court. ** MPs and MLAs cannot be arrested in civil cases during a session of Parliament, and 40 days before and after the beginning and end of a session. ** These privileges are only available in civil cases, and not in criminal cases or preventive detention cases.

Purpose of Immunity

To allow MPs/MLAs to discharge their duties without any fear of consequences that may follow in the way they speak or exercise their vote on the floor of the House essential for democratic functioning of the legislatures.

The 1998 Ruling	The Present Case
• The ruling came in the *P.V. Narsimha Rao v. State* case which dealt with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) bribery case of 1993. • It accused five JMM MPs of taking bribes to vote against the no-confidence motion against the then PV Narasimha Rao government. • Although the government survived the motion, CBI registered a case against these five MPs under the Prevention of Corruption Case, 1988 (PoCA). • Accused MPs argued that they enjoyed immunity under Article 105 and as they do not hold any public office, they cannot be brought under the purview of the PoCA. • While quashing the complaint, 3:2 majority held that MPs were immune from prosecution not just	• In 2012, Sita Soren, a member of JMM was accused of accepting a bribe to cast her vote for a certain candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections of 2012. • Following this, the Election Commission of India cancelled the Rajya Sabha election, and the CBI filed a chargesheet against Soren, under PCA. • Ms. Soren approached the Jharkhand High Court (HC) seeking to quash the charge sheet and the criminal proceedings against her contending that she had immunity under Article 194(2). • Jharkhand HC rejected this plea which led her to appeal in the SC against the HC order. • A 2-judge bench of SC referred the case to a three-judge bench in 2014 arguing that the issue was *substantial and of public importance.*

for votes cast by them in Parliament, but also for any acts associated with the casting of such votes and there is no competent authority under the PCA to grant sanction for the prosecution of an MP under the PCA.	• A three-judge Bench led by then CJI Ranjan Gogoi while hearing the case observed that the Jharkhand HC judgement dealt with the 1998 Narasimha Rao verdict and hence should be referred to a larger Bench.
• But SC convicted one MP in this case as he took a bribe but did not cast any vote therefore, he didn't have any immunity under the Article 105(2).	• This matter was finally taken up now and was referred to a seven-judge bench arguing that it was an important issue that concerned polity.

Similar Judgements

1. ***K Anandan Nambiar Case 1951*:** The apex court held that MP could claim no special status higher than that of an ordinary citizen and is as much liable to be arrested, detained, or questioned even during the session.

2. ***Keshava Singh Case, 1965*:** The Court held that in the matters of privileges stated under the Constitution of India, the house will be considered as the sole and exclusive judge. But if any privilege is not mentioned in the Constitution, then the Court will be the final authority.

3. ***State of Kerala Vs. K. Ajith and Others 2021*:** Here**,** SC observed that privileges and immunities were not gateways to claim exemptions from the general law of the land, particularly as in this case, the criminal law which governs the action of every citizen.

Extra Mile: Parliamentary Privileges

• Parliamentary Privileges are some rights and immunities which enable the MPs to discharge their duties and functions without any interference or intimidation and are essential to allow parliamentary proceedings and functions in a disciplined and undisturbed manner.

• The Constitution of India, parliamentary conventions, laws made by the Parliament, rules of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and judicial interpretations are the sources for these privileges.

• These privileges can be claimed only until the person is a member of the house and ceases to exist as soon as he ends up being a member.

Related Constitutional Provisions

• **Article 105, Article 194***: Mentioned above.*

• **Article 122(*Article 212*):** The validity of any proceedings in Parliament (*State Legislature*) cannot be called into question in a court on the grounds of any alleged irregularity of procedure.

Types of Parliamentary Privileges

Individual Privileges	Collective Privileges
These are the privileges enjoyed by the MPs and MLAs. Some of these are- • No MP can be arrested 40 days before the beginning and 40 days after the end of a Parliamentary session. • MPs have freedom of speech in Parliament and are not liable to any proceedings in any court. • They are exempt from jury service during the session of Parliament.	These are enjoyed by both Houses of the Indian Parliament and State Legislature as a whole, as well as their members and officers. Some of these are- • Right to publish its reports, debates, and proceedings. • Right to exclude strangers from its proceedings • Right to make rules to regulate its own procedure • Right to punish members as well as outsiders for breach of its privileges • Prohibited court inquiry into the House proceedings. • No arrest can be made without the permission of the presiding officer.

Rise in Global Debt

- A report released by The Institute of International Finance (IIF) recently shared that the **global debt rose to an all-time high of $307 trillion** in the second quarter, by the end of June 2023.

- Global debt in dollar terms has risen by $10 trillion in the first half of 2023 and by $100 trillion over the past decade.

- Further, global debt as a share of GDP has started to increase once again to hit 336% after dropping quite steeply for seven consecutive quarters (nearly two years).

Global Debt

- Global debt refers to the borrowings of **governments** as well as **private businesses and individuals.**

- Governments borrow to meet various expenditures that they are unable to meet through tax and other revenues. Governments may also borrow to pay interest on the money that they have already borrowed to fund past expenditures.

- The private sector borrows predominantly to make investments.

Reasons For Rising Global Debt

- Both global debt in nominal terms and global debt as a share of GDP have been rising steadily over the decades.

- The rise came to a halt during the pandemic as economic activity was slow and lending slowed down. But global debt levels, have started to rise again in the last few quarters.

- **Over 80% of the rise** in global debt in the first half of the year has come from advanced economies such as the **U.S., U.K., Japan, and France**.

- Among **emerging market** economies, **China, India and Brazil** have seen the most growth in debt.

- During the first half of 2023, total global debt rose amid rising interest rates, which was expected to negatively affect demand for loans.

- But a rise in debt levels over time is to be expected since the **total money supply usually steadily rises each year** in countries across the globe.

  - ✓ In fact, even a simple **rise in the total amount of savings** in an economy can cause a rise in debt levels as these increased savings are channeled into investments.

- A more interesting phenomenon was the drop in **global debt as a share of GDP** over seven consecutive quarters prior to 2023.

- The IIF attributes this to the **rise in price inflation**, which it claims has helped governments to inflate away the debts denominated in their local currencies.

- **Inflating away of debt:** the central bank of a country either <u>directly or indirectly uses freshly created currency to effectively pay off outstanding government debt</u> by, for example, purchasing government bonds in the market.
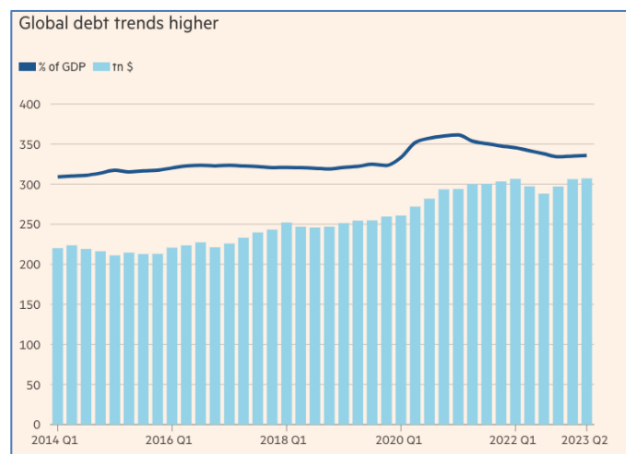
- But the creation of fresh money causes prices to rise, thus imposing an indirect tax on the wider economy to *pay the government's debt.*

Concerns Of Rising Global Debt

- Rising global debt levels usually leads to concerns. This is particularly so in the case of government debt which is likely to rise rapidly due to thoughtless borrowing by politicians to fund populist programmes.

- And <u>when central banks raise interest rates, servicing (paying) outstanding debt becomes a challenge</u> for governments with a heavy debt burden.

- However, despite rising debt levels over the last decade, the interest that governments had to pay lenders largely remained manageable due to extremely low interest rates, particularly in western economies.

- This is set to change now as central banks have raised interest rates to fight high price inflation since the pandemic.

- **Rising interest rates can increase pressure on governments** and force them to either <u>default outright or inflate away their debt.</u>

- Many analysts, in fact, believe that several governments will never be able to pay their debt in full and that **inflating away debt** is the only way for such governments to avoid an outright default on their debt.

- The IIF report has also warned that the <u>international financial infrastructure is not equipped to handle unsustainable domestic debt levels</u>.

- Generally, rapidly rising private debt levels also lead to worries among analysts about their sustainability. This is because such a rise is linked to **unsustainable booms that end in economic crises** when such lending is not backed by genuine savings.

- The most recent example of this was the **2008 global financial crisis**. The crisis was immediately preceded by an economic boom fuelled by the U.S. Federal Reserve's easy credit policy.

India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council (SPC) Meeting

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Al Saud and PM Modi co-chaired the **first summit-level meeting** of the <u>India-Saudi Arabia </u>SPC. The Saudi Crown Prince was on a daylong State Visit to India post the G20 Summit.

India-Saudi Arabia "Strategic Partnership Council (SPC)"

- **About**
  - The pact to establish the SPC was **signed** during PM Modi's visit to Saudi Arabia in October 2019.
  - The Council essentially aimed to establish a high-level council to steer the Indo-Saudi relationship.
- **Pillars**
  - The SPC has two main pillars:

| Committee on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation |
| Committee on Economy and Investments |

  - Both sub-committees have four functional levels of engagements:

| Summit level (PM& Crown Prince) | Ministerial-level | Senior Officials' Meetings | Joint Working Groups (JWGs) |

Key Outcomes Of The Recent Meeting

- **Various projects**
  - India and Saudi Arabia decided to expedite implementation of the $50-billion West Coast refinery project.
    - The West Coast refinery project is a 60 million tonnes *refinery-cum-petrochemical complex* to be built on the Maharashtra coast.
  - Identified energy, defence, semiconductor & space as areas for intensified cooperation.
  - Other areas of cooperation such as security, education, technology, transportation, healthcare, tourism and culture were identified.
- **Diversification of current status** of their hydrocarbons relationship into a **comprehensive energy partnership.**
- **8 Pacts signed:** In a range of areas, including digitisation and investment.

India-Saudi Arabia Bilateral Relations

- They enjoy cordial and friendly relations reflecting the centuries old economic and socio-cultural ties.
- The establishment of diplomatic relations in 1947 was followed by high-level visits from both sides.

Recent Visits And Significant Outcomes

- Then Indian PM Manmohan Singh visited Saudi Arabia in 2010 and the '**Riyadh Declaration'** signed during the visit. It elevated the bilateral relationship to a '**Strategic Partnership'**.
- During the visit in 2016, King Salman conferred the Kingdom's highest civilian honor on Prime Minister Modi.
- During the visit of PM Modi to Riyadh in 2019, the **SPC Agreement** was signed.

Economic Cooperation

- **Trade**
  - In 2022-23, bilateral trade reached an all-time high of $52.75 billion.
  - India's exports to Saudi Arabia were $10.7 billion, up from $8.8 billion in 2021-22.
  - India is Saudi Arabia's second largest trading partner whereas Saudi Arabia is India's fourth largest

trading partner.

- **Investment**
  - Indian investments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have reached approximately USD 2 Billion.
  - Saudi Arabia is the **18th largest investor** in India with investments amounting to $3.14 billion (March 2022).
  - During his visit to India in February 2019, Saudi Crown Prince had announced that the Kingdom would be investing US $100 billion in India in diversified sectors.

Energy Partnership

- Energy cooperation forms a central pillar of bilateral ties. Saudi Arabia is a key partner for India for ensuring energy security.
- It remained India's **third largest Crude and Petroleum products** sourcing destination for FY 2022-23.
  - India Imported 39.5 MMT of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, in FY23, accounting for 16.7 % of its total crude imports.
  - Additionally, India's LPG imports from Saudi Arabia stood at 7.85 MMT and accounted for 11.2% of its total petroleum product imports in FY 23.

Defence Partnership

- In a landmark visit, the Indian Chief of Naval Staff, General Manoj Mukund Naravane visited Saudi Arabia in December 2020.
- As on date, two editions of the bilateral naval exercise "**Al Mohed al Hindi**" have been concluded.
- Additionally, both sides are also having close cooperation in the domain of defence industries and capacity building.

Indian Community in Saudi Arabia

- The~2.2 million strong Indian community is the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom.
  - 7% of the population of Saudi Arabia comprise of Indians who have a large part in the economic growth of the country.
- During PM's visit to Riyadh in October 2019, the two sides announced that **India's e-Migrate system** would be integrated with the **Kingdom's e-Thawtheeq system** to streamline the migration process for workers.
- The annual Hajj pilgrimage is another important component of bilateral relations.
- During Crown Prince's visit to New Delhi in February 2019, it was announced that India's Hajj quota would be increased by 24,975 in 2019, enabling 2,00,000 Indians to perform Hajj in August 2019.

Collaboration during COVID-19

In February and March, 2021, in two separate consignments, India provided 4.5 million **COVISHIELD vaccines to the Kingdom**. On the other hand, during the second wave, the latter provided India with COVID-relief material, particularly liquid oxygen.

Challenges

- **Trade Deficit** - India has a trade deficit of $31.3 billion with Saudi Arabia.
- **Regional Stability** due to the ongoing civil war in Syria, US-Iran hostility, Palestinian issue etc.
- **Growing presence of China** is also problematic for India.
  - China had helped to broker a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran earlier this year.
- Migrant workers bear the brunt of Saudi's (and other Gulf countries') **Kafala system**.

- The system is a **sponsorship system** that binds migrant workers to one employer. The employer, or sponsor, is responsible for the employees' visa and legal status.

Conclusion

- The stability and security of the Gulf region and the Indian subcontinent are closely interlinked. Keeping this in mind, India had initiated **Look West Policy** which accelerated its engagement with the Gulf region in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular.

- However, the task ahead for both the countries is to put into action the promising agreements signed between the two countries and taking stock of them from time to time for effective outcomes.

Diplomatic Tussle Between India and Canada

- Recently, Canada's PM Justin Trudeau announced in the Parliament that his govt. is investigating possible links between the Indian government and the assassination of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada.

- Later, Canada expelled a senior Indian diplomat, and India retaliated by expelling a senior Canadian diplomat.

India-Canada Bilateral Relation

- Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1947.

- Bilateral relation was elevated to a strategic partnership during PM Modi's visit to Canada in 2015.

Commercial Relations Between India And Canada

- **Bilateral Trade Relation**

  o India was Canada's 10th largest trading partner.

- **Export/import items**

No sign of diplomatic thaw

- India **suspended visa applications** in Canada due to unspecified security threats.
  - **In 2021, Canada was 4th largest source of tourists in India.**
- India also demanded Ottawa to **reduce its diplomatic staffing in India.**
  - This was demanded on the grounds of interference in domestic affairs in an escalation of the festering diplomatic crisis between the two countries.
- Earlier, New Delhi had advised all Indian nationals in Canada, as well as those who were planning to visit that country, to exercise utmost caution.
  - This was against the backdrop of growing anti-India activities and politically-condoned hate crimes and criminal violence in Canada.
- The two countries are learnt to have paused their negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement.
- Also, the intelligence was shared among Five Eyes Alliances.
  - India is a close partner of many members of this alliance.

  o Major items of exports to Canada include gems, jewellery and precious stones, pharmaceutical products, ready-made garments, etc.

  o On the other hand, India imports pulses, newsprint, wood pulp, asbestos, potash, iron scrap, copper, minerals and industrial chemicals from Canada.

- **Major agri-imports from Canada**

  o The first is **muriate of potash (MOP),** the third most consumed fertiliser in India after urea and di-ammonium phosphate.

    - Canada was India's largest MOP supplier last year, followed by Israel, Jordan, Belarus

- o The second major item is **masur or red lentil**. India is a significant importer of pulses, with masur being the biggest after arhar/tur or pigeon-pea.
    - Canada is India's largest masur supplier, followed by Australia.
- **CEPA/EPTA negotiations**
    - o In March 2022, the two countries had agreed to re-launch the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations.
    - o Both the countries also decided to have an interim agreement or Early Progress Trade Agreement (EPTA) that could bring commercial gains to both.

Development cooperation

- After 55 years of bilateral programming in India totaling $2.39 billion, Canada's bilateral development assistance program came to an end in 2006.
    - o This was following a change in Indian government policy regarding aid.
- Canada supports various projects in India via Grand Challenges Canada.
    - o The main programming sector of the *Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch* is maternal, newborn and child health, which includes support to early childhood development.

INDIA AND CANADA, IN NUMBERS

Canada accounts for just 0.56% of the total FDI in India.
DPIIT data show total FDI equity inflow between April 2000 to June 2023 was $645,386.0884 mn, of which only $3,642.5243 mn came from Canada.

But Canada is home to 5.26% of overseas Indians
Of the 3,21,00,340 overseas Indians, 5.26% (16,89,055) are in Canada, including 1,78,410 NRIs and 15,10,645 PIOs, according to MEA data.

And every 7th Indian student abroad is in Canada
In 2022, of the estimated 13,24,954 Indian students abroad, 13.83% (1,83,310) were in Canada, according to Ministry of External Affairs data.

Canada is 4th largest source of tourists in India (2021)
Canada accounted for 5.3% (80,437) of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India in 2021; 72.6% of Canadian FTAs were members of the Indian diaspora. FTAs from Canada rose to 3,51,859 in the pre-pandemic year 2019 from 88,600 in 2001. Arrivals from Canada fell sharply post pandemic.

Bilateral trade is tiny; its balance is in India's favour
India's trade with Canada was $8,161.02 mn during FY 2022-23, just 0.70% of India's total trade of $1,165,000.88 mn. Canada was India's 35th biggest trading partner. The balance of trade is in India's favour; in 2022-23, India's exports to Canada stood at $4,109.74 mn, and imports at $4,051.29 mn.

Nuclear Cooperation

- Canadian aid to India in the nuclear field begun in 1956. However, this relationship deteriorated in 1974 after India conducted **Smiling Buddha nuclear test**.
    - o Canada was among the first countries to participate in India's nuclear power program.
    - o CIRUS, the first research reactor to be built in India, was built with the help of Canada.
- Later, in June 2010, the nuclear cooperation was restored when a Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) with Canada was signed.

Cooperation in Science and Technology

- Canada was a partner country for the Technology Summit 2017.
- Department of Biotechnology under **IC-IMPACTS program** implements joint research projects in health care, agri-biotech and waste management.
- Department of Earth Science and Polar Canada have started a programme for exchange of knowledge and scientific research on Cold Climate (Arctic) Studies.

Five Eyes (FVEY)

- It is an **intelligence-sharing alliance** between the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.
- The alliance was originally created in 1946 between the United States and the United Kingdom to share intelligence signals.
- Canada joined in 1949, and New Zealand and Australia joined in 1956. The alliance was made public in 2010 when files were released.

Cooperation in Space

- ANTRIX, the Commercial arm of ISRO, has launched several nano-satellites from Canada.
- ISRO in its 100th Satellite PSLV launched in 2018, also
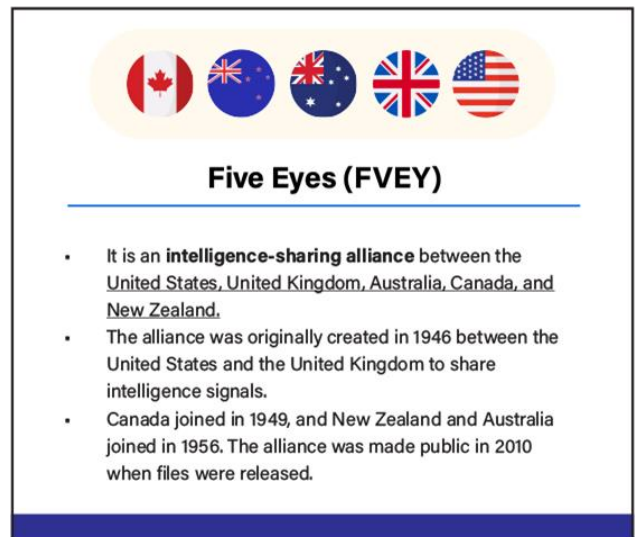
flew Canadian first LEO satellite.

Cooperation in Indo-Pacific

- In November 2022, **Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy was released**.
  - Canada, 20 per cent of whose population originates in the Indo-Pacific region, is the <u>last G7 nation to embrace the concept of the Indo-Pacific</u>.
- The Canadian strategy document contains sharp words on China's coercive challenge to the international rules-based order and on human rights.
- On the other hand, this document highlights India's strategic importance and asked Canada to work closely with India.

People-to-People contact

- Canada hosts one of the largest Indian diasporas in the world, numbering 1.6 million (PIOs and NRIs) which account for more than 4% of its total population.
  - In the field of politics, in particular, the present House of Commons (total strength of 338) has 22 Members of Parliament of Indian-origin.

Challenges in India-Canada relationship

- Separatist Khalistani groups
- Canada is slow to act against anti-India elements on its soil
- Attacks on Indian-origin people;
- Canadian comments over India's farmer protests and India's cancellation of diplomatic talks in response.

- For the first time, Canada Post and India Post joined hands to issue a commemorative stamp on Diwali in 2017. Diwali has been celebrated on the Parliament Hill for the last 18 years.

[For discussion on Khalistani movement in Canada, refer the topic "**Celebration of Indira Gandhi's killing in Canada**" from The Recitals – June 2023]

Modi-Biden Meet

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the US President Joe Biden held a bilateral meeting on the eve of the G20 meeting. The US president also reaffirmed his support for a reformed UN Security Council with India as a permanent member during the talks.

Key Outcome of Modi-Biden Meet

- **Joint statement released** which **hailed ties spanning seas to stars**.
  - Their 29-paragraph joint statement focused exclusively on the bilateral agenda.
    - It made no mention of regional and global issues, counter-terrorism or situation in the neighbourhood including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar.
- **Critical defence pacts and the procurement**
  - Both sides discussed the recent pact between GE Aerospace and Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) to <u>manufacture GE F-414 jet engines in India</u>; and
    - procurement of **31 General Atomics MQ-9B remotely piloted aircraft**.
  - The F414 engines will power the IAF's Light Combat Aircraft Mk2 jets.
    - Only a handful of countries such as the US, Russia, UK, and France have been able to master these specialised technologies needed to manufacture an engine that can power a combat aircraft.
  - Both the leaders applauded the conclusion of a second **Master Ship Repair Agreement**.

- The most recent agreement was signed by the U.S. Navy and Mazgaon Dock Shipbuilders, Ltd., in August 2023. This will advance India's emergence as a hub for the maintenance and repair of forward-deployed U.S. Navy assets.

- **Commitment to deepen and diversify the India-U.S. Major Defence Partnership**
  - This will be done through expanded cooperation in new and emerging domains such as space and AI, and accelerated defence industrial collaboration.

- **India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X)**
  - Both the leaders commended the INDUS-X team for establishing a robust collaboration agenda to harness the innovative work of the U.S. and Indian defence sectors to address shared security challenges.
    - The initiative aims to explore possibilities for co-producing jet engines, long-range artillery, and infantry vehicles.
  - INDUS-X had convened the inaugural Academia Start-up Partnership at IIT Kanpur.
  - It initiated the **Joint Accelerator Program** for Indian Startups in August 2023 at Hyderabad.

- **On Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET)**
  - iCET is a framework for India & US to collaborate on critical and emerging technologies.
  - The initiative was launched in January 2023 to strengthen the strategic partnership
  - Both sides decided on a midterm review of iCET in Sept. 2023 and to work towards an annual review, co-led by the National Security Advisors of both countries, in early 2024.

- **Space cooperation**
  - Space cooperation had formed a very important part of the joint statement during PM Modi's state visit to the US in June this year.
  - At that time, the two countries had announced that:
    - India would join the **US-led Artemis Accords** for planetary exploration, and
    - that the space agencies of the two countries, ISRO and NASA, would mount a **joint mission to the International Space Station in 2024**.
  - This time, leaders welcomed efforts towards **establishment of a Working Group for commercial space collaboration** under the existing India-US Civil Space Joint Working Group.
  - Announced their intention to **work together on planetary defence** to protect planet Earth and space assets from the impact of asteroids and near-Earth objects.
  - This also includes US support for India's participation in asteroid detection and tracking via the Minor Planet Center.

- **India-US Cancer Dialogue** will be launched in November 2023 and the US-India health dialogue in October 2023 in Washington DC.

- **On the nuclear side:** Both sides welcomed intensified consultations to expand opportunities for facilitating India-US collaboration in nuclear energy.
  - This includes the development of next generation small modular reactor technologies in collaborative mode.

- **Investment platform:** In June, both sides had envisaged a multi-billion-dollar investment platform to provide catalytic capital for greenfield renewable energy projects.
  - This time, each side agreed to *provide up to $500 million towards an investment fund*.

- **On Innovation Handshake:** It is a new initiative between India and US. It was announced in June 2023 during PM Modi's visit to US.

- It is aimed at addressing regulatory hurdles that stand in the way of cooperation between the two countries and promoting job growth in emerging technologies.
- This time, the two leaders decided to include two anchor events in the fall (one in India and one in the United States). The two sides will collaborate to bring together start-ups, private equity and venture capital firms to build linkages between the two countries' innovation ecosystems.

- **On trade disputes:** Both leaders lauded the settlement of the seventh and last outstanding India-US WTO dispute. This was beyond the settlement of 6 outstanding bilateral trade disputes in WTO in June 2023.

- **Setting up of a Global Challenges Institute:** Both leaders welcomed the increasing academic partnerships between Indian and American higher education institution.
  - This includes setting up of a **Global Challenges Institute** to strengthen research on sustainable energy, agriculture, health and pandemic preparedness.

- **Reiterated their stance on building resilient global semiconductor supply chains**
  - In a signal that highlights the two countries' growing distance from China, India also supported the US's **'Rip and Replace'** pilot project.
    - This project mandates that American companies tear out telecom equipment made by the Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE.
    - This move has already been implemented by New Delhi as part of its 5G launch.
  - Both leaders also acknowledged the setting-up of **two Joint Task Forces** focused on collaboration in the field of Open RAN and R&D in 5G/6G technologies.
    - Open RAN is an ongoing shift in mobile network architectures that enables service providers the use of non-proprietary subcomponents from a variety of vendors.
  - Both sides also welcomed the signing of an agreement between the **Bharat 6G Alliance** and **Next G Alliance**, as a first step towards deepening public-private cooperation between vendors and operators.
    - The **Bharat 6G alliance**, a public-private sector initiative, was formed after the PM said India would launch the next-generation high speed network by 2030.
    - The alliance aims to establish India as a supplier of IP, products and solutions of affordable 5G and 6G and other future telecom solutions.
    - It has all the three telcos – Jio, Airtel and Vi – as members along with companies like Tech Mahindra.

[For detailed discussion on India-US bilateral relation, refer the topic *"PM Modi's state visit to USA"* from The Recitals – June 2023]

G20 Summit 2023 -New Delhi Leaders' Declaration

The leaders at India's G20 Summit 2023 arrived at a joint communique — called the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration.This is a significant victory for India's G20 presidency that came amid increasing tensions and divergent views over the Ukraine conflict.

THE NEW DELHI DECLARATION

ON UKRAINE WAR

ALL STATES must act in a manner consistent with purposes and principles of UN charter in its entirety.

THEY MUST REFRAIN from threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition against territorial integrity and sovereignty or political independence of any state; also from use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible.

PEACEFUL RESOLUTION of conflicts, and efforts to address crises as well as diplomacy and dialogue are critical.

"THERE WERE different views and assessments of the situation."

"TODAY'S ERA must not be of war."

ON GRAIN/FOOD/ENERGY SECURITY

CALLS ON Russia and Ukraine to ensure immediate and unimpeded deliveries of grain, foodstuffs, and fertilizers/inputs from Russia and Ukraine.

EMPHASISING importance of sustaining food and energy security, called for cessation of military destruction or other attacks on relevant infrastructure.

POTENTIAL FOR high levels of volatility in food and energy markets remains.

ON ECONOMIES & FINANCIAL MARKETS

"WILL PROTECT the vulnerable, through equitable growth and enhancing macroeconomic and financial stability."

REAFFIRM April 2021 exchange rate commitment made by G20 finance ministers and central bank governors.

ENDORSE financial stability board's high-level recommendations for regulation, supervision and oversight of crypto-assets, activities.

FINANCE MINISTERS and central bank governors will discuss taking forward the cryptocurrency roadmap at their meeting in October.

RENEW our commitment to ensure a level-playing field and fair competition by discouraging protectionism, market distorting practices.

ON CLIMATE CHANGE

NEED TO ACCELERATE efforts to phase down unabated coal power, in line with national circumstances.

WILL WORK towards facilitating low-cost financing for developing countries to support their transition to low carbon.

WILL PURSUE and encourage efforts to triple renewable energy capacity globally through existing targets and policies, in line with national circumstances by 2030.

REITERATE our commitment to take action to scale up sustainable finance.

REITERATE use of carbon pricing and non-pricing mechanisms and incentives toward carbon neutrality and net zero.

RECOGNISE need for increased global investments to meet our climate goals of the Paris agreement.

NOTE NEED OF $5.8-5.9 trillion in pre-2030 period required for developing countries, in particular for their needs to implement their emission targets.

CALLS ON parties to set an ambitious, transparent, and trackable New Collective Quantified Goal of climate finance in 2024, from a floor of $100 billion a year.

ON GLOBAL DEBT VULNERABILITIES

COMMIT TO promoting resilient growth by urgently and effectively addressing debt vulnerabilities in developing countries.

CALL FOR swift conclusion of the debt treatment for Ethiopia.

ON HEALTH

REMAIN COMMITTED to strengthening global health architecture.

WILL ENHANCE resilience of health systems and support development of climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems in collaboration with multilateral banks.

- **Uniqueness of the Declaration**
  - The communique is <u>filled with deliverables</u> on a range of issues. It is also crafted in a different way — not the usual paragraphs that are structured in a joint declaration.
  - Instead, it starts with a preamble, and then has 10 chapters, and ends with a conclusion.
- **On Ukraine**
  - The big sticking point was the Ukraine-Russia conflict, which was addressed in detail in seven paragraphs. This is much more elaborate than the Bali Declaration, which had just two paragraphs.
  - The Russia-Ukraine paragraphs did not condemn Russia for its actions, nor did it call it an aggression. But the West also got what it wanted.
- **Strong, Sustainable, Balanced, and Inclusive Growth**
  - It talks about the global economic situation, advancing financial inclusion, and fighting corruption. It vows to implement the **Action Plan against Fugitive Economic Offenders** that will help strengthen international cooperation and information sharing.

- **Accelerating Progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
  - This is about <u>eliminating hunger and malnutrition, health collaboration and delivering quality education</u> among others.
  - One of the important elements is on how **future pandemics can impact** the economy, which also brings out the gaps in the existing pandemic response mechanism, including institutional and funding arrangements.
  - **On education**, it talks about <u>enhancing teachers' capacity, improved curricula, content in local language, and access to digital resources</u>.
    - This will ensure that all children, including the most marginalised, are provided with the essential building blocks for all future learning.

- **Green Development Pact for a Sustainable Future**
  - It stresses the need to implement clean, sustainable, just, affordable, and inclusive energy transitions.
  - One important element is the mention of the need to build *reliable, diverse, responsible, and sustainable<u>value chains of critical minerals, semiconductors, and related technologies.</u>*

- **Reforming Multilateral Institutions for the 21st Century**
    - reform of the UN Security Council was agreed to for the first time in the G20; and
    - there was a strong push towards reforms for better, bigger, and more effective Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).
  - They also called for **managing debt vulnerabilities** of low and middle-income countries and the start of exchange of tax-relevant information on crypto assets by 2027.

- **Technological Transformation & Digital Public Infrastructure**
  - This chapter contains elements of building digital public infrastructure, crypto-assets, and harnessing Artificial Intelligence (AI) responsibly for Good and for All.
  - On AI, they agreed to pursue a pro-innovation regulatory/governance approach that maximises the benefits and takes into account the risks associated with the use of AI.
  - The G20 leaders agreed on a **G20 framework for digital public infrastructure** and **Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository (GDPIR)**.
    - The framework calls for building interoperable solutions and formulating laws that can ensure that DPIs are safe, secure, trusted, and governed transparently.
  - It also talks about a **comprehensive toolkit** <u>which is aimed at improving cyber education and cyber awareness</u> for the protection and empowerment of children and youth.
  - <u>Gathered consensus around creating a global regulatory framework for crypto-assets.</u>
    - They endorsed the Financial Stability Board's (FSB's) high-level recommendations for the regulation, supervision and oversight of crypto-assets activities.

- **Gender Equality and Empowering all Women and Girls**
  - It promotes equal rights to economic resources, property ownership, financial services, and inheritance for women.
  - It also supports women's organisations and networks, and closing gender gaps in agricultural access.
  - Under India's G20 Presidency, a decision to create a **full-fledged working group on women's empowerment** has been made. The group will prioritise gender equality, women's empowerment, leadership, and bring convergence across sectors at all levels.

- **On Countering Terrorism and Money Laundering**
    - It contains a strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and a positive message towards international peace and security.

- **Creating a More Inclusive World**
    - India's G20 Presidency has paved the way for the **African Union's permanent membership in the G20**.
        - This will make G20 more inclusive, deepen cooperation with Africa, and help realise its developmental aspirations.
    - Also, there is a commitment to promote respect for religious and cultural diversity,
    - It deplores all acts of religious hatred, including against religious symbols and holy books.

- **From Delhi, a vision for Brazil, South Africa, US**
    - In conclusion, there were a few broader takeaways that this Summit projected:
        - a strong commitment for future Presidencies including for the new cycle beginning in 2026 — Brazil in 2024, South Africa in 2025, and the US in 2026.
    - There was recognition of all Engagement Groups and Initiatives of India's G20 Presidency.
    - By conducting over 200 meetings in 60 cities across India, New Delhi has set a new template and a high bar — of taking G20 to the people.
    - The democratisation of diplomacy is a key takeaway from this successful exercise.

African Union in G20

- During the 18th G20 Summit, held in India, the African Union (AU) was admitted as a new member of the G20.

- This was barely three months after India floated the idea of including the organisation.

- The idea was floated in June this year, when PM Modi wrote to G20 leaders to propose that the African Union be given full membership at the upcoming Delhi Summit of G20.

- The idea germinated after the '**Voice of the Global South**' Summit in January 2023, in which most of the African Union's 55 countries had participated.
    - So far, only one country from the grouping — South Africa – was part of the G20.
    - Many African leaders had argued that Europe is represented by five countries as well as the European Union (EU), and the African Union merits similar representation as well.

For detailed discussion on African Union and importance of inclusion of AU in G20, refer the topic "**PM Modi calls for G-20 membership for African Union**" from The Recitals – June 2023.

G 20

- G-20, was a group of finance ministers and central bank governors from 19 individual countries and European Union. It was established in 1999.

- G20 was elevated to a forum of Heads of State/Government in 2008 to effectively respond to the global financial crisis of 2008.

- G-20 is a forum, not a legislative body, its agreements and decisions have no legal impact, but they do influence countries' policies and global cooperation.

- G20 members represent around 85% of global GDP, over 75% of global trade, and two-thirds of the world's population.

How is the G20 structured?

- The G20 works in three major tracks — <u>two of them are official and one is unofficial</u>.

- The official tracks are the **Finance Track and the Sherpa Track**. The unofficial track includes engagement groups or civil society groups.

- **Finance Track**

    o The Finance Track is headed by the finance ministers and central bank governors, who usually meet four times a year.

        ▪ Two meetings are usually held on the sidelines of the World Bank and IMF meetings.

    o It mainly focuses on <u>fiscal and monetary policy</u> issues such as the global economy, infrastructure, financial regulation, financial inclusion, international financial architecture, and international taxation.

    o Today, it has eight working groups.

- **Sherpa Track**

    o The Sherpa Track was established after the forum became a leaders' summit in 2008.

    o It consists of representatives of heads of state (Sherpa)

    o It focuses on socio-economic issues such as agriculture, anti-corruption, climate, digital economy, education, employment, energy, environment, health, tourism, trade, and investment.

    o There are 13 working groups within the Sherpa Track.

- **Engagement Groups**

    o The unofficial track comprises engagement or civil groups.

    o These groups often draft recommendations to the G20 Leaders that contribute to the policy-making process.

    o The engagement groups are as follows: Business20, Civil20, Labour20, Parliament20, Science20, SAI20, Startup20, Think20, Urban20, Women20, and Youth20.

20th ASEAN-India Summit

PM attended the 20th ASEAN-India Summit that was hosted by Indonesia (at Jakarta) as current Chair of ASEAN. This <u>current ASEAN-India Summit was the first Summit</u> since the elevation of India-ASEAN relations to a *Comprehensive Strategic Partnership* in 2022.

Key Outcome of the 20th ASEAN-India Summit

- **PM Modi announced a decision to establish an Indian Embassy in Timor Leste**

- **Two Joint Statements were adopted regarding:**

Maritime Cooperation	Food Security and Nutrition

- **Joint Statement on strengthening food security and nutrition in response to crises**

    o It recognised the inter-connectedness and vulnerabilities of the Indo-Pacific region in the face of the regional and global challenges. Thus recognising the importance of joint efforts and mutual support in the region and beyond to strengthen food security and nutrition.

o   Millets found a prominent place in the document.

o   It supported ASEAN-India preparedness for long-term resilience and sustainability of agrifood system.

- **Joint statement on maritime cooperation:** Areas such as safety and security of maritime areas, maritime domain awareness, disaster management etc. have been covered.

Key Highlights Of The Speech Delivered By PM Modi At 20th ASEAN-India Summit

- **Highlighted the importance of ASEAN:** PM reaffirmed ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific.

o   ASEAN is the central pillar of India's Act East Policy.

o   He highlighted the synergies between India's *Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative (IPOI)* and *ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).*

- **Presented a 12-point proposal for strengthening India – ASEAN cooperation**.

o   The proposal covered connectivity, digital transformation, trade and economic engagement, addressing contemporary challenges, people-to-people contacts and deepening strategic engagement.

12 proposals are as follows:

Establishing multi-modal connectivity and economic corridor that links South-East Asia-India-West Asia-Europe

Offered to share India's Digital Public Infrastructure Stack with ASEAN partners

Announced ASEAN-India fund for Digital Future focusing on cooperation in digital transformation and financial connectivity

Announced renewal of support to Economic and Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) to act as knowledge partner for enhancing our engagement.

Called for collectively raising issues being faced by Global South in multilateral fora

Invited ASEAN countries to join Global Centre for Traditional Medicine being established by WHO in India

Called for working together on Mission LiFE

Offered to share India's experience in providing affordable and quality medicines through Jan-Aushadhi Kendras

Collective fight against terrorism, terror financing and cyber-disinformation

Invited ASEAN countries to join Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

Cooperation in disaster management

Enhanced cooperation on maritime safety, security and domain awareness

ASEAN

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional grouping that aims to promote economic and security cooperation among its ten members:

- **Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.**
  - Timor-Leste joined the ASEAN in 2022 as an Observer. ASEAN has agreed in principle to accept **Timor-Leste as its 11th member.**
  - The decision was made in Phnom Penh(Cambodia), where the 40th and 41st ASEAN summits were held.

- ASEAN countries have a total population of 662 million people and a combined GDP of $3.2 trillion as of 2022.
- ASEAN has an anthem, a flag and biannual summits (twice a year) with a rotating chairmanship.
- Establishment: It was established in August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the founding fathers of ASEAN: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Motto: "One Vision, One Identity, One Community". Secretariat: Jakarta, Indonesia.

India's Link With ASEAN

- **ASEAN and Act East Policy:** ASEAN is central to India's Act East policy, which focuses on the extended neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific region.

- **India among the dialogue partners:** India is part of the ASEAN Plus Six grouping, which includes China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia as well.

- **Trade and Investment**

o   In 2010, India-ASEAN FTA in goods were signed. FTA in services were signed in 2014.

o   ASEAN is India's **4th largest trading partner**. Total trade stood at $110.4 billion in 2021-22.

- **Institutional cooperation**
  - India – ASEAN summit-level partnership in 2002;
    - The year 2022 marked 30 years of ASEAN-India relations and it was designated as **ASEAN-India Friendship Year**.
  - Ties were elevated to a **strategic partnership** in 2012 and **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** in 2022.
  - India and ASEAN have strengthened defence cooperation by the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+).

43rd ASEAN Summit 2023

- ASEAN Summit 2023 was held at Jakarta, Indonesia.
- The theme of this year's ASEAN Summit is **'ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth.'**
- The participating leaders decided that Myanmar won't be allowed to lead the ASEAN in 2026.
  - This move is considered as the latest blow to efforts by its ruling generals to gain international recognition after violently seizing power in 2021.
- The Philippines agreed to take over the regional bloc's chairmanship in 2026.

India-Middle East-Europe Mega Economic Corridor

- PM Modi announced the launch of the **India-Middle East-Europe mega economic corridor** on the sidelines of the G20 summit.
- The project includes India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, European Union, France, Italy, Germany and US.
- The project aims to foster economic growth and political cooperation. It would help to boost trade, transport energy resources and improve digital connectivity.

About the India-Middle East-Europe Mega Economic Corridor (IMEC)

- **Part of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII)**
  - While its details are yet to come out, the project is a part of the PGII - a West-led initiative for funding infrastructure projects across the world.

THE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR
- - - Sea Route
— Rail Route
Haifa, Al Haditha, Riyadh, Dubai/Jebel Ali, Piraeus, Haradh, Al Gheweifat, Mumbai

  - First announced in 2021, PGII is a collaborative effort by G7 nations to fund infrastructure projects in developing nations. It was launched officially in 2022.
  - The PGII collectively aims to **mobilise nearly $600 billion from the G7 by 2027** to invest in critical infrastructure for the people of the Global South.
  - This project is also called as a **green and digital bridge across continents and civilizations**.
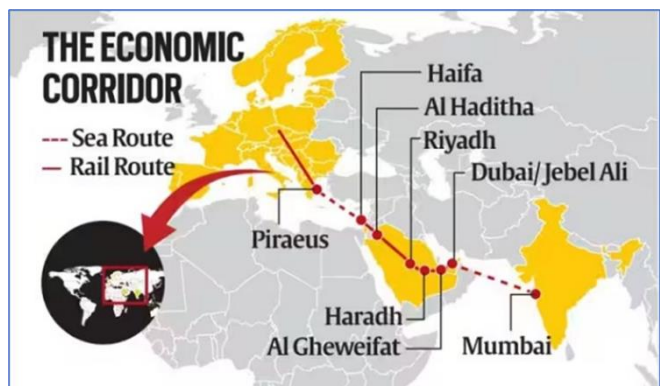
- **Route**
  - The plan seeks to bolster trade between India, the Middle East as well as Europe.
  - It will establish a **modern-day Spice Route** to bind regions <u>that account for about a third of the global economy</u>.
    - The Spice Route was a network of sea routes that connected the East and West for over two thousand years.
    - The route stretched from the west coast of Japan, through the islands of Indonesia, around India to the lands of the Middle East, and from there, across the Mediterranean to Europe.

- **Projects**
  - The project would involve the building of a railway line across the *Arabian Peninsula through the UAE and Saudi Arabia.*It will develop **shipping connectivity** to India and Europe on either end of this corridor.
    - One proposed project would link **railway and port facilities** across the Middle East — including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel.
  - The corridor will also include <u>an electricity cable, a hydrogen pipeline and a high-speed data cable</u>
  - This would **speed up trade between India and Europe by up to 40 percent**.

Significance of India-Middle East-Europe mega economic corridor

- **A game-changer**
  - Global trade: It presents an <u>alternative to China's wide-ranging strategic infrastructure investments</u>.
  - The corridor would increase prosperity among the countries involved by increasing the flow of energy and digital communications.
  - The project would help to address the <u>lack of infrastructure</u> needed for growth in lower- and middle-income nations.
    - The enhanced infrastructure would boost economic growth, help <u>bring countries in the Middle East together.</u>
    - It will help establish that region as a hub for economic activity instead of as a source of challenge, conflict or crisis.

- **Countering China**
  - This project comes at a time when Saudi Arabia and the UAE, both old allies of US, have been strengthening their ties with China.
    - These countries seek to enhance relations with rapidly growing eastern economies.
  - China has also boosted ties with the Middle East of late, helping to

Several new geopolitical trends underlined by IMEC

Breaks the myth that India-US cannot work together in Middle East

- The conventional wisdom in Delhi said India and the United States might work together in the Indo-Pacific but had little in common in the Middle East.
- That myth was broken when India and the United States joined hands with Israel and the United Arab Emirates to set up the I2U2 forum to develop a few joint economic projects.
- The India-Arabia-Europe corridor could turn out to be far more consequential.

Breaks Pakistan's veto over India's overland connectivity to the West

Since the 1990s, Islamabad was adamant in its refusal to let India gain access to land-locked Afghanistan and Central Asia.

India's strategic engagement with the Arabian Peninsula

- The Indian govt now has an opportunity to build enduring connectivity between India and Arabia.
- The current project will restore **India's role as a driver in shaping regional connectivity.**

India- Middle East and Europe corridor

Mobilisation of Europe into the infrastructure development in the region

- The European Union had earmarked 300 million Euros for infrastructure spending worldwide during 2021-27.
- Its support for the new corridor will make the EU a major stakeholder in integrating India with Arabia and Europa.

broker a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran earlier this year.

- o During BRICS Summit 2023, the oil-rich Gulf states announced their intention to join the grouping, with China playing a leading role in this move.
- o The plan is being seen as an ambitious effort by Washington to counter China's Belt and Road initiative (BRI)
  - ▪ Of late, China's BRI has been facing a series of troubles due to rising loan defaults and slowing down on investments.
- **Significance for India**
  - o India was anxious about China's connectivity projects in the region under its BRI
  - o It was also frustrated by Pakistan's refusal to allow overland access.
  - o Its quest for credible connectivity through Iran into the Eurasian landmass did not yield much result.
    - ▪ Tehran is more open to India, but its confrontation with the West has cast a shadow over the commercial utility of corridors across Iran into Eurasia.
  - o Against this backdrop, India finally found a formula to connect to both Arabia and Europa.

Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA)

The Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) was formally launched by the Indian PM on the side-lines of the G20 Summit in New Delhi. India-led GBA would attempt to bring countries together to co-develop, accelerate technological advances in production processes, and **advocate for the use of biofuels particularly in the transport sector**.

About the GBA

- GBA is **an India-led Initiative** to develop **an alliance of Governments, International organisations and Industry to facilitate adoption of biofuels** through international cooperation.

- The initiative **aims to position biofuels as a key to energy transition and contribute to jobs and economic growth**.

- GBA will **offer capacity-building exercises** across the value chain, technical support for national programs and promoting policy lessons-sharing.

- It will facilitate **mobilising a virtual marketplace** in mapping demand and supply, as well as connecting technology providers to end users.

- It will also facilitate **development, adoption and implementation of internationally recognised standards**, codes, sustainability principles and regulations to incentivize biofuels adoption and trade.

Countries and Organisations which have Already Joined GBA

19 Countries

- 7 G20 countries supporting GBA: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, India, Italy, South Africa, USA.
- 4 G20 Invitee Countries supporting GBA: Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, UAE.
- 8 other countries supporting GBA: Iceland, Kenya, Guyana, Paraguay, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Finland.

12 international organisations

- World Bank, Asian Development Bank, World Economic Forum,
- World LPG Organisation, UN Energy for All,
- UNIDO, Biofutures Platform, International Civil Aviation Organization,
- IEA, International Energy Forum, International Renewable Energy Agency and World Biogas Association.

GBA Members constitute major producers and consumers of biofuels

USA (52%), Brazil (30%) and India (3%), contribute about 85% share in production and about 81% in consumption of ethanol.

Significance of GBA

- **Quest towards sustainability and clean energy** - Biofuels are significantly cleaner than the conventional fossil fuels.

- **Cater to common global goods** – It will ensure climate change mitigation through reduced carbon emissions, achieving SDGs and circular economy.
- **Ensuring the affordability of biofuels** – It will do so by securing the supply of biofuels.

Significance of the GBA Initiative for India

- **Help strengthen India's position globally:**GBA as a tangible outcome of the G20 presidency, showcases the **action-oriented nature of India's positive agenda** as G20 President and represents the "**Voice of the Global South**".
- **Provide opportunities to Indian industries:** The alliance will focus on **collaboration** and will provide additional opportunities to Indian industries in the form of exporting technology and exporting equipment.
- **Help accelerate India's existing biofuels programs:**It will contribute to increased farmers' income, creating jobs and overall development of the Indian ecosystem.
    - E.g. SATAT, and GOBARdhan scheme.
- **Biofuels growth potential:**The global ethanol market was valued at USD 99.06 billion in 2022 and is predicted to grow at a CAGR of 5.1% by 2032 and surpass USD 162.12 billion by 2032.
    - As per International Energy Agency (IEA), **there will be 3.5-5x biofuels growth potential by 2050**due to Net Zero targets, creating a huge opportunity for India.
- **Reducing import dependency of crude oil:** India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 85% of its requirement of the commodity.
    - Increasing the use of biofuels is a key tool towards two ends - reducing dependency on energy imports and **limiting the carbon footprint of the country's rapidly growing energy use.**

India's Achievements

- Achieved the target of 10% ethanol blending in petrol, months ahead of the targeted timeline of November 2022;
- Govt advanced the deadline for pan-India E20-petrol (20% blended ethanol) -rollout to 2025-26 from 2030;
- Govt is aiming at blending diesel with suitable biofuels and natural gas with biogas.

Island In Pacific Ocean
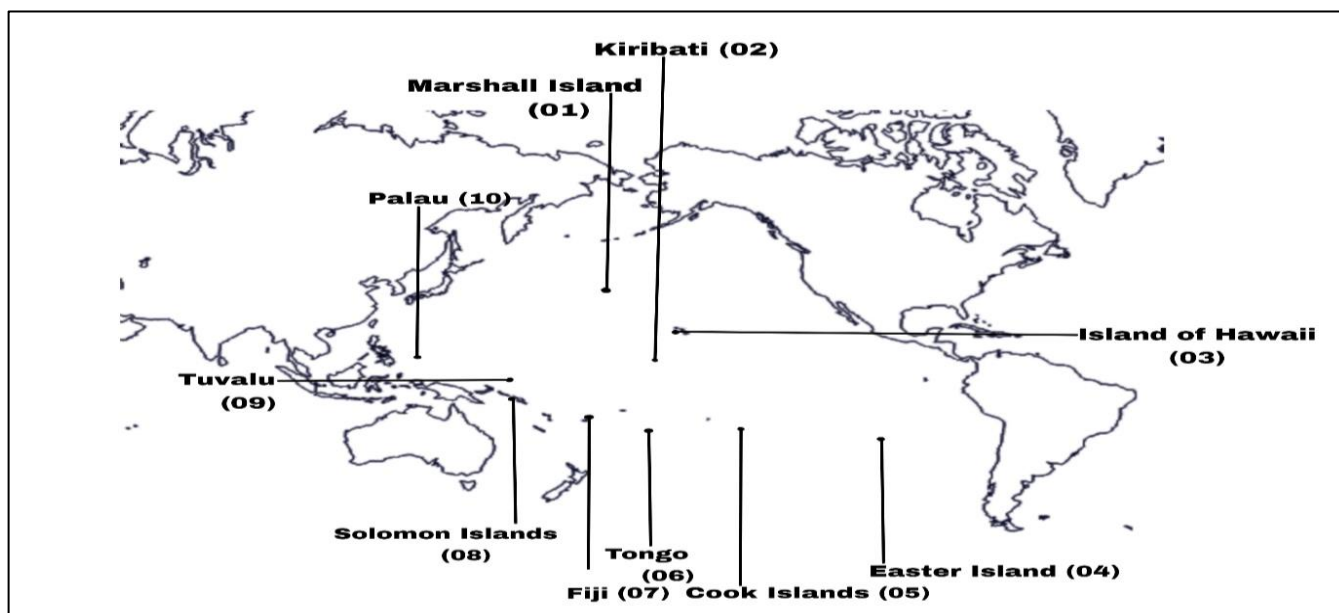
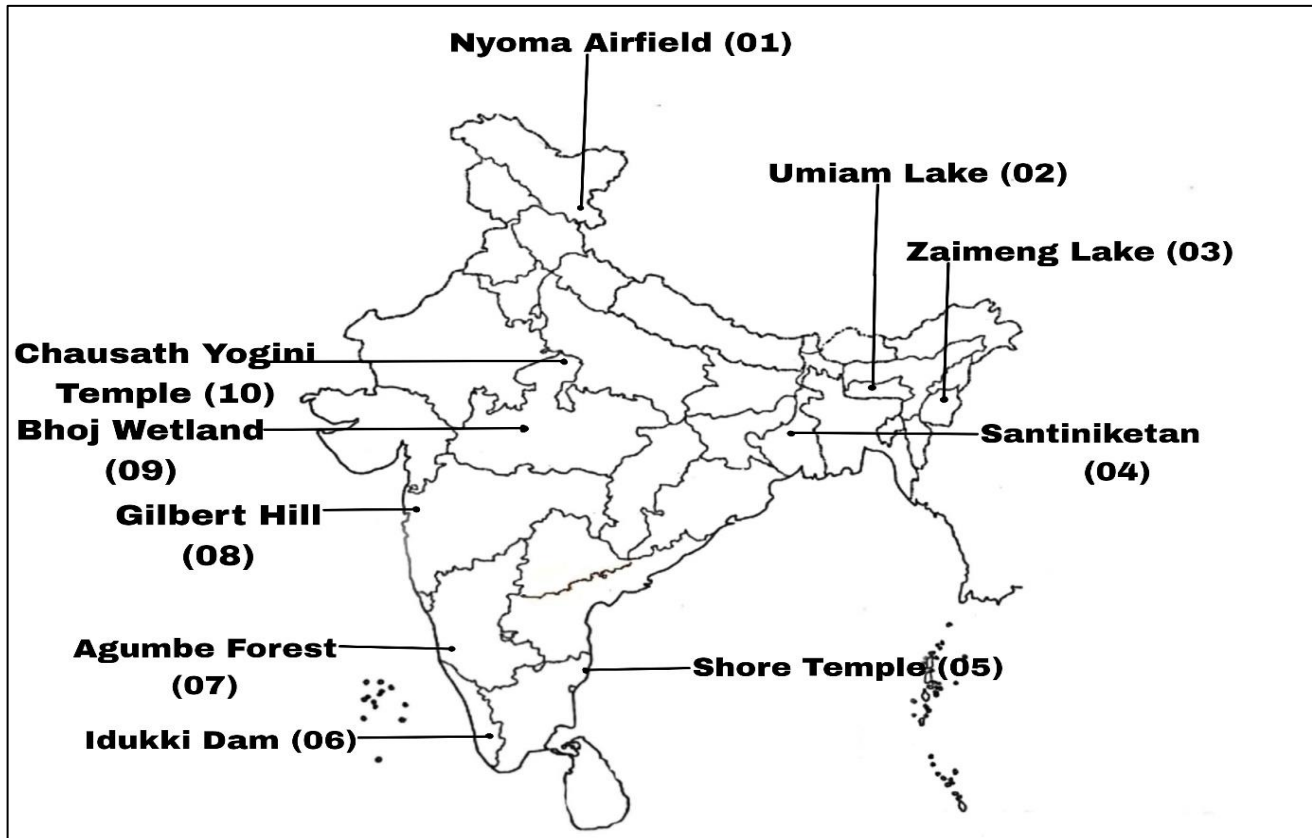| 01	Marshall Island	It is an island country near Kiribati in the Pacific Ocean, slightly west of the International Date Line and just north of the equator. The capital and largest city of the country is Majuro. The country is part of the larger island group of Micronesia.
02	Kiribati	It is a group of 33 islands, of which only 20 are inhabited, are scattered over a vast area of ocean. It is made up of three distinct island groups - the Gilbert Islands, the Line Islands, and the Phoenix Islands.
03	Island of Hawaii	These are an archipelago of eight major volcanic islands. Mauna Loa is the largest shield volcano on Earth located in this Island.
04	Easter Island	It is an island and special territory of Chile, at the south-easternmost point of the Polynesian Triangle in Oceania. In 1995, UNESCO named Easter Island a World Heritage Site, with much of the island protected within Rapa Nui National Park.
05	Cook Islands	It comprises 15 islands. In 1965 the Islands become a self-governing territory in free association with New Zealand.
06	Tonga	It is a Polynesian country and also an archipelago consisting of 171 islands of which 45 are inhabited. Tonga is a constitutional monarchy and a member of the British Commonwealth.
07	Fiji	It is an island country in Melanesia, part of Oceania in the South Pacific Ocean. The majority of Fiji's islands were formed by volcanic activity.
08	Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands, country in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. It consists of a double chain of volcanic islands and coral atolls in Melanesia.
09	Tuvalu	It was formerly known as the Ellice Islands. It is composed of three reef islands and six atolls. Due to the lack of land above sea level, Tuvalu is often referred to as the first country that will be totally submerged, due to climate change.
10	Palau	It is an island country in the Micronesia sub-region of Oceania in the western Pacific. Palau is also best known for unique limestone islands that make up part of the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon, a natural and cultural UNESCO World Heritage Site.

01	**Nyoma airfield**	Minister of Defence has laid foundation stone for Nyoma airfield in Eastern Ladakh. Nyoma village is located close to south Bank of Pangong Tso. It hosts an Indian Air Force Base within the Leh district. Nyoma is notably home to an Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) established in 1962.Border Roads Organisation will construct India's highest fighter airfield in Nyoma.
02	**Umiam Lake**	It is also known as Barapani Lake. The Meghalaya government adopted AI-enabled robotic technology in Umiam Lake to keep it free of pollutants. It was created by damming the Umiam River in the early 1960s. It is encircled by lush green East Khasi hills. It is one of the biggest artificial lakes in Meghalaya
03	**Zaimeng Lake**	A team of scientists recorded a new species of salamander the Tylototritonzaimeng in the Zaimeng Lake.It is situated on top of Khongtheng mountain ranges, Manipur.The greater part of the lake is basically a marshy mass of thick grass like weeds, mixed with reeds and green mosses.
04	**Santiniketan**	It has been designated as India's 41st UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is a renowned cultural and educational hub located in the Birbhum, West Bengal. It started as an ashram (hermitage) founded by Rabindra Nath Tagore's father, Debendranath Tagore in 1901. In 1921, it evolved into a "world university" known as "Visva Bharati." It was originally called Bhubadanga.
05	**Shore Temple**	The Historic Shore Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site, has achieved a significant milestone by becoming India's 1st Green Energy Archaeological Site. It is a historic temple complex located in Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. It was probably built during the reign of Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha (Pallava ruler), who reigned from 700 to 728 CE.
06	**Idukki dam**	Major security breach reported from Idukki dam. It is double-curvature Arch dam constructed across the Periyar River in Kerala. It is the 3rd-highest arch dam in India

		after the Tehri Dam (Uttarakhand) and Bhakra Nangal Dam (Himachal Pradesh).
07	**Agumbe Forest**	The amount of rainfall received in Agumbe has reduced as compared to the other towns in the region. It is located in Shivamogga, Karnataka and referred as "Cherrapunji of South India", with an average rainfall of 8000 mm. It is also located adjacent to the Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary and the Kudremukh National Park. It is the world's only natural habitat of the King Cobra and referred as "The Cobra Capital"
08	**Gilbert Hill**	The Maharashtra Government proposed to develop Gilbert Hill into a tourist spot. It is a monolith column of black basalt rock in Maharashtra,Mumbai. It was formed when molten lava was squeezed out of the Earth's clefts during the Mesozoic Era about 66 million years ago. It was declared a National Park in 1952 under the Forest Act. The 'hill' is one of just three volcanic rock outcrops (visible exposures of bedrock or other geologic formations at the surface of the Earth) on the planet
09	**Bhoj wetland**	The National Green Tribunal (NGT) ordered the Madhya Pradesh government to stop the operation of cruise vessels in the Bhoj wetland.It consists of two contiguous human-made reservoirs, the upper and lower lakes, located in the city of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.The lakes are very rich in biodiversity, particularly for macrophytes, phytoplankton and zooplankton. It was designated as the Ramsar site in 2002.
10	**Chausath Yogini temple**	It is believed that the design of the old Parliament building was inspired from Chausath Yogini temple. It is located in mitaoli village in Madhya Pradesh. The temple is circular, with 64 chambers dedicated to the 64 yoginis, and a central shrine dedicated to Shiva. It was built around 1323 by King Devapala of the Kachchhapaghatadynasty. It is hypaethral, which means it has no roof and no shikharas.

International Places In News
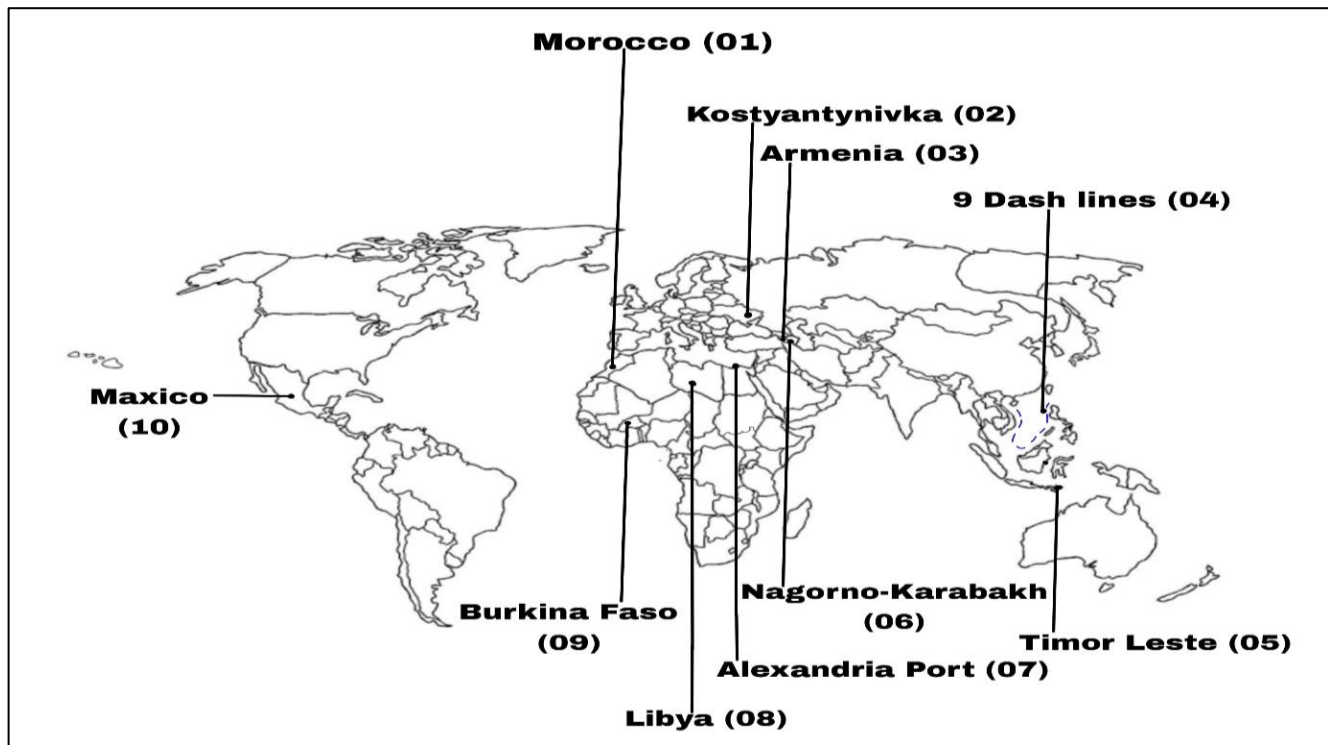
01	**Morocco**	A powerful earthquake of magnitude 6.8 struck central Morocco. It is a mountainous country in western North Africa that lies directly across the Strait of Gibraltar. Its largest city is Casablanca and capital is Rabat. It shares its borders

		with Algeria, Western Sahara, Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. It is the only African country with coastal exposure to both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.
02	**Kostyantynivka**	Missile explosion in Kostyantynivka city is being seen as a result of a wayward Ukrainian rocket. The City is situated in eastern Ukraine, on the bank of Kryvyi Torets River. It developed into a major center for the production of iron, zinc, steel and glass during the Soviet era.
03	**Armenia**	Union Cabinet approved the MoU with Armenia on Cooperation in the field of sharing successful Digital Solutions implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation. It is a landlocked country in the Caucasus. It is bordered by Azerbaijan to the east, Iran to the south, Turkey to the west, and Georgia to the north. Yerevan is its capital, and largest city.
04	**9 Dash-lines**	Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and Philippines have rejected the new map of China as it depicts 9 Dash-lines as a Chinese Territory. It is a historical demarcation line on a map used by China to assert territorial claims in the South China Sea. China stakes claim to 90% of the South China Sea based on the U-shaped imaginary nine-dash line. Permanent Court of Arbitration of UNCLOS has ruled that China's claim in the area has no legal basis.
05	**Timor-Leste**	India has announced the opening of an embassy in Dili, capital of Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste is located in Southeast Asia, on the southernmost edge of the Indonesian archipelago, northwest of Australia. It shares its border with Timor Sea, Wetar Strait, Ombai Strait, and western Timor.
06	**Nagorno-Karabakh**	Azerbaijan has launched military operation against Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. The region is landlocked and referred to as Artsakh by Armenians. It was claimed by both Azerbaijan and Armenia after the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917. The territory is recognised as part of Azerbaijan, but its inhabitants are predominantly ethnic Armenians. The reason for the present-day war is that Azerbaijan has imposed an effective blockade on the only route into the enclave from Armenia, known as the Lachin Corridor.
07	**AlexandriaPort**	INS Sumedha, a Saryu class Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel (NOPV), arrived in Port Alexandria, for 'Exercise BRIGHT STAR-23.' It is located on the northern coast of Egypt, to the West of the Nile Delta. In ancient times, Alexandria was built between the Mediterranean Sea and Lake Mariut. The latter was connected to the River Nile via canals.
08	**Libya**	Eastern Libya experienced a catastrophic event as floods caused by Storm Daniel, brought widespread destruction. It is a country in the Maghreb region of North Africa. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Algeria, and Tunisia. It is the 4th-largest country in Africa. The largest city and capital isTripoli.
09	**Burkina Faso**	Burkina Faso orders the French embassy's defense attache to leave. It is a landlocked country in western Africa. It shares its boundaries with Mali, Niger, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo. Major river flowing through Burkina Faso is Black Volta, Red Volta and White Volta.
10	**Mexico**	Mexico's Supreme Court ruled that state laws prohibiting abortion are unconstitutional and violate women's rights. It is a country in the southern portion of North America. It shares its land border with United States, Guatemala and Belize and maritime boundary with the Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea.

Aadhaar Biometrics Not Reliable In India's Climate

- According to a report by global rating major, Moody's Investors Service, the biometric technology used by India's Aadhaar program is **unreliable** in hot and humid climates.

- The report also raised concerns about security and privacy vulnerabilities in centralized identification systems.

- The concerns come a year after CAG of India had pulled up the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) for Aadhaar's deficient data management.

What Moody's Has Said About Aadhaar

- **Aadhar integrates marginalised groups and expands welfare benefits access**

  o Moody's has noted that Aadhaar is the world's largest digital ID program.

  o It enables access to public and private services, with verification via fingerprint or iris scans, and alternatives like One-Time Pass-codes.

- **The system faces hurdles:** Including the burden of establishing authorisation and concerns about biometric reliability.

  o The system often results in service denials, and the reliability of biometric technologies, especially for manual labourers in hot, humid climates, is questionable.

Unique Identification Authority of India (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").
- It issues a unique 12-digit identification number to each individual in India.
- It serves as proof of identity and proof of address for residents of India.

Nodal Ministry
The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

Why The Reliability Concerns Are Alarming

- **Aadhar is the primary identity document** linked to a number of the government's welfare schemes. So, if the technology is not reliable, it might result in people not receiving various subsidies from the government that they are entitled to.

  o There are documented cases in Jharkhand of starvation deaths linked to Aadhar biometrics failing.

- **Widespread use of Aadhar - Statistics**

  o As of July 31, 2023, 765.30 million Indians had linked Aadhaar with ration card to avail ration through Public Distribution System(PDS).

  o Over 280 million residents linked Aadhaar with cooking gas connection for LPG subsidy through PAHAL.

  o Over 788 million Aadhaar have been uniquely linked with the Bank Accounts on NPCI Mapper.

  o And almost 100% of farmer-beneficiaries under PM Kisan Yojna are connected via Aadhaar.

Aadhaar's Recurring Concerns

- **Observations made by CAG:** There are issues of data-matching, errors in authentication, and shortfall in archiving in Aadhaar.

- **Lack of data archiving policy**

  o CAG has also criticised the absence of a system to analyse the factors leading to authentication errors. Even though UIDAI was maintaining one of the largest biometric databases in the world, it did not have a **data archiving policy**.

- Data archiving policy is considered as a vital **storage management** best practice.

- **Deprived revenue to the Government**
  - UIDAI provided Authentication services to banks, mobile operators and other agencies free of charge till March 2019. This is contrary to the provisions of their own Regulations and it deprived revenue to the Government.

Key Findings of the Parliament Panel on the New Education Policy

The Parliament Standing Committee on Education tabled a report during the **special session** of Parliament on the "Implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 in **Higher Education."**

Issues Discussed by the Committee

- rigid separation of disciplines,
- limited access to higher education in socio-economically disadvantaged areas,
- lack of higher education institutes (HEIs) that teach in local languages,
- limited number of faculty,
- lack of institutional autonomy,
- lesser emphasis on research,
- ineffective regulatory system
- low standards of undergraduate education.

Key Findings/Recommendations of the Committee

- The report noted that of the 1,043 universities functioning in the country 70% are under the State Act and that 94% of students are in State or private institutions with just 6% of students in Central higher educational institutions.
  - This highlights the **importance of States in providing higher education**.

About
National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

- Approved by the Union Cabinet in July 2020, it outlines the vision of India's new education system. The committee that drafted the NEP 2020 was headed by **ShriK Kasturirangan.**
- NEP 2020 focuses on five pillars: **Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, Equity, and Accountability** – to ensure continual learning.
- The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986 and forms a comprehensive framework to transform both **elementary and higher education** in India by 2040.
  - This is the 3rd such education policy since India's independence.
  - The earlier two were launched in **1968 & 1986.**
- There is much emphasis upon multi-disciplinarity, digital literacy, written communication, problem-solving, logical reasoning, and vocational exposure in the document.

- The panel said that by 2030, **every district in the country should have at least one multidisciplinary HEI and that the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education**, including vocational education, should be increased from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035.

- The panel asked the Union Government and the State Governments to take actions such as:
  - earmarking suitable funds for the education of Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs),
  - setting clear targets for higher Gross Enrolment Ratio for SEDGs,
  - enhancing gender balance in admissions to HEIs,
  - providing more financial assistance & scholarships to SEDGs in both public & private HEIs,
  - making admission processes and curriculum more inclusive,
  - increasing employability potential of higher education programmes and for developing more degree courses taught in regional languages and bilingually.

- The panel also recommended s**pecific infrastructural steps to help physically challenged students** and a strict enforcement of no-discrimination and anti-harassment rules.

- The Committee appreciated the manner in which the NEP was implemented in Jammu and Kashmir. It said that the Union Territory was among the first in the country to implement NEP from the academic session 2022 in all its higher educational institutions.

  - I**mproving effectiveness and impact of Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) in funding HEIs**. It asked the HEFA to diversify its funding sources beyond government allocations.

  - The panel said that Indian institutions were likely to face several issues in implementing the **multiple entry and multiple exit (MEME) system**. While the MEME looked like a flexible system, which was being operated by Western educational institutions effectively, <u>it might not work well in the country</u>.

Personality Rights Of Celebrities

- The Delhi High Court passed an interim order protecting the personality rights of Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor.

- Anil Kapoor sought to restrain the use of his name, the acronym AK, his voice, image, as well as his characters like Lakhan, Mr India, Majnu Bhai, Nayak and the phrase jhakaas with his photo without his consent. He is also seeking protection from use of any technology including AI deepfakes, GIFs etc.

Existing Legal/Constitutional Provisions In India

- The publicity rights are governed by statutes like **the Trademarks Act 1999 and the Copyright Act 1957.**

- With the 2017 judgment (**Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India**), the personality rights were elevated to the position of constitutional rights.

  - The ruling formally recognised the **right to privacy** as a fundamental right derived from the right to life and personal liberty, as provided by **Article 21**.

  - The court ruled that an individual may be permitted to prevent others from using his/her image, name and other aspects of his/her personal life and identity for commercial purposes without his/her consent.

The Personality Rights

About

- The name, voice, signature, images or any other feature easily identified by the public are markers of a celebrity's personality and are **referred loosely as personality rights.**
- These could include a pose, a mannerism or any aspect of their personality.
- Many celebrities even register some aspects as a trademark to use them commercially.
  - Eg, Usain Bolt's "bolting" or lightning pose is a registered trademark.
- The idea is that only the owner or creator of these distinct features has the right to derive any commercial benefit from it.

Legal/Constitutional basis

- Personality rights or their protection are not expressly mentioned in a statute in India. However, these rights are traced to fall under the **right to privacy and the right to property.**
  - Even as the Delhi High Court and the Madras High Court have passed interim orders, <u>the law is at a nascent stage in India.</u>

2 Types of personality rights

- **The right of publicity,** or the right to keep one's image and likeness from being commercially exploited without permission. <u>It is similar (but not identical) to the use of a trademark.</u>
- **The right to privacy** or the right to not having one's personality represented publicly without permission.

Other SC Judgements

- **Shivaji Rao Gaikwad (aka Rajinikanth) v. Varsha Production:** Though there is no definition for the personality right under any statute in India, there is still the recognition of personality right.

- **ICC Development (International) Ltd., Vs. Arvee Enterprises:** The right of publicity has evolved from the right of privacy and any effort to take away this right from the individuals would be violative of **Articles 19 and 21** of the Constitution of India.

Personality Rights On Internet

- In 2011, the Delhi HC (in Arun Jaitley vs Network Solutions Pvt Ltd) stated that the popularity or fame of individuals will be no different on the internet than in reality.

- Name, due to its peculiar nature/distinctive character, coupled with the gained popularity has become a well-known personal mark under the trademark law.

Personal Rights Vs Consumer Rights

- While celebrities are protected from commercial misuse of their name and personality, there have also been instances where the consumers are misled owing <u>to false advertisements or endorsements by such personalities</u>.

- Due to such cases, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs has made a notification - **Guidelines on Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022**, by imposing a penalty on the endorser.

With rapid changes in technology, there has been rampant misuse of personality attributes such as name, image, likeness, voice etc through tools like artificial intelligence. The present order sets a precedent against such misuse in the future.

Bima Sugam

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) will soon roll out **Bima Sugam** - an online (electronic) marketplace for buying and selling of insurance policies.

Bima Sugam

- **About**

  o It is an online platform where customers can choose a suitable scheme from multiple options given by various companies.

  o All insurance requirements, including those for life, health, and general insurance (including motor and travel) will be met by Bima Sugam.

  o It will help in the settlement of claims, whether it is health coverage or death claims, in a *paperless manner* on the basis of policy numbers.

- **Steps taken by IRDA**

  o IRDAI has appointed a committee for the creation of the platform.

  o It now plans to go for requests for proposals soon to appoint a service provider for the platform who will be technological partners for creating & running a platform to provide all the services in one place.

- **Ownership of this platform**

  o <u>Life insurance and general insurance companies will own a 47.5 per cent</u> stake each, while brokers and agent bodies will own 2.5 per cent each.

- **Timeline for the launch**

  o IRDAI initially wanted the Bima Sugam to be up and running by January 2023 but postponed it to August 1. It has now postponed the implementation to June 2024.

What Are Its Benefits

- **Single window for the policyholder** to manage his/her insurance coverage.

  o It will provide end-to-end solutions for customers' insurance needs i.e., purchase, service, and settlement in a seamless manner.

- **Empowerment of consumers**

  o Currently, there are hundreds of insurance schemes in the life and non-life sectors. Customers have no idea who is offering the best deal and the pros and cons of different schemes.

  o Bima Sugam will enable them to identify a suitable scheme for the customers in a single platform.

- **Benefits for insurance companies and intermediaries**

  o It will facilitate insurance companies to access the validated and authentic data from various touch points on a <u>real-time basis.</u>

- o The platform will be an interface for the intermediaries and agents to sell policies and provide services to policyholders and <u>reduce paperwork</u>.
- **Universalise and democratise insurance**
  - o This protocol will be connected with **India Stack** which is a set of APIs (application programming interface) that allows governments, businesses, startups, etc. to utilise the **unique digital infrastructure** to enable seamless delivery of services.

India's Health Priorities & G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration

All three health priorities of India's G20 Presidency found a mention in the G20 New Delhi Leader's Declaration.

India's Top 3 Health Priorities

- These were in line with the <u>economic and social disruption</u> caused by Covid-19 pandemic and what could be done to prevent such loses further.
- The three priorities included:
  - o **Building resilient systems** for health emergency prevention, preparedness and response.
  - o **Strengthening cooperation in pharmaceutical sector** with focus on ensuring equitable availability and access to vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics during a pandemic.
  - o **Creating a platform for sharing digital health innovations** and solutions to ensure better and universal health coverage, like **CoWIN** and **e-Sanjeevani**.

Incorporation of India's Health Priorities in G20 Declaration

- At the G20 meeting held in New Delhi under India's Presidency, the member states agreed to a joint statement. With reference to health priorities set by India, a general consensus was reached by the member countries (with some compromises).
  - o For example, India did not insist on countries contributing towards a **$200-million fund** for a digital health programme, or on a permanent platform for sharing knowledge, intellectual property rights, and resources for vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics.

About Digital Health Programme

- India committed to developing a platform for sharing scalable solutions under the WHO that can be utilized by its member states. This culminated in the launch of **Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)**. The GIDH comprises of –
  - o an **investment tracker**,
  - o a **repository** of existing digital health solutions, knowledge sharing for implementation & country-specific adaptation of these solutions, and
  - o an **ask tracker** to monitor the needs of different countries.
- India has committed to offering its vaccine management platform CoWIN, its tele-medicine platform e-Sanjeevani, and its Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission platform as digital public goods to others.

An Interim Medical Counter measure (MCM) Platform

- There was <u>no consensus on creating a permanent platform</u> for ensuring equitable access to medical counter-measures during a pandemic.
  - ✓ Examples of MCMs include biologic products (vaccines, blood products, antibodies), drugs (antimicrobials, chemical threat antidotes, treatments for radiation injury), and devices (diagnostic tests and personal protective equipment (PPE), which includes gloves, respirators/certain masks, and gowns.
- However, the committees agreed to develop an **interim platform** to promote an end-to-end network for research and manufacturing them till a legally binding pandemic treaty can be agreed upon.

- ✓ Interim platform should be led by an inclusive decision-making arrangement, including effective representation of low- and middle-income countries, and convened by the WHO.

- Although there is in principle agreement by the G20 member countries on the need for such a platform, there is no clarity yet on how soon the platform can be developed.

Traditional Medicines

- India's G20 presidency also pushed for **integration of evidence-based** traditional medicine practices with modern medicine. A global summit on traditional medicine was hosted on the sidelines of the G20 health ministers' meeting last month.

- The G20 outcome document acknowledges their potential in public health delivery systems, provided they are rigorously and scientifically validated.

Service Charge in Restaurants/Hotels

The Delhi High Court in an interim order has directed members of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Association of India (FHRAI) to replace the term '**service charge**' with '**staff contribution**'.

- The High Court also directed that the **such amount should not exceed 10% of the total bill (excluding GST)**.Going forward, the restaurants will now have to specify on their menus in bold that tips need not be given after staff contribution is paid.

What is Service Charge?

- A service charge is a fee charged to customers for something specific, such as a bank charging a fee for using an ATM that's not part of its network or a vendor charging a fee for making a payment with a credit card.
- It also may be called a customer service fee or maintenance fee.
- Restaurants and hotels generally levy a service charge of 10% on the food bill.

Nature of Service Charge in Restaurants/Hotels

- While the GST is a mandatory component as per law, the service charge is supposed to be optional.
- It is the equivalent of what is known as gratuity around the world, or tip, in casual parlance.

Background of the Present Case

- In July 2022, the **Central Consumer Protection Authority** (CCPA) had issued guidelines that **restaurants or hotels should not automatically add service charge to the bill or collect it from consumers under any other name**.

- The National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) and the FHRAI challenged this order in the Delhi High Court.

- Subsequently, last year, the Delhi High Court had stayed the CCPA guidelines subject to the association members ensuring that the levying of service charge in addition to the amount and taxes is "duly and prominently displayed on the menu or other places" along with the customer's obligation to pay the same.

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs and the CCPA also informed the High Court that over 1,105 complaints were registered by consumers on the National Consumer Helpline after the guidelines regarding unfair levying of service charges were issued.

- After this, the court granted time to the petitioner associations (NRAI & FHRAI) to respond to the government's stand while **extending the interim stay.**

Why Did CCPA Issue Such Guidelines?

- Service charge is used by restaurants/hotels to pay the staff and workers and is not charged for the experience or food served to consumer.

- Consumer Organizations observed that **levying service charge is patently arbitrary and constitutes an unfair as well as restrictive trade practice under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.

- **If any consumer finds that a hotel or restaurant is levying a service charge in violation of the guidelines, he/she can request the concerned establishment to remove it from the bill amount**.

- Consumers can also complain to the National Consumer Helpline (NCH), which works as an alternate dispute redressal mechanism at the pre-litigation level, by calling **1915** or through the NCH mobile app.
- They can also file complaints with the Consumer Commission. The complaint can be filed electronically through the **e-Daakhil portal** for its speedy and effective redressal.
    - **E-Daakhil is an online portal** launched by _National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC)_ in 2020 for facilitation of offline and online complaints relating to the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** by consumers.

Justice Amitava Roy Committee

Recently, the Supreme Court sought views of the Central and the State Governments on the **Justice Amitava Roy Committee report**.

- In September 2018, the Supreme Court had formed a **Committee on Prison Reforms** chaired by former judge, Justice Amitava Roy.
- The decision was taken based on a letter from former Chief Justice of India R.C. Lahoti highlighting the overcrowding in prisons, unnatural deaths of prisoners, gross inadequacy of staff and the lack of trained staff.
- **Objectives of the Committee –**
    - Examine the extent of overcrowding in prisons and correctional homes & recommend remedial measures;
    - Availability of legal aid and advice;
    - Grant of remission, parole and furlough;
    - Reasons for violence in prisons/correctional homes;
    - Recommend measures to prevent unnatural deaths and assess the availability of medical facilities in prisons/correctional homes.
- The court asked the committee to complete the collection of data and information and submit the report in a year. The committee submitted the final report in December, 2022.

Major Findings of the Committee

- **Crowding among Undertrials –**
    - Globally, one in three prisoners are undertrials. In India, **three out of four, or about 77% of the total prison population in 2021, were undertrials**.
- **Conditions of Female Prisoners –**
    - Women prisoners face far worse conditions than men in terms of access to basic facilities.
    - The report said that prisons only in Goa, Delhi and Puducherry allow female inmates to meet their children without any bars or glass separation.
    - Less than 40% prisons provide sanitary napkins to female inmates.
    - Only 18% of female prisoners get exclusive women's prison facilities, and functional women's prisons exist in just 15 states and union territories.
- **Number of Suicide Cases –**
    - Suicide is a major cause of the 817 unnatural deaths reported in jails across the country between 2017 and 2021.Out of the 817 unnatural deaths, 660 were suicides with Uttar Pradesh recording the highest number of suicides at 101.

Other Recommendations Made By The Committee

- **Reduce Violence amongst Prisoners –**
  - M**andatory segregation of undertrials, convicts and first-time offenders** inside jails, while producing them in courts, during their hospital visits, etc.
  - Prison administration should strive to comprehensively implement national and state health insurance schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat scheme, Chiranjeevi Health Insurance Scheme and similar state health insurance schemes in prisons.
  - It further suggested the need for a **robust grievance redressal mechanism** for the prisoners for registering their complaints.

- **Use of Video Conferencing as a Medium –** As far as possible, production of senior citizens and sick prisoners in courts should be done through video-conferencing medium.
- **Prevention of Suicide:** Jail staff should be regularly provided the requisite training to recognise "signs of depression and aberrant behaviour".

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overcrowding
- Segregation of undertrials, convicts and first-time offenders not only inside jails but also during production in courts, visit to hospitals or intra-jail movements
- Special fast-track courts to deal with petty offences pending for 5 years or more
- District and sessions judge to regularly monitor progress of cases pending in for more than one year in a session triable case and for more than six months in magistrate triable cases

Suicides
- Suggests suicide-proof barracks with collapsible material
- Identify potential hanging and anchoring points within the existing design of prison infrastructure

Transgender: The panel noted that only 13 states and 2 UTs have designated a 'complaint officer' to deal with complaints of violation of rights of transgender inmates. Majority of the states and UTs have not formulated welfare schemes for transgender prisoners. Existing welfare schemes are being extended to them

Deemed-to-be-University Status

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been granted the deemed-to-be-university status by the Ministry of Education on its 63rd Foundation Day

- NCERT has established a formidable presence in research, actively shaped school education, teacher training, and adult literacy.
- Hence, NCERT on becoming a research university **will offer opportunities for global collaborations and contributions to the global educational landscape.**
- With the status of a deemed university, NCERT will **offer its own graduate, postgraduate and doctoral degrees.**

About NCERT

- The NCERT is **an autonomous organisation set up in 1961** by the Government of India, under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- It was set up with the primary purpose **to assist and advise the Central and State Governments on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement** in school education.
- **The major objectives of NCERT and its constituent units are to:**
  - Undertake, promote and coordinate **research** in areas related to school education;
  - Prepare and publish model **textbooks**, supplementary material, etc. **For example,** JaduiPitara - a play-based learning-teaching material tailored for children between the age group of 3 and 8 years developed by NCERT.
  - Organise pre-service and in-service **training of teachers**;
  - **Develop and disseminate innovative educational techniques** and practices;
  - **Collaborate** and network with state educational departments, universities, NGOs and other educational institutions;

- o **Act as a clearing house** for ideas and information in matters related to school education; and
- o **Act as a nodal agency** for achieving the goals of Universalisation of Elementary Education.
- **The NCERT is an implementation agency** for bilateral cultural exchange programmes with other countries in the field of school education.

About Deemed Universities India

- Universities in India are recognised by the **University Grants Commission (UGC)**, which draws its power from the UGC Act, 1956.

- A deemed university or deemed-to-be-university is an **accreditation granted to higher educational institutions** (HEIs) in India.

- According to the Ministry of Education, a HEI (other than universities) that works at a very high standard in a specific field of study **might be designated as a 'Deemed-to-be-university' by the Central Government on the advice of the UGC**.

- This provision was introduced to ensure that more HEIs achieve university status for all practical purposes, because under the UGC Act, 1956, **university status can be obtained by institutes established under state or union laws**.

- Currently, the UGC lists **~130** institutes that have been given deemed university status. According to this list, the first institute to be given deemed university status was the **Indian Institute of Science in 1958** and Tamil Nadu has the most deemed universities (28).

- Such institutions <u>enjoy the academic status and privileges of a university</u>. Also, the status of deemed university allows for **complete autonomy** in terms of courses, curriculum, admissions and fees.
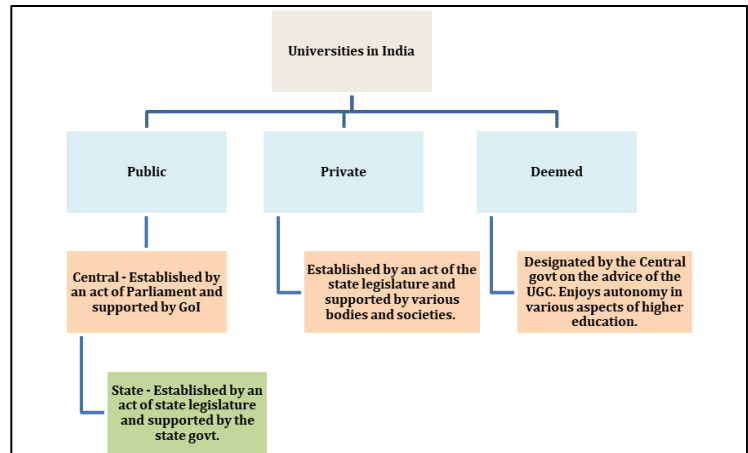
7 Years On, Mission To Clean The Ganga Remains A Work In Progress

As per one report, National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has, so far, installed treatment plants capable of treating just 20% of the sewage estimated to be generated in the five major States that lie along the river.

- The treatment plants will be capable of treating 60% of sewage by December 2026.

- Projects to set up sewage treatment plants (STPs) and sewerage networks are at the heart of the Namami Ganga mission, and account for about 80% of the overall project outlay.

- As of July 2023, STPs capable of treating 2,665 MLD (million litres per day) have actually been commissioned, and are now functional.

- The river's water quality is now within prescribed limits of notified primary bathing water quality.

- o A conspicuous sign of the improvement in water quality along the Ganga was a rise in the dolphin population — both adult and juvenile — from 2,000 to about 4,000.

- The NMCG is now <u>working to develop a water quality index</u>, on the lines of the air quality index, to be able to better communicate about river-water quality.
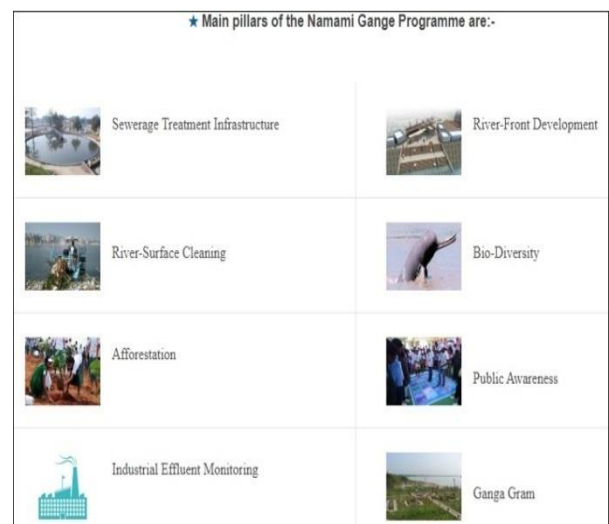
Key Achievements Under The Programme

- **Creating Sewage Treatment Capacity:** 98 sewage projects have been completed in the states of UK, UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, etc.

- **Creating River-Front Development:** Construction, modernisation, and renovation of 267 Ghats/Crematoria and Kunds/Ponds have been initiated.

- **River Surface Cleaning:** For collection of floating solid waste from the surface of the Ghats and River and its disposal are afoot and pushed into service at 11 locations.

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Cadre of volunteers (**Ganga Praharis**) have been developed and trained to support conservation actions in the field

- **Public Awareness**: Ganga Praharis and Ganga Doots are engaged in spreading awareness through planting trees, cleaning ghats, Ganga Aarti, painting and poems.

- **Industrial Effluent Monitoring:** Regulation and enforcement through regular and surprise inspections of Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) is carried out.

- **Deploying best available knowledge and resources across the world:** Clean Ganga has been a perennial attraction for many international countries that have expertise in river rejuvenation.

Challenges Faced During Project Implementation

- Several plants took time to be commissioned as there were problems with land acquisition.

- In many instances, the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) needed revision.

- Though NMCG is a ₹20,000 crore mission, the government has so far given in-principle approval for projects worth ₹37,396 crore. Of this, only ₹14,745 crore has been released to States for infrastructure work, as of June 2023.

About Namami Gange Programme

- It is **an integrated conservation mission,** approved as 'Flagship Programme' by the Union Government in **2014**

- It is administered by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti's** Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, **to accomplish the twin objectives of -**
  - Effective abatement of pollution,
  - Conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.

- Implemented by: **National Mission for Clean Ganga** (NMCG), and its state counterpart organisations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).
  - **NMCG is the implementation** wing of National Ganga Council (NGC), which replaced the National Ganga River Basin Authority.
  - NGC was created in 2016 under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016, and is headed by the PM.

- In order to implement the programme, **a three-tier mechanism** has been proposed for project monitoring comprising of:
  - A high-level task force chaired by **Cabinet Secretary** assisted by NMCG at the national level,
  - State level committee chaired by **Chief Secretary** assisted by SPMG at the state level
  - District level committee chaired by the **District Magistrate.**

- Its implementation has been divided into -
  - Entry-Level Activities (for immediate visible impact),
  - Medium-Term Activities (to be implemented within 5 years of time frame)
  - Long-Term Activities (to be implemented within 10 years).

UPI Crosses 10 Billion Monthly Transactions, Confirms NPCI

The service is not just being used extensively domestically - at least for small ticket transactions - but has also become a key part of India's foreign policy outreach

Status of UPI Transactions in India:

- Monthly transaction count on UPI **crossed 10.24 billion on 30 August**, with a net transaction value of **₹15.18 trillion**.

- Transactions on UPI have **grown by over 50% year-on-year**, with August last year registering 6.58 billion monthly transactions.

- UPI crossed 1 billion monthly transactions for the first time in October 2019, thus **taking less than four years to grow 4x in its adoption.**

Parivar Pehchan Patra

Haryana's Leader of Opposition (LoP) has promised to scrap the Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP)- flagship scheme of Haryana Government if voted to power in the state elections of 2024.

Background

PPP scheme was introduced by Haryana Government in the year 2020 to identify each family in Haryana and keep their basic data, provided with the consent of the family, in a **digital format**. The opposition criticized the scheme, alleging discrepancies in the data collection and flagging privacy concerns.

About the PPP Scheme

What is PPP ID?	It is a unique **eight-digit Identity number** that is issued to each family residing in Haryana as a single unit. All the residing families are required to enroll (obligatory) in this scheme to avail yourself of 'paperless' and 'faceless' various government services and social security schemes.
Objective	To create authentic, verified, and reliable data of all families in Haryana.

Process to Enroll

• The PPP ID can be made through-
  1. Common Service Centers (CSCs) managed by Village Level Entrepreneurs.
  2. SARAL Kendra's managed by the state government.
  3. PPP operators registered for data collection.
• The data for a family is collected based on a signed self-declaration made by an adult member.
• Each data field is then separately verified through customized and defined procedures.

Type of Data Collected	*Names of family members, their date of birth, age, contact details, complete address, marital status, caste, and occupation details; Aadhaar numbers; Proof of date of birth; E-mail address; Voter ID card; Bank account details, for how long has one lived at a particular place, annual income, details of immovable property, educational qualification, etc. It also asks if the individual has a PAN card, is an Income Tax payee, a freedom fighter, a BPL card holder, divyang etc.*

PPP vs Aadhaar	
PPP	**Aadhaar**
It goes beyond the basic identity details and contains the **socio-economic data** of the families.	It only contains the *unique identity information* such as fingerprint, IRIS scan, face ID, address details, contact details etc.
It verifies *each field of information* during registration through specific procedures.	It only *verifies the identity* of the person during registration.

Benefits

- **Automatic Data Updation-** The Family ID will be linked to the Birth, Death and Marriage records. This will ensure automatic updation of the family data as and when such life events happen.
- **Automatic Selection of Beneficiaries-** The Family ID will link existing, independent schemes like scholarships, subsidies and pensions. This will ensure consistency, reliability and at the same time enable automatic selection of beneficiaries for various schemes, as per their eligibility.
- **Single Application-** Through the database of families created under PPP, family members won't need to apply individually for each scheme to receive benefits.
- **No Further Documents Required** once the data in the PPP database is authenticated and verified
- **Brings transparency** to the system and eliminates middlemen so as to stop ineligible people from taking advantage of any scheme.

- **Erroneous Data**- The agencies appointed by the government to collect the data are filling in erroneous data. Due to the wrong information filled people are losing out on their social security benefits.

- **No Proper Correction Mechanism**-People run from pillar to post to get their information corrected.

- **Mandatory Aadhaar Details**- Out of the 25 columns one must fill to get a PPP card, the very first column is Aadhaar, which is mandatory. But a nine-judge Supreme Court judgement of 2017 ruled that Aadhaar card will not be mandatory.

- **Caste Information**- Data for PPP card also requires filling in **caste details**, but social security benefits are given from the **Consolidated Fund of the State**, and don't require the beneficiary's caste.

Central Empowered Committee

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) which was **constituted by the Supreme Court (SC)** to monitor and report on compliance of its environment related orders, will now function under the administrative control of the Central Government in the **Ministry of Environment** as per a new notification released by the Environment Ministry.

What Will Change Now

1. The committee which has been **adhoc** so far will now be recognized as a **permanent statutory body**.

2. It will now report to the ministry instead of the SC.

3. The committee will include a chairman, a member secretary, and the remaining three expert members, who are civil servants. All of the members will be appointed by the environment ministry and the SC will have no say in this. It will be **funded** by the ministry, and not SC.

Background

- The CEC in March 2023 filed a report against reconstructing a convention center at Patnitop in Jammu and Kashmir after the SC had allowed it.

- This report was not considered appropriate by the SC. The bench observed that the CEC could not question the SC and asked for a few "young" names from the government to replace the ageing members of the CEC.

- Following this, India's Solicitor General Tushar Mehta placed a draft before the SC informing that the government is planning to publish a draft notification under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to make CEC a permanent statutory body.

- The proposal was approved by the SC in the interest of all the stakeholders.

➢ The chairperson must have at least 25 years of experience in environmental, forestry, or wildlife fields or substantial administrative expertise in government, serving a maximum term of 3 years.

4. The provision of having two NGO members on the committee will no longer exist.

5. In case any of its recommendation is not acceptable to the State or Central Government, the Government shall give reasons in writing for not accepting the same and such decision will be final.

About the Central Empowered Committee

It is a committee constituted by the Supreme Court in 2002 in the famous *TN Godavarman vs Union of States case,* to monitor the implementation of its orders and report non-compliance with respect to conservation of forests & wild-life and related issues arising out of the said orders like encroachment removals, compensatory afforestation, plantations, and other conservation issues.

Composition = A chairperson + four members

* The current CEC is chaired by retired IAS officer PV Jayakrishnan and consists of retired Indian Forest Service officers as its members.

Functions

- To monitor the implementation of SC orders and place reports of non-compliance before the SC and central government for appropriate action.

- To examine pending interlocutory applications in writ petitions (referred by the SC) as well as the reports and affidavits filed by the states in response to the SC orders and give its recommendations on the same.

- To deal with any grievance applications from any aggrieved person and dispose them in conformity with SC

---

orders. In case any application cannot be appropriately disposed of, it should refer the same to the SC.

- To examine and advise on any issue referred to it.
- To **suggest measures** generally to the state and central government, <u>for the more effective implementation</u> of the act and other orders of this court.

Powers (Jurisdiction extends to whole of India)

For effective discharge of powers, the committee can-

- Call for any documents from any persons or the government of the union or the state or any other official;
- Undertake site inspection of forest area involved;
- summon any person and receive evidence from such person on oath either on affidavit or otherwise;
- Co-opt one or more persons as its members or as special invitees for dealing with specific issues;
- Co-opt, wherever feasible, the chief secretary or his representative and principal chief conservator of forests of the state as **special invitees** while dealing with issues pertaining to a particular state;

Achievements

- It has filed thousands of reports on issues like compensatory afforestation, net present value of forests, Kudremukh mining, Aravali forests and Bellary mining.
- Its 2006 report resulted in a month's simple imprisonment of a former Maharashtra minister and serving Forest Secretary for permitting wood mills to operate in violation of the SC's order.
- The CEC recommended cancelling the double-tracking of a railway line from Castle Rock in Karnataka to Kulem in Goa. It was accepted by the SC

Concerns Raised

1. **No Autonomy**- omitting the NGO members as existed in previous CEC will result in loss of accountability and autonomy of the committee.
2. **Government's Puppet**- Members appointed by the government may not be able to counter the views of the government
3. **No Decision-Making Power**- With the ultimate decision remaining with the government, there is no independence and can be used as a tool to override decision making power of the states.

Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)

The Supreme Court (SC) recently reprimanded the administration of UT of Ladakh for denying the candidates of National Conference (NC) to use its symbol 'plough' in the elections to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC). It set aside the notification released by the Ladakh administration for elections and directed to declare a new date for elections.

✓ 'Plough' is the registered party symbol of NC with the Election Commission of India (ECI).

NC's Defence

It argued that if a political party, recognized as a State party in some State or States, sets up a candidate for an election in a constituency in any other State or UT where it is not a

Background

With the announcement of LAHDC polls for Kargil, the election commissioner of Ladakh refused to allot the plough symbol to NC candidates on the grounds that-

- No state party, including the NC, is a **recognized party** in Ladakh, and therefore the NC could not claim its plough symbol in Ladakh.
- The reserved symbol 'plough' for NC must be notified first by the ECI for Ladakh.
  - Ladakh was earlier a part of the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and was carved out as a separate UT in 2019 after the J&K Reorganization Act came into force. Following this, the Election Commission of India (ECI) recognized NC as a party of the UT of J&K in 2019.

This decision was challenged by NC in the High Court of J&K and Ladakh which ruled in its favour and passed two orders- first issued by a single bench and the second by a double-bench allowing the NC to retain 'plough' as its party symbol in Ladakh.

The Ladakh administration appealed against this order in the Supreme Court which has again ruled in the favour of NC upholding the judgement of J&K High Court and have imposed a fine of 1 lakh rupees on Ladakh administration for not following court orders and delaying the process of election.

recognized State party, then such candidate may be allotted the symbol reserved for that party.

Why Is This Election So Important?

- These are the first local polls in the region since Ladakh's creation as a Union Territory.
- Following the reorganization, Ladakh witnessed continued protests for-
  - ➤ the protection of its language, culture, land, and jobs
  - ➤ inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
    - ✓ 6th Schedule provides for the creation of Autonomous District Hill Councils in the states of Assam, Mizoram, Tripura & Meghalaya to conserve their rights, culture, and ethnicity.

Change In Political Representation of Ladakh

- Before becoming a UT, the Ladakh region elected two Members to the Legislative Assembly of J&K from Leh and Kargil and a single Member to Parliament.
- After becoming a UT without an assembly, Hill Council will act as its political authority along with the lone MP.

Extra Mile: Allotting Party Symbol

- The Election Commission allots symbols for anyone contesting in polls as per the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968.
- A person contesting on behalf of **a recognized political party** inherits his party's symbol.
- An independent candidate or someone contesting on behalf of an **unrecognized** political party must approach the Commission and get a symbol allotted from the list of 'free' symbols available.
  - A candidate has to provide three symbols from the free list at the time of submission of nomination papers, one of which is allocated to him/her.
  - Any choice other than from the EC's list is rejected.
- In the case of a recognized political party, the Commission allows it to 'reserve' a symbol.
  - If a political party recognized in a particular State wishes to contest elections in another State, it can 'reserve' the symbol being used by it.
  - The Commission will oblige, provided the symbol is not being used by anyone else.
- Two or more recognized state political parties can have the same symbol provided they are not contenders in the same State or Union Territory but if one of the parties want to open their account in the other State, it will have to contest on a different symbol.

About the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)

Creation: Two councils- LAHDC, Leh (in 1995) and LAHDC, Kargil (in 2003) were created under the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997.

Composition

- Both the councils comprise of 30 councilors each (26 councilors elected and four nominated).
- A Chairperson is elected from among the members who also serves as Chief Executive Councilor for the council and holds the rank and powers of a cabinet minister.
- It also consists of four Executive Councilors who possess the rank and status of Deputy Minister.
- The Deputy Commissioner of the district is designated as the Chief Executive Officer, LAHDC and holds control over the overall district administration, execution of works and maintaining Law and Order.

Powers

- Drafting development plans for the region.
- Formulation of budgets for both districts.
- Implementation of movement schemes.
- Promotion of language and culture, public health, education, local road transport and its development
- Promoting Small-scale industries, non-conventional energy, and tourism.
- Levy and collect taxes and other fees in their jurisdiction.

National Judicial Data Grid & Portal

Real-time data on the filing and disposal of cases in the **Supreme Court** will now be available through the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG). The NJDG-SCI (Supreme Court of India) portal would include the following data-

1. The current pending cases (civil and criminal);

2. Cases filed and disposed in the previous month;

3. Number of cases pending before three-judge, five-judge, and even nine-judge Benches.

About the National Judicial Data Grid

What?
It is a national data repository (Aligned with the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP)) created in 2015 under the **e-Courts** project and contains details of orders, cases (civil and criminal) and judgements of District and Subordinate Courts, High Courts and allows real-time data updation by connected District and Taluka courts. ** NJDG was built as part of Phase II of the e-Courts project, which is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
Developer = The National Informatics Centre (NIC) + Computer Cell (Supreme Court Registry) ** The NIC was established in 1976 and is under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). The NIC provides IT services, infrastructure, and consultancy to central and state governments.

Functions & Benefits
 	
• **Easy tracking of cases & Informed decision making:** It works as a monitoring tool to identify, manage & reduce the pendency of cases. It also contains the <u>details about the reasons for delay</u> in giving the judgement in a case. This will help keep a proper track on issues being faced by the judiciary while resolving cases.
 	
    ✓ Currently, litigants can access case status information on 23.81 crore cases, and more than 23.02 crore orders/judgements.
 	
    ✓ E.g., in 2023, the total pendency of registered cases in SC is 64,854; however last month 5,412 cases were instituted and 5033 were disposed of. This suggests that pendency in the SC is largely due to legacy cases, since the court is currently disposing of approximately the same number of cases as are filed on an annual basis.
 	
• **Transparency and accountability:** It allows the litigants to access the status of their cases and provides a drill-down analysis based on the age of the case as well as the State and District.
 	
• **Increased coordination among all the three tiers of Indian judiciary:** It facilitates better monitoring of court performance and bottlenecks, and, thus, serves as an efficient resource management tool.
 	
• **Single source of data and an enormous potential for high-quality research work:** Using the Open Application Programming Interface (API), the NJDGprovides easy access to Central and State Government using a departmental ID for their evaluation and monitoring purposes. This facility will apply to non-institutional litigants as well in future.

e-Courts Project

The Cabinet has approved Phase III of the e-Courts project with a budget outlay of Rs 7,210 crore.

About the e-Courts Project

• The e-Courts Mission Mode Project is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2006 and is a part of the **National e-Governance Plan**, monitored and funded by Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, for the District Courts across the country.

• **Implemented:** Supreme Court is responsible for its policy planning, strategic direction, and implementation.

- **Evolution-** It was conceptualized based on the "National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005" submitted by e-Committee, Supreme Court of India with a vision to transform the Indian Judiciary by ICT enablement of Courts.

Phases

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Begun in 2007, during this phase-	Approved in 2015, during this phase-	Recently approved, this phase proposes to-
1. Computer Server Rooms and Judicial Service Centers were prepared for computerization of the District Courts.	1. Already covered courts were provisioned for additional hardware per Court Room.	1. To usher in a regime of maximum ease of justice by moving towards digital, online, and paperless courts through digitization of the entire court records, including legacy records.
2. The District and Taluka Court Complexes were computerized with installation of hardware, LAN, and Case Information Software (CIS), for providing basic case related services to the litigants and the lawyers.	2. Uncovered Courts of Phase-I and newly established Courts were provided with new hardware systems per Court Room and the Court Complexes were provisioned for hardware, LAN etc.	2. Implement a **smart scheduling system** to recommend an appropriate schedule for listing cases based on availability of judges, lawyers, witnesses; nature of the case; and caseload of the judge.
3. District court websites were launched.	3. **National Judicial Data Grid** was launched for providing case details and status online of all the district and High Courts of India.	3. It can be extended to enable lawyers and litigants to get a definitive estimate at the next hearing.
4. Judicial Officers and Court Staff were trained under Change Management exercises to use computers and Case Information System (CIS).	4. Court Complexes related to Jails and Desktop based Video Conferencing were allowed to go beyond routine remands and production of under-trial prisoners and for recording evidence in sensitive cases.	4. use of emerging technologies like AI, Machine Learning and its subsets like Optical Character Recognition (OCR) etc for analysis of case pendency, forecasting future litigation, etc.

Aspirational Blocks Programme Module

iGOTKarmayogi Bharat in partnership with NITI Aayog, has launched a new learning module dedicated to the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP).

iGOT Karmayogi

The Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) portal is an online learning platform that owns all the digital learning resources to be used in the capacity building process. It can be accessed through https://igotkarmayogi.gov.in/and consists of six hubs:

About the Aspirational Blocks Programme Module (Implemented by: NITI Aayog)

NITI Aayog has launched the Aspirational Blocks Programme, building on the success of the Aspirational Districts Programme. It was announced in the Union Budget 2022-23.

What?	
This module consists of courses which seek to build functional, domain and behavioral competencies of 5000 Block-level officials across 500 identified Blocks by acquainting them with subjects crucial for performing their duties and responsibilities effectively.	
Aim	To enrich and enable the transformation of the <u>under-served Blocks</u> by providing essential knowledge and skills to the Block officials, thus improving grassroots governance.

10 Courses Included under ABP Module
1) Time Management (DoPT), 2) Communication for Citizen Centricity (DoPT), 3) Leadership (DoPT), 4) Orientation Module on Mission LiFE (Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change), 5) Sustainable Development Goals (ISTM), 6) Problem Solving and Decision Making (DoPT), 7) Self-Leadership (The Art of Living), 8) Stress Management (DoPT), 9) Yoga Break at Workplace (Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga), and 10) Team Building (DoPT).

**Please refer to The Recitals- June 2023 edition for more information on Mission Karmyogi.

Skill India Digital (SID)

Recently, the Skill India Digital (SID), a comprehensive digital platform was launched by the Ministry of **Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** to provide every Indian quality skill development, relevant opportunities, and entrepreneurial support.

About Skill India Digital (SID) Platform

What?	This platform is part of the **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** to provide skills, education, employment, and entrepreneurship ecosystem to Indian citizens.
	** Digital public infrastructure refers to blocks or platforms such as digital identification, payment infrastructure and data exchange solutions that help countries deliver essential services to their people, empowering citizens enabling digital inclusion.
Objective	• To establish India as a global skills hub.
	• To enable individuals to develop their skills and make a career at any stage of life.

Features
• It is designed to skill, reskill, and upskill individuals.
• It will be configured through a three-layered framework consisting of-
i) *Trust*- to enable verifiable digital credentials designed for portability, permanence, inclusion, and reusable electronic registries as a single source of truth.
ii) *Finance*- to enable payment services like direct beneficiary transfer, rewards, scholarships etc.
iii) *Discovery*- to facilitate commerce and entrepreneurship in the ecosystem.
• **Integrated Portals:** It has portals like Udyam, e-Shram, NCS and ASEEM interlinked for Government to Citizens (G2C), Business to Consumer (B2C) and Business to Business (B2B) services.
• It will act as a bridge between the employees and employers and allow educational institutes to create/modify curriculum as per industry needs.

Key Elements Enhancing SID
• Aadhaar/AI-based Facial Authentication: Ensuring secure access and verification.

- Digital Verifiable Credentials (DVC): Providing a tamper-proof, verifiable record of qualifications.Moreover, the platform integrates Digital CVs with personalised QR Codes, simplifying the sharing of skills and qualifications with potential employers and partners.
- AI and ML Recommendations: Offering personalised learning paths and career guidance.
- Interoperability: Promoting the integration of government training programs.
- WhatsApp Chatbot
- Ease of Doing Business
- Aadhaar based eKYC

Benefits

1. ***Accelerated Skilled Talent Hiring***- It makes skill development more innovative, accessible, and personalized by focusing on digital technology and Industry 4.0 skills.

2. ***Aligns with G20 Vision***- Creates vision for building DPI and the digital economy to promote digital skills and digital literacy.

3. ***Single, Unified and Centralized Platform for All Needs***- It will be a go-to hub for citizens in pursuit of career advancement and lifelong learning accessible anytime and anywhere.

4. ***User friendly Interface***- with multi-language support which is adaptable to various devices and can access the platform effortlessly (Mobile-First Approach), regardless of their technological background.

5. ***Digitally Verified Credential*** (DVC): It will empower users to confidently present their qualifications, experiences and certifications in a digital format that carries an inherent layer of authenticity.

Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation inaugurated a newly constructed residential premises at Jogbani Integrated Check Post of Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) in Araria, Bihar.

About Land Ports Authority of India

What?

Formally established in 2012 as a statutory body under the Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010, the LPAI is entrusted with the task of building land ports on Indian borders and providing state of the art infrastructure facilities for facilitating safe, seamless, and efficient cross-border movement of cargo and passengers.

LPAI is involved in the development of land ports (also known as Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)) to maintain regional connectivity across the international borders of India.

**There are currently nine operational land ports in India, which are located at Attari, Agartala, Petrapole, Raxaul, Jogbani, Moreh, Sutarkandi, Srimantapur, and Dera Baba Nanak.

Nodal Ministry	Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs
Objective	To reduce dwell time, trade transaction costs, promote regional trade, people-to-people contact and imbibe the best international practices.

Composition- Appointed by the Central Government, its members include-

1. Chairperson & Two Members- one for Finance and the other for Planning and Development.

2. Not more than nine members (ex-officio) from amongst the officers, not below the rank of the Joint Secretary to the Government of India among concerned Ministries.

3. The Chief Secretary or his nominee not below the rank of the Secretary of State where ICPs are located;

4. A representative each from recognized bodies of workers and of traders.

International Lawyer's Conference 2023

For the first time the International Lawyer's Conference was organized in **India** for the year 2023 and was attended by distinguished judges, legal professionals, and leaders of the global legal fraternity.

About The International Lawyer's Conference

What?	It is a platform to provide introspective discourse and constructive dialogue on multiple issues concerning the Bar, the Bench, and the legal profession.
Convener	The Bar Council of India in collaboration with the Law Society of England and Wales, the Bar Council of England and Wales and the Commonwealth Lawyers Association.
Theme for 2023	'Emerging Challenges in Justice Delivery System' It focused on subjects like emerging legal trends, challenges in cross-border litigation, legal technology, environmental law etc.

Objective
To serve as a platform for meaningful dialogue & exchange of ideas on various legal topics of national and international importance and strengthen international cooperation on legal issues.

Promotion of Tribal Products for Northeast Region (PTP-NER 2.0) Scheme

The second phase of 'Promotion of Tribal Products for Northeast Region' (PTP-NER 2.0) scheme was launched recently by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED), Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

About the PTP-NER Scheme

What?
It is a Central Sector Scheme launched initially in April 2023 for providing market access & technology to tribal products

Objective
• To empower individuals to become self-employed and self-reliant.
• Development & promotion of tribal products by *enhancing the livelihood of tribal entrepreneurs*.

Implemented by
TRIFED along with Northeastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation (NEHHDC)- Union Ministry of DoNER (With concerned departments), India Post (for facilitating logistics)

Phases	**Phase I** • Teams of TRIFED and NEHHDC, in close collaboration with State Administrations visited 38 districts of eight north eastern states. • 64 Tribal Artisans Empanelment Melas (TAeM) were conducted. • This initiative resulted in the procurement of 3115 products ranging from textiles, forest produce, bamboo items, jewelry, pottery, paintings etc. **Phase II** • Teams from TRIFED, NEHHDC and State Administration will travel to 29 districts of seven Northeastern states to connect with tribal artisans and highlight their cultural richness and heritage not only to the Nation but to the entire world.

	About Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (TRIFED)

- Established in1987 under the Multi State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984, TRIFED is a national-level apex organization under the administrative control of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Headquarters is in New Delhi, and it has 13 regional offices.

Objective

Socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by marketing tribal products, empowering them with knowledge, tools, and information

Approach

- Capacity building of the tribal people through sensitization;
- Forming and training Self-help Groups (SHGs);
- Exploring marketing possibilities in national as well as international markets;
- Creating opportunities for marketing tribal products on a sustainable basis and creating a brand.

Programmes Launched by TRIFED

1. **MSP for MFP –** The scheme Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produces (MFP) to provide a fair price to MFP gatherers, enhance their income level
2. TRIFED has launched a transformational "**Tech for Tribals**" program in partnership with Institutes of National Importance (INIs) to develop Tribal entrepreneurship.
3. **VanDhan –** It addresses the problems faced by the Tribals like- possession of land/house with no rights; restrictions in the collection of minor forest produce; exploitation by middlemen; displacement from national parks and wild sanctuaries, lack of development in forest villages etc.
4. In 2021, TRIFED has launched "Sankalp se Siddhi" - Village and Digital Connect Drive. The main aim of this drive is to activate the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) in the villages.
5. **TriFood –** To promote value addition to Minor Forest Produce (MFP).
6. TRIFED operates a network of retail outlets called "Tribes India" across India, where tribal products are showcased and sold.
7. TRIFED has also ventured into e-commerce by launching an online platform called "Tribes India e-Marketplace," which allows customers to purchase tribal products online.
8. TRIFED has also partnered with other e-commerce portals such as Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal and PayTM to provide market access to its tribal artisans. Tribes' India products are also now available on GeM to facilitate purchases by Government.

Parliament Secretariat

As the parliament turns 75, its rich history is incomplete without highlighting the contributions made by the parliamentary secretariat which acts as the backbone of the parliament.

About the Parliament Secretariat

What?	It is a professional body which acts as a custodian of procedure, precedent, legislative knowledge and their transfer across parliamentary terms.
Functions & Responsibilities	
	Procedural Support: It assists in the preparation of the agenda for parliamentary sessions, maintains records of parliamentary proceedings, and provides procedural advice to MPs.
	Logistical Support: It manages the physical infrastructure of Parliament House and other related buildings,

including security, maintenance, and other facilities required for the smooth conduct of parliamentary sessions.

- **Administrative Support:** Such as the recruitment and training of parliamentary staff, budget management, and coordination of parliamentary committees.
- **Information and Research:** The Secretariat also provides research and reference services to members of parliament, helping them access relevant information and data for their work.
- **Language Services:** It offers translation and interpretation services to ensure that parliamentary proceedings are accessible to members who speak different languages.
- **Broadcast and Communication:** It manages the broadcasting of parliamentary sessions and maintains communication channels for disseminating information related to parliamentary activities.

Origin

The idea of a separate secretariat for the legislature was first given in 1925 by Vithalbhai Patel, the first elected Speaker (then called the President) of the Central Assembly so that the office of the Speaker can work independently with a staff directly under its control. Thus, the first secretariat for the legislature was created in 1929, independent of and unconnected with the government.

Structure

In 1974, a committee of MPs recommended structuring the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats into 11 functional areas such as- Legislative for dealing with the work of the houses (supervised by secretary generals); Library research and information; Verbatim reporting (word-by-word); Printing and publication; Watch and ward (renamed parliament security) service.

Appointment of Staff

- The Constitution specifies that Parliament could make a law to regulate the recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to the secretarial staff of Parliament.
- But as no such law has been made by the parliament, the appointments are done according to the rules made by the presiding officers of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

Secretary-General

- There are two Secretary-Generals, one for Lok Sabha and the other for Rajya Sabha.
- **Appointment**- They are appointed at the discretion of the Presiding Officers of the two houses.
- **Function**: Rendering advice to the Presiding Officer as well as the House on all matters relating to the running of the House and its Committees.
- **Position**- The pay scale, position and status of the post of Secretary-General is equivalent to that of the post of Cabinet Secretary.

** The Secretary General is only answerable to the Presiding Officers. Their actions cannot be discussed or criticized in or outside Parliament.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)

PMMSY completed its three years and has successfully pulled inland fisheries from traditional waters, and infused technology, inspiring many enterprising youth to venture into fisheries.

➢ India is the 3rd largest fish producing and 2nd largest aquaculture nation in the world.

About the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)

What?   (**PMMSY marks the highest-ever investment in the fisheries sector in India)

It is a scheme (introduced as part of the 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' package) being implemented in all the States

and Union Territories for a period of five years (FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25) to-

1. Bring Blue Revolution through sustainable development of fisheries sector in India

   ✓ Blue Revolution was launched in 2015 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (BR-CSS) for a period of 5 years

2. Address critical gaps in the fisheries value chain from fish production, productivity and quality to technology, post-harvest infrastructure and marketing.

3. In order to facilitate access to institutional credit, fishermen are provided with **insurance coverage**, financial assistance and a facility of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) as well.

Implemented by	Department of Fisheries (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying)

Objectives

- **Increasing Exports & Harnessing the Potential of the Fisheries Sector (Economic Security to Fishermen) -** in a sustainable and equitable manner.

- **Doubling Fishermen Income & Enhancing Fish Production**- to 22 million metric tons (MMT) by 2024-25. Enhancing aquaculture productivity to 5 tons per hectare from the current national average of 3 tons and augmenting domestic fish consumption from 5 kg to 12 kg per capita.

- **Strengthening the Value Chain-** including post-harvest management and quality improvement.

- **Regulatory Framework**- Building a robust fisheries management and regulatory framework.

- **Investment**- Facilitating private investment and growth of entrepreneurship.

Key Strategic Priority Areas-

1) Marine Fisheries; 2) Inland Fisheries; 3) Fishermen's Welfare; 4) Infrastructure and Post-harvest Management; 5) Cold Water Fisheries; 6) Ornamental Fisheries; 7) Aquatic Health Management; 8) Seaweed Cultivation Etc.

Achievements

1. **Entrepreneurship-** Use of technology has inspired enterprising youth to venture into fisheries. For example, young woman entrepreneurs from Kashmir valley are efficiently rearing cold water rainbow trout using a recirculatory aquaculture system.

2. **Fishery in Non-Traditional Areas**- Almost 20,000 hectares of fresh pond area is being brought under inland aquaculture, and farmers in Haryana and Rajasthan are successfully converting their saline waste lands into wealth lands through aquaculture.

3. **Empowering Women**- Along with fishing, fisher women are now exploring remunerative options and alternative livelihoods such as ornamental fisheries, pearl culture, and seaweed cultivation. Recently a ₹127 crore Seaweed Park was launched in Tamil Nadu's Ramanathapuram district.

4. **Supporting Research**- genetic improvement of Indian White Shrimp at Chennai, the development of specific pathogen-free brood stock, and domestication of tiger shrimp in the Andaman Islands.

5. **Increased Exports**- The cumulative fish production since 2014 is way ahead of the fish production of the previous 30 years. India's sea food exports have almost doubled from 2013-14 to 2022-23.

COFEPOSA Act, 1974

Recently, the Madras High Court quashed a detention order issued under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act (COFEPOSA) Act, 1974, against a practicing lawyer on the charges of smuggling.

About the COFEPOSA Act, 1974

It provides for preventive detention for the purpose of conservation and augmentation of foreign exchange and preventing smuggling activities.

** The COFEPOSA Act also empowers authorities to confiscate properties and assets acquired through smuggling activities or foreign exchange violations.

- **Communication**-
    - Any detention order made by the State Government or by an officer of the State Government must be forwarded to the Central Government within ten days.
    - Detained person should be communicated the grounds for detention within five days or within fifteen days from the date of detention in exceptional circumstances with written reasons for the delay in communication.

- **Multiple Grounds for Detention**- If a person has been detained on two or more grounds then such order of detention should be made separately on each of such grounds.

- **Applicability:** This act is applicable to Indian citizens as well as foreigners who are involved in smuggling goods, including gold, narcotics, or other prohibited items, or who engage in foreign exchange violations.

- **Power of Examinig the Detention Order**-
    - High Courts can examine detention orders prior to execution and a detention order cannot be challenged at pre execution stage on the grounds of delay in execution.
    - No detention order can be held invalid only because-
    (a) the detenue is outside the limits of the territorial jurisdiction of the Government or the office making the order of detention, or
    (b) that the place of detention of such person is outside the said limits.

** **Legal Safeguards:** The act provides certain safeguards and procedures to protect the rights of individuals detained under its provisions. These include the right to be informed of the grounds of detention, the right to legal representation, and the right to make a representation against detention.

Similar Acts regarding Preventive Detention

- National Security Act (NSA), 1980
- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) of 1967
- Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PITNDPS) Act, 1988
- Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980
- Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA)

Bharatkosh Portal

An e-wallet payment option was launched by the Union Aviation Minister on the Bharatkosh Portal.

The Bharatkosh Portal (Non-Tax Receipt Portal (NTRP))

- It provides one stop services to deposit any fees/fine/other money into the Government Account and converges all the Civil Ministries/Departments of Government of India.

- **Implemented By**- Office of Controller General of Accounts (OCGA) and Ministry of Finance.

- **Objective**- To provide 24X7 year-round electronic services to deposit the money into Government Account using internet-based payment technologies to the users at their doorstep.

- **Significance**- It fulfills the e-Governance (efficient, effective & excellent) commitment of the Government

The e-Wallet Facility

- It will act as a prepaid wallet wherein a unique wallet ID will be generated for each registered user on the BharatKosh portal to manage their wallet transactions.

- It would enable registered users to add funds to their wallet through NEFT/RTGS mode.

- **Benefits**-
  o Adding funds in advance.
  o Instant generation of receipts and challans eliminating the problem of failed bank transactions.
  o Easy and Quick processing of fees for various regulatory approvals in the Bharat Kosh portal.
- **Limitation**- It will only be available to registered Bharatkosh users and no other users.

PM Vishwakarma Scheme

- The Prime Minister has launched the **PM Vishwakarma scheme** on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti, for giving government support to workers engaged in **traditional crafts and skills.**

- The prime focus of the scheme is <u>improving the quality as well as the reach of products and services of artisans and craftspeople</u> and ensuring that they are integrated with the domestic and global value chains.

- Vishwakarma, in Hindu mythology, is seen as the **architect of the gods** and was the <u>divine carpenter and master craftsman</u> who made the weapons of the gods and built their cities and chariots. He is considered the main deity of workers, artisans, and artists.

Scheme Details

- The scheme will be **fully funded by the Central government** with an outlay of **Rs 13,000 crore**.

- The scheme will provide support to artisans and craftspeople in **rural and urban** areas across India.

- In the first year, five lakh families will be covered and a total of **30 lakh families will be covered over five years** from FY24 to FY28.

- The prospective beneficiaries will be registered free of charge through common services centres (CSCs) using the biometric-based PM Vishwakarma portal.

- Initially, **18 traditional trades** will be covered. These include *carpenter; boat maker; armourer; blacksmith; hammer and tool kit maker; locksmith; goldsmith; potter; sculptor, stone breaker; cobbler; mason; basket/mat/broom maker/coir weaver; doll and toy maker (traditional); barber; garland maker; washerman; tailor; and fishing net maker.*

- The government will provide **collateral free loan up to ₹3 lakhs**.

- The loan will be given in **two phases**. Loan of Rs 1 lakh will be given in the beginning and when it is repaid an additional loan of Rs 2 lakhs will be provided

- The loan will be provided at a **concessional interest rate of 5%**, along with incentive for digital transactions and marketing support.

- The beneficiaries will be provided recognition through a **PM Vishwakarma certificate** and ID card, and **skill upgradation** involving basic and advanced training.

- A stipend of Rs 500 will be provided for skill training and Rs 1,500 to purchase modern tools.

Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana

- The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY) has **exceeded its initial employment generation goals,** <u>showcasing its success in job creation</u> and recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Launched in October 2020**, the ABRY was designed to <u>stimulate the creation of new job opportunities</u>. It is being implemented through EPFO.

- This was done by extending financial support to employers of establishments registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO).

- The scheme aimed to <u>incentivize employment of unemployed individuals</u>, including those who lost their jobs due to the pandemic, by <u>covering both the employee and employer contributions (24% of wages)</u> for establishments with **up to 1000 employees**.

- For establishments with **over 1000 employees**, <u>only the employee's EPF contributions (12% of wages) were covered</u> in respect of new employees (earning wage less than Rs. 15,000/- per month).

Achievements

- The scheme had set a target to benefit approximately 7.18 million employees across India. As of July 31, 2023, it has already achieved an **enrolment of over 7.58 million new employees**

- Till now, a total of 1,52,380 establishments, employing 60,44,155 new employees, have availed benefits amounting to a sum of Rs. 9,669.87 crore under the scheme.

Central Banker Report Cards 2023

- The Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das has been rated A+ in the Global Finance Central Banker Report Cards 2023.

- The other two central bank chiefs who earned "A+" grades are -- Thomas J. Jordan (**Switzerland**) and Nguyen Thi Hong (**Vietnam**).

- The Central Banker Report Cards is an **annual publication by Global Finance since 1994**.

- It assesses and grades the performance of central bank governors in **101 significant countries, territories, and regions**.

- It also covers entities such as the European Union, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, the Bank of Central African States and the Central Bank of West African States.

- It celebrates those bank governors whose strategies outperformed their peers through originality and creativity.

- The grades are based on a **scale from A to F** for success in inflation control, economic growth goals, currency stability and interest rate management.

Education to Entrepreneurship Partnership

- A three-year collaboration "Education to Entrepreneurship: Empowering a generation of students, educators, and entrepreneurs" was launched in New Delhi.

- *The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, and Meta* are partners in this venture.

- 3 Letters of Intent (LoI) were exchanged between Meta and National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

- The programme is in line with the country's goal of making India a global powerhouse for skill development and empowering the youth (Amrit Peedhi) of the nation.

- Under the partnership with NIESBUD, **5 lakh entrepreneurs** will get access to **digital marketing skills** by Meta over the next 3 years.

- Through Meta's platforms, both *aspiring and established business* owners will receive training in digital marketing skills, in **7 regional languages** to begin with.

- The initiative will support the seamless integration of students, youth, the workforce, and micro-entrepreneurs with cutting-edge technologies. The goal is to enable the younger generation to become problem solvers and entrepreneurs.

- In addition, digital skills not only play a critical role in the innovation ecosystem but also act as a vital link for a large number of small rural, micro and self-employed entrepreneurs, enabling them to expand, grow and succeed.

MoU Between Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya and Airbus

- The Indian Railways' GatiShaktiVishwavidyalaya (GSV) Vadodara and Airbus have signed an (MoU) aimed at strengthening the Indian aviation sector.

- The industry-academic partnership aims to encourage the collaborative development & delivery of <u>skill-enhancing courses/ programs</u> tailored to the needs of both regular students and working professionals to serve its fast-growing aerospace sector.

Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV)

- GVS Vadodara was **established through an Act of Parliament in 2022**, for creating best in class manpower and talent for the **entire transportation and logistics sectors**.
- It's the first of its kind university which aims to fulfill the mandate of the **National Developmental Plans** across railways, shipping, ports, highways, roads, waterways, and aviation, among others.
- Sponsored by the Ministry of Railways, the university already has several collaborations with leading institutions and industries globally.

Airbus

- Airbus is the world's largest manufacturer of commercial aircraft and a leading producer of helicopters, defence and space equipment.
- Make in India is at the heart of Airbus' business strategy in India and the company is steadily increasing India's contribution to its global products.

- It is expected that around 15,000 students are likely to be placed in Airbus India operations.

- The partnership will also facilitate<u>joint research ventures &hands-on industry exposure for faculty members</u> while providing internship & placement opportunities for students, supported by **scholarship** programs.

India's First UPI ATM

- Hitachi Payment Services, a payments and commerce solutions provider, has introduced the country's first-ever UPI-ATM in association with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), offering secure, card-less cash withdrawals.

- The UPI-only **White Label ATM (WLAs)** would significantly <u>enhance customer security by eliminating the need for physical cards</u>.

- Furthermore, it will <u>drive financial inclusion by facilitating easy access to banking services</u> in areas where traditional banking infrastructure and card penetration is limited.

- The UPI ATM is built on Android OS and brings in significant possibilities of transitioning from legacy architecture (of transaction processing and ATM management) to offering solutions in line with evolving technology.

- It will mark a significant milestone in banking services by seamlessly *integrating* the convenience and security of UPI into traditional ATMs. It will also eliminate the risk of skimming by fraudsters.

  o **Skimming** occurs when devices illegally installed on ATMs, point-of-sale (POS) terminals, or fuel pumps

White Label ATMs (WLAs)

- WLAs are **owned and operated by non-banking entities.** ATMs operated under this business model allow customers to use them for banking transactions regardless of the bank they have an account with.
- RBI approved the operation and inclusion of WLA under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act of 2007. It was introduced to expand India's ATM network, especially in semi-urban and rural areas.
- WLA companies work with banking networks to enable bank customers to use banking services like withdrawing funds, paying bills and depositing cash. WLA operators charge card-issuing bank fees to provide this facility to the bank's clients.
- The transaction process in WLAs consists of a lending bank, a sponsor bank that handles settlements and an ATM network provider. The Sponsor bank provides the cash facility for the White ATM.

Hitachi Payment Services

- A 100% subsidiary of Hitachi Ltd., Hitachi Payment Services is a pioneer in the payment industry in India, offering a comprehensive range of payment solutions.
- It is the **only WLA operator** to offer a cash deposit facility. This service can be accessed at more than 3,000 ATM locations.
- Hitachi has over 65,500 ATMs (including 27,500 cash recycling machines) and 9,500 WLAs. In addition, it caters to over 3 million merchant touchpoints and processes over 7 million digital transactions daily.

capture data or record cardholders' PINs. Criminals use the data to create fake debit or credit cards and then steal from victims' accounts.

Operation of UPI ATM

- At present, card-less cash withdrawals rely on <u>mobile numbers and OTPs</u>, while UPI-ATM operates through **QR-based UPI cash withdrawals**.

- Users must have a UPI application installed on their smartphones to perform transactions.

- A single-use QR code will be displayed on the screen. Users can scan the QR code on the screen from any UPI app on their phones, input their pin, and get the cash.

- Transaction limit of up to ₹10,000 per transaction, aligned with existing UPI daily limits and issuer bank's UPI-ATM transaction limits.

Self-Regulating Organisation For fintech

- RBI has asked finch entities to form a Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO).

- Those entities who are interested in being recognised as SROs will have to apply to the RBI. Once the regulator finds an entity suitable, it will issue a letter of recognition.

Need for an SRO

- There have been many instances where a few fintech players were involved in unethical practices such as charging very high interest rates and harassment of borrowers for recovering loans.

- *In the context of a new and evolving sector like fintech, it is the industry participants who possess the deepest understanding of the processes and practices within the trade.*

- Therefore, they are best suited to establish common rules, enforce them, and effectively handle disputes that may arise from non-compliance with these rules

Benefits of an SRO

- SROs are widely considered **experts in their fields**. This is helpful to their members as they can be called in to participate in discussions and learn more about the industry.

- It ensures member organisations follow a certain ethical standard & enhances confidence in the ecosystem.

- They can serve as a watchdog to guard against unprofessional practices within an industry or profession.

- SRO can help in establishing codes of conduct for its members that foster transparency, fair competition, and consumer protection.

- By proactively addressing issues like market integrity, conduct, data privacy, cybersecurity, and risk management, SROs can help build trust among consumers, investors, and regulators.

> **Fintech**
>
> It is a shortened combination of financial technology. It is used to describe new technology that seeks to improve and automate the delivery and use of financial services.
>
> It is composed of specialized software and algorithms that are used on computers and smartphones.
>
> At its core, fintech is utilized to help companies, business owners, and consumers better manage their financial operations, processes, and lives.

> **Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO)**
>
> - An SRO is a **non-governmental organisation** that <u>sets and enforces rules and standards relating to the conduct of entities in the industry (members).</u>
> - It operates with the aim of <u>protecting the customer and promoting ethics, equality, and professionalism.</u>
> - SROs typically **collaborate with all stakeholders** in framing rules and regulations.
> - Their self-regulatory processes are administered through impartial mechanisms such that members operate in a disciplined environment and accept penal actions by the SRO.
> - An SRO is expected to <u>address concerns beyond the narrow self-interests of the industry, such as to protect workers, customers or other participants in the ecosystem.</u>
> - Regulations, standards, and dispute resolution and enforcement by an SRO get legitimacy not just by **mutual agreement of its members**, but also by the efficiency with which self-regulation is perceived to be administered.
> - Such **regulations supplement, but do not replace**, applicable laws or regulations.
> - The **recognised** SRO will serve as a two-way communication channel between its members and the RBI through a less formal set-up.
> - It will work towards **establishing minimum benchmarks, and standards** and help instill professional and healthy market behaviour among its members.
> - SROs will impart **training to the staff** of its members and others and will conduct awareness programmes.
> - It will <u>establish a uniform grievance redressal and dispute management framework across its members.</u>

Industrial Development Scheme (IDS) for Himachal Pradesh (HP) and Uttarakhand

- The Cabinet has approved an additional amount of Rs. 1164.53 crore for Industrial Development Scheme (IDS), 2017 for HP and Uttarakhand to meet the committed liabilities up to 2028-29.

- The initial financial outlay under IDS was only Rs 131.90 crore, which has been exhausted during financial year 2021-22.

- As per the approval of additional funds, the following incentives would be benefitted for units located anywhere in the States of HP and Uttarakhand

Central Capital Investment Incentive for Access to Credit (CCIIAC)

All eligible **new industrial units and existing industrial units** on their substantial expansion in the manufacturing and service sector will be provided CCIIAC @ 30% of the investment in plant and machinery with an upper limit of Rs 5 crore.

Central Comprehensive Insurance Incentive (CCII)

- **New industrial units and existing industrial units** on their substantial expansion will be eligible for reimbursement of 100% insurance premium on insurance of building and plant & machinery.

- This will be applicable for a maximum period of 5 years from the date of commencement of commercial production/operation.

Divya Kala Mela

- A 10-dayDivya Kala Mela is being organised in Varanasi from 15th-24th September.

- The event Varanasi is the **seventh in the series** starting from 2022. The earlier six events were held at **Delhi, Mumbai, Bhopal, Guwahati, Indore and Jaipur**.

- It is an initiative of **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)** towards economic empowerment of PwD/Divyangjan.

- It presents a bigger platform for marketing and showcasing the products and skills of Divyangjan (PwD).

- Broad product categories include home decor & lifestyle, clothing, stationery and eco-friendly products, packaged food and organic products, toys & gifts, personal accessories.

- It will also be an opportunity for all to go **vocal for local**.

Yashobhoomi

- The Prime Minister recently inaugurated the Phase 1 of **India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICEC)** called **Yashobhoomi at Delhi**

- Developed at a cost of about **Rs. 5400 crore** and total project area of over **8.9 lakh square metres**, Yashobhoomi will be among the world's largest MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) facilities.

- The Exhibition halls built across over 1.07 lakh square metres, will be utilised for hosting exhibitions, trade fairs, and business events.

- It is made of materials and objects inspired from Indian culture in the form of terrazzo floors with brass inlay representing rangolis patterns.

Indian Green Building Council (IGBC)

IGBC was formed by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in 2001. It is India's premier body for green building certification and related services.

Vision: To enable a Sustainable built environment for all.

- Yashobhoomi is equipped with a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment system with 100% wastewater reuse and provisions of rainwater harvesting.
- The campus has received Platinum certification from **Indian Green Building Council (IGBC)**.

YES-TECH

- **Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister** recently made a strong pitch for **generating real-time assessments of likely yields** for all essential crops.
- Until now, the extent of land which is getting covered under a particular crop (say wheat) could be estimated but estimating the output was not possible.
- Absence of reliable farm output estimates, leads to shortages and the country is forced to import food grains at the last moment.
- A real time assessment would help the economy, as the government will be able to plan the imports beforehand. This will also ensure that the farmer doesn't suffer because of the import/export policy.
- It will also help in policymaking, to decide the minimum support price (MSP) or in terms of procurement or the amount of quantity needed for buffer.
- In this context, a new automated real-time estimation system called **Yield Estimation System, based on Technology (YES-TECH)** has been put in place from this kharif season for the wheat and rice crops.
- However, it is important to quickly expand it to cover other crops, particularly pulses and oilseeds.
- YES-TECH Manual is a comprehensive guide developed after extensive testing and piloting in 100 districts of the country.
- It facilitates the implementation of YES-TECH, offering methodologies, best practices, and integration insights for accurate yield assessments at the Gram Panchayat level.
- YES-TECH has been created with assistance from ISRO and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

General Crop Estimation Survey

- The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DA&FW), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has launched the mobile application and the web portal for General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES).
- It has been **developed by DA&FW** for utilising technology to enhance the reach, scope, and outcome of government actions in the course of development. They have been designed to transform agricultural practices across the nation.
- The automation of the GCES process will ensure on time reporting of crop statistics and accuracy of the data.
- The pilot of these two has been planned in 12 States and will be rollout by 3rd week of October 2023.

Key Features of the Portal and Mobile Application

- **Comprehensive Information:** Of yield estimation including village wise GCES plan and plot details where the crop cutting experiments are conducted and post harvesting crop weight.
- **Timely Reporting:** Till date data collection, compilation and yield estimation is completely manual process which cause delay in reporting by states.
- In the new process, the field data will be collected using GPS enabled mobile application and will be stored in the server which ensures on time reporting of crop statistics.
- **Geo-referencing:** It enables the primary worker to draw the boundary of the experimental plot and upload photos of the plot as well as of the crops through it. This feature will ensure transparency and accuracy of the data as well.

- **Transparency:** GPS enabled devices provide precise latitude and longitude coordinates for data collection points. This information ensures that data is linked to specific geographic locations, without any scope for ambiguity or manipulation of data regarding where it was collected.

- The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) recently launched three initiatives, namely the *Kisan Rin Portal (KRP), KCC Ghar Ghar Abhiyaan, and a manual on Weather Information Network Data Systems (WINDS).*

- These initiatives aim to revolutionize agriculture, enhance financial inclusion, optimize data utilization, and improve the lives of farmers across the nation.

- It will further the goal of agricultural transformation and sustainable economic growth for the farming community across the nation.

Kisan Rin Portal (KRP)

- KRP has been developed collaboratively by MoA&FW, the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAH&D), Department of Fisheries (DoF), RBI, and NABARD.

- It aims to revolutionize access to credit services under the **Kisan Credit Card (KCC).** It will also assist farmers in availing subsidized agriculture credit through the **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS).**

- The KRP portal provides an integrated hub, offering a *comprehensive view of farmer data, loan disbursement specifics, interest subvention claims, and scheme utilization progress.*

Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)

It is a **central sector scheme** launched in the year **2006-07** with a view to provide **short term Agri-loans** availed by farmers through KCC for their working capital requirements at concessional rate of interest.

KCC

KCC was introduced in 1998 so that farmers may use KCC to readily purchase agricultural inputs (such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, etc and draw cash) for their production needs.

- KCC is **implemented** by Commercial Banks, Cooperative Banks and RRBs under the overall guidance of the Department of Financial Services. It was **developed** by NABARD.
- The scheme was further extended for the investment credit requirement of farmers, **allied and non-farm activities** (Consumption requirements of farmer household), in the year 2004.
- In 2012 the scheme was revised to facilitate the issue of **Electronic Kisan Credit Cards.**

Eligibility: Farmers - individual/joint borrowers who are owner cultivators; Tenant farmers, oral lessees & share croppers; SHGs or Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) of farmers;

Features:
- Banks provide single credit facility/ term loans to farmers.
- Farmers can take a loan of up to Rs 3 lakh in the scheme.
- Farmers having KCC credit are covered under personal accidental insurance up to Rs 50,000 for permanent disability and death and up to Rs 25,000 for other risks.
- Quantum of loan for the 1st year under this scheme is assessed on the basis of the cost of cultivation, post-harvest expenses and farm maintenance cost.
- For the subsequent 5 years, the loan will be sanctioned on the basis of the increase in the scale of finance.
- Banks will not seek security on loans up to Rs. 1.60 lakh. The validity of KCC is for **5 years.**

Ghar-Ghar KCC Abhiyaan: Door to Door KCC Campaign

- The campaign aims to extend the benefits of the KCC Scheme to every farmer across the nation. The campaign will begin from 1st October 2023 to 31st December 2023.

- MoA&FW has verified existing KCC account holders' data against the **PM KISAN** database. And it has identified account holders who match with the PM KISAN database and those who are PM KISAN beneficiaries but do not have KCC accounts.

- The campaign aims to reach out to non-KCC amount holder PM KISAN beneficiaries and integrate the eligible PM KISAN beneficiary farmers into the KCC scheme.

Weather Information Network Data Systems (WINDS) Manual

- A manual of WINDS portal was also released at the event. The portal was launched in July 2023.

- The WINDS portal is a centralized platform that hosts, manages, and processes hyper-**local weather data** collected by **Automatic Weather Stations** and **Rain Gauges** at Taluk/Block and Gram Panchayat levels.

- The portal enhances risk assessment and decision-making in crop insurance, agriculture advisories, and disaster mitigation, supporting the agricultural sector and rural economy.

- The aim is to ensure real time weather information so that farmers can take right precaution for their crops at the right time.

- The comprehensive manual provides stakeholders with an in-depth understanding of the *portal's functionalities, data interpretation, and effective utilisation, empowering farmers, policymakers and various agricultural entities to make well-informed choices*.

BBPS Extended To UK

- India is in the process to expand its presence for cross-border bill payments in the United Kingdom through the **Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS).**

- With this, NRIs in UK would be able to make use of the system for direct payments towards bill payments through multiple modes.

- Enabled by the RBI in September 2022, the facility, so far, is available to NRIs living in **Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and UAE**.

- Before this facility, NRIs would transfer money to their families and they would make their bill payments – electricity, gas, water, loan repayments, etc.

- So, this facility makes things easier on two counts — one, the number of transactions is halved and it would help the family members in India, who are often elderly and face issues in making payments online or otherwise.

- However, this facility is yet to take off in a big way, with only 300-400 cross-border transactions were done in the last month.

BBPS

- BBPS is an RBI conceptualised system **owned and operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).**
- It offers interoperable and accessible bill payment services to consumers via digital (bank channels) along with a network of agents & bank branches.
- BBPS also provides a standardised bill payment experience, centralised customer grievance redress mechanism and uniform customer convenience fee, etc.
- These bills can be for electricity, telecom, DTH, gas, water bills, insurance, loan repayments, education fees, FasTag Recharge, municipal taxes, subscription fees, etc. in one single window.
- The **payment mode options** at BBPS are Cash, Cards (Credit, Debit & Prepaid), IMPS, UPI, Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS), Internet Banking and wallets.

- Advancing financial inclusion globally through technology and *digital public infrastructure* has been a key pillar of India's G20 agenda.

International Cruise Terminal

- The Vizag International Cruise Terminal (VICT) was recently inaugurated at the Vishakhapatnam port.

- It will serve as a pivotal gateway for both domestic and international cruise tourism along the eastern coast of India.

- The terminal will operate as a Cruise Terminal during the months of November to March. During the remaining months of April to October, the berth will be utilized for **Coastal Cargo operations.**

- Ministry of Tourism committed 50% of funding, equivalent to ₹38.50 crores, with the remaining expenditure being met by Vishakhapatnam Port Trust (VPT).

- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has launched an initiative to <u>create awareness and promote compliance with Indian standards at the grassroots level</u>.

- It aims to **promote the culture of standardization and benefits of using products conforming to Indian Standards among Gram Panchayats**

- BIS has reached out to 2.4 lakh Gram Panchayats, to sensitize and train Gram Panchayat Presidents and Secretaries in collaboration with state and district authorities

- Gram Panchayats are provided with a booklet of important and useful Indian Standards relevant to different sectors, underlining the importance of adhering to these standards.

Benefits Of Compliance To Indian Standards

- **Enhanced Quality and Safety:** Of government programs and schemes implemented at the village level.

- **Consumer Protection:**–Ensuring products and services to meet specified quality and safety criteria, protects consumers from substandard or unsafe offerings.

- **Environmental Conservation:**By regulating processes that may have adverse ecological impacts.

- **Capacity Building:** Sensitization workshops are designed to empower Gram Panchayat officials with the knowledge and tools necessary to implement standards effectively.

Bureau of Indian Standards

- It is the **National Standards Body of India** working under the aegis of **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.**
- It is established by the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986
- The Minister in charge of the Ministry or Department having administrative control of the BIS is the ex-officio President of the BIS.
- The organisation was **formerly the Indian Standards Institution (ISI)**, which was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

- **National Progress:** The initiative aligns with the vision of a prosperous and progressive India by promoting a culture of quality and safety in all sectors.

Lighthouse Tourism

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) inaugurated **India's First Lighthouse Festival** from the Fort Aguada Lighthouse in Goa.

- The three days' festival, celebrated across all the lighthouses in the country in an effort to transform these historic spots as tourist destinations.

- A **lighthouse** is a tower, building, or a type of physical structure designed to emit light from a system of lamps and lenses and to serve as a navigational aid in the water.

- The initiative is part of the <u>lighthouse heritage tourism plan</u>. Under this, **The Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships** has plans to develop **75 lighthouses across the country into tourist hubs**.

  o   Directorate General of Lighthouses & Lightships is a subordinate office under the MoPSW. It provides General Aids to marine navigation along the Indian coast.

- To promote lighthouse heritage tourism, the ministry plans to develop the lighthouses on the lines of those in Europe and America under the **PPP model.**

- The lighthouse festival is part of the **Bharat Pravah initiative** that aims at highlighting the deep impression and the significance of rivers, ports, and shipping in the everyday life of the country, particularly the country's culture and history.

- The festival is a kind of road show to attract investors to develop these lighthouses and also to attract people towards lighthouses as tourism hubs.

- The Centre enacted the **Marine Aids to Navigation Act in 2021** by repealing the Lighthouse Act, 1927 to provide a framework for development, maintenance, and management of aids to navigation in India.

- Under this, it introduced the innovative concept of **Heritage Lighthouse** wherein the Central government may designate any aid to <u>navigation under its control</u> as a heritage lighthouse.
- In addition to their function as aids to navigation, such lighthouses will be developed for educational, cultural, and tourism purposes.

AI Chatbot for PM KISAN

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has launched an AI chatbot for the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM Kisan) scheme.
- This is the first AI Chatbot integrated with a major flagship scheme of the Union government.
- The introduction of the AI chatbot in the PM-KISAN grievance management system is aimed at empowering farmers with a user-friendly and accessible platform.
- It is also a significant step towards **enhancing the transparency, efficiency and reach of the scheme**, while providing the farmers with prompt, clear and accurate responses to their queries.
- It has been developed and improved with the support of **EkStep foundation and Bhashini**.
- In the first phase of the development, the chatbot will assist farmers in seeking <u>information related to their application status, payment details, ineligibility status</u> and other scheme-related updates.
- The AI Chatbot, accessible through the PM-KISAN mobile application, is **integrated with Bhashini** which **offers multilingual support,** catering to the linguistic and regional diversity of the PM-KISAN beneficiaries.
- The chatbot is currently available in English, Hindi, Bengali, Odia and Tamil, and will soon be available in all 22 official languages of the country.

PM KISAN

- It is a **central sector scheme**, with 100% funding from the Union Government.
- The scheme was started to <u>increase the income of the farmers by providing income support</u> to eligible landholding farmers' families across the country.
- It aims to supplement the financial needs of the farmers in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health, appropriate yields as well as to meet **domestic needs**.
- Under the scheme, which became effective from December 2018, the Centre provides **Rs 6,000 per year** to eligible farmers in three equal instalments of Rs 2,000.
- The <u>state governments and UT administration identify the farmers</u> who are eligible for the scheme and share the list with the Centre. The central government then directly transfers the fund to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.
- Since its launch, over Rs. 2.61 Lakhs crores has been transferred to more than 11 Crore farmers so far.

Eligible Farmers

- Scheme initially provided income support to all Small & Marginal Farmers' families **across the country** (*both urban & rural areas*), holding cultivable land upto 2 hectares.
- In June 2019, the scheme was **extended to cover all farmer families** in the country irrespective of the size of their land holdings.

Exclusion Criteria

However, the following categories of people holding cultivable land have been excluded from the scheme:

- Institutional landholders.
- Present or retired officers and employees of state/central government as well as PSUs and government autonomous bodies.

- Income Tax payers in last assessment year.
- Farmer families holding constitutional posts.
- Professionals like doctors, engineers and lawyers.
- Retired pensioners with a monthly pension of over Rs 10,000.

Revocation Of Additional Duties On US Products

- India recently lifted additional duties on eight US origin products, including apples, walnuts and almonds.
- The additional duties were imposed on the US' products in 2019, over and above the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) duty, in response to the US' decision to raise tariffs on steel and aluminium items.
- However, there is no reduction on the MFN duty or the basic custom duty (BCD), which still applies to all imported products, including US-origin products.
- The additional duties have been withdrawn, with the decision to resolve six outstanding WTO disputes between the US and India through **Mutually Agreed Solutions**.
- Furthermore, the US has agreed to provide market access to Steel and Aluminium products under the exclusion process.
- The imposition of additional duty on products from US had placed it at a disadvantage. It had lost a certain market that was taken up by other countries including Iran, New Zealand, Chile and Turkey.
- The revocation of additional duties will not result in any negative impact on domestic apple, walnut and almond producers.
- Rather, it will result in competition in the premium market segment of apples, walnuts and almonds, thereby ensuring better quality at competitive prices for Indian consumers.

Most Favoured Nation Duty

- The MFN clause is the **founding principle** of the WTO. Under the WTO agreements, countries cannot normally discriminate between their trading partners.
- MFN clause requires a country to **extend the same trade terms to all the trading partners**. For example, if a country grants a special favour such as a lower customs duty for a product to a particular country, it has to do so with all its trading partners.
- In general, MFN means that every time a country lowers a trade barrier or opens up a market, it has to do so for the same goods or services from all its trading partners — whether rich or poor, weak or strong.
- It is the first article of the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, which governs trade in goods.
- MFN is also a priority in the **General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)** (Article 2) and the **Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)** (Article 4), although in each agreement the principle is handled slightly differently.
- Together, these 3 agreements cover all three main areas of trade handled by the WTO.

Exceptions

- However, some exceptions are allowed. For example, countries can set up a free trade agreement that applies only to goods traded within the group — discriminating against goods from outside.
- Or they can give developing countries special access to their markets. Or a country can raise barriers against products that are considered to be traded unfairly from specific countries.
- And in services, countries are allowed in limited circumstances, to discriminate. But the agreements only permit these exceptions under strict conditions.

Inward and Outward Investment in India

- The RBI recently shared **annual census on foreign liabilities and assets (FLA)**.

- It covers cross-border liabilities and assets of the entities (companies, limited liability partnerships, alternative investment funds and partnership firms) with inward/outward direct investment (DI).

- Out of the 38,689 entities, which responded in the latest census round, 33,850 reported Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Outward Direct Investment (ODI) in their balance sheet as of March 2023.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

- FDI is a category of cross-border investment in which an <u>investor resident in one country establishes a lasting interest in an enterprise in another country.</u>

- With FDI, foreign companies are directly involved with day-to-day operations in the other country. This means they aren't just bringing money with them, but also knowledge, skills and technology.

Outward Direct Investment (ODI)

- An ODI is a business strategy in which a domestic firm expands its operations to a foreign country.

- Employing ODI is a natural progression for firms if their domestic markets become saturated and better business opportunities are available abroad.

- American, European, and Japanese firms have long made extensive investments outside their domestic markets. China has emerged as a large ODI player in recent years.

- FDI occurs when a **non-resident** invests in the shares of a resident company. ODI occurs when a **resident company** invests in a non-resident country as part of a strategy to expand their business.

ODI Highlights

- Total ODI by Indian firms **rose by 19.46 per cent to Rs 9.11 lakh crore** ($ 109 billion) in FY23 as against Rs 7.62 lakh crore last year.

- The **top ten countries** accounted for as much as **85 per cent of the ODI**. **Singapore** was the **largest beneficiary** of ODI from India, with the country getting Rs 2.03 lakh crore ($ 24.48 billion) or 22.3% of the total ODI during FY23.

- US received (13.6%share) and the UK got (12.8%).

- Significantly, **three jurisdictions known for tax benefits** are in the top ten countries that received Indian ODI.

  ✓ **Bermuda** received Rs 12,582 crore, **Jersey** Rs 11,661 crore and **Cyprus** Rs 9,985 crore

  ✓ Bermuda, for example, imposes no taxes on profits, income, dividends, or capital gains. It has no limit on the accumulation of profit, and has no requirement to distribute dividends.

OUTWARD DIRECT INVESTMENT FROM INDIA

COUNTRY	2022	2023	SHARE
Singapore	₹182,200 cr	₹203,233 cr	22.3%
USA	₹102,078 cr	₹124,123 cr	13.6%
UK	₹84,075 cr	₹116,398 cr	12.8%
Netherlands	₹97,723 cr	₹106,395 cr	11.7%
UAE	₹55,608 cr	₹87,459 cr	9.6%
Mauritius	₹70,392 cr	₹76,881 cr	8.4%
Switzerland	₹26,130 cr	₹28,228 cr	3.1%
Bermuda	₹11,515 cr	₹12,582 cr	1.4%
Jersey	₹13,198 cr	₹11,661 cr	1.3%
Cyprus	₹10,142 cr	₹9,985 cr	1.1%
Other Countries	₹1,09,591 cr	₹1,34,124 cr	14.7%
All Countries	₹7,62,652 cr	₹9,11,069 cr	100.0%

FDI Highlights

- The total FDI flow in FY23 was Rs 49.93 lakh crore ($ 601 billion) as against Rs 46.72 lakh crore a year ago.

- The **US was the largest source of inward FDI in India** in FY23, followed by Mauritius, the UK and Singapore with the **top ten countries accounting for over 90 per cent** of the flows.

- The US brought in Rs 8.58 lakh crore FDI in FY23 (as against Rs 8.05 lakh crore in the previous), accounting for 17.2% of the share.

- FDI from Mauritius was Rs 7.43 lakh crore (Rs 7.79 lakh crore) accounting for a share of 14.9 per cent and the UK Rs 7.08 lakh crore (Rs 5.83 lakh crore).

- Other major FDI contributors included Singapore , Netherlands and Japan

---

- Of this, Rs 47.75 lakh crore was by way of **equity and the balance was debt**.

- The manufacturing sector continued to attract the largest share of FDI equity.

- Among services, _information & communication_ and _financial & insurance_ activities were the major FDI recipient sectors.

- Over 97 per cent of the responding DI entities were unlisted in March 2023 and they accounted for a bulk of the FDI equity capital in India.
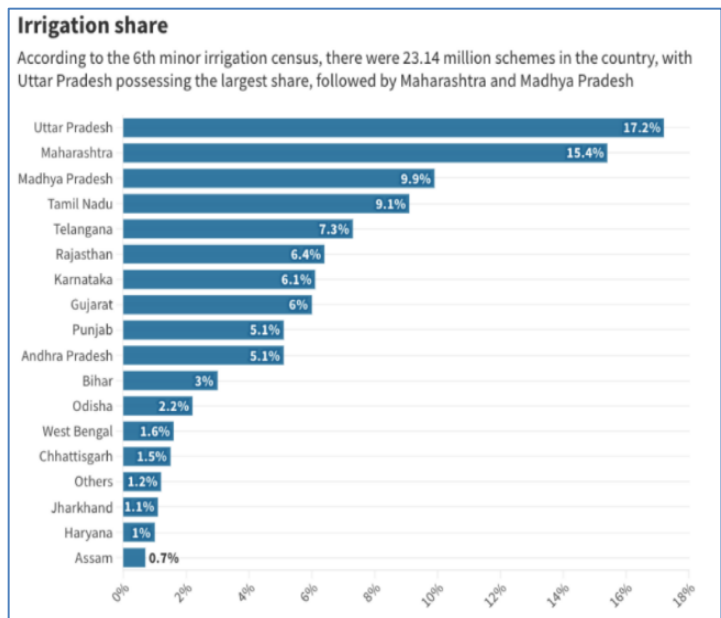
Minor Irrigation Census (MIC)

- The Ministry of Jal Shakti, Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has released the report on the **6th census on minor irrigation schemes**.

- A sound and reliable data base for **minor irrigation schemes** is essential for effective planning and policy making in this sector.

- With this objective, the government has been conducting census of minor irrigation schemes. So far, five censuses have been conducted with reference year 1986-87, 1993-94, 2000-01, 2006-07 and 2013-14 respectively.

- The MIC reports aren't a reflection of the present state of use. The data made public in the latest, sixth edition of the report, reflects irrigation trends in 2017-18.

- Similarly, the report released in 2017, or the fifth edition, reflected data in 2013-14 and so on. Because data collection requires collecting granular data down to the block level, it takes a few years to compile and make the data public.

- The **6th minor irrigation census** with reference year **2017-18** was completed in 32 States/ UTs. The work was delayed due to the Covid pandemic.

- The census was conducted under the **centrally sponsored scheme Irrigation Census**.

Key Findings

- As per the report, **23.14 million minor irrigation (MI) schemes** have been reported in the country. Out of this **21.93 million (94.8%) are Ground Water (GW)** and **1.21 million (5.2%) are Surface Water (SW) schemes**.

- **GW schemes** comprise dugwells, shallow tube wells, medium tube wells and deep tube wells. The **SW schemes** comprise surface flow and surface lift schemes.

- There has been an **increase of about 1.42 million** in MI schemes during 6th MI census as compared to 5th Census. Nationally, GW and SW schemes have increased by 6.9% and 1.2%, respectively.

- **Dug-wells have highest share in MI schemes** followed by shallow tube-wells, medium tube-wells and deep tube-wells.

State Wise Distribution

- **Uttar Pradesh** possesses the **largest number of MI schemes** in the country followed by Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

  ✓ Leading States in GW schemes are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh,

Irrigation share

According to the 6th minor irrigation census, there were 23.14 million schemes in the country, with Uttar Pradesh possessing the largest share, followed by Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh

State	Share
Uttar Pradesh	17.2%
Maharashtra	15.4%
Madhya Pradesh	9.9%
Tamil Nadu	9.1%
Telangana	7.3%
Rajasthan	6.4%
Karnataka	6.1%
Gujarat	6%
Punjab	5.1%
Andhra Pradesh	5.1%
Bihar	3%
Odisha	2.2%
West Bengal	1.6%
Chhattisgarh	1.5%
Others	1.2%
Jharkhand	1.1%
Haryana	1%
Assam	0.7%

Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

  - ✓ In SW schemes Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Odisha and Jharkhand have the highest share.
- Maharashtra is the leading State in **dug-wells**, surface flow and surface lift schemes.
- Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab are the leading States in shallow tube-wells, medium tube-wells and deep tube-wells, respectively.

Miscellaneous Details

- Out of all MI schemes, **97.0% are 'in use'**, 2.1% are 'temporarily not in use' whereas 0.9% are 'permanently not in use'. *Shallow tube-wells and medium tube-wells lead in the category of 'in use' schemes.*
- A **majority of MI schemes (96.6%) are under private ownership**. In GW schemes, the share of private entities in the ownership is 98.3% whereas in SW schemes the respective share is 64.2%.
- For the first time, the information about gender of the owner of MI scheme was also collected in case of individual ownership. Out of all the individually owned schemes, **18.1% are owned by women**.
- **Electricity is the dominant source of power** to extract water, over diesel, windmills, and solar pumps.
- This electrification of groundwater withdrawal corresponds to a rise in the use of tubewells and borewells that are capable of extracting water at greater depths.
- While the use of electricity showed a significant jump from powering only 56% of sources in 2011 to 70% in 2017, the latest report, shows electricity as powering 76% of sources – a slower growth rate.

Social Bonds

- NABARD has issued its first rupee-denominated **AAA rated social bonds** with a total size of ₹1040.50 crore.
- The bonds issued *privately* to eligible institutional investors was listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). The bonds with a face value ₹1 lakh each have a five-year tenure.
- Social bonds, also known as social impact bonds are a type of bond where the bond issuer is gathering funds for a project that has some socially beneficial implications.
- Like any other bond, social bonds imply that the bond issuer owes a debt to the bondholder, who becomes the bond issuer's creditor by virtue of having purchased a bond.
- In other words, the bondholder gives a loan to the bond issuer, who uses the capital for some project aimed at the greater social good.
- The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India co-created India's 'first Social Impact Bond (SIB).

Sustainability Bond Framework

- NABARD has also announced a Sustainability Bond Framework, which seeks to finance and refinance new or existing eligible green and social projects.
- The key criteria to make a project eligible to get financing from these bonds include contribution to the environment to mitigate climate change effects, conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, and prevention and control of pollution.
- Projects that promise energy efficiency, including green buildings, energy storage, and smart grids, would also be eligible to get funding through the new type of bonds that NABARD is rolling out.

OIML Certificate Issuing Authority

- India has become *International Organisation of Legal Metrology (OIML)* certificate-issuing authority.
- With addition of India, the number of countries authorised to issue OIML certificates has increased to 13.

- After this, the <u>Legal Metrology Division, Department of Consumer Affairs</u>, is now authorised to issue OIML certificates.
- Twelve other countries are Australia, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, France, United Kingdom, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, and Slovakia.

Legal Metrology

- Metrology is the science of measurement. Legal metrology is the application of legal requirements to measurements and measuring instruments.
- The objective of legal metrology is to **ensure public guarantee** from the point of view of security and accuracy of the weights and measurements.

OIML Certification System

The OIML-CS is a system for issuing, registering and using OIML certificates, and their associated OIML type evaluation/test reports, for instruments like digital balance, clinical thermometers, etc. It is a single certificate accepted worldwide.

Benefits

- India is a member of the OIML since 1956. The country now has the authority for issuing internationally accepted OIML certificate for selling weights and measures anywhere in the world.
- Thus, domestic manufacturers can now export their weighing and measuring instruments worldwide without incurring additional testing fees, resulting in significant cost savings.
- Since only 13 countries are authorised, neighboring countries and manufacturers can come to India to get their certification done.
- So, it will be a revenue earner in terms of foreign exchange and will also lead to employment generation.

International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML)

- The **OIML** is an intergovernmental organisation that was created in 1955 to promote the global harmonisation of the legal metrology procedures that facilitate international trade.
- Such harmonisation ensures that certification of measuring devices in one country is compatible with certification in another, thereby facilitating trade in the measuring devices and in products that rely on the measuring devices.

Vanadium Deposits

- Vanadium, a critical raw material for many industrial applications, has been found in sediment samples collected from Gulf of Khambhat, which opens into the Arabian Sea off Alang in Gujarat.
- Traces of the metal have so far been found in Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha and Maharashtra. However, it is the first report of vanadium occurrence in the offshore sediments of India.
- Rarely found in its pure form naturally, vanadium is present in over 55 different minerals, which makes its production costly. At Gulf of Khambhat, it has been found in a mineral called titanomagnetite, which is formed when molten lava cools rapidly.
- Vanadium is a critical raw material for strategic sectors such as defence and aerospace. For instance, vanadium-containing alloys of titanium and aluminium are used in jet engine components and high-speed airframes.
- Besides these, the metal is also used for storing energy and in making critical electronic components.
- It is used to make alloys that are resistant to corrosion and high temperatures.
- It is also used to make vanadium redox flow batteries, which are promising for large-scale energy storage.

Iran One Year After The Mahsa Amini Protests

- Iran's rulers have intensified a clampdown on dissent one year since the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini.

- The death of Mahsa Amini had sparked protests that spiralled into some of the worst political turmoil since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Background

- Iran's so-called **morality police** arrested 22-year-old Jina Mahsa Amini in Tehran for allegedly violating Iran's mandatory Islamic dress code.

- They then took her to a police station, where she slipped into a coma. Three days later, she died in hospital.

  - While Amini's family said she had been killed by blows to her head and limbs, the authorities said she had died due to existing medical problems.

- Amini's death sparked widespread anger, leading to anti-government rallies and protests against the mandatory rule of wearing Hijab.

Morality Police Of Iran

- **About**

  - **Gasht-e-Ershad,** which translates as guidance patrols, is widely known as the morality police.

  - It is a unit of Iran's police force established under former hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

  - It is supervised by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. However, the elected government has a say in their activities through the Interior Ministry.

  - Both men and women officials are part of the morality police.

- **Functions**

  - Not only the enforcement of hijab, but the implementation of other rules on public appearance and conduct are also the responsibility of the police.

  - In 2010, for instance, Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance issued a template for suitable haircuts for men in order to halt Western influence on culture.

  - The morality police were tasked with enforcement at salons.

Libya's Catastrophic Flooding

- Many people died and thousands went missing after devastating floods swept through the **Libyan port city of Derna**.

- Entire neighbourhoods disappeared into the sea as a huge tsunami-like torrent of water swept through the city.

Iran in one year since **Mahsa Amini protests erupted**

Morality police vanished and then re-appeared
- Morality police largely vanished from the streets after Amini died in their custody.
- However, after the protests lost momentum, they once again took to the streets.
- The authorities installed surveillance cameras to identify and enforce penalties against women who were not wearing veils.

Veil as one of the principles of Islamic Republic
- Authorities described the veil as one of the principles of the Islamic Republic.
- It ordered both private and public sectors to deny services to any women who had discarded it.

Proposal for longer prison term
- With many Iranians saying the number of unveiled women continues to grow, the parliament is considering longer prison terms for anyone who flouts the dress code.

Response of western countries
- Western countries imposed new sanctions on security forces and on dozens of Iranian officials over the protests, further straining already difficult ties.

Geographical Location Of Derna

- Derna is a port city in eastern Libya. It is located on the **Mediterranean coast** between Benghazi and Tobruk.

- It is also located at the eastern end of the Jebel Akhdar, or "green mountains".

Reasons Behind The Catastrophic Damage To Derna

- **Extreme Weather**

  o Libya's eastern region,witnessed extreme rainfall from Sept 10 to 11.

    ▪ E.g., in Derna, the average monthly rainfall in the whole of September is under 1.5 mm. However, it exceeded 150 mm in about two days.

  o The rains were accompanied by strong winds of up to 80 kph.

    ▪ The water was brought by **Storm Daniel** which reached Libya

    ▪ **Formed in Greece**, this storm is also responsible for causing floods and deaths in Spain, Turkey and Bulgaria earlier this month.

    ▪ Before reaching Libya, Daniel transitioned into what is known as a **'medicane,'** or tropical-like cyclone that occasionally forms over the Mediterranean Sea.

    ▪ The storm became stronger as it drew energy from the abnormally warm waters.

      - Mediterranean has been 2-3 degree Celsius warmer this year

      - Medicanes are known to be weak storms that do not last long. But higher sea surface temperatures help them become stronger and last longer.

    ▪ It unloaded excessive rainfall over northeastern Libya, where rain flowing down the mountainous terrain overwhelmed **dams.**

- **Vulnerable geography of Derna**

  o It is situated at the **end of a valley** and bisected by the **Wadi Derna**, a seasonal river that flows from mountains to the south (towards the sea) and is normally protected from flooding by dams.

- **Crumbling infrastructure**

  o The country has been gutted by a war between two rival factions for more than a decade.

    ▪ In Tripoli, Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah leads Libya's internationally recognised government.

    ▪ In Benghazi, the rival prime minister, Ossama Hamad, heads the eastern administration, which is backed by powerful military commander Khalifa Hiftar.

  o In the tussle for power, focus on socio-economic issues, including maintaining and developing infrastructure has been put on the backburner.

  o Moreover, as flooding is quite rare in the region, Libya was not prepared to face the calamity.

    ▪ There are no flood-resilient structures or roads in the country, especially in Derna.

Operation Against Armenian Forces In Nagorno-Karabakh

- Azerbaijan launched anti-terror operations in Nagorno-Karabakh.

  o In the name of this operation, Azerbaijan's forces opened fire on Armenian positions.

  o Azerbaijan and Armenia last went to war in 2020.

- Tensions in the South Caucasus have been high for months around the breakaway enclave, recognised internationally as part of Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh Region

- **Geographical location**

  o Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous and heavily forested region lying south of Caucasus mountains.

  o The region includes the north-eastern flank of the Karabakh Range of the Lesser Caucasus and extends from the crest line of the range to the margin of the Kura River lowland at its foot.

- **Disputed region**

  o Under international law, **this region is recognised as part of Azerbaijan**.

  o However, ethnic Armenians who constitute the vast majority of the population there reject Azeri rule.

  o In 1990s, Azerbaijan's troops were pushed out of the region following a war.

  o Since then, these ethnic Armenians have been in administrative control of Nagorno-Karabakh, with support from Armenia.

Origin Of The Dispute Between Armenia And Azerbaijan

- In the early 1920s, after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, the new Soviet rulers, established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, with an ethnic Armenian majority.

  o This region was established within the **Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan.**

- As Soviet control loosened towards the end of the 1980s, smouldering Armenian-Azeri frictions exploded into violence when the region's parliament voted to join Armenia.

- During the fighting, the ethnic Armenians gained control of the region.

  o They also pushed on to occupy Azerbaijani territory outside Karabakh, creating a buffer zone linking Karabakh and Armenia.

- With the break-up of the Soviet Union, in late 1991, Karabakh declared itself an independent republic, further escalating the conflict into a full-scale war.

  o That de-facto status has not been recognised elsewhere.

India And The Dispute Between Armenia And Azerbaijan

- **No Specific Policy**

  o India does not have any specific public policy for the South Caucasus region like the 'Neighborhood First Policy' or 'Act East'.

  o At the same time, India's relations with the countries of the region (Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan etc.) show great contrast.

- **Relationship with Armenia**

  o India and Armenia signed a **Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation in Dec 1995**.

  o If the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region reaches the territory of Armenia, this treaty will prohibit India from providing military or any other aid to Azerbaijan.

  o Armenia has openly supported India on the Kashmir issue, while Azerbaijan has the support of Pakistan.

- **Relationship with Azerbaijan**

  o Investments have been made in an oil field project by India's public sector company ONGC Videsh Limited in Azerbaijan.

- GAIL is exploring the possibilities of cooperation in the field of LNG.
- Azerbaijan is an important country located on the route of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- India's demand for a peaceful resolution of the conflict through diplomatic negotiations without supporting either side is a positive step.

UK's Sycamore Gap

- Recently, the Sycamore Gap tree was cut down. The 300-year-old tree in England was famous for its beauty and unique location.
    - It was cut down by a teenage boy, in what is being seen as a deliberate act of vandalism.
- The sycamore tree was located in a dip between two hills, at a **gap in the Hadrian Wall** – an <u>old stone structure that is close to the border between England and Scotland</u> – in Northumberland, northern England.
- Sycamore trees can become extremely tall as they mature – reaching a height of up to 35 metres.
- They are commonly found in the UK and have leaves similar to that of a maple tree. A sycamore can live for as long as 400 years.
    - Native to central, eastern and southern Europe, it is believed to have been introduced to the UK by the Romans or in the Tudor era around the 1500s.
- The Hadrian Wall is part of a larger UNESCO World Heritage Site called the 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire' and is found in the UK and Germany.

Philippines Removes 'Floating Barrier' Installed By China

- The Philippines has removed a floating barrier installed by China to block Philippine fishing boats entering a contested area in the South China Sea.
- Manila says China violated its fishing rights with the 300m (1,000ft) barrier in the Scarborough Shoal.
    - The Philippines describes the shoal as an integral part of the Philippine national territory.
        - Scarborough Shoal is within the 200-nautical-mile (370km) EEZ of the Philippines as defined by international maritime law.
        - It was affirmed by a ruling of <u>The Hague's International Court of Arbitration</u>.
    - China claims more than 90% of the South China Sea and seized the shoal in 2012.
        - Beijing claims the area as part of its territory and refers to Scarborough Shoal as Huangyan Island.

South China Sea Dispute

- The South China Sea is a marginal sea that is part of the Pacific Ocean, encompassing an area from the Karimata and Malacca Straits to the Strait of Taiwan.
- South China dispute is a dispute over territory and sovereignty over ocean areas in south China sea. This also includes the two islands
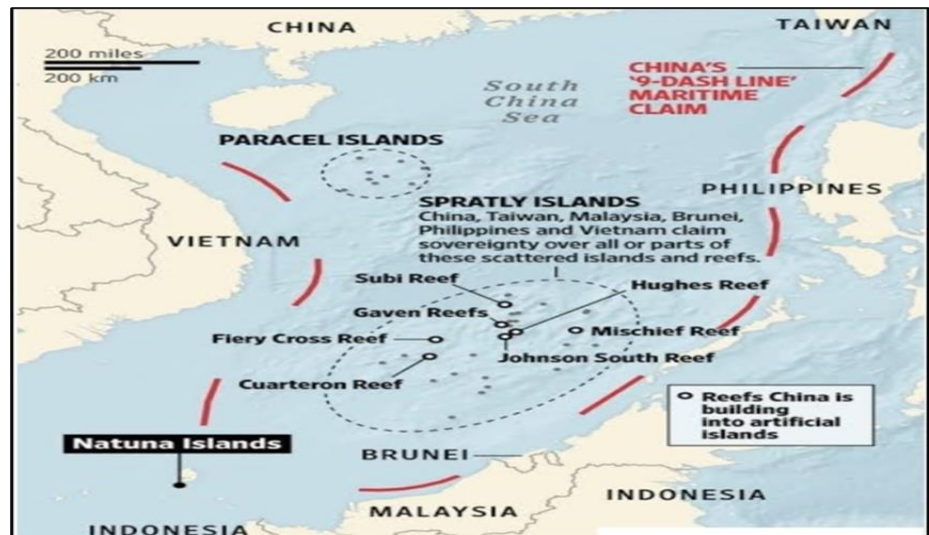
namely – **The Parcels and the Spratlys**. China often invokes the so called __nine-dash line__ to justify its apparent historic rights over most of the South China Sea.

- Parts of this sea is also claimed by <u>Taiwan, Malaysia, Philippines, Brunei and Vietnam</u>.
- China has ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that declared China's assertion as without basis.
  - o In 2016, Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) awarded a verdict refuting Chinese claim over South China Sea.

Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin Meet For Talks In Russia

- The leaders of North Korea and Russia held talks in Russia's Far East. The talks were aimed at deepening military, economic and geopolitical cooperation on the official agenda.
- The summit underscored the growing ties between two isolated leaders involved in separate confrontations with the West, especially with the United States.
- This summit was significant as <u>Russia wants to buy North Korean ammunition for its ongoing invasion of Ukraine</u>.
- On the other hand, North Korea's economy has been crippled by the pandemic-era border closures and Kim wants supplies of food and energy to address shortfalls.
- The meeting is also a move on Kim's part to deepen relations with Moscow and <u>end his country's years of isolation</u>.
- Apart from this, the leader is trying to counter the **pressure from South Korea-US-Japan trilateral cooperation**.

Iran-US Prisoner Exchange

- A deal for Iran to release seven Americans in exchange for access to $6 billion in assets and clemency for five Iranians held in the US has been successful.
- The agreement was negotiated by the US and the Islamic Republic of Iran over a period of two years and was facilitated by Oman, Qatar, and Switzerland.
- The prisoner exchange is a positive step — one of a few de-escalatory measures between the two nations in recent months.
  - o The release of fund will help Iranian economy. Iran has been in an economic crisis for years, due in part to state corruption and incompetence — but also due to harsh US-led sanctions.
- However, it is not a signal that US-Iran relations are fundamentally changing.

Indonesia Offers Golden Visa To Entice Foreign Investors

- In a move to woo foreign individuals and corporate investors, <u>Indonesia has introduced a golden visa scheme</u>.
  - o A golden visa is an immigration program that allows wealthy individuals to obtain a residence permit or citizenship in a foreign country.
- Under this new visa scheme, foreign investors can receive a resident permit of between 5-10 years, depending on the value of their investment.
  - o To be eligible for 5-year visa, an **individual** needs to set up a company worth $2.5 million.
    - ▪ If one wants a 10-year visa, an investment of $5 million would be required.

o **Corporate investors** are required to invest $25 million to get five-year visas for directors and commissioners. They need to invest double, or $50 million, to gain a 10-year visa.

Italy To Walk Out Of China's Belt And Road Initiative

- In a private meeting during the G20 summit 2023, Italian PM Giorgia Meloni reportedly conveyed Italy's plans to withdraw from the Belt and Road Initiative to Chinese Premier.
- While talking to the news reporters, Meloni clarified that a final decision on whether to leave the BRI was still to be taken.
- Italy is the only G7 country to sign up for the BRI, which it did in 2019.
  - o G7 is the grouping of advanced economies of US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan, with the European Union as a "non-enumerated" member.

Why Does Italy Want To Leave The BRI

- **Background – why Italy joined BRI?**
  - o Italy had joined the BRI at a time it was desperate for investment and infrastructure building, having survived three recessions in 10 years.
  - o Its government at the time did not share warm relations with the EU, and was happy to turn to China for the funds it could pump in.
- **Expectations not fulfilled**
  - o Italy had signed an agreement to join the BRI in 2019. Four years later, the agreement has not done much for Italy.
  - o Chinese FDI in Italy dropped from $650 million in 2019 to just $33 million in 2021. In fact, the country invested far more in non-BRI countries in Europe.
  - o In terms of trade, since joining BRI, Italy's exports to China increased from 14.5 to 18.5 billion euros, while Chinese exports to Italy expanded from 33.5 to 50.9 billion euros.
- **Changing geopolitics**
  - o For Beijing, a G7 country joining the BRI had been a big diplomatic win, and Rome walking out just ahead of the initiative's 10th anniversary will be a loss of face.
  - o This will be in line with Europe's increasingly cautious stand towards China.
    - While the US-China ties have been rocky for years now, many countries in Europe continued to maintain close economic and trade links with China.
    - However, the Russia-Ukraine war, China's perceived staunch support of Vladimir Putin, and geopolitical rivalries taking the form of trade sanctions have forced a rethink.
    - In April, EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) collapsed.
    - In 2022, Estonia and Latvia quit the 17+1, China's diplomatic push in Central and Eastern European countries. Lithuania had walked out in 2021.
  - o Italy has the G7 presidency next year, and walking out of the BRI will sit well with its Western allies.
- **The Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII)**
  - o Recently, the West has come out with its own initiative for funding infrastructure projects across the world in the form of the PGII. This is seen as a counter to the BRI.

Why World Is Worried About BRI

- It is being feared that China could use "**debt-trap diplomacy**" to extract strategic concessions:
  - o such as over territorial disputes in the South China Sea or

- silence on human rights violations.
- China had done this in the past. In 2011, China wrote off an undisclosed debt owed by Tajikistan in exchange for 1,158 sq km of disputed territory.
- Many experts claim that it is a form of economic imperialism that gives China too much leverage over other countries, often those that are smaller and poorer.
- Chinese commercial presence around the world will eventually lead to expanded military presence.

BRI and India

- India does not support the BRI, and has declined to join the project. The major reason for this is that the BRI passes through Indian territory illegally held by Pakistan.
- The arm of the BRI project, known as China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), runs from **Kashgar** in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region to **Gwadar port in southwestern Baluchistan in Pakistan**.
    - This arm links mainland China to the Arabian Sea.
- The project enters Indian territory occupied by Pakistan in Gilgit Baltistan, and traverses the entire length of Pakistan from north to south before reaching the Arabian Sea.

Stapled Visa Row - Asian Games 2023

- Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur called off his trip to China on the eve of the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games.
- This was after three athletes — all wushu martial arts players — from Arunachal Pradesh were denied accreditation cards and instead offered stapled visas by China.
    - Accreditation cards have the dual purpose of being an ID card for the Asian Games as well as a visa.

The Asian Games

- **About**
    - The Asian Games, **also known as Asiad**, are a multi-sport event that takes place every four years. The games are the second largest multi-sport event after the Olympics.
    - The **Olympic Council of Asia (OCA)** organizes the games, which have 45 participating countries or regions.

Stapled Visa Row

What is a stapled visa?

- A stapled visa is simply an unstamped piece of paper that is attached by a pin or staples to a page of the passport and can be torn off or detached at will.
- This is different from a regular visa that is affixed to the passport by the issuing authority and stamped.

Stapled visas issued by China

- China has made it a practice to issue stapled visas to Indian nationals from Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.
- It says the visas are valid documents, but the Government of India has consistently refused to accept this position.
- China began issuing stapled visas to residents of Arunachal Pradesh in the mid-2000s and to those from Jammu and Kashmir from 2009.
- China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of its territory.
- The Indian government has refused to accept the stapled visas as valid documents.

- The **19th edition of the Asian Games** is being held in Hangzhou, China (from September 23 to October 8).
    - The 18th Asian Games were held in Indonesia in 2018.
- The **1st Games were held in New Delhi**, with 11 participating countries, including Japan.

[For detail on India-China Boudary dispute in eastern sector, refer the topic *"China announces renaming of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh"* from The Recitals – April 2023.]

Manipur Demands Freezing of Visa-Free Entry from Myanmar

The Manipur state government has requested the Centre to **"permanently" wind up the Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the Indo-Myanmar border**.

Indo-Myanmar Border

- **About**
  - The Indo-Myanmar border runs for 1,643 km.
  - The States of Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km) and Mizoram (510 km) have common border with Myanmar.

- **Demarcation of Indo-Myanmar border**
  - Out of 1643 km, demarcation of 1472 km has been completed.
  - There are **only two un-demarcated portions** along Indo-Myanmar:
    - Lohit sub-sector of Arunachal Pradesh-136 km
    - Kabaw valley in Manipur – 35 km.

- **Security Concerns along the border**
  - **Secessionist movements**
    - The movement for Greater Nagaland, comprising of areas in both India and Myanmar, has dramatically destabilised the border.
  - **Support to insurgents and terrorists in India**
    - Many of the Insurgents in the North Eastern States of India have ties with groups in Myanmar who provide political backing, economic assistance, logistic support, military training or arms supplies.
    - The **porous border also helps provide safe havens to the insurgents**.
  - **Narcotics smuggling**
    - India is located near the Golden Triangle of drug production in the East (Northern Thailand, Laos and Myanmar), which has resulted in rampant drug trafficking through the country.
    - Trafficking of synthetic drugs to and from Myanmar is a concern.
  - **Issue of refugees and illegal migrants**
    - Since the military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, the ruling junta has launched a campaign of persecution against the Kuki-Chin people.
    - This has pushed large numbers of Myanmarese tribals across the country's western border into India, especially into Manipur and Mizoram.

Free Movement Regime (FMR)

About
- It is a pact between India and Myanmar that allows tribes living along the border on either side to **travel up to 16 km inside the other country without a visa.**
- FMR is being seen as a part of the India's Act East policy.

Rationale behind FMR
- The boundary between India and Myanmar was demarcated by the British in 1826.
- This effectively divided people of the same ethnicity and culture into two nations without seeking their opinion. Hence, need was felt to enable ethnically similar communities living across the borders to move freely without the need of a visa.
- The FMR was supposed to provide impetus to local trade and business.
  - However, it has been criticised for unintentionally aiding illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and gun-running.

Current status
- However, the agreement has been defunct since 2020, first because of the Covid pandemic. After the military coup in Myanmar in 2021 and the continued escalation of its refugee crisis, **India suspended the FMR in September 2022.**

- **Border management**
  - **Security force along Indo-Myanmar border:** Fondly known as "Friends of the North East People", the **Assam Rifles** is deployed in North East for guarding Indo-Myanmar Border.
  - **Modern Weapons for surveillance and border security:** Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), Battle Field Surveillance Radar (BFSR), Laser Range Finder etc. are being used for border security.
  - **Border Fencing:** In order to check the problem of infiltration, smuggling of contrabands and illegal activities in the Indo-Myanmar border area
  - **Comprehensive Border Infrastructure Project** undertaken to improve *border infrastructure* on India-Myanmar Border
  - **Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)**: The government of India decided to set up ICPs at major entry points on our land borders.
  - **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):** Various developmental works in the border areas have been undertaken by the MHA under the BADP as part of a comprehensive approach to border management.

NIA Confiscates Properties Of 'Sikhs For Justice' Founder

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) confiscated land and part of a house belonging to Gurpatwant Singh Pannu in Amritsar and Chandigarh.
  - Pannu is the US-based lawyer and founder of the banned Sikhs for Justice.
- The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act (UAPA)**, amended in 2019, allows an NIA officer to conduct raids, and seize properties that are suspected to be linked to terrorist activities.
  - The NIA does not have to take permission of the Director General of Police of a state.
  - The investigating officer only requires sanction from the Director General of NIA.

About National Investigation Agency

- The **National Investigation Agency Act, 2008** was enacted and it gives the NIA powers to:
  - Take **Suo motu** cognisance of terror activities in any part of India and register a case,
  - Enter any state without permission from the state government, and
  - Investigate and arrest people.
- At present NIA is functioning as the **Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency** in India.
- **Objectives:**
  - To set the standards of excellence in counter terrorism and other national security related investigations at the national level
  - To create deterrence for existing and potential terrorist groups/individuals.
- **Jurisdiction:** Provisions of NIA Act extend to the whole of India and also applies to Indian citizens outside the country.
- **Headquarters**: New Delhi; **Nodal Ministry**: Ministry of Home Affairs
- **Functions of NIA:**
  - In-depth professional investigation of scheduled offences.
  - Ensuring effective and speedy trial.
  - Assist all States and other investigating agencies in investigation of terrorist cases.
  - Build a data base on all terrorist related information and share the data base available with the States and other agencies.

NIA (Amendment) Act, 2019

- **It expanded the type of offences that the investigative body could investigate and prosecute**. The agency can now investigate offences related to human trafficking, counterfeit currency, manufacture or sale of prohibited arms, cyber-terrorism, and offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.
- The amendment also enables the Central government to designate sessions courts as special courts for NIA trials.

FICCI CASCADE Report on Illegal Trade

Recently, a report titled '**Hidden Streams: Linkages Between Illicit Markets, Financial Flows, Organised Crime and Terrorism**' was released by FICCI CASCADE.

Key Highlights Of The FICCI CASCADE Report

- **Illegal economy in India has an overall score of 6.3**, which is higher than the average score of 5 of other 122 countries.
- **Illicit Financial Flows – Value Gap India** (2009-2018): India has faced an approximate total potential revenue loss of US $13 billion involving both **misinvoiced imports and exports**.
- **Terror and Crime in India: Economic Impact of Violence for India (Billions PPP)**
  - In 2021, India's economic cost for violence was at US $1170 billion at purchasing power parity (PPP). This accounts for approximately 6% of the country's GDP.
  - Also, violence per capita impact for the same period is estimated at US $841 at PPP.
- **Organised Crime**
  - India's aggregate score of organised crime is low at 4.3 (on a scale of 1-10), compared to the average benchmark of 5.2 for 122 countries.
  - The criminal network, however, has a significant influence in India due to its significant role in India's organised crime scenario.
    - They have a widespread presence across the country and they are involved in a variety of illicit activities including drug and human trafficking and the illegal trade in wildlife products.
  - This is attributable to the **efficacy of criminal networks in India**, which enables them to generate substantial illicit financial flows despite their small numbers.
- **Drug Economy in India**
  - India's is located near major drug-producing regions, including the **Golden Triangle** (Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand) and the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran).
  - India's location has been associated with activities that may involve the transportation and distribution of controlled substances.
  - There has been an increase in the illicit drug trade in India in recent years.
    - The FICCI report stated that 3,172 cases of drug seizures were recorded during 2014-2022 as against 1,257 cases in 2006-2013.
    - Total 4,888 arrests were made during the same period for these seizures involving **3.33 lakh kg of drugs worth Rs 20,000 crore**.

FICCI CASCADE
FICCI CASCADE stands for the **C**ommittee **A**gainst **S**muggling and **C**ounterfeiting **A**ctivities **D**estroying the **E**conomy.
o The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) established the forum in New

- **Some of the findings of FICCI CASCADE**
  - The government lost over 508% of tax revenue from the alcohol industry.
  - The government lost 201% of tax revenue from the FMCG packaged foods industry.
  - The government lost 113% of tax revenue from the tobacco industry.
  - Smuggling & counterfeiting could hinder India's goal of becoming a 40 trillion-dollar economy.

Intelligence Bureau's District-Level Officers To Attend Counter-Terror Grid Meetings

- MHA has directed the Intelligence Bureau's (IB) **district-level officers** to attend meetings of the multi-agency center (MAC).
  - MAC is a counter-terrorism grid established in 2001 by the IB.
  - Headquartered in Delhi, it is India's largest intelligence-sharing platform.
- Meetings of the MAC are typically attended by state-level officers who share inputs on their respective areas.
- But a few months back, especially after the ethnic clashes in Manipur, the government decided to rope in district-level SP-rank officers for the meetings.
  - Senior officials, who used to attend the meeting so far, shared only core information, not the nitty-gritty of any area related issues
- This is part of the Centre's strategy to improve the intelligence-sharing mechanism and get real-time updates.

IAF Takes Delivery Of First C295

- Indian Air Force (IAF) received the first of the 56 C295 aircraft at the Airbus production site in Seville, Spain.
  - These C295 aircrafts are set to replace its ageing **Avro-748 fleet**.
    - The Avro 748 is a twin-engine turboprop military transport and freighter of British origin.
- In September 2021, India signed a deal with a European Corporation named **Airbus Defence and Space** to procure **56 C295 aircraft.**
- Under the agreement, Airbus will deliver the **first 16 aircraft in fly-away condition** from its final assembly line in Seville, Spain within four years.
- The subsequent 40 aircraft will be manufactured by **Tata Advanced Systems Ltd** (TASL) in India as part of an industrial partnership between the two companies.
  - The first Made-in-India aircraft will be rolled out of the manufacturing facility in September 2026 and the remaining 39 will have to be produced by August 2031.
- The acquisition of the aircraft is significant for two reasons:
  - First, **it will replace ageing Avro-748 aircraft**. Hence, it will provide a fillip to the IAF's air transport duties in carrying troops and material.
  - Secondly, the acquisition **sets into motion India's first-ever 'Make in India' Aerospace programme in the private sector**.

13th Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs' Conference (IPACC)

- The 13th IPACC was held at the Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi.

- This biennial event was co-hosted by **Indian Army and the US Army Pacific**. It served as a unifying platform for army chiefs from 30 Indo-Pacific nations.
- The collective aim was to deliberate upon critical aspects of security cooperation, strategic collaboration, and pressing regional concerns.
- Theme: "**Together for Peace: Sustaining Peace and Stability in the Indo-Pacific Region**".
- While addressing the conference, India Army Chief said that <u>territorial disputes and transnational threats of terrorism</u> are among the many land-related challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.
    o Other challenges included:
        ▪ Artificial islands built to acquire real estate and establish military bases
        ▪ Climate change impacting inhabited islands/coastal areas of rim nations
        ▪ Natural calamities

Govt Extends AFSPA In Parts Of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland For Six Months

- Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) extended the Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act (AFSPA) in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland for another six months starting from October 1.
    o The AFSPA gives the power to:
        ▪ Arrest anyone without a warrant and use force if needed
        ▪ Fire after giving warning or use other kinds of force even if it causes death.

[For detailed discussion on AFSPA and Disturbed Area, refer the topic *"AFSPA lifted from more areas in Northeast states"* from The Recitals – March 2023].

75th Anniversary Of Operation Polo

India celebrated the 7th anniversary of Operation Polo on September 13, 2023. On this day in 1948, Indian Army launched to integrate the princely state of Hyderabad.

Operation Polo: Background Against Which Operation Polo Was Launched

- **Intentions of Nizam of Hyderabad state,** Mir Osman Ali Shah, of keeping his state as an independent entity and did not join India or Pakistan after Independence.
- **Standstill agreement:** Nizam signed a standstill agreement with India in November 1947.
    o This essentially meant that a **status quo** would be maintained between the Indian dominion and the Hyderabad state till a solution was found.
    o The agreement was signed for a period of one year during which the Indian government would not exercise any authority over Hyderabad.

Need for Operation Polo

- **Location of Hyderabad**
    o Situated in the Deccan, Hyderabad was one of the most populous and richest states.
    o It had 17 districts including Aurangabad (now in Maharashtra) and Gulbarga (now in Karnataka).
- **Intention to have fraternal relations with Pakistan**
    o The landlocked state had a <u>majority Hindu population</u> with the state <u>administration almost entirely run by its Muslim rulers</u>.
    o There was no common border with Pakistan but the Nizam had every intention to have fraternal relations with that country.

- **Excesses of the Razakars**
  - During this period, the Nizam's administration had taken advantage of the standstill agreement signed with India.
  - It started to increase the **number of its irregular force called Razakars** which was led by Maj Gen SA El Edroos, the Arab commander in chief of the Hyderabad state forces.
    - The Razakars were a paramilitary force in the Hyderabad State. It was created to support the Nizam's rule.
    - The Razakars primarily consisted of local Muslim volunteers who were loyal to the Nizam's regime.
  - The Razakars persecuted Hindus and forced them to become Muslims. They also raped women.

Operation Polo On The Ground

- The Indian forces were led by Maj Gen Jayanto Nath Chaudhuri, the General Officer Commanding of 1 Armoured Division.

- The Nizam of Hyderabad announced a ceasefire on September 17.

- On September 18, Maj Gen Chaudhuri entered Hyderabad city with his forces and Maj Gen El Edroos surrendered to him.

- Maj Gen Chaudhuri was later appointed the Military Governor of Hyderabad.

Ex BRIGHT STAR-23

- INS Sumedha arrived at Port Alexandria, Egypt to participate in '**Exercise BRIGHT STAR- 23**'.
  - This was the maiden participation of Indian Navy in Ex Bright Star.

- This military exercise brought together naval forces from 34 nations, making it the largest joint military exercise ever conducted in the Middle East & North Africa region.

- The exercise was conceptualized as a training exercise between the US and Egypt during the Camp David Accord of 1977.
  - The first edition of the exercise was conducted in Egypt in 1980 and it was expanded to include more nations in 1995.

IAF's Training Exercise Trishul

- Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted its annual training exercise, "Trishul". The exercise was designed to test the operational preparedness of the Western Air Command (WAC).

- WAC is the largest & most important Air Command of the IAF, responsible for aerial defense of North India.

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATION

18th East Asia Summit

Prime Minister Modi attended the 18th East Asia Summit (EAS) in Jakarta.

East Asia Summit (EAS)

- **About**

  o It is a forum for leaders of countries in the Indo-Pacific region to discuss political, security, and economic challenges.

  o The EAS was established in 2005 by the ASEAN and is held annually.

    ▪ The EAS was launched in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2005.

- **Members**

  o The EAS was originally attended by 16 countries from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Oceania.

  o In 2011, membership expanded to 18 countries, including Russia and the United States.

  o Currently, EAS is a forum of 18 countries that represent <u>54% of the world's population and 58% of global GDP</u>. The 18 countries are:

    ▪ **Ten member states of the ASEAN**

    ▪ Along with <u>Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and United States</u>.

  o EAS is the **only leaders-led forum that brings together** US, China, Russia, India, RoK, and Australia.

- **India and EAS**

  o India is member of EAS since 2005.

  o At the <u>4th EAS in Thailand in 2009</u>, leaders endorsed the proposal to revive **Nalanda University**.

    ▪ The idea was first proposed by former President APJ Abdul Kalam in 2006.

> **To become a member of the EAS, countries must:**
> - Sign the ASEAN *Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC)*
> - Be a formal dialogue partner of ASEAN
> - Have substantive cooperative relations with ASEAN

> **Six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS**
> - Environment and Energy,
> - Education,
> - Finance,
> - Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases,
> - Natural Disaster Management, and
> - ASEAN Connectivity

78th UNGA

- The UN General Assembly held its **78th annual gathering**. EAM S Jaishankar led the Indian delegation at the assembly.

- **President of 78th UNGA** - Mr. Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago

- **Theme** - "*Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all*"

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

- **About**

  o It was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations and is headquartered in New York City.

  o It is <u>one of the six principal organs</u> of the UN and serves as the main policy-making organ of the Organization.

- o   Each Member States of the United Nations has an equal vote.
- **Some of the key decisions of UNGA**
  - ▪ appointing the Secretary-General on the recommendation of Security Council
  - ▪ electing the non-permanent members of the Security Council
  - ▪ approving the UN budget
- **Some of the important achievements of UNGA**
  - o   Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000
  - o   The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document
  - o   17 SDGs formulated in September 2015
- **General debate of UNGA**
  - o   The Assembly's annual general debate provides Member States the opportunity to express their views on major international issues.
  - o   On this occasion, the Secretary-General presents on the opening day of the debate his report on the work of the Organization.

India, UN Launch Capacity Building Initiative

- During the 78th UNGA, India and the United Nations have jointly launched an initiative aimed at building the capacity of countries in the Global South.
  - o   The "*India-UN Capacity Building Initiative*" was announced at the event India-UN for the Global South-Delivering for Development.
- It will leverage India's Technical and Economic Cooperation platform to share India's development experiences and best practices with partner countries in the Global South.
- It will operationalise development-relevant deliverables of India's G20 Presidency. Hence, it is seen as a big boost to India's G20 Presidency.
- As part of this initiative, the UN India team and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will partner together.

ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

GRIHA

The Indian Army's new Thal Sena Bhawan (TSB), coming up on a sprawling 39-acre site, boasts of several green measures in line with GRIHA-IV norms.

Challenges In GRIHA

1. Limited Awareness

2. Inadequate Government's Policies & Procedures

3. Extra Clearances And Approvals

4. Deficient Incentives To Encourage Adoption

5. Expensive Equipment And Products

6. Lack Of Skilled Manpower And Subject Matter Experts

7. Limited availability of green building materials and technologies

GRIHA (Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment)

- It is a rating tool that helps people assess the performance of their building (over its entire life cycle) against certain nationally acceptable benchmarks for 'green building'.
- It is an independent, not-for-profit society jointly set up by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- It attempts to minimize a building's resource consumption, waste generation, and overall ecological impact to within certain nationally acceptable limits / benchmarks.

IPBES Invasive Alien Species Assessment

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has released its new publication – the "Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species and their Control'.

➤ IPBES, an independent intergovernmental organization, was established in 2012 by 94 governments in Panama City. Although it receives secretariat services from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), IPBES is not a UN body. It is headquartered in Bonn, Germany.

Key Findings of the Assessment Report

Recent Surge in Alien Species & Local Extinctions:

- 37% of the 37,000 alien species known today have been reported since 1970 – largely caused by rising levels of global trade and human travel.

- At least 218 invasive alien species have been responsible for more than 1,200 local extinctions.

Geographical Distribution of Impacts	Habitat-Specific Impact	
34% of the impacts of biological invasions were reported from the Americas, 31% from Europe and Central Asia, 25% from Asia and the Pacific, and about 7% from Africa.	Most negative impacts are reported on land (about 75%), especially in forests, woodlands, and cultivated areas, with considerably fewer reported in freshwater (14%) and marine (10%) habitats.	

National Biodiversity Plans and Lack of Investment & Legal Frameworks

- 80% of countries have targets for managing invasive alien species in their national biodiversity plans. Only 17% have national laws or regulations specifically addressing these issues.

- The report finds that 45% of all countries do not invest in the management of biological invasions.

About Invasive Alien Species	Examples of Invasive Species in India
1) Invasive species are non-native organisms introduced to new environments, causing harm to native ecosystems. They enter via various	**1) Water Hyacinth** - Water hyacinth is a floating aquatic plant that grows rapidly, forming dense mats on water bodies.
	2) Lantana - It is a shrub native to Central and South America. It has invaded many forests and grasslands in India, outcompeting native

means, including accidental transport and global trade.	plants and reducing grazing land for livestock.
2) Once established, they spread quickly, leading to detrimental effects like native species declines, disrupted food chains, changed nutrient cycles, and habitat degradation.	**3) American Bullfrog** – It were introduced for aquaculture and have become invasive in parts of India. They prey on native amphibians and disrupt local ecosystems. **4) Red-whiskered Bulbul** - Originally from Southeast Asia, it was introduced as cage birds.

2nd Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability

The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change participated in the virtual 'High Level Dialogue on Human Health and Environment' convened under the 2nd Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability.

About 2nd Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability

- The Berlin forum on chemicals and sustainability, organized by the German Federal Ministry for Nature, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, aims to promote a common understanding and provide political guidance on key international issues related to sound chemical and waste management, focusing on a 'Just Transition Towards a Pollution-free Planet'.

- It also aimed to garner support and ensure a high level of ambition of the 'SAICM Beyond 2020' during the upcoming 5th meeting of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5).

About Hazardous Chemical

What?	• It is a chemical that has properties with the potential to do harm to human or animal health, the environment, or capable of damaging property.

Category
• **Flammable chemicals** - These chemicals can catch fire easily and can ignite at relatively low temperatures. Example - Gasoline, ethanol, propane, and acetone
• **Toxic chemicals** - These substances can cause harm or even death when they are inhaled, ingested, or encounter the skin. Example - Mercury, lead, asbestos, and cyanide
• **Corrosive chemicals** - These are highly reactive and can cause severe damage to living tissues or materials they meet. Example - Sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, sodium hydroxide, and ammonia
• **Reactive chemicals** - These are unstable and can undergo rapid chemical reactions, releasing heat, gases, or causing explosions. Example - Potassium permanganate, hydrogen peroxide, chlorine, and sodium azide
• **Carcinogenic chemicals** - Prolonged exposure to these chemicals can increase the risk of developing cancer. Example - Benzene, formaldehyde, asbestos, and arsenic

Why is Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste Important?	• **To Ensures Safe Chemical Use & To Prevents Pollution** • **To Safeguards Ecosystems & To Reduces Health Risks:** An estimate by WHO stated that the deaths by exposure to hazardous chemicals increased 29% between 2016 and 2019. • **Supports Circular Economy**

International conventions that focus on hazardous chemicals
• **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)** - This convention aims to eliminate or restrict the production and use of POPs, which are harmful to human health and the environment. It includes chemicals like DDT and PCBs.
• **Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure** – It ensures that countries have access to information about hazardous chemicals before they are imported. It promotes informed decision-making and consent between exporting and importing countries.

- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal** – It regulates the transboundary movement of hazardous waste, ensuring its proper management and disposal.
- **Minamata Convention on Mercury** – It aims to reduce mercury emissions and releases from various sources, including industrial processes and small-scale gold mining.
- **Rotterdam Convention on Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade** - It promotes the safe handling and trade of hazardous chemicals and pesticides. It requires exporters to provide information on the risks associated with these substances to importing countries

World Ozone Day

- Every year, 16th September (established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1994) is observed as the International Day for Preservation of Ozone layer (World Ozone Day).
  - ➢ It is celebrated to commemorate the signing of the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances in 1987.

About Ozone Layer (form of oxygen with the chemical formula O3)

- Most ozone layers occur naturally in the Earth's Stratosphere, between 10 and 50 40 km above Earth's surface.
- It forms a protective layer that shields earth from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays.
- It is gradually being destroyed by Ozone-Depleting Substances, including CFCs, HCFCs, halons, methyl bromide, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform.

Effects of Ozone Depletion

- It causes increased UV radiation levels at the Earth's surface, which is damaging to human health (skin cancers, eye cataracts and immune deficiency disorders).
- UV radiation also affects terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, altering growth, food chains and biochemical cycles.

About Montreal Protocol

- It was adopted in September 1987 and entered into force on 1 January 1989.
- Its objective is to cut down the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances.
- Montreal Protocol led to the replacement of CFCs with Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)
- Global consumption of ozone-depleting substances has been reduced by some 98-99% since countries began acting under the Montreal Protocol.
- India joined the Montreal Protocol in 1992.

Kigali Agreement (2016)

- The terms of the Kigali Amendment entered into force in 2019.
- India ratified the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on phasing down climate-damaging refrigerant HFCs in August 2021.
- ➢ The goal is to achieve an over 80% reduction in HFC consumption by 2047.
- Because HFCs were not ozone-depleting, they were not controlled substances under the Montreal Protocol.
- They were part of the greenhouse gases whose emissions are sought to be curtailed through Kyoto Protocol of 1997 and the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve

The Madhya Pradesh Government announced the establishment of the "Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve", marking the seventh tiger reserve in the state and the 54th in the country.

About Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve

- It is the 7th tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh. (**Madhya Pradesh is known as the "tiger state"**)

- The reserve includes areas within the Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary and the Veerangana Durgavati Sanctuary. The Singorgarh Fort is located within the reserve.

- A vital green corridor connecting Panna Tiger Reserve to Durgavati will aid tiger migration.

Flora	Fauna
Teak, Saja, Dhaora, Ber, and Amla etc	tigers, leopards, wolves, jackals, and various deer species, Common Langur Rhesus Macaque etc.

Other Tiger Reserves (TR) in Madhya Pradesh: 1) Bandhavgarh TR, 2) Kanha TR, 3) Panna TR, 4) Pench TR, 5) Sanjay-Dubri TR, 6) Satpura TR.

** Guru Ghasidas National Park of Chhattisgarh was the 53rd Tiger Reserve.

** Project Tiger was launched in 1973 to protect Bengal tiger population in its natural habitat.

Deoxygenation in Water Bodies

A study published in Nature Climate Change has highlighted that deoxygenation (DO) could "induce acute death" for certain aquatic species.

About Deoxygenation in Water Bodies

- It is often referred to as hypoxia or anoxia, occurs when the oxygen levels in the water drop to levels that are insufficient to support aquatic life.

- Globally, oceans have lost around 2% of dissolved oxygen since the 1950s and are expected to lose about 3–4% by the year 2100.

Causes of DO	Impact of DO on Ecosystem
1) Pollution Sources &Climate Change - Various pollutants, including industrial discharges, agricultural runoff, and untreated sewage, contribute to deoxygenation. **2) Organic Matter Decomposition & Eutrophication** - Excessive nutrient inputs can cause eutrophication. This process stimulates the rapid growth of algae, which consumes oxygen during decomposition, resulting in decreased oxygen levels in the water.	**1) Ecological Impact –** Fish and other aquatic organisms that rely on oxygen may suffer from stress, suffocation, or even death. This can have a cascading effect on the food web, impacting the entire ecosystem (Including Human Health). **2) Altered Nutrient Cycling** – It can disrupt the natural cycling of nutrients in water bodies. When oxygen levels decrease, the decomposition process slows down, leading to accumulation of organic matter.

Solutions for Deoxygenation in Water Bodies

To combat deoxygenation in water bodies, a comprehensive strategy includes nutrient pollution reduction through runoff control, responsible fertilization, riparian buffer zones, wetlands restoration, mechanical aeration systems,
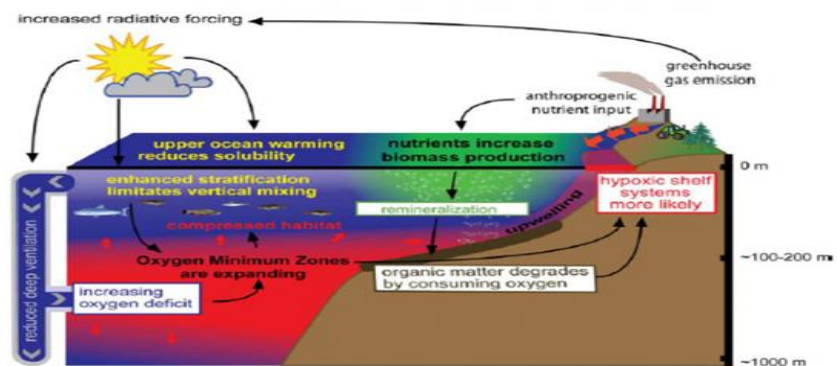
water flow management, and stringent regulations to reduce point source pollution and mimic natural patterns.

Light Pollution and Its Impact on Marine Ecosystems

A recent study argues that we should broaden our perspective to consider the impact of light pollution on coastal marine ecosystems, which affects everything from whales to fish, coral and plankton.

About Light pollution in the Marine Ecosystem

- It refers to the excessive or misdirected artificial light that affects marine habitats and organisms. (Artificial lighting refers to the light that is produced from artificial sources such as candles, fire, electricity, etc.)
- The scientists found that 1.9 million square kilometers of the ocean experience biologically significant amounts of artificial light pollution to a depth of 1 meter (3 feet).
  - ➢ This represents about 3 percent of the world's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).

Source of Light Pollution in Marine Ecosystem	Impact of Light Pollution on Marine Ecosystems
• **Coastal Development**	• **Disruption of Natural Cycles & Altered Reproduction**
• **Artificial Lighting from Ships & Fishing and Aquaculture Operations**	• **Disorientation of Sea Turtles & Shift in Migration Patterns**
• **Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms**	• **Changes in Predation Dynamics**
• **Coastal Cities and Urban Areas**	

Overall Impact of Light Pollution

- Disturbs the reproductive cycles of some animals.
- Disturbs migration of birds that navigate using the stars and to disorient night-flying insects.
- In humans, it disturbs circadian rhythms that regulate hormones and other bodily functions.
- Excessive blue light emitted form LEDs directly affects sleep pattern in Human by suppressing the production of the hormone melatonin, which mediates the sleep-wake cycle in humans.

State of the Rhino 2023

The International Rhino Foundation (IRF) published the report, "State of the Rhino, 2023", which documents current population estimates for the five surviving rhino species in Africa and Asia.

Key Findings of This Report

- **Global Poaching Threat:** Poaching still threatens all five rhino species and has increased in several regions that had not previously been targeted.
- **White Rhinos in South Africa: continues** to face devastating poaching losses of its white rhinos.
- **Black Rhino Resilience:** Black rhino populations are increasing despite constant poaching pressure.
- **Conservation Success for Greater One-Horned Rhinos:** This population in India and Nepal continues to grow, due to strict wildlife crime law enforcement and habitat expansion.
- **Challenges Facing Javan Rhinos:** The status and whereabouts of 12 of the approximately 76 remaining Javan rhinos is unknown.
- **Uncertainty Surrounding Sumatran Rhinos:** Signs of Sumatran rhinos are increasingly hard to find, creating more uncertainty about their population in the wild.

** Poaching remains a significant threat to all five rhino species, with increased activity in previously unaffected regions.

About International Rhino Foundation (IRF) (founded in 1989)	

About International Rhino Foundation (IRF) (founded in 1989)

- It is a Texas-based charity focused on the conservation of the five species of rhinoceros.

- It worked with both in-situ conservation and ex-situ conservation.

World Rhino Day = observed on 22nd September (1st announced by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - South Africa in 2010**)**

** According to the WWF, there are about 27,000 wild rhinos left in the world, mostly in Africa.

Five Species of Rhino

White Rhino	• Africa's largest species of rhino, also known as the 'square-lipped' rhino. • IUCN Status – Near Threatened • Distribution – South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Uganda
Black Rhino	• IUCN Status – Critically endangered • Distribution – South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya
Greater one Horned Rhino	• Asia's largest species of rhino, also known as the Indian rhino. • IUCN Status – Vulnerable and Wildlife Protection Act,1972 - Schedule1 • Distribution - India, Nepal • Assam is home to the largest population of greater-one horned rhinos in four protected areas, i.e., Pabitora Wildlife Reserve, Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park, Kaziranga National Park, and Manas National Park, with **more than 90% in Kaziranga National Park.**
Sumatran Rhino	• IUCN Status - Critically Endangered • Distribution - Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Borneo.
Javan Rhino	• IUCN Status - Critically Endangered • Distribution - Live only in Ujung Kulon National Park in Java, Indonesia.

Conservation Efforts to Protect Rhino

- **New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019** - India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia, and Malaysia have signed the declaration for the preservation and protection of the Rhino.

- **DNA profiles of all rhinos** - The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched a project in 2019 to generate DNA profiles of all rhinos in the country.

- **DNA sequencing:** 2021 was the project deadline, the Indian rhino was the first wild animal species in India to have all its member's DNA-sequenced.

- **The Indian Rhino Vision 2020** - Launched in 2005, it aimed to achieve a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread across seven protected areas in the Indian state of Assam by 2020

Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary

Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary is spread over a vast arid region comprising seven north-eastern districts of Kalyana Karnataka.

Geographic Location	• It is located around the Chandrampalli Dam in Kalaburagi, Karnataka. • It is the 1st dry land Wildlife Sanctuary (Declared in 2011) in South India.

Features

- Chincholi is also home to Lambani Tandas, a protected tribal community that lives in the forests in

harmony with nature.	
Flora	**Fauna**
1) Home to dry and moist deciduous trees in its core zone and teak, acacia plantations in the outer area. 2) Medicinal herbs, sandalwood and red sanders trees are found	It is home Black Buck, Common Fox, Four-horned Antelope, Fruit bat, Hyena, Indian Wolf etc.

Ecocide

About	1) It refers to acts that harm the environment to such a severe extent that they result in significant and lasting ecological damage. 2) Ecocide is often associated with human activities, such as industrial pollution, deforestation, oil spills, and large-scale habitat destruction.

Key Information

- **Historical Context:** Ecocide has been used to describe the ecological damage caused by historical events, such as the use of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska, and the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest.
- **Legal Implications:** The concept of ecocide has gained attention in legal and environmental circles, with discussions about whether it should be recognized as an international crime. Some argue that ecocide should be added as a fifth crime against peace under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Tapioca

About	Tapioca is a starchy food made from the cassava root.

Features

- It's naturally gluten-free, so it can serve as a wheat substitute in cooking and baking for people who are on a gluten-free diet.
- It is low in sodium and rich in several nutrients, such as potassium and iron.

PLASHBOT: Weed Harvester

- This system removes unwanted plants from water bodies. It has different parts to find, remove, crush, and move the plants. It uses smart navigation to work smoothly.
- It is one of the elements of an innovative waterbody management project called "TAMARA".

Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)

CPF has issued a joint call to action for forests towards 2030

- It is an innovative voluntary partnership on forests that was established in April 2001.
- It consists of 14 global organisations chaired by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- Its objective is to emphasise the urgent need for increased action with the UN mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Climate Ambition Summit (CAS)

- The United Nations Climate Ambition Summit (CAS) held in UN Headquarters, New York. (The summit was announced in December 2022 by UN Secretary-General)

- It is a prominent international event aimed at addressing the pressing issue of climate change.

- The CAS is designed to showcase "first mover and doer" leaders from government, business, finance, local authorities, and civil society who have presented concrete action rather than mere promises, to expedite the global economy's decarbonization efforts and ensure climate justice.

- It was held to accelerate climate action in the run up to the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

- China, the US and India, who collectively account for about 42% of global greenhouse gas emissions and are the top three emitters in that order were all absent from the CAS.

Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights' (GSFR)

India hosted the 1st GSFR at the ICAR Convention Centre, National Agricultural Science Centre in New Delhi.

- The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) and the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) are the organising partners.

- The meeting strived for a better understanding of the "interconnectedness of farmers' rights and human rights" and actions that can be opted to promote the realisation of farmers' rights.

Species In News

Walking Leaves	• These are also called leaf insects, are insects that look very similar to leaves. • They are any of more than 50 species. They feed on plants and typically inhabit densely vegetated areas. • Their natural range extends from islands in the Indian Ocean, across parts of mainland South Asia and Southeast Asia, to Papua New Guinea and Australia in the western Pacific.
Takahe Bird	• It was believed to be extinct decades ago, has returned to the forests of New Zealand's South Island. • It had been formally declared extinct in 1898. • It is large flightless bird, has predominantly blue feathers on their bodies, green wings, and a large red beak. • It is territorial and non-migratory, adapting its behavior to the changing seasons.
Tharosaurusindicus	• The scientists named the dinosaur Tharosaurusindicus, with Tharo deriving from the Thar desert. • At 167 million years old, they are the oldest known Diplodocoid fossils in the world. • This family was unique, its members were smaller and had shorter necks and tails compared to the other long-necked sauropods.
Stump-tailed macaque	• It is also called the bear macaque. • It is a species of Old-World monkey found in South Asia.

	• It is mostly found in North east state. • They have thick, long, dark brown fur covering their bodies and short tails. • It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List and in Schedule II of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
Caribbean False Mussel 	• It is an invasive species that, originally from the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of South and Central America. • It poses a severe threat to mussel aquaculture farms and native species, outcompeting them in their natural habitats. • It can be found growing on hard surfaces such as logs, stones, shells, and artificial structures.
Indian oil sardine 	• It is a species of ray-finned fish in the genus Sardinella. • It contributes to about 15% of the total marine fish production in India. • It is distributed on the entire west coast from Gujarat to Kerala and also on the Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa coasts in the east. • Highest abundance and large-scale shoaling are observed off Kerala and Karnataka coasts.
Sambar deer 	• It is a large deer native to the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. • Hunting and habitat encroachment are the main threats. • It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List and in Schedule III of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. • Their range is distributed from the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains across southern Asia and reaching the islands of Taiwan, Sumatra and Borneo.
Chitala Fish 	• It is a species of fish known for its nocturnal predatory behaviour and is known as the Indian featherback or Indian knifefish. • It is native to the Indian subcontinent, including regions of Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. • It is listed as Near Threatened in the IUCN Red List • It is found in the Indus, Ganges-Brahmaputra and Mahanadi river basins in India.
Palpimanus Godawan 	• It is a new spider species, have been found in the conservation sites of the Rajasthan Desert National Park. • It is particularly shy, hiding under rocks or in crevices when disturbed. • It stays confined to an area.
Pampaphoneusbiccai 	• A 265-million-year-old fossil belongs to the species Pampaphoneusbiccai. • This ancient creature was part of the early therapsid clade known as Dinocephalians, which existed just before the Earth's largest mass extinction event. • These creatures both carnivorous and herbivorous representatives.
Red Fire Ant	• It is one of the world's most invasive ant species, native to South America.

	• These insects can be aggressive when disturbed and they have a painful sting, which is irritating to the skin and can cause allergic reactions. • The ant can also damage crops and local ecosystems.
BatillipesKalami	• Researchers named a new species of marine tardigrade after former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam • Tardigrades are also known as water bears. They are microscopic eight-legged animals. • It belongs to species known as extremophiles, that survive in extreme conditions, without food or water.
Mithun	• Mithun descendant of the Indian Gaur or bison gets a 'food animal' tag from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). • It is distributed in Northeast India, Bangladesh, northern Myanmar and in Yunnan, China. • It is the state animal of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. • It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.
Indian skimmers	• It is also known as Indian scissors bill. • It is native to India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam. • It is more widespread in winter; found in the coastal estuaries of western and eastern India. • It is listed as Endangered in the IUCN Red List.

Liquid Apogee Motor (LAM)

For the Aditya-L1mission (designed to study the Sun), ISRO will be using Liquid Apogee Motor (LAM) identical to the one used in the Mars and Moon missions.

➢ The term "apogee" refers to the point in an orbit where the spacecraft is farthest from the Earth, and a LAM is designed to perform thrusting maneuvers at or near this point in order to change the spacecraft's orbit.

About Liquid Apogee Motor (LAM)

What?	A type of rocket engine that is specifically designed to provide the final boost to a satellite's orbit
Propellants	The LAM engine uses mono-methyl hydrazine (MMH) and mixed oxides of nitrogen (MON3) as propellants.
By	Developed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), the ISRO Centre for Liquid and Cryogenic Propulsion in Thiruvananthapuram
Applications	1) The successful operation of LAM is vital to ISRO's plans to place the Aditya spacecraft in a halo orbit at Lagrangian point L1. 2) It is often used in satellite missions to achieve the desired orbit and maintain the satellite's position and trajectory.

Advantages

- LAM has high specific impulse, which refers to its efficiency in converting propellant mass into thrust. This allows satellites to achieve higher velocities and reach their desired orbits more efficiently.

- **Backup Propulsion:** Many spacecrafts are equipped with multiple propulsion systems, including LAMs, as a redundancy measure. If one propulsion system fails, another can be used as a backup.

- **Spacecraft Station Keeping:** LAMs are also used for station-keeping maneuvers to keep a spacecraft in its desired position within a particular orbit, such as maintaining a geostationary orbit for communication satellites.

- **Precision Orbit Adjustments:** LAMs are capable of providing precise thrust control, which is essential for fine-tuning a satellite's orbit. This is important for maintaining the desired orbital parameters for communication, Earth observation, or scientific missions.

Meningococcal Disease

Five people have died in Virginia from complications of a rare but serious illness following a statewide outbreak of meningococcal disease.

About Meningococcal Disease

1) It is a rare but serious bacterial infection, caused by a bacteria called Neisseria meningitides.

2) It causes meningitis (inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord) and septicemia (bloodstream infection).

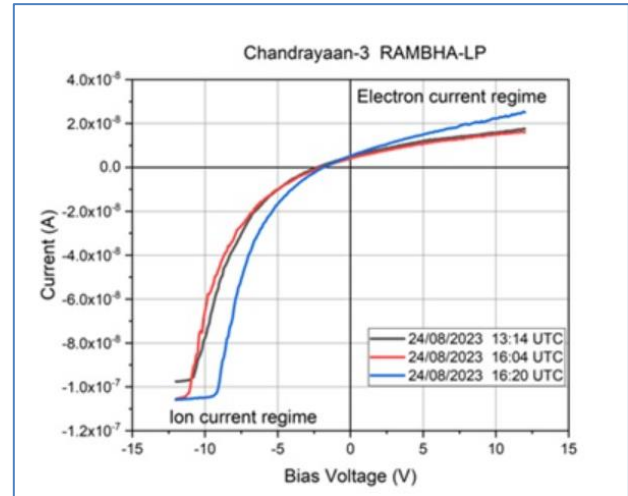| Transmission	Symptoms
1) Through respiratory droplets (e.g., through coughing, sneezing, or close contact) 2) Most commonly spread among people who live in close quarters, such as dormitories, military barracks, or households	A headache, fever, nausea or vomiting, brain fog, sensitivity to light, sleepiness, a stiff neck and possibly a skin rash
Treatment: Vaccination with antibiotics is essential	

RAMBHA-LP Payload

One of the three Indian payloads on the Chandrayaan-3 lander (Vikram), has completed the first in-situ measurements of the surface-bound lunar plasma environment over the south polar region.

➢ The measurements have been carried out by the Radio Anatomy of Moon Bound Hypersensitive ionosphere and Atmosphere-Langmuir Probe (RAMBHA-LP) payload onboard the lander.

➢ **RAMBHA-LP:** named after American chemist and physicist Irving Langmuir, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

About RAMBHA-LP Payload

What?	It is a device used for characterizing plasma (ionized gas), a state of matter.
By	Developed by the Space Physics Laboratory (SPL) at ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Thiruvananthapuram.

Key Features

- It features a 5 cm metallic spherical probe mounted on a 1-meter boom attached to the Chandrayaan-3 Lander's upper deck.

- It operates without interruption, aiming to explore the changes occurring in the near-surface plasma environment throughout the lunar day.

Key Findings of Langmuir Probe

- It indicates that the plasma encompassing the lunar surface is relatively sparse (thin).

- The thinness of lunar plasma is important because it affects the way radio waves propagate through space.

- It is characterised by a number density ranging from approximately 5 to 30 million electrons per cubic meter.

Plasma and Its Significance

1. **Fourth State of Matter:** Plasma is the fourth state, distinct from solids, liquids, and gases.

2. **Charged Particles:** It's made up of charged particles, like electrons and ions.

3. **Widespread in the Universe:** Plasma is abundant in stars, galaxies, and lightning.

4. **Unique Properties:** It conducts electricity, generates magnetic fields, and emits light.

5. **Temperature Range:** Plasma can be extremely hot (as in stars) or cooler (as in fluorescent lights).

6. **Space Exploration:** Plasma affects communication, spacecraft charging, and space weather.

7. **Measurement:** Instruments like Langmuir probes study plasma to enhance mission safety and success.

8. **Plasma on Earth:**

   ➢ **Natural Occurrence:** Plasma can be found naturally on Earth in phenomena like lightning and the auroras (northern and southern lights).

   ➢ **Man-made Plasma:** It's also created in man-made environments like fluorescent lights and plasma TVs.

Varicella Zoster Virus (VZV)

Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology scientists, have for the 1st time in the country, found the presence of Clade 9 variant of varicella zoster virus (VZV).

About Varicella Zoster Virus (DNA virus: α-herpesvirus family)

- It is one of nine known herpes viruses that can infect humans.
- It causes chickenpox, a common childhood illness.
- This virus doesn't bid farewell once we've had chickenpox. Approximately 1 per 4000 children develops VZV encephalitis, an acute neurologic disorder with potentially severe complications.
- It sneaks into our nerve cells and goes into a dormant state, hiding out for years or even decades. When our immune system weakens or undergoes stress, it can reactivate.

About Chickenpox (varicella): A relatively mild, self-limited childhood illness

Transmission	Direct contact with the fluid from blisters or through respiratory droplets
Symptoms	Itchy blisters that cover the entire body
Treatment	Most cases of chickenpox resolve on their own within a week or two
Vaccine	The chickenpox vaccine is routinely recommended for children. These vaccines also help prevent the spread of VZV to others.
Incubation Period	The time between exposure to the virus and the appearance of symptoms, this can vary between 10 to 21 days for chickenpox.

Wide Field Survey Telescope (WFST)

China is set to launch the Wide Field Survey Telescope (WFST).

About Wide Field Survey Telescope (WFST)

What?	It is the largest time-domain survey facility in the Northern Hemisphere. (Time-Domain Survey Facility: A specialized observatory equipped to monitor and study dynamic astronomical events over time, providing insights into the changing universe.)
Where?	At the Lenghu astronomical observation base in northwest China's Qinghai Province **Lenghu Astronomical Observation Base:** A high-altitude observatory located in Qinghai Province, China, known for its excellent conditions for astronomical observations due to clear skies and minimal light pollution.
Aim	To explore & conduct time-domain dynamic astronomical events
Features	1) It has a 2.5-meter primary mirror and a prime-focus camera with a large field of view. 2) It will enable researchers to detect faint and distant celestial signals, including those from galaxies beyond the Milky Way and galaxy clusters. 3) It will also seek out planets or their moons in the Kuiper Belt and beyond. 4) It has set out to find and track 10 lakh solar system objects for a comprehensive view of the solar system and its evolution.

Xenotransplantation

For the 1st time, Chinese scientists have grown humanized kidneys, which have human cells.

Xenotransplantation (The word "xeno" comes from the Greek word for "foreign" or "strange")

- It is a process that involves the transplantation (works on active tissue), implantation, or infusion into a human host of either
    a. live cells, tissues, or organs from a nonhuman animal source, or
    b. human body fluids, cells, tissues, or organs that have had ex vivo contact (outside of the living body)

	with live nonhuman animal cells, tissues, or organs.

- Such cells, tissues or organs are called xenografts or xenotransplants.

Key Points

- **Organ Shortage:** Xenotransplantation is being explored as a potential solution to the critical shortage of human organs available for transplantation. There are far more people in need of organ transplants than there are organs from deceased human donors. In the United States, 17 people die each day waiting for an organ transplant.

- **Pig Organs:** Genetically modified pigs, known as "xenotransplantation donors," are bred with specific modifications to reduce the risk of organ rejection in the human recipient.

> **Why are Pigs used in this process?**
>
> - Pigs are the most commonly considered source for xenotransplantation because their organs are anatomically and physiologically similar in size and function to human organs.
>
> - Pigs have advantages over monkeys and apes. They are produced for food, so using them for organs raises fewer ethical concerns.
>
> - Pigs have large litter, short gestation periods and organs comparable to humans.
>
> - Pig heart valves also have been used successfully for decades in humans.
>
> - The blood thinner heparin is derived from pig intestines.
>
> - Pig skin grafts are used on burns and Chinese surgeons have used pig corneas to restore sight.

- **Immunological Challenges:** One of the major challenges of xenotransplantation is the potential for hyperacute rejection, an immediate and strong immune response against the transplanted organ. To address this issue, researchers have developed pigs with modified genes to reduce the expression of antigens that trigger such immune responses.

- **Ethical and Safety Concerns:** Xenotransplantation raises ethical concerns about the treatment of animals, genetic modification, and the potential for new infectious diseases to emerge from the transfer of animal organs into humans. Safety concerns include the risk of transmitting unknown pathogens from animals to humans (zoonotic infections).

- **Regulation and Research:** Xenotransplantation is a highly regulated field with stringent oversight by regulatory agencies in many countries. Research in this area involves ongoing experiments in animal models and laboratory studies to address safety and efficacy concerns. Clinical trials in humans are still relatively rare and often highly monitored.

- **Alternative Approaches:** In addition to xenotransplantation, researchers are exploring other approaches such as artificial organs, 3D-printed organs, and regenerative medicine techniques.

Nipah Virus Infection (NiV)

In Kerala, as many as 153 health workers have been found in the contact list of the confirmed cases of Nipah virus infection (NiV).

About Nipah Virus

What?	• It is a zoonotic virus which means it is transmitted from animals to humans.
Host	• Fruit bats are the natural hosts of this virus and have a high mortality rate.
Areas	• Outbreaks occur almost annually in parts of Asia, primarily Bangladesh and India.

Symptoms	Treatment	
1) Initially fever, headaches, muscle pain,	Currently there are no licensed treatments	

vomiting and sore throat	available for Nipah virus (NiV) infection. Treatment is limited to supportive care, including rest, hydration, and symptoms as they occur.
2) Typical pneumonia and severe respiratory problems, including acute respiratory distress	

Transmission: Nipah virus (NiV) can spread to people from:

- Direct contact with infected animals, such as bats or pigs, or their body fluids (such as blood, urine or saliva)

- Consuming food products that have been contaminated by body fluids of infected animals (such as palm sap or fruit contaminated by an infected bat)

- Close contact with a person infected with NiV or their body fluids (including nasal or respiratory droplets, urine, or blood)

Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment (MOXIE)

NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) said that MOXIE, an oxygen-producing instrument on Perseverance Mars Rover has successfully completed its Mars mission.

About MOXIE: Technology demonstrator of NASA's Mars 2020 Rover Perseverance

- It produced oxygen from carbon dioxide in the Martian atmosphere by using solid oxide electrolysis.

- Its objective is to produce oxygen of at least 98% purity at a rate of 6–10 grams per hour.

- It is the 1st experimental extraction of a natural resource from another planet for human use.

Significance of Mission Success

- By being able to produce oxygen locally, we can reduce reliance on Earth for essential resources and support long-duration missions.

- Oxygen is not only crucial for astronauts to breathe, but it can also be used for rocket propellant and as a key component in life support systems.

  ➢ It paves the way for more ambitious missions, enabling us to sustain the human presence on Mars and further unlock the mysteries of our neighboring planet.

About Perseverance Rover

- It is a Mars rover designed to explore the crater Jezero on Mars as part of NASA's Mars 2020 mission (launched in July 2020 and landed on Martian Surface in February 2021)

  ➢ Jezero Crater, a location chosen because it is believed to have once contained a lake and river delta. Such environments are ideal for the preservation of signs of past microbial life.

- The mission provides opportunities to demonstrate technologies that will address the challenges of future manned missions to Mars.

- The rover carried Ingenuity; the 1st ever helicopters to fly on Mars.

- Perseverance communicates with Earth through NASA's Deep Space Network, which allows it to send back data and images to scientists and engineers on Earth.

Comet Nishimura

1st time in more than 400 years that Comet Nishimura will pass by the Earth.

About Comet Nishimura

What?	It is a long-period comet discovered by Hideo Nishimura in August 2023, which is why the comet was named after him.
Location	It is currently located in the constellation Leo.

Key Points	
• It will not leave the Solar System, will come to aphelion (farthest distance from the Sun) in 2227, and return around the year 2430.	
• As the comet dives toward the Sun, it will surely continue to intensify and possibly become a naked-eyed object in early September.	

About Comet
1. Comets are small celestial bodies that orbit the Sun.
2. It is frozen leftovers from the formation of solar system, composed of dust, rock, and ice.
3. It can be distinguished from stars by its streaking tails of dust and energized particles, as well as the glowing green coma surrounding it.
➢ The coma is an envelope that forms around a comet as it passes closely to the sun.

Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)

What?	CMEs are large explosions of plasma and magnetic fields from the Sun's corona.
Reason	Caused by instabilities in the Sun's magnetic field

Features
• The blast of a CME carries about a billion tons of material out from the Sun at very high speeds of hundreds of kms per second.
• It contains particle radiation, mostly protons and electrons and powerful magnetic fields stronger than what is normally present in the solar wind.

Impact of CMEs
• **Geomagnetic Storms** - It can cause disturbances in Earth's magnetic field-which can disrupt radio communications, GPS signals, and even cause power outages.
• **Satellite Communications** - It can interfere with satellite communications by affecting the ionosphere, which can disrupt radio wave propagation.
• **Auroras** - It can generate colorful auroras when charged particles interact with Earth's atmosphere.
• The Northern and Southern Lights are examples of auroras caused by CMEs.

Examples of Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)
• **Carrington Event of 1859 -** It was named after the British astronomer Richard Carrington. It caused massive fires in telegraph stations and resulted in stunning auroras visible in many parts of the world.
• **The Great Magnetic Storm of 1989** - A powerful CME caused a severe geomagnetic storm, disrupting power grids and communication systems in Quebec, Canada. Millions of people were left without electricity for several hours.
• **Bastille Day Event of 2000 & Halloween Storms of 2003** - These storms disrupted satellite communications, GPS systems, and even led to rerouting of flights near the polar regions.

TrailGuard AI Camera

- Wildlife officials in Madhya Pradesh are testing TrailGuard AI camera-alert system, an artificial intelligence-based camera system to monitor movements of tigers and other animals.
  - ➢ The new camera system being tested is referred to as the "TrailGuard AI camera-alert system."

AboutTrailGuard AI Camera

- It is used as a security system for national parks to detect, stop, and arrest poachers.

- Unlike traditional camera traps, these devices are slim and inconspicuous, shaped like a pen, measuring 13.8 cm long and 1.4 cm wide.

- It uses artificial intelligence to detect humans within the images and relays pictures containing humans back to park headquarters via GSM, long-range radio, or satellite networks.

- The product was developed by RESOLVE, an international non-profit organization. The operative AI processor used is Intel's Myriad chip.

Specific Species Targeting

- It is equipped with embedded software that allows it to be programmed to take photographs of specific species of interest.

- This feature helps reduce the possibility of capturing irrelevant images such as leaves or non-target animals.

- The system can be instructed to capture images of humans or specific species such as lion, tiger or cheetah.

Feline Panleukopenia Virus

Seven leopard cubs have died at Bannerghatta Biological Park in Bengaluru after being infected by a highly contagious Feline panleukopenia virus.

About Feline Panleukopenia Virus (FPV)

- **It is also known as Feline Distemper (Kittens are most severely affected).**

- **It is a viral disease of cats caused by the feline parvovirus.**

Transmission	Impact
FPV is primarily transmitted through direct contact with an infected cat's bodily fluids, feces, or contaminated environments.	It infects and kills the rapidly growing and dividing cells in the body, including cells in the bone marrow, intestines, and skin, and in a developing fetus.

Symptoms	Treatment
It includes severe lethargy, diarrhoea, vomiting, dehydration, decreased to absent appetite, weight loss, rough or unkempt hair coat and fever.	There is no specific treatment for this virus. 1) Dehydration is treated with aggressive intravenous fluid therapy, while clinical signs of vomiting and diarrhea are treated with prescription medications. 2) Antibiotic therapy is often instituted to help control any secondary bacterial infections due to low white blood cell counts.

** **Vaccination** is the most effective way to prevent FPV infection.

SN1987A Supernova

James Webb Space Telescope captures stunning image of SN1987A supernova.

About SN1987A Supernova

Discovery	Discovered in 1987, It was the closest observed supernova since the invention of the telescope.
Location	The supernova is located in the Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC), a satellite galaxy of the Milky Way, about 1,70,000 light-years away from Earth. This proximity made it an ideal target for detailed study.

Key Features

- It is often referred to as a "string of pearls," showcases a series of luminous rings composed of gases and dust expelled by the dying star in its various phases of collapse and explosion.

- **Progenitor Star:** The progenitor star that led to SN 1987A was identified as a blue supergiant star known as Sanduleak -69° 202. It had a mass estimated to be about 20 times that of the Sun.

- **Neutrino Detection:** SN 1987A was notable for another reason—it was the first supernova for which neutrinos were detected.

  ➢ Neutrinos are elusive subatomic particles that are produced in vast quantities during supernova explosions.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)

The department of animal husbandry and fisheries of the UT administration has vaccinated over 21,000 livestock of Chandigarh against foot and mouth disease (FMD).

About Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)

About	• It is a viral disease affecting cloven-hoofed animals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs.
	• It poses a significant threat to the livestock industry.
	• The disease is estimated to circulate in 77% of the global livestock population.
Cause	• It is caused by an Aphthovirus of the family Picornaviridae, seven strains (A, O, C, SAT1, SAT2, SAT3, and Asia1).
Treatment	• Each strain requires a specific vaccine to provide immunity to a vaccinated animal.
	• Its prevention is based on the presence of early detection and warning systems and the implementation of effective surveillance among other measures.

About National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) for FMD

- It is a 100% centrally funded programme, from 2019 to 2024.
- It aims to control FMD and Brucellosis by 2025 with vaccination and eventual eradication by 2030.

About Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

About	• It is common in children under the age of 5, but anyone can get it.
	• The illness is usually not serious but is very contagious.
	• It spreads through person-to-person contact.
Cause	It is caused by a coxsackievirus, which belongs to a group of viruses called nonpolio enteroviruses.
Symptoms	Symptoms include fever, sore throat, painful blister-like lesions on the tongue, gums and ulcers inside their mouth rashes on the palms and soles.
Treatment	It is mostly treated with anti-allergic medicines and ointments.

Psyche Mission

NASA's Psyche spacecraft is set to embark on a groundbreaking mission to explore a metal-rich asteroid named Psyche.

About Psyche	• This will explore, for the 1st time ever, a giant metal asteroid called Psyche.
	➢ The Psyche asteroid orbits the sun in the main asteroid belt, between Mars and Jupiter.

Mission	• Mission management, navigation and its operations will be looked upon by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).
	• Psyche is the 14th mission selected as part of NASA's Discovery Program.
	• It will also test a sophisticated new laser communication technology called Deep Space Optical Communications (DSOC).
About Deep Space Optical Communications (DSOC)	• It encodes data in photons at near-infrared wavelengths (rather than radio waves) to communicate between a probe in deep space and Earth.
	• Using light instead of radio allows the spacecraft to communicate more data in a given amount of time.
Significance of the mission	• **Unveiling Iron Cores:** Scientists speculate that the asteroid could be the leftover piece of a completely different kind of iron-rich body that formed from metal-rich material somewhere in the solar system.
	• **Peering Inside Terrestrial Planets:** Psyche will facilitate an unprecedented examination of the interiors of terrestrial planets, including Earth, which are otherwise hidden from view.
Science Objectives of this mission :	• Determine whether Psyche is a core, or if it is unmelted material.
	• Determine the relative ages of regions of Psyche's surface.
	• Determine whether small metal bodies incorporate the same light elements as are expected in the Earth's high-pressure core.
	• Determine whether Psyche was formed under conditions more oxidizing or more reducing than Earth's core.
	• Characterize Psyche's topography.

Galactic Tides

What?	• It refers to tidal forces experienced by objects within the gravitational field of a galaxy, such as the Milky Way.
	• It is similar to the tides in Earth's oceans but on a much larger scale.
Causes	• These are generated by gravitational interactions among celestial objects within a galaxy, including stars and gas clouds.
Impact	• **Reshaping Galaxy Structure:** Galactic tides can reshape the structure of a galaxy by inducing the formation of tidal tails and bridges, altering its overall appearance.
	• **Promoting Star Formation:** They can play a role in promoting star formation within galaxies by triggering the gravitational collapse of gas and dust clouds.
	• **Disrupting Smaller Systems:** Galactic tides can disrupt smaller star systems or objects within a galaxy, leading to their fragmentation or dispersion.
	• **Orbital Changes:** The tidal forces also affect the orbits of individual stars within a galaxy, resulting in long-term changes in the galaxy's overall structure.
	• **Interactions Between Proximate Galaxies:** Galactic tides influence how neighboring galaxies interact with one another, determining whether they merge, collide, or maintain their separation.
	• **Observations in Andromeda:** For instance, in the case of the Andromeda galaxy, researchers have observed tidal streams near its edges, which are believed to be signatures of dwarf

galaxies that were once captured and subsequently absorbed by Andromeda.

- **Effects on Supermassive Black Holes:** Galactic tides also impact the behavior of supermassive black holes located at the centers of galaxies, leading to events that alter their interactions with nearby stars and celestial objects.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI)

There are rising applications and ethical concerns in Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI).

About Generative AI

- Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence technology that can produce various types of content, including text, imagery, audio and synthetic data.
- It works by training a model on a large dataset and then using that model to generate new, previously unseen content that is similar to the training data. This can be done through techniques such as neural machine translation, image generation, and music generation.
  - ➢ Example: DALL.E, a generative image generation service, can generate original imagery to align with the branding.

Applications of Generative AI

- **Revenue Generation** - It can craft sales, marketing, and brand messaging.
- **Blogging and Reach(Data Synthesis & Summary)**- Agencies can generate personalized social media posts, blogs, and marketing text and video copies by providing a text prompt to a Generative AI service, like ChatGPT, Google's Bard.
- **Coding** - It can suggest entire functions, snippets, and even fully functioning modules and generate code in real-time right in your editor (eg GitHub)
- **Wide usage in various industries:** GenAI can be used in many industries, including financial services, Consumer internet, Healthcare, Higher education.
- Natural Language Processing: Generating human-like text, chatbots, language translation, and text summarization.

Challenges of Generative AI

- **Ethical concerns -** It raises ethical considerations, such as the potential for generating fake content, deepfakes, or biased outputs that can have negative impacts on individuals or society.
  - ➢ "Deepfake" is a type of AI technology that is used to create highly realistic, often deceptive, multimedia content, such as videos, images, or audio recordings.
- **Data requirements** - It often requires large amounts of high-quality data (for Interpretability and transparency) to train effectively, which can be challenging to obtain or curate.
- **Adversarial attacks** - It can be vulnerable to adversarial attacks, where malicious actors manipulate inputs to generate misleading or harmful content.
- **Inaccuracy problem**: Generative AI uses machine learning to infer information, which brings the potential inaccuracy problem to acknowledge.
- **Increase in Biases:** Recent evidence suggests that larger and more sophisticated systems are often more likely to absorb underlying social biases from their training data. These AI biases can include sexist, racist, or ableist approaches within online communities.
- **Risk of Unemployment:** This could happen if generative AI automates tasks or processes previously performed by humans, leading to the displacement of human workers.
- **Plagiarism:** they are really just making new patterns from the millions of examples in their training set. The

results are a cut-and-paste synthesis drawn from various sources—also known, when humans do it, as plagiarism. Either way, what's missing is uniqueness.

CALIPSO Mission

NASA announced that the CALIPSO mission ended on August 1 after 17 years of operations.

About CALIPSO Mission (Cloud-Aerosol LIDAR and Infrared Pathfinder Satellite Observations)

Features
• -The mission is dedicated to studying how clouds and aerosols impact the Earth's climate, Atmospheric processes (using data from CALIPSO to construct 3D models)   • Launched in 2006, CALIPSO is a satellite-based observatory.   • The mission measures the altitude of clouds and layers of airborne particles like: Dust, Sea salt, Ash, Soot.   • The mission involved two satellites, CALIPSO and CloudSat, which were launched in 2003 and orbited the Earth in a Sun-synchronous orbit.

Launched by	NASA and France space agency CNES (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales).

Instrumentation
• **Lidar Technology** - It is equipped with a lidar (light detection and ranging) instrument, known as the CALIOP (Cloud-Aerosol Lidar with Orthogonal Polarization).   ➤ CALIOP uses laser pulses to measure the altitude and properties of clouds and aerosols with high precision.   • **Passive Sensors** – includes the Imaging Infrared Radiometer (IIR) and the Wide Field Camera (WFC), which provide complementary data on clouds and aerosols.

Aarogya Maitri Cube

What is it?	1) The world's 1st portable disaster hospital. The hospital can be airlifted and assembled into 72 cubes that contain essential medical equipment and supplies. 2) It is a Part of Project BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita and Maitri)

Features
1) The cubes can support 200 survivors for 48 hours during natural disasters or crises.   2) The hospital includes Operation theatres, mini-ICUs, Ventilators, Blood test equipment, an X-ray machine, a Cooking station, Food, Water, a Shelter, Power generator.   3) It is part of the "Aarogya Maitri" project. The project aims to provide essential medical supplies to any developing country affected by natural disasters or humanitarian crises.

Gujarat Declaration of WHO

WHO has unveiled the "Gujarat Declaration," the outcome document of the 1st WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023 in Gandhinagar.

- The declaration reaffirms global commitments to 1) Indigenous knowledge, 2)Biodiversity, and 3)Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM).
- The declaration outlines measures to integrate TCIM into national health systems, promote standardized documentation, and establish a global network of TCIM reference clinical centers.

- It also highlights the role of digital health technologies and emphasizes the importance of biodiversity conservation and the rights of indigenous peoples in TCIM.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

What is BESS?	BESS are devices that store energy from renewable sources like solar and wind. They can store energy from solar or the electric grid and provide that energy to a home.

Features & Importance

- BESS plays a crucial role in the modern energy landscape by providing a means to store surplus electricity when supply exceeds demand and release stored energy when demand is high or during power outages.
- In case of grid outages, BESS can provide uninterrupted power to critical loads, ensuring business continuity and home comfort.
- BESS helps maintain grid stability by providing rapid response to frequency and voltage fluctuations, reducing the need for expensive grid infrastructure upgrades.
- BESS can be deployed at various scales, from small residential units to large utility-scale installations, and they offer numerous benefits for power systems, the environment, and energy consumers.

Blue Button Movement

What is it?	• A movement that allows consumers to access their health information. • The Blue Button logo signifies that a consumer can download a single electronic file that contains their available health data.

- Patients can use the Blue Button to download information such as: Emergency contacts; Military health history; Important Lab test results; Medications; Allergies etc.
- It can help prevent medication errors, and can improve care coordination.

Storm-0558

According to Microsoft Threat Intelligence, a China-based hacking group identified as Storm-0558 breached U.S. government-linked email accounts.

- Storm-0558 acquired the Managed Service Account (MSA) key which is used by a service to validate authentication tokens for the service.
- The group breached email accounts linked to the US government. They stole an MSA consumer signing key from Microsoft's environment. The breach led to the theft of 60,000 US State Department emails.

ArXiv

What?	Online repository for the distribution of scholarly and academic research papers.
Purpose	To facilitate the rapid dissemination of research findings and foster collaboration and discussion within the academic community.

Features

- **Open Access:** All content on arXiv is freely accessible to anyone with an internet connection. This open-

access model has contributed to the platform's popularity and widespread use.

- **Categories:** ArXiv is organized into subject categories, such as physics, mathematics, computer science, and many subcategories within these fields. This helps users find research papers relevant to their areas of interest.

Xpert MTB/RIF Test

It is a new test that is revolutionizing tuberculosis (TB) control by contributing to the rapid diagnosis of TB disease and drug resistance to rifampicin.

Xpert MTB/RIF test	Traditional Method
Simultaneously detects Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex (MTBC) and resistance to rifampin (RIF) in less than 2 hours.	Standard cultures can take 2 to 6 weeks for MTBC to grow and conventional drug resistance tests can add 3 more weeks.

GFATM (Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria)

What is GFATM?	An international financing organisation (Created in 2002, Secretariat: Geneva, Switzerland) works with governments, civil society, and people affected by diseases.
Objective	To end the epidemics of AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (To Achieve SDGs)

GFATM & Other Countries /Organisations

- The GFATM relies on organizations in each country known as "Local Fund Agents".
- The United States is the Global Fund's largest single donor and technical resource for supporting program delivery at the country level.
- G7 played a crucial role in setting up a global fund to fight malaria and Aids in 2002.
- India joined the Global Fund as a donor in 2006. India has partnered with the Global Fund to launch Joint Effort for Elimination of Tuberculosis (JEET).

Passkeys

About	Passkeys are a type of security feature that allows users to access their online accounts without using passwords.
Purpose	To avoid the hassle of remembering and typing complex passwords, and also to protect their accounts from hackers

Methodology

- It works by using public-key cryptography, a technique that involves two related keys: a public key and a private key.
- The public key is stored on the web server, while the private key is stored on your device.
- Instead of typing a password, users can simply enter a passkey that is sent to their email or phone as a one-time code.

- The **fourth Nadi Utsav** was organized by the **National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM)** of **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)**.

- The event is an attempt to document riverine culture, its tradition, rituals and water wisdom.

- Indian society has always held rivers in high regards, considering them an integral part of its culture. Civilizations have developed along the banks of rivers.

- IGNCA, has been organizing the Nadi Utsav since 2018. The inaugural event was held in **Nashik** on the banks of **River Godavari**.

- The second edition took place in **Vijayawada** situated on the banks of **River Krishna**, and the third in **Munger (Bihar)** city situated on the banks of **River Ganga**.

- This year's the event was hosted in Delhi situated on the banks of **River Yamuna**.

- The event had three types of exhibitions. The **'Sanjhi' exhibition** was based on 16 Ghats of the country.

  ✓ Apart from this, a photography exhibition related to river civilization and an exhibition of paintings made on rivers was also organized.

IGNCA

- Established in **1987**, IGNCA is a premier government-funded arts organization in India. It is an autonomous institute under the **Ministry of Culture**.

- It is visualised as a centre encompassing the study and experience of all the arts.

Bhartiya Bhasha Summit

- A two-day Bharatiya Bhasha Utsav and Technology &Bharatiya Bhasha Summit-was held in New Delhi.

- The summit organized as part of Bharatiya Bhasha Utsav, is jointly organized by the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), and their constituent institutions.

- It will set the course for a technologically enriched future for Bharatiya languages in education.

- The government has proposed to celebrate the birthday of renowned Tamil poet and freedom fighter MahakaviChinnaswamiSubramania Bharati as **Bharatiya Bhasha Divas (11 December).**

- The summit aims to facilitate a seamless transition from the current education ecosystem to one rooted in Bharatiya Languages, in line with the New Education Policy-2020 vision.

- The summit will encompass **three pivotal thematic sessions**:

  - Technology FOR Bharatiya Languages
  - Technology IN Bharatiya Languages
  - Technology THROUGH Bharatiya Languages

- These themes will emphasize the integration of technology in promoting Bharatiya Bhasha (Indian Languages), including its role in teaching, training, examination, and translating educational materials.

- During the summit, key discussions were held on agendas like "Leverage Technology for Bharatiya Languages", "Operating Systems and Software Localization", "Search Engine Localization" and more.

- A comprehensive roadmap for realizing the vision of education in Bharatiya Languages will be mapped, with active participation from stakeholders across various sectors, including academia, students, research scholars, infotech industry etc.

Matangini Hazra

- Recently, the 81st anniversary of Matangini Hazra's martyrdom took place.

- Matangini was born in a village named Hogla, near Tamluk, in 1869. She was married at an early age of 12 and was widowed by the time she turned 18.

- Matangini Hazra actively joined the freedom struggle and was so influenced by Gandhi's beliefs, that she earned the name **Gandhi Buri** (the old Gandhian woman).

- At the age of 61, she was arrested for taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. In fact, her participation in the Movement led to several short stints in prison.

- Her involvement with the freedom struggle intensified during the Quit India Movement launched by Gandhi in August 1942. In September that year, a 73-year-old Hazra led a large procession of around 6,000 protesters, mostly women.

- The procession marched with the aim to take over the Tamluk police station from British authorities. Amid the conflict, Hazra was shot and she died.

- Her death made her a martyr for many, inciting revolutionaries to establish their own parallel government in Medinipur, which functioned till 1944, when it was disbanded at Gandhi's request.

- In 1977, the first statue in the Kolkata Maidan dedicated to a woman revolutionary was that of Matangini Hazra.

Pulikali

- A large show of Pulikali dance was recently organised on the festival of Onam, in Thrissur city. Pulikali (Tiger Dance) is one of the **folk art forms of Kerala**.

- On the **fourth day of Onam festival**, artists paint their bodies like tigers with stripes of yellow, red and black and dance to the rhythm of traditional percussion instruments such as thakil, udukku and chenda.

- The **main theme** of this folk art is **tiger hunting** with participants playing the role of tiger and hunter.

- It was introduced two centuries ago, by the former ruler of Cochin, **Maharaja Rama Varma SakthanThampuran**.

Onam

- Onam is one of the most important festivals of Kerala that **celebrates rice harvest**.

- The 10-day-long Onam festivities, also known as Thiru-Onam or Thiruvonam, is also celebrated to pay homage to legendary **King Mahabali's homecoming**.

- The sequence begins with Atham, followed by Chodhi, Vishakam, Anizham, Thriketa, Moolam, Pooradam, Uthradom, culminating on the 10th day, known as Thiruvonam.

- Onam is celebrated in the **Chingam month**, which marks the beginning of the Malayalam calendar.

- People also enjoy other cultural activities, including Onakalikal (various games played during the festival), Vallamkali (boat race).

- **Kaikotti kali** and **Thumbi Thullal** are two graceful dances performed by women on Onam.

TRIFED's Artisanal Treasure At G20 Summit

- The G20 Summit witnessed a remarkable showcase of India's rich tribal heritage and craftsmanship, presented by TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India), Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

- The following items were showcased at the summit:

- **Longpi Pottery:** Named after the village of Longpi in Manipur, the **Tangkhul Naga tribes** practice this exceptional pottery style.
  - ✓ Unlike most pottery, Longpi**does not use the potter's wheel**. All shaping is done with the hand and with the help of moulds.
  - ✓ The characteristic gray- black cooking pots, the plump kettles and charming bowls, mugs and nut trays, are trademarks of Longpi but now fresh design elements are being introduced.
- **Chhattisgarh Wind Flutes**: Curated by the **Gond Tribe of Bastar** in Chhattisgarh, the **Sulur bamboo wind flute** is a unique musical creation.
  - ✓ Unlike traditional flutes, it <u>produces melodies through a simple one-handed twirl</u> and has **surface etching** of fish emblems, geometric lines, and triangles.
  - ✓ It also helps tribal men ward off animals and guide cattle through jungles.
- **Gond Paintings**: Paintings made by Gond tribe show their deep connection to nature and tradition.
  - ✓ They start with dots, calculating image volume, which they then connect to form outer shapes filled with vibrant colours. These artworks, deeply influenced by their social milieu, artfully transform everyday objects.
- **Gujarat Hangings**: Curated by the **Bhil &Patelia Tribe in Dahod**, Gujarati wall hangings are rooted in ancient Gujarat art form.
  - ✓ Initially the wall hangings were dolls and cradle birds made of cotton cloth and recycled materials. Now, they include mirror work, zari, stones, and beads, to suit contemporary fashion while preserving tradition.
- **Sheep Wool Stoles**: These are crafted by **Bodh, Bhutia and Gujjar Bakarwal tribes** from Himachal Pradesh/Jammu & Kashmir.
  - ✓ They use pure sheep wool to make a diverse range of clothing, from jackets to shawls and stoles. They are crafted on **hand-operated looms and stitching machines**.
  - ✓ Originally featuring monochromatic schemes of white, black, and grey, the craftsmanship has evolved with dual coloured designs dominating.
- **Araku Valley Coffee**: It comes from **Araku Valley in Andhra Pradesh**. This coffee is renowned for its unique flavours, aroma, purity and sustainable cultivation practices.
- **Rajasthan Artistry***:
  - ✓ **Glass Mosaic Pottery** captures the mosaic art style, meticulously crafted into lamp shades and candle holders. When illuminated, they release a variety of colors, adding vibrancy to any space.
  - ✓ **Meenakari**is an art of decorating metal surfaces with vibrant mineral substances, a technique introduced by the Mughals. Delicate designs are etched onto metal, creating grooves for colors to fill in.
  - ✓ **Metal Ambabari** craft curated by the Meena Tribe, also includes enameling, a meticulous process that improves metal decoration. Today, it extends beyond gold to metals like silver and copper.

Nataraja at G20 Summit

- A magnificent 27 foot Nataraja, the tallest statue of Lord Shiva's dancing form in the world, was placed at the G20 summit at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- The statue is an **ashtadhatu (eight-metal alloy)** piece of art, crafted by sculptors from Swamimalai in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu.
- The eight metals used in its construction are <u>copper, zinc, lead, tin, silver, gold, mercury and iron</u>.

- It has been constructed using the lost-wax casting method to make finely detailed single piece sculptures. This process ensures there are no welded parts in the Nataraja statue.

The Cholas and Nataraja

- The design of this Nataraja at the summit, is inspired from three Nataraja idols - Thillai Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, the Uma Maheswarar Temple in Konerirajapuram, and the Brihadeeswara (Big) Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in Thanjavur.

- All three temples were originally constructed by the Cholas, who at their peak around the 9th-11th centuries AD, ruled over much of peninsular India.

- The Cholas were great patrons of art and high culture. They were devout **Shaivites** and built elaborate Shiva temples (like the one in Thanjavur) across their territories.

- Although Shiva was first portrayed in sculpture as Nataraja in the fifth century AD, its present, world-famous form evolved under the Chola.

Nataraja

- Nataraja is a depiction of Lord Shiva as the divine cosmic dancer. He is also known as the **Lord of Dance**, as he is said to have invented 108 different dances. The dance performed by Nataraja is called **Tandava**.

- The image of Nataraja is encircled in a **prabhamandala**, that is the **circle of fire**.

- On the head of the lord is a crown of **coiled hair (jatamukuta)**, decorated with the river Goddess Ganga, a snake, jewels, flowers, a crescent moon, and a human skull.

- On the forearm of his right hand is placed a **bhujanga-valaya** which is a bracelet shaped like a coiled snake.

- In his upper right hand he holds a **damru (a hand drum)**, whose sounds draw all creatures into his rhythmic motion. In his upper left arm, he holds **agni (fire)**, with which he can destroy the universe.

- Beneath one of Nataraja's feet lies **crushed a dwarf-like figure**, representing illusion, which leads humanity in the wrong path.

- Yet, amidst all the destructive symbolism, Nataraja also reassures, and shows Shiva as the Protector. With his front right hand, he makes the '**abhayamudra**' (a gesture that removes fear).

- With his raised feet, and with his front left arm he points to his raised feet, asking his devotees to seek shelter at his feet.

Konark Wheel

- A replica of Konark Wheel from the Sun temple in Odisha's Puri served as the backdrop at the G20 summit.

- The Konark Sun Temple was built in the **13th century by King Narasimhadeva I** of the **Eastern Ganga Dynasty**. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage site.

- The temple follows the **Kalinga or Orissa style of architecture**, which is a subset of the nagara style of Hindu temple architecture.

- The word 'Konark' is a combination of two Sanskrit words **kona** (corner or angle) and **arka** (the sun). The temple is conceived as a **giant stone chariot** with 24 wheels and 7 horses.

- The Konark Chakra represents the wheel of the Sun God's chariot. The wheel with 24 spokes, which has also been adapted into the Tricolour, embodies India's ancient wisdom, advanced civilisation and architectural excellence.

- Interestingly, the spokes of the wheels can be used as a sundial. By observing the shadow cast by the spokes, one can determine the approximate time of day.

- This temple was called the "**Black Pagoda**" in European sailor accounts because it looked like a great tiered tower which appeared black. Similarly, the Jagannath Temple in Puri was called the "**White Pagoda**".

Leander Paes

- Multiple Grand Slam winner Leander Paes has been nominated for the International Tennis Hall of Fame (ITHF) in the player category.
  - ✓ ITHF is a non-profit organization located in USA, the only museum in the world that preserves and promotes the history of tennis and celebrates its champions.
  - ✓ He is the **first Asian man** to be nominated for the ITHF in the **player category**. Li Na, the female Chinese player, became the first Asian player to get nominated to the ITHF in 2019.
- In 1996, Paes became India's **only Olympic medalist in tennis**, earning bronze at the Atlanta Games.
- Besides Paes, former India player **Vijay Amritraj** is also nominated in the **contributor category**.

Dada Saheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award

- Veteran actress Waheeda Rehman has been conferred with Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award for the year 2021.
- The legendary actress has also won the National Award for Best Actress (1971) and has been honoured with the Padma Shri in 1972 and Padma Bhushan in 2011.
- Dadasaheb Phalke Award is India's **highest award in the field of cinema**.
- It is presented annually at the **National Film Awards ceremony** by the **Directorate of Film Festivals**, an organization set up by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- The award comprises a Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) medallion, a shawl, and a cash prize.
- Presented first in **1969**, the award was introduced by the Government of India to commemorate Dadasaheb Phalke's contribution to Indian cinema. The **first recipient** of the award was actress **Devika Rani**.

Dadasaheb Phalke

- Dhundiraj Govind Phalke was an Indian producer-director-screenwriter, known as the **Father of Indian cinema**.
- His debut film, **Raja Harishchandra**, was the first Indian movie released in **1913**, and is now known as **India's first full-length feature film**.

Raj Bhasha Kirti Puraskar

- Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW) has been conferred the prestigious **Raj Bhasha Kirti Puraskar** for **2022-23** in the category of Ministries/Departments with less than 300 employees.
- This is the second consecutive year wherein DoPPW has received the honor of being the best performing Department in this category.
- The Raj Bhasha Kirti Puraskar is a prestigious award conferred every year on a department which stands first among all the Ministries/Departments with less than 300 employees during the Akhil Bhartiya Raj Bhasha Sammelan and Hindi Diwas celebrations **organized by the Department of Official Language, Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- This recognition reflects the dedicated efforts of DoPPW in promoting the use of Hindi and upholding linguistic diversity in government operations.

Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize

- The prestigious Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) Prize for the year 2022 has been awarded to twelve leading scientists in the seven disciplines.

- The prize is given each year by the **Council of Scientific Research (CSIR)** for outstanding contributions to science and technology. It is the most coveted award in multidisciplinary science in India.

- **First awarded in 1958**, it is named after the **founder Director of CSIR Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar**.

- Any citizen of India engaged in research in any field of science and technology **up to the age of 45 years** is eligible for the prize.

- **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO)** working in India are also eligible. The prize comprises a citation, a plaque, and a cash award.

- The Prize is awarded based on contributions made through work done **primarily in India during the five years preceding the year of the prize**. (In this case, 'primarily' means 'for the most part').

Norman Borlaug Award 2023

- Indian agriculture scientist Swati Nayak recently became the third Indian agriculture scientist to win the prestigious Norman E Borlaug Award for 2023. She is fondly called as Bihana Didi (Seed Lady).

- Other two Indian recipients: Aditi Mukherji (2012) and Mahalingam Govindaraj (2022).

- Working with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), she has won the Borlaug Award for "Field Research and Application".

- Nayak formulated a strategy for introducing drought-tolerant Shahabhagi Dhan rice variety in Odisha. It brought about a major change in rainfed areas. The variety became an integral element of every farmer family's diet and crop rotation.

- Many climate-resilient rice varieties have been successfully deployed in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal through her focussed strategy, partnerships, and unique positioning models.

Norman Borlaug Award

- The award is endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation and is presented every October by the **World Food Prize Foundation**.

- It recognizes exceptional science-based achievement in **international agriculture and food production** by an individual **under the age of 40**.

- It is named after Norman E. Borlaug, the **father of the Green Revolution** and the 1970 Nobel Peace Laureate.