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SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

ALL INDIA TIGER ESTIMATION

On the occasion of Global Tiger Day (July 29), a detailed report on the All-India Tiger Estimation 2022 was released.

31 JULY - 05 AUG 2023

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GS2

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON CHILDREN

Context:

A recent study has highlighted how **climate change contributes** to violence against children.

How climate change contributes to violence against children?

Aspect	Description
Hazards and Disaster Risk	Natural disasters create stressful environments, leading to higher risks of violence against children in relief shelters or at home. In post-disaster situations, children might be forced into labour for recovery efforts.
Gender	Climate change can exacerbate child marriage in certain regions due to drought-induced economic pressures, affecting girls disproportionately.
Mobility and Im-mobility	Climate migrants face increased risks of violence, and separation from families or caregivers makes children vulnerable. Immobility, as in slum areas, can lead to child abuse and violence.
Child Labor	Natural disasters and climate-change-related industries (agriculture, mining, etc.) contribute to child labour, which can expose children to exploitation and violence.
Health	Climate-related mental health issues can lead to increased perpetration of violence against children , as eco-anxiety and fear of consequences contribute to domestic violence. As temperatures rise, infants will bear the greatest burden of malnutrition and rising food prices. Children will suffer most from the rise in infectious diseases.

Addressing violence against children due to climate change requires a multi-faceted approach:

- **Integrated Policies:** Develop **context-specific policies** that recognize the link between climate change and violence against children.
- **Early Warning Systems:** Establish early warning systems for **climate-related disasters that specifically consider children's vulnerabilities.**

- **Psychosocial Support:** Offer counselling, play therapy, and mental health services to help children cope with anxiety and stress.
- **Gender-Sensitive Interventions:** Focus on preventing child marriage, human trafficking, and gender-based violence exacerbated by climate change.
- **Climate-Resilient Education:** Integrate climate change awareness and preparedness into school curricula to empower children with knowledge and skills to face climate-related challenges.
- **Child-Centred Disaster Plans:** Develop and implement disaster preparedness plans that specifically address the needs and vulnerabilities of children during extreme weather events.
- **Child-Centred Shelters:** Design and set up shelters that prioritize the safety and well-being of children during emergencies.

Also, refer to our previous article on the [Impact of Climate change on Social issues](#)

Insta Links: [Still a nightmare for domestic violence survivors](#)

Mains Links: Analyse the growing impacts of climate change on Indian Society. (10M)

GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Context:

The Government of [National Capital Territory of Delhi \(Amendment\) Bill](#), 2023, was introduced in the Lok Sabha, leading to opposition protests and debates.

About the Bill:

The bill aimed to replace the **National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance**, 2023, which deals with the **control of services in Delhi.**

Background of the Issue:

The Delhi government and Lieutenant Governor have been in a **legal battle since 2015** over control of "services" in Delhi. The Supreme Court **gave a split verdict in 2019**, and a five-judge Constitution Bench recently (May 2023) granted more powers to the Delhi government over services. It ordered that the **Delhi government will have control over administrative services** other than matters related to public order, police, and land.

To counter it, the central government passed the **National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance**, 2023. The ordinance excluded "services" from the purview of the Delhi legislature and **conferred LG with more powers.** It will

now be replaced by the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Key features of the new bill:

Aspect	Description
Purpose	To amend certain provisions of the Government of NCT of Delhi Act, 1991 .
Establishment of NCCSA	Introduces the National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA) to provide recommendations to the LG on service matters.
Composition of NCCSA	NCCSA consists of the Chief Minister of Delhi (Chairperson) , Principal Home Secretary, and Chief Secretary of the Delhi Govt.
Empowerment of Central Govt.	Central Govt. empowered to make rules regarding the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi's affairs, officer & employee functions, terms, and conditions.
Discretionary Power to LG	LG granted discretionary power over matters beyond Delhi Assembly's competence or requiring judicial/quasi-judicial action.

Concerns regarding the bill:

Concerns	Description
Centralization of Power	Critics argue that the Bill centralizes power in the hands of the LG, diminishing the elected government's authority.
Bypassing the Legislative Assembly	Opponents claim that the Bill bypasses the elected Legislative Assembly's decision-making role.
Impact on Co-operative Federalism	Critics argue that the bill is undermining the democratic mandate and interfering with local governance.
Potential for Conflict	Some fear that discretionary power given to LG could lead to conflicts between the elected govt. and LG.
Constitutional Validity	Questions arise about the constitutional validity of the Bill and its alignment with federal principles .
Curtailing Delhi Government's Autonomy	Critics worry that the Bill might curtail the autonomy of the Delhi government in policy-making.

How UTs are administered?

The Union Territories (UTs) in India are administered by the **President** through an **appointed administrator**, who represents the President and exercises administrative powers in the UT. In some Uts, such as **Delhi and Puducherry**, the administrator holds significant powers, including the ability to make laws and regulations for the UT, while in others, the

administrator's powers are limited to **providing advice to the elected government**.

Special provision for Delhi UT:

Special provisions have been made for certain Uts, such as **Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir (yet to be constituted)**, which have a **legislative assembly and a Council of Ministers headed by a Chief Minister**. The legislative assembly of these Uts has the power to make laws with respect to matters enumerated in **List II or List III in the Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution insofar as these matters are applicable in relation to the UT.

However, **some entries in List II, such as public order, police, and land**, are not within the legislative competence of the legislative assembly of Delhi.

Insta Links: [Centre-Delhi row heads to Constitution Bench](#)

Mains Links: [Whether the Supreme Court Judgement \(July 2018\) can settle the political tussle between the Lt. Governor and the elected government of Delhi? Examine. \(UPSC 2018\)](#)

Prelims Links:

Q. In the context of India, which one of the following is the characteristic appropriate for bureaucracy? (UPSC 2020)

1. An agency for widening the scope of parliamentary democracy
2. An agency for strengthening the structure of federalism
3. An agency for facilitating political stability and economic growth
4. An agency for the implementation of public policy

Ans: 4

WHO REPORT ON THE GLOBAL TOBACCO EPIDEMIC, 2023

Context:

The new WHO report on tobacco control highlights global progress, including the implementation of **MPOWER measures**.

What is the MPOWER measure?

MPOWER measures are tobacco control strategies developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2008. They include:

- M=Monitor tobacco use
- P=Protect people from tobacco smoke
- O=Offer help to quit tobacco
- W=Warn about tobacco dangers
- E=Enforce bans on tobacco advertising
- R=Raise taxes on tobacco products

Key highlights of the Report:

Highlights	Description
Global Smoking Decline	Worldwide, with 300 million fewer smokers today , the prevalence of smoking declined from 22.8% (2007) to 17% (2021)
Implementation Progress	Over 5 billion people (71% of the global population) are protected by at least one MPOWER measure
Countries Implementing MPOWER	The number of countries implementing at least one MPOWER measure increased from 44 (2008) to 151 (2022) . Only 4 countries (Brazil, Turkey, Netherlands, and Mauritius) have implemented all measures.
E-cigarettes Warning	WHO warns against the aggressive promotion of e-cigarettes as a safer alternative, especially for youth
Second-hand Smoke Impact	Second-hand smoke exposure is linked to over 1 million non-smoker deaths annually, various health issues
India's Achievements	India excels in health warning labels and tobacco dependence treatment ; bans sale of e-cigarettes 27% reduction in smoking in public places in Bengaluru due to enforcement and communication efforts
Recommendations	Need for warnings on OTT platforms , stronger enforcement, bans on loose cigarette sales, and increased fines; Bans on tobacco advertising can minimize its consumption Efforts to reduce second-hand smoking through smoke-free public areas and awareness campaigns

Impact of tobacco smoking:

Health Issues Due to Tobacco Smoking	
General Population	Cardiovascular diseases, respiratory issues, cancer
Children and Adolescents	Respiratory infections, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
Pregnant Women	Pregnancy complications, low birth weight, developmental issues
Smokers	Lung cancer, COPD, decreased lung function
Second-hand Smokers	Respiratory infections, asthma, heart diseases
Workforce and Productivity	Increased sick leave, decreased productivity
Low-Income Individuals	The financial burden of tobacco-related health issues

Elderly Population	Aggravation of age-related health problems
People with Pre-existing	Aggravation of existing conditions like asthma and diabetes



Key initiatives taken by India:

Initiatives	Description
Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019	Enacted to combat the use of e-cigarettes, aiming to address their health risks.
National Health Policy 2017	Aims to reduce tobacco use by 30% by 2025 through awareness and preventive measures.
Warnings covering 85% area on tobacco product packs	Mandates large health warnings on tobacco product packs to increase awareness.
WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control	India is a party to this international treaty, committed to tobacco control measures.
Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act 2003 (COTPA 2003)	prohibition of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> smoking in public places advertisement of cigarettes sale of tobacco products to anyone below the age of 18 years prohibition of selling areas like schools, colleges, etc.
National Tobacco Control Programme and Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan.	

31st May is observed as **'World No Tobacco Day'** every year to spread awareness about the deadly effects of tobacco consumption.

Tobacco cultivation in India:

It is one of the important cash crops. Today, India is the **second-largest crop producer in the world after China**.

Insta Links: [World No Tobacco Day](#)

Mains Links: Limiting the discovery of tobacco products can prolong the resistance and not prevent it. India urgently needs a National Tobacco Control Policy with a special focus on children. Comment. (10M)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN SECURITY FORCES

Context:

An RPF jawan (on the **Jaipur-Mumbai Superfast Express**) with mental health issues shot and killed passengers, prompting questions about having armed troubled personnel on duty

What is [mental health](#)?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is a state of well-being in which the **individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully**, and is able to contribute, to his or her community.

Status of issue:

- The suicide rate in the **Indian Army** is about 8.5 suicides per 100000 people

Reasons for Prevalence of Mental Health Issues in Uniformed Forces	
Tightly Structured Hierarchy	Command-and-control hierarchy system
	Senior officer as reporting authority
	Lack of platform for communicating personal issues
Stress is not Addressed	Signs of stress are often ignored
	Fear of being perceived as weak
	Pressure to conform to "macho" stereotype
Less Recognition for Achievements	Lack of recognition for constabulary
	Frequent persecution for failures
Tendency towards Alcoholism	Resorting to alcohol/drug abuse for coping

Lack of Awareness and Stigma	Lack of awareness about mental health issues
	The stigma around seeking help for mental health concerns
Separation from Family and Home	Being away from family for extended periods
	Isolation and loneliness due to duty demands
Job-related Stress and Trauma	Exposure to traumatic events
	High-stress nature of duties
Poor Working Conditions	Meagre salary and inadequate facilities
	Lack of timely leaves and allowances

Some key measures to address mental health issues among uniformed forces:

- Awareness and Training:** Conduct regular awareness campaigns and training programs to educate personnel and superiors about mental health, its signs, and the importance of seeking help.
- De-Stigmatization:** Work towards creating a culture where seeking mental health support is encouraged and not stigmatized, challenging stereotypes of strength and vulnerability.
- Access to Counselling:** Establish confidential counselling services accessible to all personnel, providing a safe space for them to discuss their concerns and receive professional guidance.
- Leadership Involvement:** Involve senior officers in mental health initiatives, encouraging open communication, understanding, and proactive support for struggling personnel.
- Early Intervention:** Develop a system for early identification of mental health issues through regular assessments, screenings, and peer support mechanisms.
- Promote Work-Life Balance:** Implement policies that ensure adequate leaves, balanced work hours, and opportunities for personnel to connect with their families and loved ones.
- Wellness Programs:** Offer wellness programs that focus on stress reduction, resilience-building, mindfulness, and coping strategies to enhance mental well-being.
- Crisis Response:** Develop protocols for responding to crisis situations, including access to immediate psychological support for personnel involved in traumatic incidents.
- Peer Support Networks:** Establish peer support networks where personnel can openly share their experiences, provide mutual assistance, and foster a sense of camaraderie.
- Family Support:** Recognize the role of families in supporting personnel's mental health; provide re-

sources and counselling to families to help them understand and address these issues.

- **Inclusive Policies:** Tailor policies and interventions to the diverse needs of personnel, considering factors like gender, age, cultural backgrounds, and ranks.

The government has taken several steps to improve mental health:

- **Constitutional Provision:** Recognized healthcare as a fundamental right under Article 21.
- **Mental HealthCare Act 2017:** Ensured access to mental healthcare from government-funded services, reduced use of **Section 309 IPC** (suicide attempt), and focused on treatment.
- **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):** Addressed mental disorders and the shortage of professionals since 1982, including modernization of mental hospitals and upgrading psychiatric wings.
- **Kiran Helpline:** Launched a 24/7 toll-free helpline to provide support for anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and more.
- **Manodarpan:** Launched under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to offer psychosocial support for students, families, and teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusion:

Addressing mental health issues in uniformed forces is crucial for both the well-being of personnel and the effectiveness of their roles. In this context, **Regular samprad sabhas** need to be conducted where **personnel can air their grievances and proper follow-up action** must be taken on all possible issues.

Insta Links:

- [Address stigma in mental health](#)
- [Mental Health at Work](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Appropriate local community-level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieving 'Health for All' in India. Explain. (UPSC 2018)

Q. Mental health is one of the most neglected social issues in India. Comment.

SOUTH ASIA'S INTEGRATION

Context:

C. Raja Mohan discusses the **evolving economic landscape of South Asia**. He highlights recent visits by leaders like Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe to Delhi, showcasing a shift in [South Asian regionalism](#).

India's vision of **regional economic integration in South Asia** is based on enhanced intra-regional trade, investment

flows, and regional transport and communication links in South Asia. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (**SAARC**) and India's **Neighbourhood First Policy** are the two vehicles in this process.

How India's growing economy is having a positive effect on South Asia?

Aspect	Description
Economic Growth	India's economy is growing and poised to become the third-largest economy.
Trade Volumes	Intra-regional trade grew from 2% in 1990 to 6% now (but compared to ASEAN countries (over 27% integration, it is still low))
Bilateral Trade Potential	India's exports: \$16 billion to Bangladesh, \$6 billion to Sri Lanka , and over \$8 billion to Nepal in 2022.
Cross-Border Connectivity	Major initiatives for cross-border connectivity are complementing trade volumes e.g., trains and bus services with Bangladesh, Nepal
Economic Reform	Economic crises in countries like Sri Lanka and Pakistan are pushing for serious economic change.
Openness to Trade and Investment	Nepal and Sri Lanka are more open to trade, investment, and connectivity with India.
Global Power Rivalry Influence	US-China rivalry and India-China conflict have altered the Subcontinent's geo-economic dynamics .
Support for Regionalism	Western nations are supporting India-centered regionalism and economic integration in the region .
Transformational Potential	These factors combined could potentially transform South Asia's economic landscape.

South Asian regional integration can overcome political disputes:

- **Economic Interdependence:** As trade benefits economies, it encourages nations to resolve political issues.
- **Sub-Regional Initiatives:** E.g., BMIC, India-Myanmar trilateral highway, SAFTA.
- **People-to-People Contacts:** Promoting cultural exchanges, educational programs, and tourism can help build positive relationships among citizens across borders.
- **Shared Challenges:** Addressing common challenges like climate change, terrorism, and natural disasters requires cooperation.
- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Confidence-building measures, trust-building initiatives, and regular dialogues can help ease tensions.
- **Economic Incentives:** Japan's effort in promoting In-

dia-Bangladesh connectivity

India can lead South Asia's development by:

- Boosting regional trade, connectivity, and investment.
- Providing an ecological blueprint for biodiversity protection and climate response.
- Focusing on regional food security and supply chains.
- Promoting sub-regional initiatives for cooperation.
- Representing South Asian interests in international forums.

Conclusion:

Together the three trends — the region's new economic openness, India's vigorous neighbourhood policies, and Western support for an **India-centred regionalism in South Asia** — could transform the **Indian subcontinent's geo-economic landscape**. India's rising economic tide could help lift all boats in South Asia.

Insta Links:

- [South Asia's human capital is the resilience it needs](#)
- [India and South Asia Regional Co-operation](#)

Mains Links:

Trade integration among South Asian countries will translate into better economic opportunities and shared prosperity for people living in these countries. Elucidate (15M)

Prelims Links:

Q. Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2020)

1. The value of Indo-Sri Lanka trade has consistently increased in the last decade.
2. "Textile and textile articles" constitute an important item of trade between India and Bangladesh.
3. In the last five years, Nepal has been the largest trading partner of India in South Asia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: B

Q. Which one among the following South Asian countries has the highest population density? (UPSC 2009)

- (a) India
- (b) Nepal
- (c) Pakistan
- (d) Sri Lanka

Ans: A

THE 2019 ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370

Context:

The Supreme Court began hearings on the **constitutional challenge to the 2019 abrogation of Article 370**, which granted **special status to Jammu and Kashmir**.

What is Article 370?

Article 370 was a provision in the Indian Constitution that **granted special autonomy and privileges to the state of Jammu and Kashmir**. It allowed the state to have **its own constitution, flag, and autonomy over most matters** except foreign affairs, defence, and communications. This article was **abrogated in 2019**, revoking the **special status of Jammu and Kashmir** and integrating it fully into the Indian Union.

Why was Article 370 abrogated in 2019?

Article 370 was **abrogated in 2019 to fully integrate the state of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union and remove its special autonomy**. The Indian government stated that this move **aimed to promote economic development, better governance, and equal rights for all citizens across the region**, while critics expressed concerns about the potential erosion of **cultural and political distinctiveness**.

The present argument in the Supreme Court regarding Article 370:

Article 370 is part of the Constitution's **"Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions"** section and is titled **"Temporary provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir"**. The provision outlines that the **President can declare it inoperative**, making it commonly seen as **temporary**. However, the petitioners argue that its **temporary nature is due to Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly's role (1951-1957) in recommending changes to it**. Once the Constituent Assembly ceased to exist in 1957, the provision **was argued to have become a permanent feature**.

The central question that SC will decide is whether **Parliament has the power to abrogate Article 370 after 1957** when the Constituent Assembly was no longer in existence.

The argument for favour and Against:

Arguments in Favor of Removing Article 370	Arguments Against Removing Article 370
Temporary Provision: Article 370 is titled "Temporary provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir". This suggests it wasn't meant to be permanent.	Original Agreement: The accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India was based on certain terms, with Article 370 being central .

CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE TO

Self-contained Exit: Article 370(3) allows for the President to declare the article inoperative , indicating a mechanism for its removal.	“Temporary” Misunderstood: The term “temporary” in Article 370 refers to the period before J&K’s Constituent Assembly created its Constitution (1951-1957), not the Article’s lifespan.
Uniformity: Removal can lead to the uniform application of Indian laws to Jammu & Kashmir, integrating it fully with India.	Constituent Assembly’s Role: Clause (3) of Article 370 mandated that any change to the relationship between J&K and India needed the J&K Constituent Assembly’s recommendation .
Development & Growth: Some believe removal can boost the region’s development, as it would get equal attention and opportunities like other states.	End of Constituent Assembly: Since the Constituent Assembly ceased to exist after 1957, the power to alter Article 370 also ended, making the Article permanent .
	Preservation of Identity: Article 370 ensured J&K maintained its unique identity and relationship with India.

Conclusion:

As the ongoing Supreme Court hearing unfolds, it’s evident that finding a **balanced resolution** that respects **historical agreements** while considering **contemporary realities** is crucial for the future of the region and the country.

Insta links: [In the Article 370 hearing, the original text and spirit count](#)

Mains Links: The banning of ‘Jamaat-e – Islami in Jammu and Kashmir brought into focus the role of over-ground workers (OGWs) in assisting terrorist organizations. Examine the role played by OGWs in assisting terrorist organizations in insurgency-affected areas. Discuss measures to neutralize the influence of OGWs. (UPSC 2019) (200 WORDS, 10 MARKS)

“LIMITED INTERNET SHUT-DOWNS” AND THEIR IMPACT

Context:

The idea of “limited internet shutdowns” is gaining traction as a way to control riots and security threats while allowing beneficial use of the internet. However, there is **no study by the Indian government or any state government** to assess the effectiveness of these shutdowns.

What is “Limited internet shutdowns”?

It refers to the **intentional restriction or blocking of access to the internet**, often specific websites or online services, within a **defined geographic area or for a specified period of time**. This is done as a response to security threats, social unrest, or public emergencies, with the aim of controlling the flow of information and communication.

- E.g., this has been applied in Manipur violence and recent Nuh (Haryana) communal violence.

Status of India on Internet shutdown:

According to a report by **Access Now** and the **KeepItOn coalition**, India enforced as many as **84 internet shutdowns in 2022** and was on **top of the list for the fifth year in a row**.

- In 2022, the **Internet was shut down 49 times in Jammu and Kashmir**, the highest of any state in the country.

Constitutional Articles & Internet Shutdown:

- **Internet-related rights** are protected by [Articles 19\(1\)\(a\)](#) (freedom of speech and expression) and [19\(1\)\(g\)](#) (freedom of trade and commerce).
- **Exceptions:** Restrictions on these rights should follow the guidelines of Articles 19(2) and (6) and adhere to the principle of proportionality.
 - **Proportionality Test:** It assesses whether governmental actions justifiably infringe on individual rights.

Legal ground:

Internet shutdown orders are regulated by the [Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services \(Public Emergency or Public Safety\) Rules, 2017](#), which fall under the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**. These rules allow for the **temporary suspension of telecom services** in a specific area during public emergencies.

- Senior officials from the **Home Ministry at both central and state levels** are authorized to issue shutdown orders.

SC Judgment & Amendments on Internet Shutdown:

- [In Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India \(2020\)](#), SC stated indefinite internet shutdowns are illegal, requiring **necessity and proportionality**.
- **The Union govt amended 2017 Rules in Nov 2020**, capping shutdowns at **15 days**.
- In Dec 2021, the **Standing Committee on Communication and IT** proposed further amendments.
 - The committee suggested a **comprehensive review of Rules**, technology-oriented changes, and uniform guidelines for states/UTs to minimize public disruption.

Impact of Internet shutdown:

Impact of Internet Shutdowns	Examples

Communication Disruption	A recently released United Nations-backed report (by OHCHR) has highlighted that shutting down the internet affects people's safety & well-being , hampers information flow and harms the economy
	Businesses are unable to conduct online transactions, affecting e-commerce and communication with clients.
Information Flow Disruption	Limited access to news websites, hindering access to timely and accurate information.
	Inability to access educational resources, affecting students' learning during shutdowns.
Economic Impact	Loss of revenue for businesses relying on online operations and services.
	Impediments to remote work, affecting productivity and economic activity.
Social and Political Impact	Inability to organize protests or rallies via social media, affecting freedom of expression and assembly.
	Government control over information flow during sensitive events, limits public awareness.
Human Rights Concerns	Violation of freedom of speech and expression, undermining democratic values.
	Infringement on the right to access information crucial for making informed decisions.
Educational Disruption	Students unable to attend online classes, disrupt education during shutdowns.
	Lack of access to online educational resources and platforms.
Healthcare and Emergency Impact	Impaired access to telemedicine services and health information during critical times.
	Delays in accessing emergency services or assistance due to disrupted communication.
Global Perception	Negative impact on a country's image, raising concerns about digital rights and freedom.
	International criticism for hindering access to information and communication.

Addressing internet shutdowns requires a balanced approach that respects security and rights:

- **Adhere to Legal Standards:** Follow clear legal grounds and constitutional principles of necessity and proportionality.
- **Transparency:** Provide transparent justifications for

shutdowns and hold authorities accountable.

- **Limited Measures:** Use specific, time-bound shutdowns; avoid blanket measures.
- **Alternatives:** Consider content removal or service restrictions instead of full shutdowns.
- **Judicial Oversight:** Ensure judicial review, preventing misuse as seen in Anuradha Bhasin case.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Collaborate with civil society, businesses, and experts for balanced guidelines.
- **Digital Literacy:** Educate citizens about rights, safe practices, and shutdown consequences.

UN's OHCHR Recommendations

- **Stop imposing Internet shutdowns:** It may be the last recourse but should be used rarely for legitimate reasons
- **Legitimate shutdown:** Need to control the spread of hate speech, disinformation or other forms of content deemed illegal or harmful
- **Clear policies:** There should be an unambiguous, publicly available, and legitimate policy for any shutdown
- **Internet companies should engage and collaborate** with stakeholders including government and civil society to prevent such disruption

Insta Links

- [UN Report on Internet Shutdown](#)
- [REGULATING THE BAN](#)

Practice Questions:

Are Internet shutdowns healthy for India? Critically analyse and also comment on the recent trends associated with and the laws governing it. (250 words)

MONEY BILLS AND FINANCIAL BILLS

Context:

Recently, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs clarified that **The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill** is a **normal Bill** and not a Money Bill.

Money Bills and Financial Bills:

Any bill related to revenue or expenditure is a **Financial Bill**. A **Money Bill** is a specific type of Finance Bill that deals only with matters specified under **Article 110(1)** and deals with **taxes, borrowing, expenditure, etc.** It can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha and must be certified by the Speaker. **All Money bills are Financial bills but all Financial bills are not Money bills**

Recent controversies:

Controversy	Details
2017 Finance Act Amendments	The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court struck down amendments made to the 2017 Finance Act , which was passed as a Money Bill. The amendments altered the functioning of various tribunals .
Question of Money Bill Classification	The Supreme Court referred the matter of whether the 2017 Finance Act amendments could have been passed as a Money Bill to a seven-judge bench , indicating uncertainty about their classification.
Doubts on Aadhaar Act Ruling	The Supreme Court has expressed doubts about the correctness of the 2018 verdict that upheld the Aadhaar Act as a Money Bill.

Preconditions for a Financial Bill to become a money bill

- **Introduction:** Must be introduced only in the Lok Sabha and not in the Rajya Sabha, as per Article 117(1) of the Constitution.
- **President's Recommendation:** Can only be introduced on the President's recommendation, as per Article 117(1) of the Constitution.

Financial Bills (I) VS Financial Bills (II):

Financial Bill (I) encompasses matters both related to money bills and general legislation.

- It is presented under **Article 117 (1) of the Constitution**
- **Similarities** with money bills: It **can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha and upon the President's recommendation**.
- **Dissimilarities:** Unlike money bills, a Financial Bill (I) can be subject to amendments or rejection by the Rajya Sabha. In case of disagreement between the two Houses, a **joint sitting** can be convened by the President to resolve the deadlock.

Financial Bill (II) concerns provisions **involving expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India** but **does not cover the subjects** outlined in Article 110.

- Governed by Article 117 (3) of the Constitution, Financial Bill (II) follows the legislative procedure of **ordinary bills**.
- It can be **introduced in either House of Parliament**, and while the President's recommendation is **not necessary for introduction**, it becomes crucial during the consideration stage.
- Without the President's recommendation, neither House can pass the bill.

Comparison of Money Bills and Financial Bills:

Aspect	Money Bills	Financial Bills
Introduction	Can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha	Can be introduced in either the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha .
President's Recommendation	Must be introduced on the President's recommendation .	President's recommendation is necessary for Category I at the introduction stage and for Category II at the consideration stage.
Originating House	Must originate only in the Lok Sabha.	Category II can originate in either the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha .
Rajya Sabha Involvement	Rajya Sabha's involvement is limited ; it can only provide recommendations. (Article 117)	Rajya Sabha can fully participate , including amendments and discussions.
Inclusion of RS Recommendations	Not mandatory for Money Bills to include Rajya Sabha's recommendations.	Provision for Rajya Sabha's recommendations to be included in Financial Bills.
Subjects Covered	Deals exclusively with matters listed in Article 110(1) of the Constitution .	Deals with matters beyond those listed in Article 110(1) and can include other financial provisions.
Certification	Certified by the Speaker as a Money Bill if it falls under Article 110(1).	
Overriding Authority	Lok Sabha's decision prevails in case of disagreements with the Rajya Sabha.	Requires agreement of both Houses for passage.
President's Role	President's recommendation is essential for the introduction	President's recommendation is required if the Bill involves expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India .

Insta Links: [What are money Bills?](#)

Mains links: [How does a money bill differ from a financial](#)

Bill? Analyze whether the process of classifying a bill as a money bill needs to change. (250 words)

IMPACT OF ARTICLE 370 ABROGATION

Context:

The article is in continuation of [yesterday's article \(Constitutional Challenge to the 2019 Abrogation of Article 370\)](#)

Positive changes in the security situation in Jammu and

Kashmir after the removal of Article 370:

Aspect	Changes and Examples
Decrease in Stone Pelting	Incidents reduced significantly; 618 in 2019 to 76 in 2021
	Injuries to security forces dropped from 64 to 10
The decline in Terrorism Incidents	32% reduction in acts of terrorism since August 2019
	Deaths of security forces decreased by 52%
	Reduction of 14% in "admission of terrorists"
Enhanced OGW Arrests	Arrests of over-ground workers (OGWs) increased from 82 to 178
	Disruption of militant support networks
Improved Law and Order	Only 20 law and order incidents were recorded in J&K in 2022
	General improvement in the overall security environment
Deterrence of Infiltration	Fewer infiltrations and armed forces personnel were killed.

Negative changes in the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir:

Aspect	Changes and Examples
Targeted Killings	Increase in killings of civilians , particularly Kashmiri Hindus and outsiders
	Over 50% of civilian deaths post-August 5, 2019 , in the past eight months.
Low-Cost Drone Threat	Small weapons dropped by drones from across the border aid killings
Alleged 'Part-Time' Militants	Engagement of 'part-time' militants by handlers in Pakistan for attacks
Attacks on Hindu-Dominated Areas	Militants targeting Hindu-majority areas with IEDs
Erosion of Trust	Concerns about security and safety among locals and minorities

Fragile Security Successes	Security achievements overshadowed by persistent threats
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Positive and Negative changes in J&K's political landscape after the [abrogation of Article 370](#):

Aspect	Positive Changes	Negative Changes
Local Governance	Establishment of Panchayati Raj institutions, District Development Council (DDC) elections held in all 20 districts in 2020.	Complaints of limited power and influence for elected DDC members, delays in disbursing honorariums ; Delays in holding Assembly elections
Political Alliances	Formation of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) with National Conference and PDP uniting.	Fragmentation of political parties, leadership changes, desertion of senior leaders from established parties.
Administrative Redistricting	Delimitation Commission redraws Assembly constituencies increases representation, and introduces reserved seats .	Concerns about the accuracy and fairness of the delimitation process , and potential gerrymandering.
New Political Outfits	The emergence of J&K Apni Party and Jammu and Kashmir Progressive Azad Democratic Party (JKPADP) .	The splintering of traditional political parties created a more diverse political landscape.
ST List Expansion Legislation	Proposal to include new groups in the state's ST list, aiming for broader representation.	Protests and demonstrations by existing ST groups fearing dilution of political empowerment
Transparency and Participation	Increased engagement of local communities in governance through Panchayati Raj.	Concerns about the effectiveness and autonomy of local bodies under the new governance structure.

THE DIRE CONDITION OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN BIHAR

Context:

A recent report (titled "Where Are the Kids?") by Jan Jagran Shakti Sanghathan (JJSS) highlights the **dire condition of government schools in Bihar**, raising concerns about their potential replacement by cheap tuition centres.

Key issues highlighted:

- None of the surveyed schools met **RTE Act** norms
- School attendance is alarmingly low, with only about **20% of pupils present**, mainly from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Acute teacher shortages, failing to meet RTE norms on pupil-teacher ratios
- The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme for textbooks and uniforms poses challenges for poor families, often leading to a **lack of essential resources**
- Students in Classes 1-5 had forgotten basic skills by the time schools reopened after the COVID-19 lockdown.

Recommendations:

- Compliance with **RTE Act**, providing **daily eggs in midday meals**
- Prohibiting tuition during school hours
- Economist **Jean Dreze**, who guided the survey, emphasizes **understanding low attendance rates** and focusing on children's needs beyond schools

Recent initiatives by Government in the Education sector:

Accomplishments	Description
New Education Policy (NEP) and Reforms	NEP 2020 proposes transformative changes in education, emphasizing experiential learning and breaking the barriers between arts and sciences . It envisions a learner-centric approach that promotes critical thinking and inquiry-based education.
National Curriculum Framework	The NCF recommends board exams twice a year , a semester system for Class 12, and more flexibility in subject combinations to reduce rigid distinctions between arts, commerce, and science in classes 11 and 12.
School Text-books	NCERT revises school textbooks in three rounds , ensuring updated and relevant content for students.
Foreign Universities	UGC is finalizing regulations to allow foreign universities to establish campuses in India , enabling them to determine admission processes, fee structures, and faculty recruitment.
New Institutions, Enhanced Capacity	Several new educational institutions like IITs, IIMs, IIITs, and AIIMS have been established in the last nine years , increasing educational capacity. EWS quota has been implemented to enhance access to education.

Female Representation	The introduction of supernumerary seats for women at IITs and NITs increased female representation from 9% in 2017 to 20% in 2022 at IITs over five years. AISHE data shows reduced gender disparity in higher education enrolment since 2014 .
Other Changes and Initiatives	The no-detention policy under RTE Act was scrapped in 2019. The National Testing Agency conducts entrance tests to higher education. The Medical Commission of India was replaced with National Medical Commission to streamline medical education. Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) was set up to fund infrastructure development in educational institutions.

Insta Links:

- [New Education Policy](#)
- [Issues Related to Education Sector](#)

Prelims Link: UPSC 2018

Consider the following statements:

- 1.As per the Right to Education (RTE) Act, to be eligible for appointment as a teacher in a State, a person would be required to possess the minimum qualification laid down by the concerned State Council of Teacher Education.
 - 2.As per the RTE Act, for teaching primary classes, a candidate is required to pass a Teacher Eligibility Test conducted in accordance with the National Council of Teacher Education guidelines.
 - 3.In India, more than 90% of teacher education institutions are directly under the State Governments.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3
(d) 3 only

Solution: B

Mains Link: The quality of higher education in India requires major improvements to make it internationally competitive. Do you think that the entry of foreign educational institutions would help improve the quality of technical and higher education in the country? Discuss. (UPSC 2015)

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ALL INDIA TIGER ESTIMATION 2022

Context:

On the occasion of Global Tiger Day (July 29), a detailed re-

port on the All-India Tiger Estimation 2022 was released.

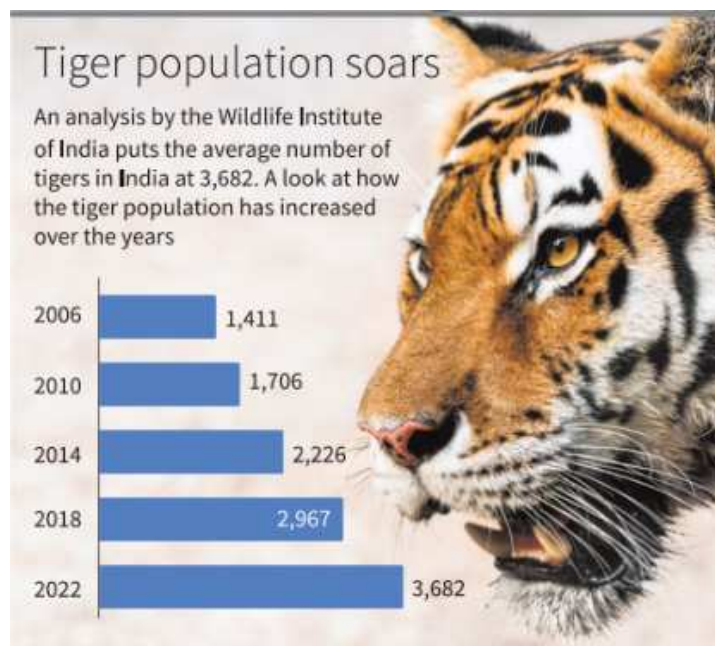
Highlights of the report:

- According to the Wildlife Institute of India's (WII) 5th quadrennial tiger census, **India's tiger population increased to 3,682 in 2022.**
- The numbers in the report, revised from 3167 earlier, **reflect a commendable annual growth rate of 6.1% per annum.**
- **The largest tiger population of 785 is in MP,** followed by Karnataka (563) and Uttarakhand (560), and Maharashtra (444).
- **The tiger abundance within the Tiger Reserve is highest in Corbett (260),** followed by Bandipur (150), Nagarhole (141), Bandhavgarh (135), Dudhwa (135), etc.
- **Central India and the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains** witnessed a notable increase in tiger population, **while the Western Ghats experienced localised declines,** necessitating targeted monitoring and conservation efforts.
- Some states, including **Mizoram, Nagaland, Jharkhand, Goa, Chhattisgarh, and Arunachal Pradesh,** have reported disturbing trends with small tiger populations.

Efforts to conserve the species:

- **Global Tiger Day (July 29):** It was instituted in **2010** at the **Tiger Summit** in St Petersburg, Russia when the 13 tiger range countries came together to create **Tx2** - the global goal to double the number of wild tigers by the year 2022.
- **Project Tiger of India:**
 - It was launched by the Central government on **April 1, 1973**, at the Jim Corbett National Park of Uttarakhand to promote the conservation of the tiger.
 - It didn't just focus on the conservation of the big cats but also **ensured the preservation of their natural habitat as tigers are at the top of the food chain.**
- **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) of India:** It was established in 2005, following a recommendation of the Tiger Task Force, to reorganise the management of Project Tiger and India's many Tiger Reserves in India.
- **Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE):**
 - It was adopted from the framework of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas.
 - Since its inception in **2006**, MEE has been jointly conducted by the NTCA and the WII and has paved the path for a successful evaluation of national tiger conservation efforts in India.

The success story of India's conservation efforts:



- Today, there are 54 tiger reserves across India, spanning 75,000 sq km.
- Nearly 75% of the global tiger population (in the wild) can today be found in India.

Challenges for the world and India:

- **Overall**, the designated year (2022) for achieving the goals of Tx2 saw uneven progress. **For example**, the countries in Southeast Asia struggled to control population decline.
- **For India,**
 - The tiger population of the country **cannot be increased at the same pace** because that will result in an increase in conflict with human beings.
 - **Action on key agendas** like carbon capture and climate change, fund flow as well as village relocation **has been the weakest performing area for Indian tiger reserves.**

Way ahead:

- **There is a need to strongly continue the eco-friendly development agenda**, minimise mining impacts, and rehabilitate mining sites.
- Vital steps to protect the country's tiger populations include -
 - Fortifying protected area management,
 - Intensifying anti-poaching measures,
 - Employing scientific thinking and technology-driven data collection, and
 - Addressing human-wildlife conflict.



Tiger

Context: India will officially mark the 50th years of 'Project Tiger' on 9 April 2023

World Tiger Day: 29th July

About Tigers (Panthera Tigris)
 IUCN: Endangered
 WPA: Schedule I
 Cites: Appendix I
 Tigers are the largest cat species and is both **flagship** and **Umbrella** species

Numbers: According to the tiger census of 2019, India has 2967 tigers, of which 526 are in Madhya Pradesh (highest).
Sub species: Traditionally eight subspecies of tigers have been recognized, out of which three are extinct— Caspian tiger, Javan tiger and Bali tiger.
Other sub species are Bengal Tigers, Amur tiger (Amur Rivers region of Russia and China, and North Korea), South China tiger, Sumatran tiger, Indo-Chinese tiger.
Largest Tiger Reserve: Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Andhra Pradesh
Smallest: Bor tiger reserve in Maharashtra
Highest Density of Tigers: Jim Corbett National Park

To know more Visit
Insights IAS Daily CA

Insta Links: [Can we democratise tiger conservation in India?](#)

Prelims Links: UPSC 2020

Q. Among the following Tiger Reserves, which one has the largest area under "Critical Tiger Habitat"?

1. Corbett
2. Ranthambore
3. Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem
4. Sunderbans

Ans: 3

DRAFT NATIONAL DEEP TECH STARTUP POLICY (NDTSP)

Context:

The National Deep Tech [Startup Policy](#) (NDTSP) draft has been released for public consultation by the **National Consortium**.

Aim of the policy: To strengthen the Indian deep tech startup ecosystem and address its unique challenges.

What are Deep Techs?

[Deep Tech](#) refers to **advanced and cutting-edge technologies** that are based on significant scientific and engineering innovations.

Example: [Artificial Intelligence](#) (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are examples of Deep Tech. They involve the **development of sophisticated algorithms and models** that enable machines to learn from data and make intelligent decisions.

Status:

India currently boasts the **third largest startup ecosystem** in the world with more than 326 incubators and accelerators. **About 14%** of them are in the area of Deep Tech.

Draft NDTSP is based on the following themes:

- Nurturing Research, Development & Innovation
- Strengthening the Intellectual Property Regime
- Facilitating Access to Funding
- Enabling Shared Infrastructure and Resource Sharing
- Creating Conducive Regulations, Standards, and Certifications
- Attracting Human Resources & Initiating Capacity Building
- Promoting Procurement & Adoption
- Ensuring Policy & Program Interlinkages
- Sustaining Deep Tech Startups

Significance:

This policy **complements and adds value to the existing Startup India policies**, programmes and initiatives, by fostering a conducive ecosystem for deep tech startups to thrive and address their unique and complex challenges.

About National Consortium:

The National Consortium is an **apex-level body set up on the recommendation of the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC)** to propose a comprehensive policy framework for the **Indian deep tech startup ecosystem**.

- Chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, it represents a diverse group of **stakeholders, including high-level representatives** from various government departments, industry associations, research institutions, and innovation centres.

About PM-STIAC:

It is an **overarching body which assesses the status of specific S&T domains**, comprehends challenges, formulates immediate, mid and long-term interventions and presents a roadmap to the Prime Minister. It has identified **nine national science missions** which aim to address **major scientific challenges to ensure India's sustainable development**.

Insta Links: [Indian Deep Tech and a case for a strategic fund](#)

Mains Links: [Deep tech present the next big opportunity for India that can drive growth and deliver sustainable solutions across the country. Discuss. \(10M\)](#)

DRAFT NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY

Context:

The Indian Ministry of Tourism has drafted a [National Tourism Policy](#) with key strategic objectives to **enhance tourism's**

contribution to the economy.

The key strategic objectives of the Policy are:

- To enhance the contribution of tourism to the **Indian economy** by increasing visitation, stay and spend and making India a year-round tourist destination
- To create **jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities** in the tourism sector and ensure the supply of skilled workforce
- To enhance the **competitiveness of the tourism sector** and attract private-sector investment
- To **preserve and enhance the cultural and natural resources**
- To ensure **sustainable, responsible, and inclusive development of tourism** in the country.

Key focus areas of the policy:

- [Green tourism](#)
- Digital tourism
- Destination management
- Skilling in the hospitality sector and
- Supporting tourism-related MSMEs

Key Recommendations of the Committee	
National Tourism Council (NTC)	Create NTC similar to the GST council
	Provide recommendations to governments on tourism issues
Tourism, Travel, and Hospitality Sector	Spending Capex above Rs. 25 crores to receive subsidies on operating costs
	Attract investments in the sector
	Acknowledge industry status for hospitality projects in eight States
Tourism in Concurrent List	Include Tourism in the concurrent list (Currently state subject)
	Simplify pandemic-related issues in the tourism sector
Industry Status to Sector	Grant industry status to promote investments
	Formalize infrastructure status for hotels

Status of Tourism in India

- India is ranked **54th place in the global travel and tourism development index 2021, down from 46th in 2019.**
- World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated over US\$170 billion or **5.8% of India's GDP** and supported over 3 crore jobs in 2021
- As of 2022, there are **40 World Heritage Sites** located in India. Out of these, **32 are cultural, 7 are natural, and one, the Khangchendzonga National Park, is of mixed type.**
- India has the **sixth largest number of world heritage sites in the world.**

Government Initiatives for Tourism in India:

Initiatives	Description
Adopt a Heritage	Encourages public-private partnerships to develop tourist-friendly amenities at heritage, natural, and tourist sites under CSR and other funds.
Travel for LiFE	Promotes sustainable tourism through mindful actions by tourists and tourism businesses in using tourism resources.
100% FDI	Allows foreign investment in the tourism and hospitality industry in India, subject to applicable regulations and laws.
Swadesh Darshan Scheme	Provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to State Governments/UT Administrations for infrastructure development of 13 theme-based circuits.
PRASAD Scheme	Aims at the holistic development of identified pilgrimage destinations.
Iconic Tourist Sites	Develop Buddhist sites at Bodh-gaya, Ajanta & Ellora as Iconic Tourist Sites to enhance India's soft power.
Buddhist Conclave	Organizes Buddhist Conclave to promote India as a Buddhist Destination in major global markets.
Dekho Apna Desh's Initiative	Encourages citizens to travel widely within India, promoting domestic tourism and enhancing tourist facilities and infrastructure.

Conclusion:

The need of the hour is **faster development of all types of infrastructure** (physical, social, and digital) to support tourism. Ensuring the **safety of tourists is a top priority**, and an official guide system could be introduced to enhance their experience. India's vast size and diverse **natural, geographic, cultural, and artistic offerings** present immense opportunities for the tourism industry to thrive and capitalize on its potential.

Insta Links:

- [Balancing development and devotion](#)
- [Sansad TV: Perspective- Promoting Tourism](#)

Mains Links:

Tourism is considered to be important for the country's economy. It is a multi-segment industry which brings in a lot

of economic value & associated benefits. Discuss the positive economic effects of tourism. (15M)

INDIA'S CHIP DESIGN ECOSYSTEM

Context:

As part of the 2nd phase of the design-linked incentive (DLI) scheme for the domestic semiconductor industry, the Indian government is considering a proposal to pick an equity stake in domestic chip design-making companies.

What is the domestic chip industry scenario?

- **India is an important destination** for global semiconductor companies.
 - **This is primarily because of its highly-skilled talent pool** of semiconductor design engineers, who make up ~20% of the world's workforce.
- **About 2,000 integrated circuits and chips are designed in India** every year.
- **Global players** operating in R&D in the country include Intel, Micron and Qualcomm, etc.
- **Over 30 semiconductor design startups** have been established in India following the DLI scheme with five already having received government support.

Initiatives to promote the semiconductor industry in India:

- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM):** Launched in 2021, it aims to build a vibrant semiconductor and display ecosystem to enable India's emergence as a global hub for electronics manufacturing and design.
- **About SemiconIndia Programme:**
 - It was approved with a financial outlay of INR 76,000 crore for the development of a sustainable semiconductor and display ecosystem in 2021.
 - **At the 'Semicon India 2023' conclave**, the Indian PM made a strong pitch to global investors, saying India will emerge as a global hub of the semiconductor and chip-making industry.
- **Approval has been granted** for the modernisation of the **Semiconductor Complex Limited (SCL)** in Chandigarh to transform it into a brownfield chip manufacturing unit.
- The government has also signed agreements with the **US and Japan for cooperation** on semiconductor development, manufacturing, research, design and talent development.

What is the DLI scheme?

- The **DLI scheme** (launched by MeitY in 2021) aims to **provide financial and infrastructural support** to companies setting up fabs or semiconductor-making plants in India.
- **It will offer fiscal support of up to 50%** (max ₹15

crores per application) of the total cost to eligible participants who can set up these fabs in the country, MeitY said in a statement.

- **It is expected to facilitate the growth of at least 20 such companies** which can achieve a turnover of more than ₹1500 crore in the coming five years and **indigenise innovations**.

How will equity stake help?

- **Equity will empower design companies** to sell their chip-designing services more effectively and attract a broader client base in the market.
- It would **prevent companies from selling their majority stake to large global players** to scale up the business.
- The equity infusion would be particularly encouraging for local, small and medium-sized firms that potentially face multiple hurdles to be part of the ecosystem.

Challenges faced by the semiconductor industry in India:

- **The sector is capital-intensive.** Therefore, any policy directed towards the semiconductor industry requires a long-term strategy.
- **Returns from the investment are not immediate.** According to the NASSCOM, it takes up to 2-3 years before the first product is out.
- **R&D becomes challenging** as chipsets become smaller and functional requirements change frequently.
- **Supply chain disruptions**, like what happened during the COVID-related lockdowns in China, could dampen potential investor confidence in the sector.
- **India owns a much smaller portion of the intellectual property (IP)** relating to the designs, which are mostly retained by global companies.

Way ahead:

- The government must consider **how it plans to link its investments to drive more innovation and employment generation** in the sector.
- **It is essential that value-added activities** (with respect to chip designing) are brought into the country.
- In other words, **moving up in the value chain** and enabling the ecosystem must be one of the imperatives of the government.
- **The government should put in place a robust framework** for target evaluation and governance to mitigate the moral hazard posed by politically driven equity investments.

Conclusion:

The above moves have the potential to create a state-of-the-art design ecosystem which will serve the national interest and also be a supplier to the rest of the world.

Insta Links: [Semiconductor manufacturing in India](#)

NITI AAYOG: TOWARDS DECARBONISING TRANSPORT 2023

Context:

NITI Aayog released the “Towards Decarbonising Transport 2023” report to support global discussions on sustainable transport during India’s G20 presidency.

What is Decarbonising Transport?

[Decarbonising Transport](#) refers to the process of reducing or eliminating carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector.

Examples:

Promoting electric vehicles, using alternative fuels, improving energy efficiency, and investing in public transport and active mobility.

Status of emission from the transport sector:

- As of 2021, the transport sector in India contributes to around 14-15% of the country’s total greenhouse gas emissions.
- Within the transport sector, road transport contributes to more than 90% of the total CO₂ emissions.
- India has the target to achieve [net-zero emissions by 2070](#).

Key Highlights of the Report:

- India has still no overall emissions or energy targets for the transport sector
- India’s transport-sector emissions could increase 65% by 2030 and 197% by 2050 (from 2020 levels)
- Contributors: Road > Rail transport

Recommendations of the Report:

The success of “Decarbonising Transport” rests on both a “mobility transition” and an “energy transition in transport”.

Recommendation	Explanation	Example
1. Increase Reliance on Zero-Carbon Electricity	The transition towards using renewable energy sources for powering transport.	Installing more charging stations for electric vehicles and promoting the use of renewable energy in public transportation systems.

2. Market Ramp-Up of Power-to-X Fuels	Develop and invest in the production of carbon-neutral alternatives for energy-dense fuels used in long-haul aviation and maritime shipping.	G20 countries collaborating to fund research and development of power-to-X fuel production techniques and facilities.
3. Eliminate Fossil-Fuel Subsidies	Phase out subsidies that favour carbon-intensive transport modes, redirecting resources towards sustainable alternatives.	Ending subsidies on gasoline prices and reallocating the saved funds to improve public transportation infrastructure and support EV adoption.
4. “Avoid, Shift, Improve” strategy	It focuses on three main actions: avoiding unnecessary trips, shifting to more sustainable modes of transport, and improving the energy efficiency of vehicles and transportation systems.	Many companies are adopting remote work options for their employees

Initiatives taken by India:

- [Bharat Stage VI Emission Standards](#)
- [Forum for Decarbonizing Transport in India](#) by NITI Aayog and WRI India
- [FAME India](#) (part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan)
- [National Electric Mobility Mission Plan](#)
- Incentives under the [Production Linked Incentive scheme](#)
- Decarbonising Transport initiative of the ITF:** Promotes carbon-neutral mobility to help stop climate change.

Conclusion:

India needs to have a comprehensive policy to decarbonize the transport sector to meet its nationally determined contributions (NDCs) i.e., reduce emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030

Insta Links: [Decarbonizing Transport Project](#)

Mains Links: [Evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of decarbonizing the transport sector in India. \(10M\)](#)

PLASTIC OVERSHOOT DAYS

Context:

In 2023, India experienced 157 days of plastic overshoot,

which means that the country generated and accumulated a significant **amount of plastic waste** that exceeded its waste management capacity.

Also, in another news, a recent report highlights that **India is one of the 12 countries accountable for 52%** of the global mismanaged plastic waste, alongside nations like China, Brazil, Indonesia, and the United States.

What is Plastic Overshoot Day?

Plastic Overshoot Day marks the **point in a year when the amount of plastic waste generated exceeds the capacity** to properly manage and dispose of it. It signifies a **tipping point where the world accumulates more plastic waste** than can be effectively handled by waste management systems.

World's first Plastic Overshoot Day on July 28, 2023, was marked recently.

Status of Plastic (as per the Report):

- India has Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI) (ratio of the mismanaged waste and the total waste) of **over 98%**
- India categorized as 'The Waste Sponges'**: It contributed a staggering over **73 lakh ton** of mismanaged plastic waste in 2023
- India has a **relatively low annual per capita plastic consumption of 5.3 kg** (USA has 221 kg)
- 1.33 %** of its total plastic waste was imported, while the country **exported 0.8 %** of its total waste
- India will contribute an **average of 16.7 days** of plastic overshoot to the environment in 2023.

Measures Needed:

Measure	Example
Reduce Single-Use Plastics	Ban on plastic straws and cutlery
Promote Recycling and Circular Economy	Implementing bottle deposit return systems
Improve Waste Collection and Management	Increasing the number of recycling bins
Raise Public Awareness	Conducting anti-plastic campaigns
Enforce Extended Producer Responsibility	Manufacturers responsible for plastic waste
Innovate Packaging Solutions	Creating biodegradable packaging materials
Policies	Increasing investment in waste management policies like Extended Producer Responsibility
Global Treaty	There is a need for a global treaty on plastic pollution

Initiatives by India:

- 1000 Cities to become 3-Star Garbage Free** by Oc-

tober 2024

- Mission LiFe
- Plastic Waste Management Rule
- Ban on single use of plastics
- '**Beat Plastic Pollution**' campaign to maintain the cleanliness and environmental integrity of the state's beaches (by Kerala Government)


Global Initiatives (for microplastics):

- [Global Partnership on Marine Litter \(GPML\)](#)
- GloLitter Partnerships Project
- [London Convention, 1972](#)


INSIGHTSIAS

Environment friendly Plastics


Bio-plastics: Materials bio-sourced or biodegradable or both and are made from renewable biomass resources (e.g., corn starch/ sugarcane/ cassava)




Biodegradable plastic: plastics (other than compostable plastics) which undergo complete degradation by biological processes under ambient environment.



Compostable plastics: Plastics that undergo degradation by biological processes during composting to yield CO₂, water, inorganic compounds and biomass.



Oxo-degradable: These are conventional plastics such as PE, which include an additive to help them break down into smaller fragments, which could lead to microplastic leakage in the environment.



Conclusion:

Further efforts should include **enhancing India's plastic waste tracking system**, enforcing **transparency in plastic usage by brands**, involving the **informal sector in the formal plastic management process**, and **creating product packaging** that considers the final disposal stage.

Insta Links:

- [Beating plastic pollution](#)
- [Effects of plastics on the environment](#)

Mains Links:

We need to slow the flow of plastic at its source, but we also need to improve the way we manage our plastic waste. Examine. (10M)

INDIA AND THE NUCLEAR WEAPON

Context:

The article discusses the timeline of India's nuclear journey as well as [its advantages](#).

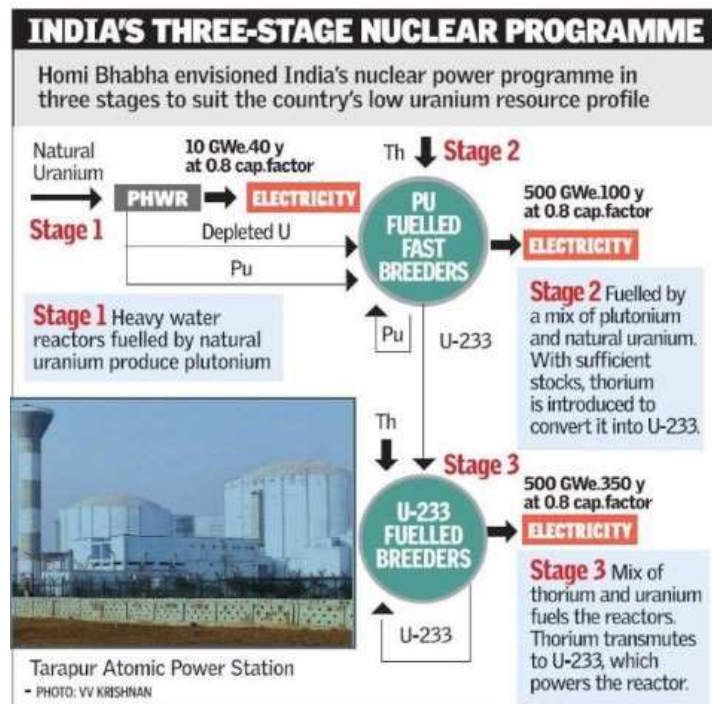
Timeline of India's Nuclear Journey:

Year	Event
1947	India gains independence.
1948	Atomic Energy Act was passed, establishing AEC.
1950	Nehru's dual intent strategy on nuclear power.
1964	China conducts its first nuclear test.
1974	India conducts its first nuclear test (Smiling Buddha) .
1985	US President R Reagan tells Rajiv Gandhi about Pakistan's bomb.
1989	Rajiv Gandhi approves the development of nuclear weapons.
1998	India conducts nuclear tests (Operation Shakti).
1999	Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan.
2005	Indo-US nuclear deal negotiations begin.
2008	Indo-US nuclear deal ratified by Nuclear Suppliers Group .
Present	India maintains a policy of credible minimum deterrence and global nuclear disarmament.

India's nuclear doctrine (presented in 1999) since Pokhran-II:

- It highlighted a **credible minimum deterrence (CMD)** and a **no-first-use (NFU)** policy, while concurrently supporting **non-proliferation and universal disarmament**.
- The sole purpose of India's nuclear deterrence is **to deter adversaries' use or threat of use of nuclear weapons**.
- The policy changed India's image and the US (once an adversary of India's nuclear programme) signed a civil nuclear deal with India in 2008, acknowledging India as a **responsible nuclear player**.

India's Three stages nuclear program



Performance of India's three-stage nuclear power plan: India's three-stage nuclear power programme was formulated by Homi Bhabha in the 1950s to secure the country's long-term energy independence, through the use of uranium and thorium reserves found in the monazite sands of coastal regions of South India.

- Three-stage nuclear Plan:** The first two stages, natural uranium-fueled heavy water reactors and plutonium-fueled fast breeder reactors, are intended to **generate sufficient fissile material from India's limited uranium resources** so that all its vast thorium reserves can be fully utilized in the third stage of thermal breeder reactors.

Performance:

- First-stage PHWRs, cover around **half the entire existing base** of Indian nuclear power (**4780 MW**).
- As of now, India produces about **6.7 GW** of power from nuclear fuel from its **22 nuclear power plants**, effectively contributing **1.8 per cent** to the total energy mix.
- While India has **successfully** completed the **first stage of its nuclear fuel program**, the second stage is still in the works and has taken much longer than expected.
- The **first 500 MW Pressurized Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) BHAVINI**, being set up in Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, is still in the process of being commissioned and has suffered from significant time and cost overruns.
- According to a report by the government large-scale **thorium deployment is only to be expected 3 – 4 decades after the commercial operation** of fast breeder reactors. [2040-2070]
 - As there is a long delay before direct thorium utilisation in the three-stage programme,

the country is now looking at reactor designs that allow more direct use of thorium in parallel with the sequential three-stage programme.

Nuclear power has empowered India:

Aspect	Empowerment through Nuclear Power
Strategic Autonomy	Enables independent decision-making in national security matters.
Deterrence Capability	Provides a credible deterrence against potential adversaries.
Global Recognition	Elevates India's status as a responsible nuclear power on the global stage.
Negotiating Power	Enhances India's leverage in international diplomatic negotiations.
Technology Advancement	Drives advancements in nuclear technology, research, and development.
Energy Generation	Contributes to clean energy generation and reduces dependence on fossil fuels.
International Cooperation	Facilitates collaboration with other nations in nuclear research and trade.
Space Exploration	Supports advancements in space technology through nuclear propulsion.
Scientific Excellence	Boosts India's scientific capabilities and human resources development

Conclusion

Nuclear power provides about **10% of the world's electricity**, and **18% of electricity** in OECD countries. Almost all reports on future energy supply from major organizations suggest an increasing role for nuclear power as an environmentally benign way of producing reliable electricity on a large scale.

Insta Links:

- [25th anniversary of Pokhran-II](#)
- [Evolution of India's nuclear policy](#)

Mains Links:

Though nuclear energy is a source of clean energy but the vulnerabilities of nuclear reactors make it prone to disasters. Examine. (150 words)

Prelims Links: UPSC 2016

Q. India is an important member of the 'International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor'. If this experiment succeeds, what is the immediate advantage for India?

1. It can use thorium in place of uranium for power generation
2. It can attain a global role in satellite navigation
3. It can drastically improve the efficiency of its fission reactors in power generation
4. It can build fusion reactors for power generation

Ans: 4

GS4

A CRISIS OF ACADEMIC ETHICS IN INDIA

Context:

The article discusses India's potential in academic and scientific research while shedding light on prevalent unethical practices like data manipulation and plagiarism.

Ethical concerns regarding Indian educational institutions

- Prevalent data manipulation and plagiarism
- Lack of clear ethical codes
- Misuse of authority by those in power
- Fear of expressing opinions
- A cultural perspective that sometimes sees cheating as "helping."
- Increasing politicization of college campus

These issues **harm India's academic reputation and hinder its potential** as a global research leader.

Reasons for Prevalence of Unethical Practices:

Reasons	Explanation
Absence of Ethical Code	Many institutions lack clear guidelines to handle misconduct, leading to unchecked unethical behaviour.
Easy Data Manipulation	Software tools make data manipulation and plagiarism simpler, making it tempting for some researchers.
Authoritarian Behavior	Misuse of authority by those in power discourages genuine complaints and fosters an environment of fear.
Defensive Academics	Instead of investigating, some academics defend accused colleagues, hindering proper scrutiny of misconduct.
Cultural Perspective	Some students may perceive cheating as "helping" rather than recognizing it as dishonest behaviour.
Fear of Losing Control	Leaders view their roles as power sources and fear being exposed for their own misconduct.
Mishandling Opinions	Leaders may punish faculty for expressing opinions, limiting independent thinking and open discussions.

The implications of the prevalence of unethical practices:

Implications	Ethical Issues
Untrustworthy Research	Manipulated data undermines research reliability.
Global Perception	Perceived dishonesty affects India's academic reputation.

Student Opportunities	Dishonest image limits students' global competitiveness.	Degree certificate forgery by students.
Leadership Quality	Ethical issues impact decision-making and organizational integrity.	Corruption in research grant allocation.
Suppressing Voices	Consequences for expressing opinions curb open discussions.	Faculty reprimanded for criticizing policies.
Emigration of Talent	An unethical environment drives researchers to seek opportunities abroad.	Researchers moving to other countries due to a lack of ethical practices.
Compromised Future	Lack of emphasis on ethics hinders progress and innovation.	Unethical conduct leads to loss of research funding.

Way forward and Conclusion

- Institutions should **implement clear ethical codes to provide guidance** on handling misconduct.
- **Ethical training modules for students and faculty** can foster a culture of integrity.
- **Transparent investigations** are essential to address misconduct allegations impartially.
- **Encouraging reporting mechanisms** can ensure that students and faculty can report unethical behaviour without fear of reprisal.
- **Changing leadership perception** by promoting leaders as responsible guides rather than power sources can foster a culture of open dialogue.
- **Institutions must prioritize ethics** by communicating expected ethical standards clearly.
- **Safeguarding faculty's rights** to express opinions without retaliation is crucial to promote independent thinking and free expression of ideas.

Insta Links: [Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude](#)

Mains Links: [Can ethics and morals be taught in educational institutions? If yes, make a case for introducing a course on ethics right from school.](#)

CONTENT FOR MAINS ENRICHMENT

WORDS DERIVED FROM GREEK AND ROMAN MYTHOLOGY AND USED TODAY

Word	Derived from	Meaning in Contemporary Usage
Promethean	Prometheus	Rebelliously and daringly creative or innovative.
Nemesis	Nemesis	Avenger or punisher, also the punishment itself.
Paean	Paean	Song of thanksgiving and praise.
Protean	Proteus	Varying, versatile.
Jovial	Jupiter	Always happy, inspiring mirth.
Saturnalia	Saturn	Unrestrained revelry, wild celebration, happy time
Saturnine	Saturn	Gloomy, serious, sombre.
Bacchanalian	Bacchus	The celebration marked by feasting and revelry.

Story of Prometheus:

He was one of the **Titans in Greek mythology** that stole fire from the **Olympian Gods** and gave it to humanity, thus **equipping mortals** with the means to spread civilization – as well as destroy it. For his transgression, **he was punished by Zeus**, the king of **Olympians**. Prometheus has represented the **eternal quest of humans for knowledge**, and the **tragedy that often accompanies this quest**.

Story of Nemesis:

It was the name given to the goddess of retribution in Greek mythology who saw to it that a successful person does not become proud or haughty – if that happened, she would put him in his place by punishing him.

Story of Proteus:

It was a sea god who could change his shape and form to avoid capture by his enemies. From the myth is derived the **English word protean**.

Story of Bacchus:

The story of The Greek god of wine was Bacchus in whose honour wild celebrations used to be held which were characterized by frenzy. So, bacchanalia indicates a celebration marked by bacchanalian feasting and revelry.

G20 PRINCIPLES FOR FINANCING CITIES OF TOMORROW

[The G20 member](#) countries have endorsed the “**G20 Principles for Financing Cities of Tomorrow: Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable.**” These voluntary principles aim to enhance the efficient use of financial resources for **inclusive and sustainable urban development**.

Suggested measures for cities:

Measures	Examples
Revenue Augmentation Through Own Source RevenuesOSR	Introducing a local sales tax for goods and services.
	Implementing a business license fee for enterprises.
	Collecting parking fees in commercial areas.
Market-based Solutions (e.g., PPPs)	Partnering with a private company to build a new city hospital .
	Contracting a private firm for waste management services .
Leverage Land as a Financing Solution	Developing a commercial complex near a new metro station .
	Selling development rights to raise funds for public infrastructure.
Enhancing City Creditworthiness	Implementing efficient budget allocation and financial reporting .
	Establishing a stable and transparent revenue collection system.
	Maintaining a strong credit history for past infrastructure projects .
Technology Interventions	Implementing a Geographic Information System (GIS) for property tax assessment .
	Utilizing a SCADA system for real-time monitoring of water supply networks.
City-to-City Exchanges and International Cooperation	Sharing urban planning strategies with a sister city to improve infrastructure .
Adopt Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	Planting trees and creating green spaces in urban areas .
	Establishing urban gardens to promote biodiversity .
	Implementing rainwater harvesting systems to manage water resources.
Integrated Approach for Risk Reduction and Disaster Resilience	Designing infrastructure with earthquake-resistant features .
	Constructing flood barriers and improving drainage systems.
	Developing emergency response plans for natural disasters.
Enabling Spatial Equity	Building universally accessible parks and playgrounds .
	Initiating affordable housing projects for low-income families.
	Improving public transportation options in underserved neighbourhoods.
	- Establishing community centres that offer healthcare and education services.

ODISHA MILLETS MISSION (OMM)	<p>Context: The state of Odisha in India has taken a progressive step in promoting millets by involving Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the millet value chain through its Odisha Millets Mission (OMM).</p> <p>Odisha Millets Mission (OMM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the OMM, Millet Shakti Cafés and Outlets have been established in various districts, showcasing a diverse range of millet-based food items. OMM has facilitated training in recipe formulation, packaging, quality control, marketing, and other skills, empowering women to participate effectively in the millet industry.
SDCS TO PROMOTE TRIBAL CULTURE	<p>The Odisha government has implemented the Special Development Councils (SDCs) initiative to preserve and promote tribal culture while ensuring economic development.</p> <p>The SDCs focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and promoting important cultural markers of tribal identity, such as language, sacred groves, and tribal artisans Over 21 tribal proficiency centres have been established to educate about tribal culture and dialect More than 4,500 sacred groves are being conserved. Artisan ID cards have been issued to over 40,000 tribal artisans to preserve culture and create employment opportunities Ensuring cultural context is considered in the development projects
SKILLING IN EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES	<p>The Directorate General of Training (DGT) is partnering with Amazon Web Services (AWS) India to offer skilling programs on emerging technologies.</p> <p>Aim: The collaboration aims to upskill students of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) in areas like cloud computing, data annotation, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning (ML).</p> <p>Under this initiative, AWS India will provide self-paced online learning programs at no cost to students through DGT's Bharat Skills platform. The platform serves as a central repository of updated curricula, course content, question banks, and learning videos for various courses.</p>
EXPOSURE OF CHILDREN TO THE INTERNET	<p>China's Cyberspace Administration has introduced regulations aimed at reducing the time children spend on smartphones. The proposed guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit minors' access to most internet services on mobile devices from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Restrict internet use to two hours a day for those aged 16-18, one hour a day for ages 8-15, and 40 minutes for children under 8. <p>Internet addiction among youth can lead to detrimental effects such as reduced academic performance, impaired social interactions, sleep disturbances, mental health issues like anxiety and depression, and decreased physical activity.</p> <p>The restrictions are part of China's efforts to combat internet addiction among youth.</p> <p>Also, read: UNESCO endorses banning smartphones from schools</p>
JALDOST AIR-BOAT	<p>JALDOST is an airboat developed by the National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) designed to clean water bodies by removing excess aquatic weeds and floating waste. It features an unsinkable airtight pontoon-type hull and a hybrid propulsion system. JALDOST Mark-2, designed based on BBMP specifications, aims to clean lakes in Bengaluru and collect waste using a steel mesh conveyor system.</p>

INDIA'S FIRST CAPTIVE BREEDING SUCCESS STORY IN ASSAM ZOO	<p>In 2011-2012, Himalayan vultures were saved from poisoning incidents in Assam. Despite doubts from veterinarians about surviving the hot and humid weather, most survived and contributed to India's first successful captive breeding of Himalayan vultures at Assam State Zoo.</p> <div> About Himalayan vultures The Himalayan Griffon vulture, also known as the Himalayan Vulture, is found in the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau. It ranges from western China to central China and Mongolia, with the ability to fly at altitudes of up to 5,500 meters. It's classified as Near Threatened by the IUCN. </div>
G20 EMPOWER	<p>Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smriti Irani, will launch the G20 EMPOWER Tech Equity Digital Inclusion Platform at the G-20 EMPOWER summit in Gandhinagar.</p> <p>Launched by: The platform is launched by G20 Alliance for the Empowerment and Progression of Women's Economic Representation (G20 EMPOWER) with the Ministry's support.</p> <p>Aim: The platform aims to bridge the gender digital divide by providing women and girls with digital skills to thrive in the technology-driven global landscape.</p> <p>The platform is available in over 120 languages and offers digital skilling courses for women across G20 nations.</p>

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

GS1

HAZRAT IMAM HUSSAIN

Context:

On the occasion of **Ashura**, **PM Narendra Modi** remembered the **sacrifices made by Hazrat Imam Hussain**. He praised his courage and commitment to the ideals of justice and human dignity.

Who was Hazrat Imam Hussain (626 to 680 AD)?

He was a grandson of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and a son of Ali ibn Abi Talib and Muhammad's daughter Fatima. He is the third Imam of Shia Islam after his brother, Hasan, and before his son, Ali. He is highly revered for his stand against injustice and tyranny.

What is Ashura?

Ashura is a **significant day in the Islamic calendar**, observed on the **10th day of Muharram**. It marks the **martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain** and his followers in the Battle of **Karbala in 680 CE**. The event symbolizes the struggle for justice and the fight against oppression in the face of great adversity. It holds deep religious and spiritual significance for Muslims, especially the **Shia community**.

MAHARASHTRA'S SAHYADRI PLATEAU

Context:

Land-use changes in Maharashtra's Sahyadri plateau, specifically the rapid shift from **traditional local grain cultivation to monoculture plantations of mango and cashew**, are impacting various elusive amphibians, insects, and reptiles that live under loose rocks.

- The study was supported by the **United Kingdom-based On the Edge Conservation**, the Habitat Trust (India) and the

Maharashtra Forest Department apart from BEAG and NCF.

What is a Plateau?

A plateau is a flat, elevated landform with a relatively level surface, often surrounded by steep slopes or cliffs. It is higher than the surrounding areas and typically stretches over large areas.

About Sahyadri plateau:

The Sahyadri plateau is located in the western part of India, parallel to the Arabian Sea. It stretches from Gujarat in the north to Karnataka in the south. It has an average elevation of around **1,000 meters**.

About Sahyadri mountain ranges

The Western Ghats of Maharashtra are locally known as the Sahyadri ranges. **Kalsubai** is the highest peak in Maharashtra. **Kaas Plateau also known as the Maharashtra Valley of Flowers** is situated in the Sahyadri range of Western Ghats.

Destruction of rocks

The Deccan Sheet Rocks in Hyderabad are home to a unique and vibrant ecosystem, **including rare flora and fauna**. However, the rapid destruction of these rocks due to urban development is threatening the survival of this diverse ecosystem.

How the destruction of rocks affects flora and fauna?

1. It disrupts their **natural habitats, leading to the loss of biodiversity**.
2. Many plants and animals, especially those **adapted to rocky environments**, lose their homes and food sources.
3. This disruption can result in the **decline or extinction of certain species**, impacting the delicate balance of the ecosystem.
4. The removal of rocks can **alter microclimates and water availability**, further affecting the survival of flora and fauna.

UREILITE

Context:

A recent study suggests that **Madhya Pradesh's famous Dhala impact crater** was created by an extraordinarily rare and ancient meteorite known as **Ureilite**.

About the meteorite:

Meteorites are **extra-terrestrial rocks or metallic objects that survive** their journey through **Earth's atmosphere and land** on the planet's surface. They originate from **asteroids, comets, or other celestial bodies in space**.

What are Ureilites?

These are a **rare class of primitive meteorites** that consist of **silicate rock with olivine and pyroxene**, along with **less than 10% of carbon, metal sulphides**, and fine-grained silicates.

The Ureilite that created the Dhala crater was approximately one kilometre in diameter and crashed into Earth's atmosphere at an extraordinary speed of 15 km/s about 2500 to 1700 million years ago.

Significance: With this discovery, **scientists hope to uncover more secrets about the rare meteorite crater** and its potential role in **Earth's early history**, including its impact on **bringing water to the planet** and the development of life.

- The Dhala crater is **Asia's largest and the world's seventh-largest impact crater**.




In India, three meteor impact craters are found:

- Ramgarh in Rajasthan
- Lonar in Maharashtra
- Dhala in MP

GI TAGS IN NEWS

Context:

The Geographical Indications Registry granted the **GI tag** to three famous products from Tamil Nadu.

Product	Description	Place/Origin
Jaderi namakatti 	Clay sticks with white colour, finger-like shape, and smooth texture . Made by Jaderi Tiruman (Namakatti) Producers Society in Jaderi, Tiruvannamalai district.	Village of Jaderi, Tamil Nadu
Kanniyakumari Matti banana 	Traditional table banana with medicinal value, highly fragrant, sweet with a sub-acid flavour, and powdery nature .	Kanniyakumari district, Tamil Nadu
Chedibutta saree 	Handloom saree made from art silk and cotton mix fabric , featuring the iconic “plant and flower” motif on the border and pallu. Woven by skilled Sowrashttra weavers .	Veeravanallur town, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

In addition to these, **seven other products** from different regions of India also received GI tags, including

- **Agra leather footwear**
- **Rajasthan’s Nathdwara Pichhwai Painting**
- **Kashmir’s Mushqbudji rice**
- **Bihar’s Marcha Rice**
- **Jammu Kashmir’s Rajouri Chikri Wood Craft**
- **Agsechi Vayingim (Agassaim Brinjal) of Goa**
- **Sat Shiro Bheno (Sat Shirancho Bhendo)** also known as Okra, is a vegetable crop of Goa.

UNESCO HERITAGE DANGER LIST

Context:

Experts from **UNESCO** have recommended adding the Italian city of **Venice** to the list of world heritage sites in danger due to **long-standing problems such as over-tourism and the effects of climate change**.

- The city has been grappling with these issues for years, **leading to deterioration and damage to its cultural and environmental attributes**. **Kyiv and Lviv in Ukraine** are also recommended to be put on the danger list this year.

List of World Heritage in Danger:

The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** compiles the list of World Heritage in Dan-

ger.

The List contains **world heritage sites that are threatened by various conditions** such as **natural disasters, armed conflicts, wars, pollution, unchecked urbanisation, poaching, and uninhibited tourist development.**

PAHARIS AND PADDARIS

Context:

The government has introduced the **Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023 in Lok Sabha** to include four communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Jammu and Kashmir.

- The **four communities proposed for ST status** are “Gadda Brahmin,” “Koli,” “Paddari Tribe,” and “Pahari Ethnic Group.”

Currently, the dominant ST communities in **J&K are the Gujjars and Bakerwals**, who were given **ST status in 1991 along with the smaller groups of Gaddis and Sippis**. The proposed expansion of the ST list has caused unrest among the **Gujjar-Bakerwal community, who fear a reduction in their share of the quota benefits.**

- The **Pahari Ethnic Group includes Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs**, with some **Kashmiri-origin settlers in Rajouri and Poonch districts.**
- The **Paddari Tribe**, residing in the **remote Paddar area of Kishtwar district**, is also proposed for ST status.

The Bill seeks to include these four communities in the ST list, **potentially granting them reservation benefits in government jobs and educational institutions, despite existing apprehensions and disputes among different communities.**

PALAEO PROXIES

Context:

The article highlights the **limitations of temperature estimates** from before the invention of thermometers, based on “**palaeo proxies.**” It calls the claims that a specific day was the **warmest in over 100,000 years as scientifically unfounded.**

What are Palaeo proxies?

Palaeo proxies, short for paleoclimate proxies, are indirect pieces of evidence that scientists use to infer past climate conditions. **Since instrumental climate records** (such as thermometer measurements) are only available for a relatively short period, usually a few hundred years, scientists rely on various natural sources to reconstruct climate conditions over longer timescales.

To estimate past temperatures, **scientists also use isotopes that undergo steady radioactive decay.**

Limitations of these techniques?

Palaeo proxy technique has limitations. **It can only provide temperature anomalies on long timescales, such as centuries or thousands of years.** Even the best proxies only offer estimates on weekly or seasonal timescales. Additionally, **all temperature proxies are local or regional, making global temperature estimates uncertain.**

Significance:

- The proxies can help in understanding the response of **modern humans to climate change.** However, such proxies are not suitable for estimating daily temperatures.
- Climate change is best understood over longer timescales, and **making alarmist claims about daily records can jeopardize the credibility of climate action efforts.**

GS2

ULLAS: NAV BHARAT SAKSHARTA KARYAKRAM

Context:

On the 3rd anniversary of **NEP 2020**, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, the Union Minister of Education and Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, launched the mobile application of **ULLAS: Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram** (or ULLAS app).

Aim:

- It aims to **provide widespread access to basic literacy and critical life skills** by leveraging technology.
- It serves as a **digital gateway for learners** to access diverse learning resources through the **DIKSHA portal of NCERT.**

Focus areas: The initiative focuses on **promoting functional literacy**, vocational skills, financial literacy, legal literacy, digital literacy, and empowerment of citizens for nation-building.

Implementation:

- The initiative operates through **volunteerism**. It encourages volunteers to participate in **DUTY or Kartavya Bodh towards nation-building.**
- Student volunteers will be incentivised with **credits in school/university** and appreciation through certificates, letters of appreciation, and felicitation, among other means.
- ULLAS targets **citizens aged 15 and above who missed the opportunity to attend school, bridging the gaps in education.**

- The initiative has **the potential to bring these students** back to learning by providing them with an open-source learning platform.

According to government data, more than **12 lakh** students are out of school in the year 2022-23 with the number of boys greater than girls.

Significance: The logo and slogan of “**ULLAS: Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram**” symbolize the campaign’s enthusiasm and the light of knowledge spreading across the nation.

THE DOCTRINE OF ‘REASONABLENESS’

Context:

Israeli courts have invoked the reasonableness doctrine to scrutinize political appointments and executive decisions.

What is the doctrine of ‘reasonableness’?

The ‘reasonableness doctrine is a **legal principle used to evaluate the validity of administrative decisions**. It assesses whether a decision is **extremely unreasonable**, based on factors like the consideration of relevant information, proper balancing of factors, and absence of irrelevant influences.

If a decision lacks these qualities, it can be invalidated.

For instance, if a government decision allocates resources without adequately considering the impact on citizens’ well-being, or if a political appointment is made without proper evaluation of the candidate’s qualifications, the ‘reasonableness’ doctrine can be used to challenge and overturn such decisions.

Indian context:

India has a ‘**Doctrine of Non-Arbitrariness and Reasonable Classification**’ originating from Article 14 (fundamental right to equality to every citizen in the country)

JUSTICE G. ROHINI COMMISSION

Context:

The **Justice G. Rohini Commission**, tasked with **sub-categorising Other Backward Classes (OBC) caste groups**, has submitted its report to the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** after nearly six years.

- **Formed in 2017** and led by former **Delhi High Court Chief Justice G. Rohini**, the commission aimed to examine the concentration of reservation and benefits among **dominant OBC caste groups**.
- Based on its findings, **the commission was to suggest a breakdown of the over 2,600 caste groups on the Central OBC list to ensure a more equitable redistribution of benefits.**

Although the report is not out, the commission’s recommendations may involve **categorizing the caste groups into broad categories, with the dominant castes receiving the smallest share of the 27% reservation**, and historically marginalized groups getting a larger share.

MEDIATION BILL, 2021

Context:

The **Rajya Sabha** passed the **Mediation Bill 2021**, which mandates individuals to attempt the **settlement of civil or commercial disputes through mediation before approaching any court or tribunal.**

- Parties can **withdraw from mediation after two sessions**, and the mediation process must **be completed within 180 days**, extendable by another 180 days by mutual consent.
- The Bill also establishes the **Mediation Council of India**, responsible for registering mediators and recognizing mediation service providers and institutes.

About Mediation:

- Mediation is an **alternative dispute resolution (ADR) method** in which a **neutral third party, known as a mediator**, helps parties in a **dispute reach a mutually agreeable resolution.**
- Mediation is considered a **more cost-effective, efficient, and less adversarial method** compared to **traditional court litigation.**

Significance:

- The bill aims to **reduce the backlog of cases in courts**, as there are currently five crore pending cases.
- The bill **provides a legal framework for mediation and reflects the government’s whole-of-government approach to promoting alternative dispute resolution.**

Issues:

- **No provisions for enforcing certain internationally mediated settlements.**
- **Lack of clarity on the qualification of mediators.**

MASI PORTAL

Context:

The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** has developed an application called ‘**MASI**’ (**Monitoring App for Seamless Inspection**) for real-time monitoring of **Child Care Institutions (CCIs)** across the country.

- The app aims to ensure **effective and efficient inspection of CCIs as provided under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015** (amended in 2021).
- It allows **unified inspections by various authorities**, including **Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)**, **State Inspection Committees**, **Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)**, and **State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs).**

- The Mission Vatsalya Scheme supports the infrastructure and financial needs of setting up CWCs in each district to ensure their effective functioning.

GS3

ISSUES WITH THE UDAN SCHEME

Context:

UDAN, aimed at improving **air connectivity for smaller cities**, is facing **turbulence as 225 out of 479 RCS routes** have ceased operations.

Issues with the UDAN Scheme:

Issues	Examples
Route Closures	225 out of 479 RCS routes have ceased operations. Examples: 128 routes shut down before completing the mandatory three-year period, and 97 routes shut down after completing the three-year period.
Commercial Unviability	Airlines found 70 routes to be commercially unviable despite the subsidy. SpiceJet operates only 20 out of 74 routes awarded to it under the scheme.
Airport Readiness	Airlines cite a lack of readiness in some airports as a reason for not operating certain routes. Examples: Thanjavur, Moradabad, Saharanpur, and Ayodhya airports were not ready for operations.
Non-compliance by Airlines	Some routes were cancelled due to non-compliance by the airline operators. Example: Air Deccan and Air Odisha shut down leading to route cancellations.
Financial Challenges	Airlines struggling to establish markets due to low passenger demand. Example: SpiceJet's attempt to establish markets on certain routes faced low passenger demand.
Inadequate Airport Infrastructure	The lack of proper infrastructure at certain airports hindered operations. Example: Airports like Thanjavur, Moradabad, Saharanpur and Ayodhya were not ready for operations.



UDAN 5.0



Context: The Ministry of Civil Aviation in India has launched the **5th round of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)**

About UDAN Scheme

It was launched as a Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation in 2016, to provide affordable, economically viable and profitable air travel on regional routes to the common man even in small towns.

	UDAN 1.0	UDAN 2.0	UDAN 3.0	UDAN 4.0	UDAN 5.0
Focus Category	Category 1 (19-78 Seats)	1 (19-78 Seats)	1 (19-78 Seats)	1 (19-78 Seats)	2 (20-80 Seats) and 3 (>80 Seats)
Distance Length Cap	500 km	500 km	800 km	1,200 km	Now no restriction on the distance between the origin and destination of the flight
Viability Gap Funding Cap	70% for Cat-1, 90% for Hilly States, J&K, Ladakh, NE and Island regions	Same	Same	Same	60% for Priority Areas, 20% for Non-Priority Areas
Number of Airports	70 airports	325 airports	688 airports	766 airports	766 airports
Exclusivity	3 years	3 years	3 years	1 year	1 year
Implementation Period	10 years	10 years	10 years	10 years	10 years

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UREA GOLD

Context:

Urea Gold is a **new variety of urea coated with sulphur**, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Rajasthan's Sikar.

Aim:

It is designed to **address sulphur deficiencies in the soil**, benefiting farmers by enhancing agricultural productivity.

Urea Gold is said to be better than conventional forms of Urea (including Neem coated urea)

- Slow release:** Sulphur-coated urea facilitates a **gradual release of nitrogen**, thereby enhancing its availability and uptake by crops.
- Extended Life:** The inclusion of humic acid in Urea Gold further extends its lifespan as a fertilizer.
- Reduces overall fertilizer usage:** According to the report, **15 kg of Urea Gold** provides comparable benefits to **20 kg of conventional urea**, making it a more efficient and effective choice for farmers.

About Urea:

The main function of Urea fertilizer (40% of Nitrogen content) is to provide the plants with **nitrogen to promote green leafy growth**. It also **aids the photosynthesis process of plants**. Since urea fertilizer can **provide only nitrogen and not phosphorus or potassium**, it's primarily used for **bloom growth**.

INDIAN COMPANIES CAN SOON LIST ON FOREIGN EXCHANGES

Context:

Indian companies will soon be allowed to **directly list their securities on overseas exchanges** in specified jurisdictions.

What is Listing on Stock Exchange?

Listing on a [stock exchange](#) is the process by which a **company's shares or securities are made available for public trading on the exchange**. It allows investors to buy and sell the company's stock, providing the company with **access to capital and visibility in the financial markets**.

Present Status:

Presently, **Indian companies cannot directly list their securities abroad** without getting themselves **listed in domestic stock exchanges**

- In 2020, the **Centre amended the Companies Act**, allowing the **direct listing of Indian companies** on foreign stock exchanges, but a framework has not been put in place so far.
- Currently, **Indian companies can raise money abroad through [American Depository Receipts \(ADR\)](#) and [Global Depository Receipts \(GDR\)](#)** (ADRs are traded on US stock exchanges while GDRs are traded mostly on European Exchanges and used to raise funds)

How will Indian Companies get listed on foreign exchanges?

The process will involve an **initial listing on the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in Gandhinagar**, followed by permission to list **in seven or eight specified overseas** jurisdictions.

Significance:

It will help expand **capital-access opportunities** for businesses in India and attract more overseas investors, ultimately leading to better valuations for Indian companies.

About IFSC:

The [International Financial Services Centre](#) (IFSC) is a **special economic zone** in Gandhinagar and caters to **customers outside the jurisdiction** of the domestic economy. It allows Indian and foreign companies to conduct various financial activities, including offshore banking, insurance, and securities trading, in foreign currencies.

Related news:

The Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF) was launched by SEBI to provide stability to the corporate bond market during times of stress.

- The CDMDF will be supported with 30,000 crore in the form of a guarantee from the National Credit Guarantee Trust Company and over Rs 3,000 crore from the mutual fund industry.

GOBARDHAN INITIATIVE

Context: The GOBARDhan initiative in India, aimed at converting waste to wealth through biogas and compressed biogas (CBG), has **shown promising results and attracted significant investments**.

More about the News:

- **The Unified Registration Portal for [GOBARDhan](#)** has received requests for over 1200 biogas plants, including 320 CBG plants in just 60 days since its launch.
- **Aim:** The initiative aims to **manage organic waste scientifically** while benefiting rural households and **involves collaboration between the government, private players, and other stakeholders**.

Note: Union Minister for Jal Shakti has launched the **Unified Registration Portal for GOBARDhan**.

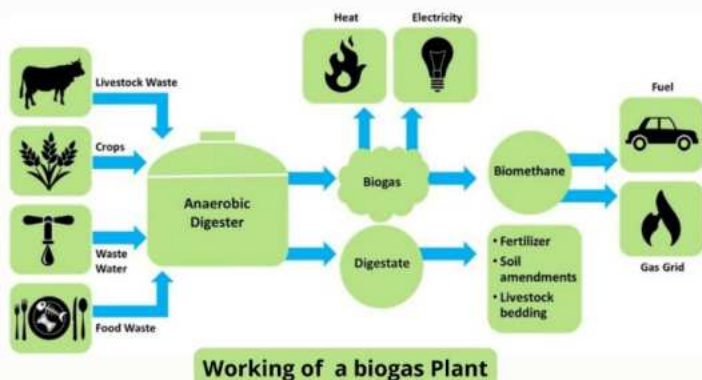
About the Scheme:

GOBARDhan Initiative	
Launched in	2018
Full Form	Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBARDhan)
Aim	To convert waste to wealth with the aim of promoting a circular economy.
Nodal Ministry	Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti
Part of	Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) Phase II under Solid Waste Management.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safely manage cattle and agricultural waste in villages and make the villages clean. • Convert organic waste to biogas and organic manure for rural use • Promote environmental sanitation and curb vector-borne diseases in rural areas • Create rural employment and income generation opportunities by involving entrepreneurs, SHGs, and youth groups in setting up GOBARDhan units.
Financial incentive	The government provides technical assistance and up to 50 lakhs of financial support per district for the safe disposal of cattle and organic waste.
Budget 2023-24 Announcement	Establishment of 500 new 'waste to wealth' plants, including 200 compressed biogas (CBG) plants , with private sector and stakeholder Ministries/ Departments' support. These will include 75 plants in urban areas and 300 community or cluster-based plants .

Biogas plant



HPCL commenced its first cow dung-to-compressed biogas project at Sanchore, in Rajasthan, under **waste-to-energy project**



Working of a biogas Plant

- A recent study reveals that **these worms are 46,000 years old, frozen since the late Pleistocene era**. Furthermore, one of them belongs to an **entirely new species called *Panagrolaimus kolymaensis***.
- Animals like **nematodes and tardigrades can survive extreme conditions** through a dormant state known as “**cryptobiosis**.” The researchers tested the hardiness of the ancient worms and found that **they can survive the absence of water and oxygen, extreme temperatures, and even drying**.

What is cryptobiosis?

Cryptobiosis is a state in which an organism exhibits no visible signs of life and its metabolic activity becomes nearly **undetectable or temporarily stops**. During this state, organisms can survive without water, oxygen, or under extreme conditions. As metabolism is a key feature of life, cryptobiosis can be seen as a **temporary “death” of the organism**.

Significance:

- This discovery increases the **longest documented cryptobiosis period in nematodes by tens of thousands of years**.
- Understanding how these worms adapted to extreme conditions can provide **insights into habitat change caused by climate change and how species can survive despite changing weather patterns**.
- Additionally, the **study raises questions about evolution and the notion of extinction, as these worms have stretched their lifespan by thousands of years**.
- The research could **have practical implications in helping species alive today and humans adapt to extreme conditions**.

WORLDID

Context:

Worldid is an initiative to **create a digital network where individuals can claim a stake and join the [digital economy](#)**. The project involves **scanning individuals’ irises through a device called “Orb” to collect biometric data and issue them a World ID**.

- In exchange, participants receive a **cryptocurrency called Worldid [WLD]**. The goal is to build the “**world’s largest identity and financial public network**” accessible globally.
- To be a part of the **Worldid network**, individuals can **become “Orb operators”** and scan the irises of others, or they can get their **own irises scanned to receive a World ID and WLD [cryptocurrency](#)**.

Features:

- Worldid uses **biometric data to ensure unique participation and avoid duplications**. The company claims to use **zero-knowledge proofs (ZKPs)** to maintain users’ privacy and **comply with Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**.
- WLD’s price fluctuates, and it was criticized, **especially by NSA whistle-blower Edward Snowden, for using biometrics for verification**.
- Worldid has been **introduced in India, with Orb operators scanning people’s eyes at various locations in cities like Delhi, Noida, and Bangalore**.

NEW BLOOD TESTING TECHNOLOGY CALLED GEMINI

Context:

Researchers have developed a **new blood testing technology called GEMINI (Genome-wide Mutational Incidence for Non-Invasive Detection of Cancer)** that uses **genome-wide sequencing of single molecules of DNA** combined with machine learning.

- This technology has the **potential to enable earlier detection of lung and other cancers**.

How it works?

The GEMINI test **starts by collecting a blood sample from individuals at [risk of cancer](#)**. From this sample, **cell-free DNA (cfDNA) shed by tumours is sequenced using cost-efficient whole genome sequencing**. Single molecules of DNA are **analyzed for sequence alterations**, providing mutation profiles across the genome.

A machine learning model then identifies changes in cancer and non-cancer mutation frequencies, **generating a score in-**

46,000-YEAR-OLD WORMS BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE FROM SIBERIAN PERMAFROST

Context:

Scientists made a fascinating discovery in **Siberia five years ago** when they found and **reanimated two kinds of frozen microscopic nematodes, or roundworms**.

dicating the likelihood of having cancer.

In laboratory tests, the GEMINI test, when combined with computerized tomography imaging, detected over 90% of lung cancers, including early-stage diseases. The test also identified altered mutation profiles in cfDNA from patients with other cancers, such as liver cancer, melanoma, and lymphoma, suggesting broader applications.

cfDNA stands for “cell-free DNA.” It refers to small fragments of DNA that are released into the bloodstream or other bodily fluids when cells in the body die and break down. These fragments of DNA are not enclosed within cells, hence the term “cell-free.”

ROOM-TEMPERATURE SUPER-CONDUCTOR

Context:

Korean researchers claim to have developed a [superconductor](#) named LK-99 that operates at room temperature and ambient pressure, a significant breakthrough in the field of physics.

- Superconductors are materials that transmit electricity with nearly 100% efficiency and have various practical applications, such as in MRI machines and magnetic levitation trains.
- Room-temperature superconductors would have numerous benefits, including reducing the cost of electricity grids, computer chips, maglev train magnets, energy storage devices, and fusion reactors by saving on coolant expenses.

Significance:

If validated, this discovery could revolutionize various industries, including computing.

Superconductors are essential for [quantum computing](#), where quantum bits (qubits) process information simultaneously, providing immense computational power. Currently, physical qubits require super-cooling to avoid errors, but room-temperature superconductors could eliminate the need for elaborate cooling systems, making quantum computing more practical and accessible.

LITHIUM EXTRACTION

Context:

India has successfully extracted [lithium](#) from the mineral concentrate on a laboratory scale.

- The country has demonstrated its capability to develop technologies for the beneficiation of lithium ore to lithium mineral concentrate.
- The processing and refining methods for lithium ore can vary depending on the type of lithium de-

posit, the characteristics of the ore, and the intended end-use of the lithium compounds.

India has recently identified a comprehensive list of 30 critical minerals, including lithium, as part of its mineral security strategy.

About [Lithium](#):

- Lithium (Li), sometimes also referred to as ‘White gold’ due to its high demand for rechargeable batteries, is a soft and silvery-white metal.

Major Global Lithium Reserves:

- Chile > Australia > and Argentina are the top countries with Li reserves.
- Lithium Triangle: Chile, Argentina, Bolivia.

THE INDIAN INSTITUTES OF MANAGEMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Context:

The Indian Institutes of Management ([Amendment](#)) Bill, 2023, introduced in Lok Sabha, aims to change the law governing the administration of Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

- The Bill proposes giving the government an expanded role in the appointment and removal of IIM Directors and initiating inquiries.

Current law:

- The 2017 Act granted the IIMs greater autonomy by declaring them “institutions of national importance.”
- The current IIM Act allows the institutes to be run by their board of governors, which has the power to make policy decisions related to administration and functioning.

Changes proposed in the new bill:

- The new Bill seeks to appoint the President of India as the “Visitor” to the IIMs, giving the President powers to conduct audits, order inquiries, and appoint or remove chairpersons and directors of the IIMs.

GROSS FIXED CAPITAL FORMATION (GFCF)

Context:

The Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) in the Indian economy has increased from over Rs 32 lakh crore (constant 2011-12 prices) in 2014-15 to about Rs 54 lakh crore in 2022-23 (Provisional Estimates)

What is GFCF?

Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) refers to the **total amount of investment made in the production of physical assets**, such as buildings, machinery, equipment, and infrastructure, within a country during a specific period. It indicates the increase in the nation's capital stock and productive capacity.

Generally, the **higher the capital formation of an economy**, the faster an economy can grow its aggregate income.

Importance of GFCF:

- **Economic Growth:** Increasing investments lead to the **expansion of productive capacity**, which can result in higher output and overall economic development.
- **Employment Generation:** For instance, constructing a new factory or infrastructure project employs workers in various stages of development.
- **Technological Advancement:** This helps improve productivity and competitiveness by enabling businesses to adopt more efficient methods and processes.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Investment in infrastructure like roads, ports, and utilities enhances a country's connectivity and supports economic activities.

FINGER MINUTIAE RECORD – FINGER IMAGE RECORD (FMR-FIR) MODALITY

Context:

[UIDAI](#) (Unique Identification Authority of India) is employing artificial intelligence-based technology to **address fraud in the Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS)**. The technology is called Finger Minutiae Record–Finger Image Record (FMR-FIR) modality.

What is FMR-FIR?

The Finger Minutiae Record–Finger Image Record (FMR-FIR) modality is an Artificial Intelligence / Machine Learning technology used by UIDAI to **prevent fraud in Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS)**.

How does it work?

It **verifies the authenticity of fingerprints during authentication** by combining **finger minutiae (distinct ridge characteristics) and finger images**. This technology helps detect **cloned fingerprints**, ensuring that only real fingerprints are used for verification, thus enhancing security, and preventing fraud.

Need?

In FY2023, the total number of fraud cases in the banking system was 13,530. Of this, almost **49 per cent or 6,659** cases were in the digital payment – card/internet – category.

Significance:

As payment-related frauds rise, this AI-based solution aims to enhance security and curb financial crimes associated with the AePS system.

AKIRA RANSOMWARE

Context:

The Akira ransomware is a type of [ransomware](#) that targets **both Windows and Linux devices**.

- It encrypts data on the affected devices, **appends filenames with the “akira” extension**, and deletes **Windows Shadow Volume copies** to prevent data recovery.
- The ransomware also **terminates Windows services to ensure uninterrupted encryption**. After stealing and encrypting sensitive data, **the attackers demand a ransom, threatening to release the data on the dark web if their demands are not met**.

How it works?

- The **ransomware is spread through spear phishing emails with malicious attachments**, drive-by downloads, specially crafted web links in emails, and insecure Remote Desktop connections.
- It has **targeted various domains, including education, finance, real estate, manufacturing, and consulting**, and once inside a corporate network, it spreads laterally to other devices using stolen Windows domain admin credentials.

To protect against Akira ransomware and other similar threats, users are advised to:

- **Maintain up-to-date offline backups**
- **Keep operating systems and networks updated**
- **Implement strong password policies and multi-factor authentication**
- **Enforce data encryption**
- **Block attachment file types that are commonly associated with malicious code**
- **Regular security audits of critical systems**

POLYPILLS

Context:

The [WHO](#) has recognized the effectiveness of polypills in combating cardiovascular diseases by including them in the Model Lists of Essential Medicines.

What are Polypills?

A polypill is a **single pill that contains a combination of multiple medications**, typically used for the prevention or treatment of various health conditions. It simplifies medication

regimens by packaging several drugs together in a single dosage form.

Example: “Polycap,” which is a polypill containing multiple medications, including **simvastatin** (for cholesterol control), **ramipril** (for blood pressure control), **atenolol** (for heart health), **hydrochlorothiazide** (for blood pressure control), and **acetylsalicylic acid** (aspirin for clot prevention).

Significance: Polypills are designed to simplify treatment regimens, enhance medication adherence, and provide an effective approach to managing complex health conditions by combining multiple medications into a single dosage form.

WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines: The WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines are updated **every two years** by the Expert Committee on Selection and Use of Essential Medicines.

lossal whale from Peru.”

- Fossils of this **ancient giant** were discovered in the **Ica desert in Peru**, and researchers estimate that it lived around **39 million years ago**.
- This prehistoric whale weighed between 94 and 375 tons (85 and 340 metric tons), making it potentially **heavier than the largest blue whales, which typically weigh around 200 tons** (180 metric tons).
- One reason for its **higher weight** is its **dense and heavy bones compared to those of modern blue whales**. This density suggests that the ancient whale may have lived in **shallow coastal waters, similar to other coastal dwellers like manatees**.

Whales are a widely distributed and **diverse group of fully aquatic placental marine mammals**. The **sperm whale** is the largest-toothed predator on Earth. The Blue Whale, *Balaenoptera musculus*, is listed as **‘Endangered’** on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™.

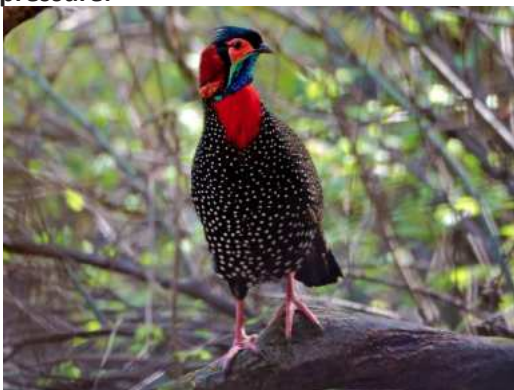
WESTERN TRAGOPAN

Context:

The Western Tragopan, Himachal Pradesh’s state bird, has been **facing habitat loss**, but efforts at a conservation breeding centre, have resulted in a gradual increase in the bird’s population.

About Western Tragopan:

- **IUCN Status:** Vulnerable; **CITES-** Appendix I.
- The bird’s distribution ranges from **North Pakistan to India, including Himachal Pradesh and parts of Uttarakhand**.
- The Western Tragopan **faces threats from habitat loss, anthropogenic disturbances, and hunting pressure**.



NEW AYUSH VISA CATEGORY FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS

Context:

The Indian government has introduced a new **Ayush** visa category for foreign nationals seeking treatment under **Indian systems** of medicine, including Ayurveda, wellness, and Yoga.

- The introduction of the **AYUSH Visa** is part of India’s roadmap for **Heal in India** initiative, which is intended at promoting India as a medical value travel (MVT) destination.
- The Ministry of Ayush and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are collaborating to establish a **Heal in India portal** for promoting medical tourism.

Aim:

This visa category aims to **promote medical value travel in India and strengthen the global recognition of Indian traditional medicine**.

Significance:

- Promotion to **Indian traditional medicine**.
- A vital step in India’s efforts to become a **prominent medical tourism destination**.
- This initiative is part of India’s strategy to develop the Ayush healthcare and wellness economy, **projected to reach \$70 billion by 2025**.

What is Ayush?

Ayush is a term used in India to refer to traditional systems of medicine and holistic wellness practices. It stands for **“Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy,”** representing various ancient healthcare systems

MASSIVE EXTINCT WHALE ‘MAY BE THE HEAVIEST ANIMAL THAT EVER LIVED’

Context:

Scientists have **described a new contender for the heaviest animal ever to live, named Perucetus colossus** or “the co-

and alternative medicine practices in the country.

What is [Medical Tourism](#)?

Medical tourism refers to the **practice of travelling to another country to receive medical treatment or healthcare services**, often due to cost savings, higher quality care, or availability of specialized treatments.

- India has also been **ranked 10th in the [Medical Tourism Index \(MTI\)](#) for 2020-21** out of 46 destinations in the world by the Medical Tourism Association.

Other steps to encourage medical tourism:

- **National Medical and Wellness Tourism Board**
- **Champion service sector scheme** for Medical tourism
- **National strategy and roadmap** for Medical and Wellness Tourism

TIME-OF-DAY (TOD) TARIFF

Context:

The article discusses India's new electricity pricing system, Time-of-Day (ToD) tariff, which adjusts prices based on demand, aiming to reduce consumption during peak hours

What is [Time-of-Day \(ToD\) tariff](#)?

Time-of-Day (ToD) tariff is an **electricity pricing system that adjusts prices based on demand**, with higher rates during peak hours and lower rates during off-peak hours. The goal is to encourage consumers to use electricity when demand is lower, helping to manage energy consumption and grid load.

Status: This system is being **introduced in India in 2024** for commercial and industrial users and in 2025 for other users. ToD tariffs are already used in many countries, including the US, UK, and Japan. For this system to work, **smart meters are needed to track electricity use every 15 minutes**.

Limitations of the system:

- **Increased Complexity:** Billing becomes more intricate as users must monitor usage across different times.
- **Behavioural Changes Needed:** Consumers must adapt routines, like altering vehicle charging or appliance use.
- **Higher Costs at Peaks:** Inflexible users face elevated costs during high-demand hours.
- **Dependence on Smart Meters:** Success relies on ample smart meter deployment; India aims for 250M by 2026.
- **Possible Resistance:** Some users might not adjust their consumption habits.
- **Storage Challenges:** Renewable energy's storage limitations can hinder constant supply, despite ToD incentives.

GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICES (GMP) STANDARDS

Context:

The government has set a **deadline for pharmaceutical companies** to implement the revised [Good Manufacturing Practices \(GMP\)](#) standards, aligned with **World Health Organisation (WHO)** standards.

What are Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) standards?

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) standards are **guidelines and regulations that ensure the quality, safety, and consistency of pharmaceutical products**.

Status of GMP in India:

- **GMP system was first incorporated** in India in 1988 in **Schedule M of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945**. It was revised in **2018**, bringing them on par with WHO standards.
- **Presently, only 2,000 of 10,500 manufacturing units** in the country were found to be compliant with WHO-GMP standards.

New regulations:

- **Companies with over Rs 250 crore turnover** must adopt the revised GMP within six months, while smaller enterprises having a turnover of less than 250 crore have a year.
- **Non-compliance could lead to license suspension or penalties.**

Aim:

The move aims to **enhance drug quality and safety**, addressing deficiencies found in inspections. The changes will include a pharmaceutical quality system, quality risk management, and product quality review.

Significance of GMP certification:

- GMP certification holds **great importance as it reduces the likelihood of product contamination, labelling errors, and inconsistent ingredient levels**.
- For India, a major medicine exporter to low- and middle-income countries, **WHO-GMP certification is crucial**.
- It's also necessary for the procurement of products under the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) from suppliers with this certification.

SAHAKAR 22

Context:

During the fiscal year 2017-18, the [National Cooperative Development Corporation \(NCDC\)](#) initiated **Sahakar-22**, a program aimed at achieving rural and agricultural prosperity through cooperative efforts by the year 2022.

This initiative encompassed several components, including:

- **FOCUS 222:** NCDC's dedicated support for cooperatives in 222 districts, which also includes 117 Aspirational Districts.
- **PACS HUB:** The transformation of Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) and other cooperatives into Apna Kisan Resource Centers.
- **AENEC:** Facilitating cooperatives in the Act East and North East regions of the country.
- **CEMtC:** Establishing Centres of Excellence to enhance market access through cooperative networks.
- **SAHAKAR PRAGYA:** Enhancing capacity development through the Laxmanrao Inamdar National Academy for Cooperative Research and Development (LINAC).

NCDC (founded 1963; HQ: New Delhi) operates as a **statutory body** under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Cooperation. It is implementing Agency under the **Central Sector Scheme** titled "**Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)**".

- NCDC is also supporting and handholding the FPOs, for **registration and legal compliance processes**, through **Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs)**

SMART CORN GMO

Context:

A new genetically modified (GMO) corn called 'smart corn' has been developed by Bayer to withstand climate change pressures.

What is 'Smart Corn' GMO?

Smart Corn **GMO** is a **genetically modified corn varietal developed by Bayer**. It grows **shorter and sturdier than conventional corn** to withstand **high-wind storms** caused by climate change. This adaptation aims to **reduce damage to crops and address** the challenges posed by climate-related events.

Benefits:

- **Increased Resilience:** Shorter, sturdier stalks make the corn more resistant to high-wind storms, reducing crop damage.
- **Addressing Climate Pressures:** Smart corn is designed to adapt to climate change-induced challenges, like extreme weather events.
- **Innovative Solution:** This shows the potential of genetic engineering to create crops that can better withstand climate impacts.

Limitations:

- **Partial Solution:** While smart corn can mitigate some effects of climate change, it doesn't address

the root causes of the crisis.

- **Technical Constraints:** Heavy rainfall and other climate-related factors can still impact crop health, regardless of stalk height.
- **Narrow Focus:** Focusing solely on crop adaptations might divert attention from broader efforts like decarbonization and ecosystem preservation.

Other notable recent climate-adapted crops include:

- **HB4 wheat:** FDA-approved **drought-tolerant wheat** with a sunflower gene, developed by Bioceres.
- **ZeaKal soybean:** GMO soybean with enhanced photosynthesis (to capture more CO₂) by ZeaKal Inc., distributed by Nutrien.

What is GMO?

GMO stands for **Genetically Modified Organism**. It refers to an organism, typically a plant or animal, whose **genetic material has been altered through genetic engineering techniques**. This involves the insertion of genes from one species into the DNA of another to introduce specific traits or characteristics.

SAVING VULTURES: BAN ON ACECLOFENAC AND KETOPROFEN

Context:

Experts working on vulture conservation have praised the Indian government's decision to ban the **manufacture, sale, and distribution of aceclofenac and ketoprofen, which are harmful to vultures**.

What are Aceclofenac and ketoprofen?

They are **non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)** used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation in humans and animals. However, these **drugs are harmful to vultures** and other raptor species when they **feed on carcasses** treated with these drugs.

Actions to protect vultures:

- **India has banned the use of Aceclofenac and ketoprofen to protect vulture populations** (under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940)
- **The ban on diclofenac for veterinary use was imposed in 2006.**

India's vulture population faced a drastic decline in the 1990s due to **diclofenac use in cattle**. Despite the ban, it will take many years before the population is revived. Vultures are slow breeders, and mortality rates could lead to extinction if not controlled.

About Vultures in India:

- **Vultures are medium- to large-sized birds of prey.** They are known for **eating carrion** (the bodies of dead animals).

- **India hosts nine vulture species**, including **six residents** (white-rumped vulture, Indian vulture, slender-billed vulture, red-headed vulture, bearded vulture, Egyptian vulture) and **three migratory species** (cinereous vulture, griffon vulture, Himalayan vulture).

Conservation Initiatives:

- **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** has approved an **Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2020-2025**. Key highlights of the plan include,
- **Vulture Conservation Centre**
- **Vulture Safe zone**
- **Rescue Centres:** Establishment of four rescue centres, in Pinjore (Haryana), Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Guwahati (Assam) and Hyderabad (Telangana). There are currently no dedicated rescue centres for treating vultures.
- **Toxic Drugs:** A system to automatically **remove a drug from veterinary use if it is found to be toxic** to vultures with the help of the Drugs Controller General of India.
- **Vultures Census**
- **Database on Threats to Vultures**

BAL RAKSHA BHARAT'LOSES FCRA PERMIT

Context:

The Indian offshoot of the **U.K.-based NGO Save The Children**, known as Bal Raksha Bharat, has had its permit under the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)** withdrawn by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Why was the Permit withdrawn?

The action was taken following the **organization's involvement in a fundraising campaign on malnutrition in 2022**. The Ministry of Women and Child Development **objected to the campaign**, asserting that the issue was **already being addressed through government schemes**.

Impact:

The **FCRA** registration is **essential for receiving foreign funds**, and the government has cancelled the registrations of **numerous NGOs in recent years**.

The **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)** is a law enacted in **1976** to regulate foreign donations to **individuals and organizations in India**. It aims to ensure that **foreign funds** are utilized in alignment with the **values of a sovereign democratic republic**.

Amendments	
	2010 (consolidation, prohibition of detrimental activities)
	2020 (increased government control and scrutiny)

Criteria for seeking permission from the Ministry of Home	Registration under the FCR Act
	Bank account in State Bank of India, Delhi
	Funds usage aligned with Act stipulations
	Definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programmes
Prohibitions under the Act	Applicants seeking FCRA permits should have no prosecution for conversion, communal tension, disharmony
	No engagement in the propagation of sedition
	Restrictions on election candidates, media, government servants, political parties
Validity	5 years; renewal within 6 months of expiry
Cancellation of permit	Violation of Act
	No reasonable activity in the chosen field for 2 years
	Becoming defunct
	No re-registration for 3 years after cancellation
FCRA 2022 Rules	Increased compoundable offences (from 7 to 12)
	Exemption for contributions < Rs 10 lakh from abroad
	The extended time limit for intimation of bank accounts

Note: Compoundable offences are **legal violations for which the parties involved can reach a settlement**, usually involving the payment of a fine or compensation, rather than facing criminal prosecution or trial.

About The Save the Children

It is an **international, non-government-operated organization**. It was founded in the UK in **1919**, with the goal of helping improve the lives of children worldwide. The NGO focuses on **child rights, health, education, and vulnerable children**. The organization has **general consultative status** in the **United Nations Economic and Social Council**.

THE PHARMACY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Context:

The Pharmacy (Amendment) Bill, 2023 has been introduced in Lok Sabha to insert a **new section 32 C into the Jammu and Kashmir Pharmacy Act, 2011**, which pertains to persons registered or qualified under this Act.

- The bill will extend the **Pharmacy Act, 1948 to the**

UT of J&K.

About Pharmacy Act 1948

- The Pharmacy Act of 1948 outlines **regulations for the pharmacy profession**.
- It requires the formation of the **Pharmacy Council of India and State Pharmacy Councils**. Practising pharmacy in India necessitates **registration under this act**
- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**, also demand the presence of a **registered pharmacist with a license** for overseeing drug dispensing.
- Breaching these regulations leads to **penalties and imprisonment**

However, the recent [Jan Vishwas Bill 2023](#) proposes the **decriminalisation** of sections related to penalties and imprisonment of the Pharmacy Act, 1948, and Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940.

VIVAD SE VISHWAS 2.0

Context:

The “[Vivad se Vishwas](#) 2.0” scheme has been launched by the **Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance**, with the aim of resolving contractual disputes involving the **government and government undertakings**.

What are contractual disputes?

Contractual disputes are **disagreements or conflicts** that arise between parties involved in a contractual agreement. These disputes occur when one or more parties believe that the terms, conditions, or obligations outlined in the contract have been **violated, misunderstood, or not properly fulfilled**.

How will the scheme help resolve disputes?

The scheme offers a **standardized voluntary (one-time settlement) approach** with **graded terms** based on the **level of dispute pendency**.

Applicability:

- For all those disputes in which the Court award (passed up to **30th April 2023**), contractors will be offered settlement amounts up to **85% of the net amount awarded** or upheld by the court.
- For **arbitral orders (passed up to 31st Jan 2023)**, the settlement amount offered will be up to **65% of the net amount awarded**.

Implementation: By utilizing the [government e-market-place \(GeM\)](#) platform for processing claims.

Significance: The scheme streamlines the **resolution process** and **aims to expedite** the settlement of contractual disputes. **Previously, the Vivad se Vishwas** scheme was announced in **Union Budget 2020-21** for reducing litigations in the **direct**

taxes payments. Vivad se Vishwas I was launched to provide relief to MSMEs during the **COVID-19 period**

MAHARATNA AND NAVRATNA CATEGORY

Context:

The Government of India has **elevated Oil India Limited to the ‘Maharatna’ category**, granting the company **enhanced decision-making powers in financial matters**.

Oil India has become the **13th Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) in India**. Having achieved **Navaratna status in 2010**, Oil India’s recent acquisition of **Numaligarh Refinery Ltd.** further **solidified its position as an integrated energy company**.

Also, the government elevated **ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL)** to **Navratna CPSE**. OVL will be the **14th Navratna amongst the CPSEs**.

Criteria for qualification:

Criteria for Maharatna Status	Criteria for Navratna Status	Criteria for Miniratna Status
1. Shall have Navratna status	1. Miniratna Category - I or Schedule ‘A’ CPSEs	Miniratna Category-I status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made profit in the last 3 years continuously • Pre-tax profit is Rs.30 crores or more in at least 1 of the 3 years • Having Positive net worth status
2. Listed on the Indian stock exchange with prescribed public shareholding	2. ‘Excellent’ or ‘Very Good’ rating in 3 of last 5 years	
3. Average annual turnover > Rs. 25,000 crore (last 3 years)	3. Composite score of 60 or above in the following 6 performance indicators including Net Profit to Net Worth, Cost of Services, Earning per share, etc.	
4. Average annual net worth > Rs. 15,000 crores (last 3 years)		Miniratna Category-II status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made profit for the last 3 years continuously • Having positive net worth status. • Not defaulted in the repayment of loans/interest payment on any loans due to the Government. • Not dependent upon budgetary support or Government guarantees.
5. Average annual net profit after tax > Rs. 5,000 crores (last 3 years)		
6. Significant global presence/international operations		

RESTRICTIONS ON THE IMPORT OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Context:

The Indian government has introduced **immediate restrictions on the imports of personal computers, laptops, and other electronic devices** to promote domestic manufacturing.

Why restriction?

India is obligated to its commitment to **zero-duty imports under WTO's Information Technology Agreement (ITA 1)**. Due to this, the government was unable to check the import of electronic goods, thus impacting its domestic manufacturing. Hence it imposed import restriction

What do the new rules say?

- **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) (Ministry of Commerce)** issued a notification saying that any import of laptops, tablets, etc., under **Harmonized System of Nomenclature (HSN) 8471** shall be 'restricted' and would be allowed **against a valid license from DGFT** from 'trusted' sources.
- **Exemption for imports under Baggage Rules, R&D, testing, benchmarking, repair, etc.**

Aim: It will likely aim at **boosting local production** and reducing dependence on imports from China, which accounted for over **75% of India's laptop and personal computer imports** in the previous fiscal year.

Significance:

- The decision aligns with the **production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme** for IT hardware and seeks to encourage companies to manufacture within India.
- Protection of **Critical Information Infrastructure** and its security concerns.
- Achievement of the **Make-in-India vision**

Impact: The restrictions are expected to impact **companies like Apple, Samsung, and Acer, potentially leading to increased local manufacturing** and potentially affecting consumer prices based on how licensing norms are enforced.

About ITA 1 and HSN:

The **Technology Agreement, known as ITA 1**, was established in 1996 with 29 members, including India in 1997. This agreement mandates the **removal of customs duties on specific IT products**.

These products, like laptops and computers, are **identified by codes called HSN codes**, which are part of a **global classification system for taxation**. HSN stands for **Harmonized System of Nomenclature**, and it's managed by the **World Customs Organization (WCO)**.

RAJMARGYATRA

Context:

The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** has introduced the '**Rajmargyatra**' app, a user-friendly mobile application aimed at providing comprehensive information about **Indian National Highways and facilitating** a smoother journey.

Benefits:

- The app serves as a **unified platform for travellers and offers real-time weather updates**, broadcast notifications, toll plaza details, and other vital services for a safe and enjoyable highway experience.
- It includes a **hassle-free complaint resolution system**, allowing users to report issues with attached media for clarity and track the progress of their complaints.
- The app **integrates with bank portals for convenient FASTag services**, including recharges and monthly passes.
- It offers features such as **over-speeding notifications and voice assistance** to encourage responsible driving behaviour.

About NHAI:

The NHAI (National Highways Authority of India) (**statutory; est. 1995; under Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)**) is an independent organization with primary responsibility to oversee the management of more than 50,000 km of the total 132,499 km National Highways in India

NIDHI PROGRAM

Context:

The NIDHI Program, initiated by the **Department of Science & Technology (DST)** in 2016, aims to foster innovation and startup culture in India.

About NIDHI Programme:

Aspect	Details
National Initiative For Developing And Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI) is an end-to-end plan for startups to double the number of incubators and startups in the duration of five years .	
Nodal Department	Department of Science & Technology (DST)
Launched in	2016
Objectives	1) Promote S&T-based entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem across the country 2) Nurture start-ups through scouting, supporting, and scaling innovations

Key Components of NIDHI

- **NIDHI-Entrepreneur in Residence (EIR):** Inspires graduating students to pursue entrepreneurship through fellowships
- **NIDHI-Promotion and Acceleration of Young and Aspiring Technology Entrepreneurs (PRAYAS):** Supports innovators and start-ups from Idea to Prototype stage
- **NIDHI-Inclusive-Technology Business Incubator (iTBI):** Expands incubation programs to various geographies and genders
- **NIDHI-Technology Business Incubator (TBI):** Supports and nurtures knowledge-driven innovative start-ups
- **NIDHI-Seed Support Program (SSP):** Provides early-stage funding to promising start-ups
- **NIDHI-Center of Excellence (CoE):** Creates a world-class facility to help startups go global
- **NIDHI-Accelerator:** Accelerates startups through focused interventions

RED SANDERS

Context:

Recent amendments by DGFT have established that **Tamil Nadu (TN) can export up to 900 MT of artificially propagated red sanders annually**, while wild specimens of red sanders have a **zero export quota**.

- DGFT has issued orders under **Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act, 1992** and the **Foreign Trade Policy 2023**.

Foreign trade policy **prohibits the import of red sanders**, but it places restrictions on its **export**. In 2019, DGFT had previously revised its [export policy to allow the export of red sanders in log form](#) and roots, but only if it originates **exclusively from privately cultivated land, including patta land**. Top of Form

About DGFT:

This Directorate (HQ: New Delhi; Ministry of Commerce) is responsible for formulating and implementing the **Foreign Trade Policy with the main objective of promoting India's exports**. The DGFT also issues **scripts/authorization to exporters** and monitors their corresponding obligations through a network of 24 regional offices.

About Red Sanders

Red sanders, classified as **endangered by the IUCN**, are native to a **specific region within the Eastern Ghats** and

are known for their **unique flora**. These trees have a **slow growth rate, taking 25 to 40 years to mature**, and they display remarkable resistance to droughts.

MAPPING

COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

Recently, an Indian Navy Dornier maritime patrol aircraft and an Indian Air Force C-130 transport aircraft visited **Australia's Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI)**, enhancing the strategic reach and military interoperability between India and Australia. India and Australia signed a **Mutual Logistics Support agreement in 2020**, and the two **Navies signed the 'Joint Guidance for the India – Australia Navy to Navy Relationship'** document in August 2021.

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands are a remote territory of Australia in the Indian Ocean, approximately 3,000 km northwest of Perth in Western Australia, and comprise two coral atolls made up of 27 smaller islands.



CHINA

Typhoon Doksuri, China's fifth and most powerful typhoon in 2023, has caused significant rainfall and flooding in Beijing and other provinces.

China is vulnerable to typhoons due to its **long eastern coastline, warm ocean waters, and geographic location in the western Pacific basin**. Typhoons tend to form in this region and often make landfall in China, bringing heavy rainfall, strong winds, and potential flooding and damage to coastal areas.



NORTH SEA

The U.K. Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, announced plans to **grant more than 100 licenses** for oil and gas exploration in the North Sea starting in the autumn. The goal is to **slow the decline in oil and gas production** to secure domestic supplies, even as the U.K. is committed to achieving 'net zero' carbon emissions by 2050.

The North Sea lies between Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. An **epeiric sea** (on the continental plate and having a very low depth avg. of 90m) on the European continental shelf, it connects to the **Atlantic Ocean** through the English Channel in the south and the Norwegian Sea in the north.



KURIL ISLANDS

The Kuril Islands dispute between **Russia and Japan** has **gained attention** amid the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The Kuril Islands dispute, known as the Northern Territories dispute in Japan, is a territorial dispute between Japan and Russia over the **ownership of the four southernmost Kuril Islands**.

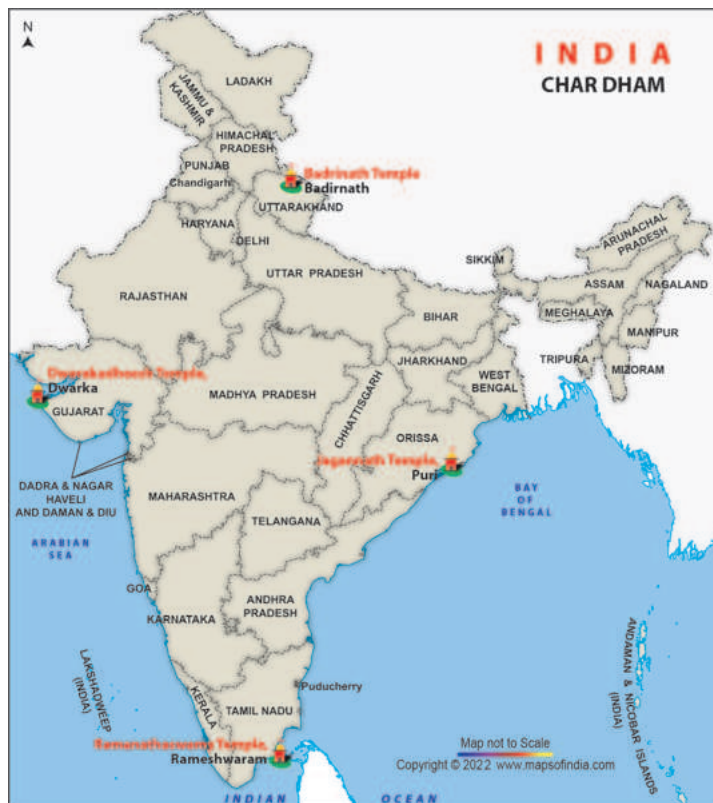
The Kuril Islands are a **volcanic archipelago administered as part of the Sakhalin Oblast** in the Russian Far East. The islands stretch **approximately 1,300 km northeast from Hokkaido in Japan to Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia**, separating the **Sea of Okhotsk** from the North Pacific Ocean.



JOHANNESBURG (SOUTH AFRICA)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India has confirmed his **attendance at the BRICS summit** scheduled to be held in Johannesburg. The **15th BRICS summit** is expected to involve substantive discussions about the potential expansion of BRICS membership.

South Africa is a country on the **southernmost tip of the African continent**, marked by several **distinct ecosystems**. In-land safari destination **Kruger National Park** is populated by big game.



PURI (ODISHA)

The Jagannath Temple Management Committee has recommended allowing the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** to inspect the **Ratna Bhandar (treasury)** of the 12th century **Jagannath Temple in Puri** during the 2024 rath yatra.

This decision holds significance due to pressure on the **Odisha government** to open the treasury, believed to hold **valuable jewellery and stones**.

The **Jagannath Temple in Puri** is located on the eastern coast of **Odisha**. It is a significant Hindu temple devoted to Jagannath, a manifestation of **Vishnu**. The temple's construction was initiated by **King Indradyumna of Avanti** in the **Kalinga Architecture style** and completed in **1161 CE**.