



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

GRAVITY HOLE

A recent study suggests that the colossal and mysterious "Gravity Hole" in the Indian Ocean may be the remnants of an ancient sea that disappeared millions of years ago.

03 JULY - 08 JULY 2023

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Arm Length Distance
between State and
Religion



Laicite/French Model
Total Separation
between State and
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Indian Model
Porous wall of separation
Separation between
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Fund Fundamentals

WHAT THE MINISTRY SAYS

CSR spending hit ₹26,210 cr in FY21, up 80% from FY16

There is a need to improve visibility and impact of invested funds

Right balance of capital and operational spending needed in CSR efforts

Regional disparity in CSR fund deployment a matter of concern

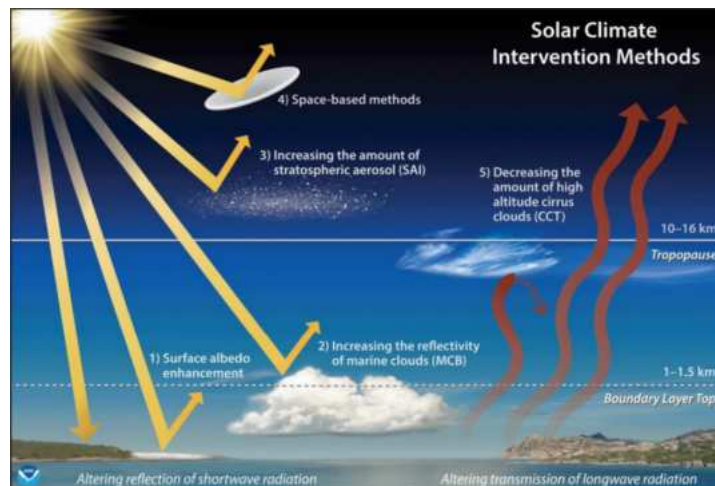
10 KEY STATES GRABBED 44% OF FUNDS BUT 8 NE STATES GOT JUST 0.91%



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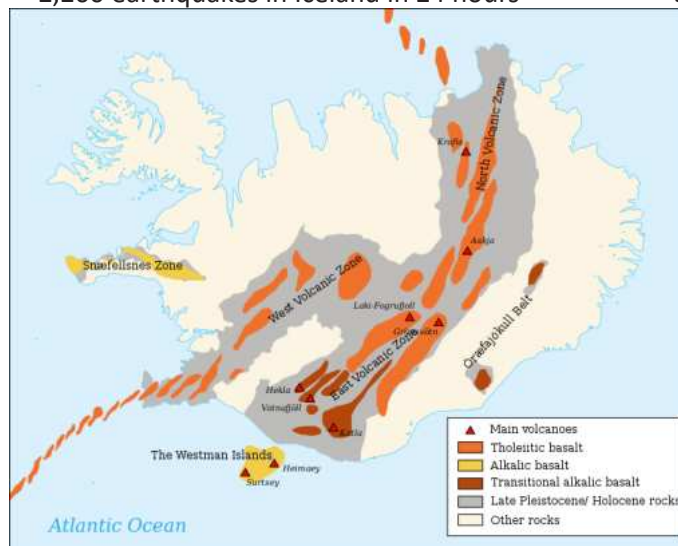
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'COMPLEX, CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION'

➤ The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, states **SC status can only be accorded to Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists**

➤ While BJP has been opposed to giving SC status to Dalit converts to Islam and Christianity, forming a panel suggests the **party is exercising caution against any legal pitfall**

➤ Calling it 'a seminal & historically complex

Constitutional question given its sensitivity and potential impact', govt's gazette notification says change in definition of SCs can only be done on the basis of a detailed study

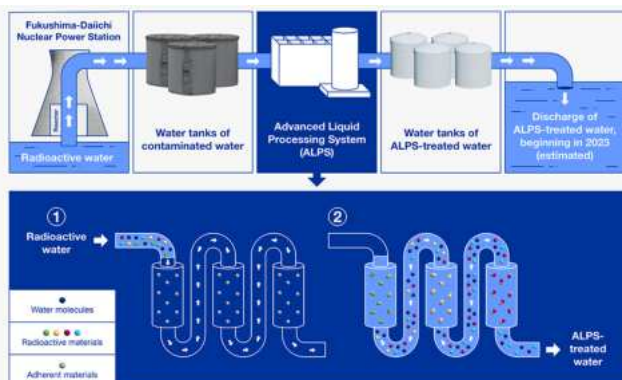
> Panel to also study changes Dalits go through on converting to other religions in terms of their customs, traditions, social and other status, as well as discrimination



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GS1

COLONIAL LEGACY OF THE NETHERLANDS

Context:

The Netherlands has issued an apology for its historical involvement in slavery, marking the 150th anniversary of its abolishment in Suriname and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean.

The acknowledgement:

Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Prime Minister Mark Rutte acknowledged the country's role in the transatlantic slave trade and expressed remorse for the atrocities committed against enslaved people and their descendants.

- The government has committed to raising awareness, addressing the present-day effects of slavery, and incorporating its history into education.

Counterview:

However, some critics argue that the apology falls short and has called for reparations and greater recognition of modern-day racism and discrimination.

Ethical Viewpoint:

The Netherlands' acknowledgement of its colonial history, including slavery, reflects an ethical standpoint of taking responsibility for past wrongdoings. By apologizing and seeking forgiveness, the Dutch aim to address the moral implications of their actions and promote reconciliation and justice. This acknowledgement also highlights the importance of recognizing historical injustices and working towards creating a more equitable and inclusive society.

What was Slave Trade?

The slave trade between colonies refers to the transportation and trading of enslaved African individuals from Africa to European colonies, primarily during the era of European colonialism.

The slave trade was driven by economic interests and resulted in the exploitation, suffering, and loss of millions of African lives.



Colonial History of the Netherlands and its Impact:

History	Impact
16th - 19th Century: Dutch East India Company	<p>The company established trade networks and colonies in Asia, particularly in present-day Indonesia. The Dutch gained control over valuable spice trade routes and exploited resources.</p> <p>The Dutch colonized and exploited the resources of the Indonesian archipelago. They imposed forced labour, plantations, and harsh policies, leading to local resistance and eventual independence struggles.</p>
17th - 19th Century: Dutch West India Company (WIC)	The WIC focused on the Atlantic slave trade, establishing colonies in the Caribbean and South America. It profited from the enslavement and trade of Africans.
Dutch Golden Age (17th Century)	The Netherlands experienced economic prosperity, cultural achievements, and scientific advancements due to colonial trade and dominance. Amsterdam became a major global trading hub.

Suriname and Dutch Caribbean colonies	The Dutch established colonies in the Caribbean, including Suriname, Curaçao, St. Eustatius, and others. These colonies relied on enslaved labour for plantations and contributed to the Dutch economy.
Cultural Influence and Legacy	The Dutch colonial period left a lasting impact on language, architecture, legal systems, and cultural practices in former colonies. The history of Dutch colonization is a subject of ongoing discussions on racism, reparations, and education.



Map of former Dutch colonies

History of Dutch Colonialism in India

Dutch colonialism in India was characterized by the **presence of the Dutch East India Company**, which established trading posts and factories in various parts of India, including the **Coromandel Coast, Bengal, and Surat (1620s)**. The first factory founded by Dutch in India was at **Masulipatnam** in 1605. Their primary focus was on trade, particularly in textiles, spices, and other commodities. They also conquered **Sri Lanka from the Portuguese and built forts** along the Malabar coast. However, their influence in India declined in the **18th century due to the growing power** of the British East India Company. **The Battle of Colachel in 1741** marked the end of the Dutch presence in South India. Eventually, through the Anglo-Dutch treaties (1812 and 1824), the Dutch lost most of their trading posts in India, further diminishing their colonial presence in the country.

Danish Occupation of A&N Islands:

Settlers from the **Danish East India Company** arrived in the Nicobar Islands on 12 December 1755. **Denmark's presence** in the territory ended formally on 16 October 1868 when it sold the rights to the Nicobar Islands to Britain, which made them part of British India in 1869.

Insta Links

- [Colonialism](#)
- [The colonial Past is still relevant](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Defining colonialism, examine the social and economic impact of colonialism on India. (15M)

HOW INDIAN ASSIMILATION AND SECULARISM IS BETTER THAN FRENCH?

Context:

After the police killed a teenager (Nahel) of Algerian descent in Nanterre (France), violent protests spread across France.

France's ethnic composition:

- France is one of the **most racially and ethnically diverse** countries in Europe.
- At least 32% of France's population under 60 has at least one immigrant ancestor → trace their origins to countries **outside Europe, especially Africa.**

The root cause behind the killing:

- **Systemic racism in French policing:** young men who are Black/ of North African descent, are 20 times more likely to be subjected to police identity checks than the rest of the population.
- **The Continuing France's Sphere of Influence and Migration:**
 - Critics say **France's exploitative relationship (Neocolonialism/ Last Stage of Imperialism) with its former colonies still continues.**
 - **This includes** repeatedly intervening in political affairs, having a considerable military presence and several economically extractive processes.
 - **An outcome of this situation** - Africa's continued impoverishment and the allure of European riches and quality of life - **has been extensive migration from Africa to Europe.**
 - For former French countries, France has been the preferred destination, where minimum wages and workers' rights are assured.
- **The failure of assimilation:**
 - After World War II, France suffered from massive labour shortages and actively **lured cheap labour from its colonies.**
 - Over the decades, this led to a **thriving African population in France**, many of whom are today naturalised citizens.
 - However, France's uniqueness lies in the **"physical presence and conceptual absence of cultural difference"** - as it does not see itself as a **pluralist or multicultural society.**
 - The French state has focussed on **"assimilating" its diverse population into the "French ideal"** by strictly adhering to political egalitarianism.
 - Yet, this attempt at assimilation has re-

mained incomplete, leading to deep tensions in French society.

- **Discrimination:** African immigrants are among the poorest in the country → lowest levels of education, the highest levels of unemployment → highest rates of crime → bear the brunt of police violence, accentuated by ingrained racial attitudes.

Lessons to be learnt from India:

- **Secularism:**



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Indian Model
Porous wall of separation
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State & Religion

- **Unity in diversity:**
 - It relates to the state of togetherness or integrity despite the presence of infinite diversity.
 - In India, it can be seen through national integration, growth and development, global recognition, and peaceful coexistence.

Conclusion:

In the era of globalisation and increased migration, governments should prefer a 'salad bowl' (an intercultural society can integrate different cultures while maintaining their separate identities) rather than a 'melting pot' (monoculture) metaphor.

Insta Links: [Strengthen secularism, save the republic](#)

Mains Links: [Q. What can France learn from the Indian Constitution's approach to secularism? \(10 Marks\).](#)

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND: HOW CAN INDIA LEVERAGE ITS BIGGEST STRENGTH?

Context:

The next 25 years could be the golden years for the country, provided it makes the best use of its favourable demographic composition.

Demographic dividend:

It is the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population is larger than the non-working-age share of the population. (UNFPA)

India's demographic dividend:

- India's average age is **29 years**, whereas the average age in US, China, France, Germany and Japan is 38, 38, 42, 45 and 48 years, respectively.
- Therefore, India is the **youngest** among the most populous countries in the world.

Implications:

- India is now in a phase in which its **working-age population is rising** and the **old-age dependency ratio is coming down**.
- **For example**, India's old-age dependency ratio will reach **37% in 2075**, whereas the same will be **56% in France, 75% in Japan, 49% in the US**, etc.

Success stories:

- Most developed countries today have been able to make use of their phase of favourable demographics for **higher growth and standard of living**.
- **China** has already set an example of being a superpower by harnessing its demographic dividend from the early Eighties till 2008-2009.
- Similarly, **Japan** (between the mid-50s and late 80s), **South Korea** (from the early 90s till 2015), **Malaysia and Singapore** have shown consistent growth by engineering structural transformations to utilise their demographic dividend.

What's behind China's success? China's early focus on **labour-intensive manufacturing** and **subsequent structural transformation** resulted in an almost 10% annual average growth rate over four decades, which is unprecedented.

Opportunities for India: Most countries are experiencing record **low fertility rates** (6.77 births per 1,000 people in China) and a **shrinking labour force**.

What should India do?

- **Focus on quality education and health facilities**, skilling, reskilling and up-skilling of the labour force to make them more productive and efficient.
- **Create opportunities** for the existing labour force and the new entrants into the labour market **by improving their productivity**.
- **Shift a major chunk of the 45.5%** of the labour force engaged in agriculture with low and negligible labour productivity.
- **Focus on labour-intensive manufacturing** such as textiles, toys, footwear, auto components, sports goods and agricultural processing, as most of the labour force has limited education and skill sets.
- **Reap the benefits of sectors** (like restaurants, hotels, mining and construction, healthcare and care-giving services) with huge potential.
- **For the manufacturing sector to grow**, India needs an accelerated focus on -
 - Infrastructure development to reduce trade and transaction costs,
 - Trade facilitation measures,

- A better IPR ecosystem,
- Ease of doing business on the ground, and
- Further rationalisation of labour laws and the taxation system.
- **MSMEs** - the backbone of Indian manufacturing, need support in improving competitiveness, achieving scale, digital infrastructure, technology up-grade and branding to be part of a larger supply chain and the global value chains.

Steps taken:

- **Skill development programmes** such as the Jan Shikshan Sansthan, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme are welcome steps.
 - **They have increased human resources supply in various sectors during 2017-22.**
- **The Vision 2025** (of the MSDE) aims to improve linkages between **education and skill, catalyse demand for formal skills and create a high-skilled ecosystem.**
- **Ayushman Bharat, Swachh Bharat Mission and PM Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana** have ensured health equity to a great extent.
- **The National Education Policy 2020** gives importance to updating knowledge, ensuring productive employment opportunities and decent/dignified work as listed in the UN SDGs 2030.
- **Samagra Shiksha programme** provides inclusive, equitable and quality education at all levels of school education.

Challenges:

- **93% of the employment in India** is absorbed by the **unorganised** sector, where workers are employed in underpaid jobs.
- High out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare, poor quality of education, non-functional schools, reluctant authorities, etc.

Way ahead:

- **Improve the labour force participation** by improving the employability of the labour force through large-scale skilling.
- At the same time, **creating employment opportunities** for the youth who enter the job market every year.
- **Scale up access and quality health services** for the majority of the population.
- **Delivery of quality education** up to higher secondary education to all is imperative for making a productive labour force.

Conclusion:

India's biggest strength is its manpower. India can be the source of the labour force for the rest of the world, provided that it accelerates reforms and achieves the desired results

of flagship programmes of **Skill India, Make in India, Start-up India**, etc.

Insta Links: [India as most populous can be more boon than bane](#)

GS2

CAN A GOVERNOR DISMISS A MINISTER?

Context:

The Governor of Tamil Nadu (RN Ravi) has dismissed a Minister (V. Senthilbalaji) in the Council of Ministers of TN and later backtracked on his decision keeping the dismissal order in abeyance.

About the minister and his dismissal:

- The minister was facing serious criminal proceedings in a number of cases of corruption and was arrested by the ED earlier.
- He was dismissed on the pretext that **he will adversely impact the due process of law**, including a fair investigation **that may eventually lead to the breakdown of the Constitutional machinery in the State.**

Criticism of this unprecedented act of the governor:

- Dismissing a Minister of a government which **enjoys an absolute majority** in the State legislature, **without the recommendation of the Chief Minister** of the State, is going to set a dangerous precedent.
- It has the **potential to destabilise State governments putting the federal and whole constitutional systems in danger.**

Power of the Governor to dismiss a minister:

The Government of India Act 1935: The appointment, summoning, determination of their salaries and the **dismissal of Ministers** shall be exercised by the Governor at his discretion.

What does the Indian Constitution say?

- **According to Article 164 of the Constitution**, the CM is appointed by the Governor (without any advice from anyone) and the individual Ministers are appointed by the Governor only on the advice of the CM.
- This implies that the **Governor cannot appoint an individual Minister according to his discretion.**
- **The Governor can dismiss a Minister only on the advice of the CM.**

The reason is simple:

- The CM alone has the **discretion to choose his Min-**

isters. He also decides who will not remain as a Minister in his Council.

- This is a **political decision** of the CM, who is ultimately **answerable to the people**.
- **The Governor is a mere constitutional head** and there is no executive function which a Governor can perform independently under the Constitution. (BR Ambedkar)
 - **Article 163:** A Council of Ministers (led by the CM) shall assist and advise the Governor in the discharge of his duties, except when the Governor is compelled to exercise his discretion under this Constitution.
- **The pleasure doctrine is a formal act:** This has been brought into the Constitution of India from the Government of India Act 1935.
 - But these words simply refer to issuing the order of dismissal (by the Governor), but **only on the advice of the CM**.

Judicial clarification:

- In **Shamsher Singh vs State Of Punjab (1974)**, the SC declared the President and Governor as the custodians of all executive powers, who exercise these powers in accordance with the advice of their Ministers (except in exceptional situations).
- In **Nabam Rebia vs Deputy Speaker (2017)**, the SC reaffirmed the law laid down in Shamsher Singh and the discretionary powers of the Governor are limited to the postulates of Article 163(1).
 - The Court also set aside the decisions in the **Mahabir Prasad Sharma (1968)** and **Pratap Singh Raojirao Rane (1999)** cases, where it was held that the Governor can exercise power under Article 164 in an unfettered manner.

Conclusion:

In sum, the dismissal of a Minister of the TN Government by the Governor of the State without the advice of the Chief Minister is **constitutionally wrong**.

Insta Links: [Governor-Chief Minister confrontation](#)

Mains Links: Q. From the resolution of contentious issues regarding the distribution of legislative powers by the courts, the 'Principle of Federal Supremacy' and 'Harmonious Construction' have emerged. Explain. (UPSC 2019)

Prelims Links: (UPSC 2014)

Q. Which of the following are the discretionary powers given to the Governor of a State?

1. Sending a report to the President of India for imposing the President's rule
2. Appointing the Ministers
3. Reserving certain bills passed by the State Legislature for consideration by the President of India
4. Making the rules to conduct the business of the State

Government

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

1. 1 and 2 only
2. 1 and 3 only
3. 2, 3 and 4 only
4. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: 2

CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS

Context:

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has approached the Election Commission of India (ECI) **seeking action against political parties** that fail to publish details of candidates' criminal antecedents as ordered by the Supreme Court.

Meaning of Criminalization of Politics:

The criminalisation of politics refers to the **phenomenon where individuals with criminal backgrounds or pending criminal cases** actively participate in **politics and hold positions** of power.

It signifies the **infiltration of criminal elements** into the political system, compromising the **integrity and functioning** of democratic institutions.

Status of Criminalization of Politics:

- Increase in the number of MPs with criminal charges: **In 2004, 24%** of parliamentarians had pending criminal cases, which **rose to 43% in 2019**.
- According to data compiled by the **Amicus Curiae**, **a total of 4,984 criminal cases** involving **legislators were pending** in various courts across the country as of 1st December 2021.
- In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, **159 MPs had declared serious criminal cases against them**, including those of rape, murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, and crimes against women.

Causes of Criminalisation of Politics:

Causes	Examples
Vote Bank Politics	Candidates and parties engaging in vote-buying and other illegal practices to secure votes
	Political leaders maintain close ties with criminal elements to mobilize support and win elections
Corruption	Politicians involved in bribery, embezzlement, and other corrupt practices for personal gains
	Misuse of power and resources for personal enrichment , leading to a culture of corruption in politics

Vested Interests	Voters prioritise caste, religion, or community affiliations over the criminal records of candidates
	Election of politicians with criminal backgrounds based on narrow community interests rather than merit or accountability
Muscle Power	Use of muscle power, intimidation, and violence to control elections and suppress opposition
	Politicians with criminal backgrounds employ “goondas” or hired muscle to influence voters and secure electoral victories
Money Power	Influence of black money, illegal funding, and mafia connections in financing election campaigns
	Politicians use illicit funds to buy votes, manipulate election outcomes, and sustain their political dominance
Weak Governance	Lack of stringent laws and regulations to deter criminal activities in politics
	Inadequate enforcement of election laws , allowing politicians with criminal records to participate and win elections

Impact of Criminalisation of Politics:

Impact	Description
Erosion of Democratic Values	Candidates with criminal backgrounds winning elections undermines the principles of free and fair elections, limiting voter choice
Weakening of Governance	Law-breakers becoming law-makers hampers effective governance
Compromised Integrity of Institutions	Normalizes corruption and erodes public trust in government
Increased Criminal Activities	Politicians involved in organized crime or protection rackets e.g., Recently deceased former MP Atiq Ahmed of Uttar Pradesh had several charges of being involved in Criminal activities
Social Disharmony	Violence and unrest due to the influence of criminal politicians, Political clashes and violence during elections

Deterioration of Public Perception	Decreased faith in the political system and public disillusionment led to lesser participation in the democratic process
Undermining the Rule of Law	Politicians involved in criminal activities create a culture of impunity
Hindrance to Development	Diversion of resources for personal gain rather than public welfare
Threat to National Security	Politicians with connections to terrorist groups or organized crime networks

Suggestions against the Criminalization of Politics:

Aspect	Summary
ADR Recommendation	ADR recommends permanent disqualification of candidates convicted of serious criminal offences from contesting elections. ADR has also asked the ECI to publish a list of defaulting parties.
Legal Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian Constitution does not specify disqualification criteria due to criminality. Representation of Peoples Act 1951 (Section 8) disqualifies individuals punished with a jail term of more than two years from standing in elections for six years after the jail term has ended.
Law Commission	The 244th report (2014) recommends the disqualification of individuals with charges framed against them at least one year before the scrutiny of nominations for an offence punishable with a sentence of five years or more.
Government Initiative	The Union government started a scheme in 2017 to establish 12 special courts for a year to fast-track the trial of criminal cases against MPs and MLAs.
Supreme Court Judgments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (2002): Candidates must declare criminal and financial records along with educational qualifications. Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013): MPs or MLAs convicted of a crime and sentenced to a prison term of two years or more are disqualified from holding office. Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India (2019): Political parties must publish candidates' criminal records on websites, social media handles, and newspapers.

Other suggestions:

- **State Funding of Elections:** Committees on electoral reforms, such as the Dinesh Goswami and Inderjeet Committee, recommend state funding of elections to reduce the use of black money and limit the criminalization of politics.
- **Strengthening Election Commission**
- Voters need to **remain vigilant and report any misuse of money**, gifts, or inducements during elections.
- **Proactive Role of the Judiciary:** Fast-tracking the judicial process can help eliminate corruption and criminal elements from the political system. It **requires a time-bound justice delivery** system, stronger actions by the Election Commission, and necessary amendments to relevant laws.
- Amending the Representation of Peoples Act (RPA) of 1951 to **disqualify individuals with pending serious criminal charges from contesting elections**.

Conclusion:

The criminalization of politics poses a serious threat to democracy and good governance. It undermines the principles of free and fair elections, affects the integrity of public servants, causes social disharmony, and erodes public trust in the government. Addressing this issue is crucial for the health and functioning of democratic systems.

About ADR:

Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an **electoral watchdog** established in 1999 by a group of professors from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad to pursue electoral reforms in India.

Insta Links: [Criminalization of Politics](#)

Mains Links: Q. It is often said that 'politics' and 'ethics' do not go together. What is your opinion in this regard? Justify your answer with illustrations. (UPSC 2013)

INDIA-AFRICA TIES

Context:

India's rise as a global player is inevitably linked to the kind of partnership it enjoys with Africa.

India-Africa ties - Background:

- India enjoys **historical, political, economic, and cultural connections** with the African continent for a long back.
- India's links with the struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa date back to the period during which **Mahatma Gandhi started his Satyagraha movement in South Africa**.
- India worked consistently to put the issue of apartheid on the agenda of the **UN, NAM, and other mul-**

tilateral organisations.

India-Africa ties - Current Status:

- **India's Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC)** has been a useful medium for promoting cooperation in the development of human resources.
- In the past 15 years and especially since 2014, India-Africa relations have developed steadily **but more progress is achievable**.
- In this context, the **Africa Expert Group (AEG)** - established by the Vivekananda International Foundation, presented the '**India-Africa Partnership: Achievements, Challenges and Roadmap 2030**'.

INDIA - AFRICA IN NUMBERS



Highlights of the India-Africa Partnership (Achievements, Challenges and Roadmap 2030):

- **Transitions unfolding in Africa:** It is slowly heading toward **regional integration and is devoted to democracy**, peace, and progress, even as countries (like Ethiopia, and Sudan) continue to battle insurgency, ethnic violence, and terrorism.
- **Sharpening competition among external powers:** Countries such as China, the US, Japan, Türkiye, and UAE are competing for strengthening their relations with Africa to ensure -
 - Market access,
 - Gain energy and mineral security, and

- Increase political and economic influence.

Challenges for India:

- No clear Strategy/Vision
- Africa is not the prime focus of India
- **Competing powers in Africa:** For example, China enjoys consistent and robust relations with the continent since 2000 and is currently its biggest economic partner.
 - China's role in Africa is recognised as '**the infrastructure developer**', '**the resource provider**', and '**the financier**.'

Recommendations to strengthen India-Africa ties:

Political and diplomatic cooperation:

- It should be strengthened by **restoring periodic leaders' summits** through the medium of the **India-Africa Forum Summit** (not held since 2015).
- **A new annual strategic dialogue** between the chairperson of the African Union (AU) and India's External Affairs Minister should be launched.
- **Forging consensus among G-20 members** on the AU's entry into the G-20 as a full member.
- The MEA **should have a secretary exclusively in charge of African affairs**.

Defence and security cooperation:

- The government needs to **increase the number of defence missions deployed in Africa**, widen the footprint of maritime collaboration, and expand lines of credit to facilitate defence exports.
- More can be done to enhance cooperation on security and defence issues like **counter-terrorism, cyber security and emerging technologies**.

Economic and development cooperation:

- India-Africa trade of **\$98 billion in FY22–23** can go up if access to finance through the creation of an Africa Growth Fund (AGF) is ensured.
- **A special package of measures** -
 - To improve project exports and build up co-operation in the **shipping domain** has been suggested.
 - To promote trilateral cooperation and deepen S&T cooperation.

Socio-cultural cooperation:

- It should be increased through **greater interaction** between universities, think tanks, civil society and media organisations in India and select African countries.
- **Setting up a National Centre for African Studies** will be the right step.
- **ITEC and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarships** awarded to Africans should be named after famous African figures.
- **Visa measures** for African students should be liberalised and should also be given work visas for short

periods.

Way ahead:

- A special mechanism for implementing the '**Road-map 2030**'.
- Clear Strategy for African Development
- Continue the current focus on capacity building
- Harness Indian civil society organisations, NGOs, and the Indian diaspora
- Promote development-friendly private investments
- Timely completion of projects
- Address concerns about the academic experience in India
- Improve the experiences of Africans in India

Conclusion:

- To cater to the needs of a large continent like Africa, India must build partnerships with other countries along the lines of the **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor** - an economic cooperation agreement between India, Japan and multiple African countries.
- India has a substantive partnership with Africa and a rich fund of **goodwill**, but it is essential for New Delhi to review its Africa policy periodically and **place a razor-like focus on its implementation**.

Insta Links: [India-Africa](#)

Mains Links: Q. "If the last few decades were Asia's growth story, the next few are expected to be Africa's." In light of this statement, examine India's influence in Africa in recent years. (UPSC 2021)

COMPARISON OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN INDIA AND THE USA

Context:

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) recently **ruled on affirmative action in college admissions, limiting its use**. We already covered a summary of the News ([Affirmative Action in Higher Education](#)). Here we will compare the affirmative actions of India and the USA.

Meaning of Affirmative Action:

Affirmative action refers to **policies and practices aimed at promoting equal opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups**, particularly in areas such as **education, employment, and government contracts**.

It involves taking proactive steps to **address past discrimination and promote diversity and inclusion**. Affirmative action can involve measures such as **preferential treatment, quotas, or targeted outreach programs** to ensure representation and equal access to opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Comparison of affirmative action in India and the United States:

Dimension	Affirmative Action in India	Affirmative Action in the USA
Purpose	Address historical social and economic inequalities based on caste	Address historical discrimination based on Race
Targeted Groups	Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC)	African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Americans
Reservation System	Reservation Quota policies provide reserved seats in education, employment, and politics	Quota systems are not used. Instead, diversity and inclusive policies are encouraged in the admission practices that seek to increase the representation of Black, Hispanic and other minority students in colleges and universities.
Origin	William Hunter and Jyotirao Phule in 1882 originally conceived the idea of a caste-based reservation system. Fundamental right under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Independent India constitution.	Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ban discrimination on various grounds.
Reservation Percentage	Fixed at 50% (Indra Sawhney judgement) for OBC, SC & ST in both employment and education	No fixed percentage. It depends on the institution or program and varies for different states of the USA
Criteria for Eligibility	Caste-based identity; Social, Education and economic (EWS quota) backwardness	Race, ethnicity, and historical disadvantage
Duration	Originally intended as a temporary measure in the Indian constitution , but extended to achieve social justice	Continues to evolve based on societal changes and legal interpretations
Controversies	The debate over extending reservations to other communities and concerns about reverse discrimination e.g., 2006 Anti-Reservation Protests; Patel and Jats demanding reservation	Controversies around misuse of affirmative policies.

The Argument for Affirmative Action:

Affirmative Action is a necessary policy to **rectify the long-standing historical injustices** faced by marginalized communities. It provides them with **access to education, jobs, and public services, enabling social mobility and breaking** the cycle of poverty. By promoting **diversity and inclusion**, reservation contributes to a more equitable and harmonious society.

Argument Against Affirmative Actions:

While the intention of **Affirmative Action** is laudable, it has some unintended consequences. Reservation can lead to **divisions and animosity among different groups**, and it may perpetuate the **notion of caste in society**. It also hampers **meritocracy**, as deserving candidates may be overlooked in favour of less qualified candidates from reserved categories. Instead, a **more targeted and comprehensive approach** addressing economic backwardness could be considered.

Way Forward: To strike a balance, **Affirmative policies** should be reevaluated to target the **most marginalized and economically disadvantaged** individuals rather than perpetuating caste-based reservations. A strong focus on **quality education and skill development** for all, regardless of caste or creed, will empower the marginalized and ensure equal opportunities.

Conclusion:

Public awareness and dialogue on the purpose and implementation of reservation are essential to foster understanding and cooperation among diverse sections of society.

Mains Links: Q. Critically examine and compare how affirmative actions in India and USA have the backing of their respective Constitutions (250 Words)

IMPACT OF CSR FUNDS

Context:

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has flagged the limited impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives despite a spike in such spending in recent years.

What is CSR?

- It is a **commitment** by businesses to integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations.
- India became the first country in the world to make corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandatory, following an amendment to **the Companies Act, 2013 in April 2014**.
- Businesses can invest **at least 2%** of their net profit (over the preceding 3 years) **in areas** such as education, poverty, gender equality, and hunger as part of any CSR compliance.

Significance:

Every company has a **moral responsibility** to play an active role in discharging social obligations, subject to the financial health of the company.

CSR trends in India:

- Since the applicability of the mandatory CSR provision in 2014, **CSR spending by corporate India has increased significantly**.
- For example**, CSR spending stood at Rs 26,210 crore in FY21, having grown 80% from FY16.
- The education sector received the maximum funding** (38%) followed by hunger, poverty, and healthcare (25%), environmental sustainability (12%), and rural development (11%).

Examples of CSR in India:

- Tata Group:** It has engaged in women empowerment activities, income generation, rural community development, and other social welfare programs.
- Ultratech Cement:** The company has organised medical camps, immunisation programs, sanitization programs, water conservation programs, organic farming programs, etc.
- Mahindra & Mahindra:** It runs programs such as **Nanhi Kali** focusing on education for girls, Mahindra Pride Schools for industrial training, and Lifeline Express for healthcare services in remote areas.

Concerns:

- The impact of the CSR funds is not widely felt.**
- Programs such as technology incubators, sports, and armed forces, reducing inequalities saw **negligible spending**.
- Regional disparities** as the Companies Act require companies should give preference to the areas around which they operate while allocating CSR funds.



Way ahead:

- Companies need to adopt a **long-term approach** “to yield productive results”. This will -
 - Enhance the visibility** as well as the impact of invested funds
 - Strike the right balance** of capital investments and operational expenses
 - Ensure the initiatives undertaken become **self-sustaining** - running seamlessly without being a burden on the companies themselves.
- The highest quality risk management framework** needs to be adopted, so as to make the CSR projects sustainable
- It is imperative to **strike a balance between local area preferences with national priorities** to avoid any concentration of CSR funds in specific regions.

Conclusion:

The emphasis should be on creating an appropriate structure for CSR, ensuring that the funds go towards the well-being of the community.

[Insta Links: CSR funding of NGOs](#)

[Mains Links: Case Study: CSR Funding in Amaria \(UPSC 2020\)](#)

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

Context:

The push for a Uniform Civil Code is raising concerns about religious rights and personal laws, as the Supreme Court's inquiry on religious freedom remains unresolved.

What is UCC?

Uniform Civil Code refers to the proposition of **having a uniform set of civil laws for all citizens of a country, irrespective of their religious or cultural affiliations**.

The principle behind UCC:

The concept of a UCC is **rooted in the idea of equality and uniformity before the law** and it aims to replace the person-

al laws based on religious practices that currently govern matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and succession.

Historical Perspectives on UCC

- **British rule:** There was a **lack of uniformity in civil matters** as **personal laws based on religious customs and traditions** were recognized for different communities. The idea of a UCC emerged as a response to this fragmentation and as a means to promote a common civil identity.
- **Portuguese rule:** When Goa was under Portuguese rule until 1961, a **Uniform Civil Code** based on the **Portuguese Napoleonic code** was implemented.
- **Nehruvian Vision:** Jawaharlal Nehru envisioned a **modern and progressive India** and saw the **UCC as an essential element of nation-building**. He believed that a UCC would **help eliminate divisions based on religion and promote equality among citizens**.
- **Hindu Code Bill:** The Hindu Code Bill sought to **codify and modernize Hindu personal laws relating to marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance**. It was seen as a **step towards a UCC**, as it aimed to **bring uniformity in personal laws within the Hindu community**.
- **Shah Bano Case:** The Supreme Court judgment, in this case, sparked debates on the need for a **UCC to ensure gender justice and equal rights for women across religious communities**.

Constitutional Perspectives on UCC

- **Constituent Assembly Debates:** During the framing of the Indian Constitution, the debates witnessed diverse viewpoints, with **some members advocating for a UCC as a way to promote gender equality and secularism**, while others expressed concerns about preserving religious and cultural rights.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy:** Article 44 of the Indian constitution states that the **state shall endeavour to secure for its citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India**.
- **Secularism:** The Indian Constitution enshrines the principle of secularism, which mandates the **separation of religion and the state**. A UCC is seen as a **way to promote secularism** by ensuring equal treatment of all citizens irrespective of their religious affiliations.
- **Equality and Non-Discrimination:** The Constitution of India guarantees **equality before the law under Article 14**, and prohibits **discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth**. UCC would uphold these principles by **ensuring equal rights and equal treatment for all citizens, regardless of their religious backgrounds**.
- **Gender Justice:** The Constitution also guarantees the **right to equality and the right against discrimination based on gender**. A UCC is seen as a means to promote **gender justice**.

How do Personal laws govern different communities?

Muslims, Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis, and Jews are governed by their own personal laws.

Goa has UCC, which **retained its common family law** known as the Goa Civil Code after it was liberated from Portuguese rule in 1961. The rest of India follows **different personal laws based on their religious or community identity**.

All Hindus	R e f o r m e d Hindu Personal Law	Applies to Hindus after the enactment of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Renounced Hindus still under Hindu Law
	Hindu Personal Law in Special Marriage Act	Hindus married under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 are still governed by Hindu Personal Law.
Muslims	Muslim Personal Law	Muslims married under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 are no longer governed by Muslim Personal Law.

Argument in favour of UCC:

Benefits of UCC	Explanation
National Integration and Secularism	UCC would create a common identity among citizens , fostering national integration . It promotes secularism by treating all religions equally and reducing communal conflicts .
Gender Justice and Equality	UCC ensures gender justice by removing discriminatory laws and granting equal rights to women in marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc. It empowers women and upholds their fundamental rights.
Simplification and Rationalisation of Legal System	UCC simplifies the legal system by eliminating the complexities and contradictions of multiple laws. It harmonizes civil and criminal laws and enhances accessibility for the common people.
M o d e r n i s a t i o n and Reform of O u t d a t e d Practices	UCC modernizes and reforms outdated practices , aligning personal laws with human rights and constitutional values. It abolishes practices like triple talaq and child marriage.

Argument Against UCC:

Challenges	Explanation
Diverse Personal Laws and Customary Practices	Harmonizing India's diverse laws and practices to establish uniformity is complex , especially when many laws are undocumented or contradictory .
Resistance from Religious and Minority Groups	Some religious and minority groups argue that it could impose majority views and undermine their constitutional rights, particularly under Article 25 guaranteeing freedom of religion .
Lack of Political Will and Consensus	Concerns exist regarding potential communal tensions and conflicts arising from its implementation.
Practical Difficulties and Complexities	Implementing UCC would involve substantial efforts such as drafting, codifying, harmonizing, and rationalizing personal laws and practices.

Law Commission Views:

- **21st Law Commission of India:** It said the "issue of uniform civil code is vast, and its potential repercussions, untested in India". It said that "UCC is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage".
- The government had asked the **22nd Law Commission of India** to undertake an examination of various issues relating to UCC.

SC-related cases:

Landmark Cases	Ruling and Implications
Shah Bano Case (1985)	The Supreme Court upheld the right of a Muslim woman to claim maintenance from her husband even after the Iddat period.
	It highlighted the need for a UCC to remove contradictions based on ideologies .
Sarla Mudgal (1995)	The Supreme Court stated that a Hindu husband cannot convert to Islam and marry without dissolving his first marriage.
	It emphasized that a UCC would prevent fraudulent conversions and bigamous marriages .

Shah Bano case (2017)	The Supreme Court declared triple talaq as unconstitutional and violative of Muslim women's dignity and equality.
	It recommended that Parliament enact a law to regulate Muslim marriages and divorces .

Conclusion:

The implementation of a **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** in India requires a balanced approach that respects **multiculturalism and diversity**. Inclusive discussions with stakeholders, including **religious leaders and legal experts**, are essential to ensure diverse perspectives are considered. The focus should be on **eliminating practices that hinder equality and gender justice while avoiding reactive culturalism**. The reform process of Muslim Personal Law should be led by the Muslim clergy, and Muslims should critically examine practices to promote equality and justice. The aim is to develop a **just and inclusive UCC that upholds constitutional values**.

Quotes related to UCC:

- *"The implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will promote the integration of India by establishing a shared platform for diverse communities"*
- *"The Uniform Civil Code may potentially enforce a code that is influenced by Hindu practices in all communities"*
- *"It is imperative to ensure that certain groups or marginalised segments of society are not subjected to disadvantageous treatment during this endeavour"*

Insta Links: [Strike a fine balance, have a just civil code](#)

Mains Links: **Q. Constitutional Morality' is rooted in the Constitution itself and is founded on its essential facets. Explain the doctrine of 'Constitutional Morality' with the help of relevant judicial decisions. (UPSC 2021)**

Prelims Links:

Q1. Consider the following provisions under the Directive Principles of State Policy as enshrined in the Constitution of India: (UPSC 2012)

1. Securing for citizens of India a uniform civil code
2. Organising village Panchayats
3. Promoting cottage industries in rural areas
4. Securing for all the workers reasonable leisure and cultural opportunities

Which of the above are the Gandhian Principles that are reflected in the Directive Principles of State Policy?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: B

ARTICLE 355 AND ARTICLE 226

Context:

A High Court, under Article 226 (its writ jurisdiction) of the Constitution, does not have the power to issue a direction to the Centre to invoke Article 355.

Article 355 of the Indian Constitution [Part XVIII (Article 352-360) - "Emergency Provisions"]	
Description	It shall be the duty of the Union to protect every state in India against external aggression and internal disturbances and to issue directions to any state to ensure compliance with the Union's laws and regulations.
Significance	The provision is designed to ensure that the government can act swiftly and decisively in the event of any disturbance or threat to the peace and security of the state/country. Recently, it was invoked in Manipur .
Article 355 vs 356	<p>Article 356 empowers the President to impose President's Rule in a state in case of a failure or breakdown of constitutional machinery in a state.</p> <p>Under Article 356, all of the state machinery is taken under the centre's jurisdiction. However, under Article 355, only the state's law and order (a state subject) is taken under the centre's jurisdiction (duration not specified in the Constitution).</p>
Recommendations to prevent misuse	<p>S.R. Bommai's case (1994), which held that the power of the President to dismiss a State government (under Article 356) is not absolute.</p> <p>Sarkaria Commission Report, which had explained a whole range of actions on the part of the Centre possible under Article 355.</p>

Writs in the Indian Constitution:

- **Meaning:** It is a legal document issued by the court that orders a person or entity to perform a specific act or to cease performing a specific action.
- **Constitutional provisions:** Issued by the Supreme Court under **Article 32** and by the High Court under **Article 226** of the Constitution of India.
- **Types:** Habeas Corpus (to have a body of), Mandamus (we command), Quo Warranto (by what warrant) Certiorari (to certify) and Prohibition.
- **Article 32 vs 226:**

Basis of difference	Article 32	Article 226
Right	Article 32 is a fundamental right.	Article 226 is a constitutional right.
Suspension	Article 32 can be suspended if an emergency has been declared by the President.	Article 226 cannot be suspended even at the time of emergency.
Scope	Article 32 has a narrow scope as it is applicable only in case of violation of a fundamental right.	Article 226 has a broader scope as it is applicable not only in the case of violation of a fundamental right but also of a legal right.
Jurisdiction	Article 32 empowers the Supreme Court to issue writ all over India. Therefore, the Supreme Court has broader territorial jurisdiction.	Article 226 empowers the High Court to issue a writ in its own local jurisdiction only. Therefore, High Courts have narrower territorial jurisdiction as compared to the Supreme Court.
Discretion	Since, Article 32 is a fundamental right, the same cannot be refused by the Supreme Court.	Article 226 confers Discretionary power to the High Court which means it is at the discretion of the High Court to issue a writ or not.

The ruling:

- **The Madras HC** passed the ruling while dismissing a writ petition which claimed that the constitutional machinery had broken down due to the attack on IT officials by a mob.
- The HC held that Article 355 appeared to have been inspired both by **the US and the Australian Constitution**.
- The scope of Article 355 **enables the Union to render all assistance**, even if the State Government has not made any specific request.
- The incident of IT officials being mobbed **would not qualify as an internal disturbance** under the purview of Article 355.
- The expressions -
 - **'internal disturbance'** could only refer to a sense of **domestic chaos** (could take the colour of a security threat) and
 - **'external aggression'** would require a large-scale public disorder (endangering the security and administration of the State).

Insta Links: [Article 355](#)

Mains Links: Q. Under what circumstances can the Financial Emergency be proclaimed by the President of India? What consequences follow when such a declaration remains in force? (UPSC 2018)

Prelims Links: UPSC 2022

With reference to the writs issued by the Courts in India, consider the following statements:

1. Mandamus will not lie against a private organisation unless it is entrusted with a public duty.
2. Mandamus will not lie against a Company even though it may be a Government Company.
3. Any public-minded person can be a petitioner to move the Court to obtain the writ of Quo Warranto.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

1. 1 and 2 only

2. 2 and 3 only
3. 1 and 3 only
4. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: 3

THE PROBLEM OF MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA

Context:

According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), all unsanitary latrines had been made sanitary under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan and **the problem of manual scavenging is eliminated.**

The practice of manual scavenging in India:

- **Meaning:** Manual scavenging includes the disposal of human excreta manually from dry latrines, and public streets and the maintenance and sweeping of septic tanks, sewers and gutters.
- **Prevalence in India:**
 - As many as **58,000** people worked as manual scavengers as of 2018.
 - **In 2022, 48 people died** due to hazardous cleaning of sewers in 2022. This number was 49 in 2021, 19 in 2020, and 117 in 2019.
 - The practice, which is considered the worst remaining evidence of untouchability, is **most prevalent among people from lower castes/Dalits.**

Attempts to abolish manual scavenging:

A Timeline Of Legislation



Salient features of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013:

- **It bans manual scavenging.**
- **It widened the definition of manual scavengers** by including it in all forms of manual removal of human excreta.
- **It lays a key focus on rehabilitating manual scavengers** by organising training programs (at a stipend of Rs. 3000) and offering scholarships to their children.
- It makes the offence of manual scavenging **cognizable and non-bailable.**
- It makes it **obligatory for employers to provide protective tools** to the workers.

Other efforts:

- **The scheme for rehabilitation of manual scavengers:** Under this, ~58,000 identified sewer workers have been **given a one-time cash payout of ₹40,000 each.**
 - In addition, ~22,000 of them have been connected to skills training programmes.
- **NAMASTE scheme:** For 100% mechanisation of sewer work. The scheme (launched in 2022) for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers has now been merged with the NAMASTE scheme.

Concerns:

- **Lack of funding:** The Union Budget 2023-24 showed no allocation for the rehabilitation scheme and ₹100 crore allocation for the NAMASTE scheme.
- **Less than half of the identified sewer workers** are connected to skills training programmes.
- Despite all efforts, manual scavenging is **still practised in India.** Just 520 districts across the country had declared themselves free of manual scavenging.

Way ahead:

- The immediate focus of administrations should be to **ensure zero deaths** due to hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.
- All local bodies must **identify and profile all septic tank/sewer workers** in their respective areas.
- Provide them with **occupational training and safety equipment.**
- Sign them up for health insurance under the **Ayushman Bharat scheme.**

Best practices:

- **The Bandicoot Robot** is the world's first robotic scavenger, developed as a Make in India and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiative by the startup Genrobotics.
- **Kerala became the first state** in the country to use robotic technology (Bandicoot) to clean all its commissioned manholes.

Insta Links: [Manual scavenging](#)

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO) SUMMIT

Context:

The recent Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marked India's first time hosting the event as a full member.

Outcomes of the Summit (New Delhi Declaration):

Outcomes	Significance
Inclusion of Iran as the ninth member of the SCO	Expansion of the SCO's membership, bringing in additional regional dynamics. Note: Other 8 members of SCO are- China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
Agreement on countering radicalization	Cooperation among member states to address activities of terrorist, separatist and extremist groups, preventing the spread of religious intolerance, aggressive nationalism, ethnic and racial discrimination, xenophobia etc
Joint statement on digital transformation	Sharing of expertise and cooperation in digital technologies and payment systems
SCO Year of Environment	Members agreed to declare 2024 as the SCO Year of Environment.
Criticism of non-UN sanctions	Rejection of non-UN sanctions that negatively impact other countries
Exploration of national currencies for payments	Potential reduction of dependence on international dollar-based payments
India's Initiatives	
Five new pillars of Cooperation with SCO	Pillars include: Startups and Innovation, Traditional Medicine, Youth Empowerment, Digital Inclusion, and Shared Buddhist Heritage
Engagement with People	Enhancing engagement among people through SCO Millet Food Festival, Film Festival, International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage etc.

Culture	Varanasi was declared the first tourism and cultural capital of SCO
India's abstention from China's Road Belt and Initiative (BRI)	Reflects concerns over China's influence and projects in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

Analysis:

India's decision to **join the SCO** was driven by its **economic significance**, regional security concerns, and the opportunity to engage with Central Asian markets and resources. However, the SCO summit initially planned as an **in-person event but later turned into a virtual summit**, may have been impacted by various factors, including the Prime Minister's U.S. State visit and concerns over tensions with China and Pakistan. With India's SCO chairpersonship ending, it is feared, there may be a sense of diminishing returns from its engagement with the SCO

Conclusion:

Despite the constraints of SCO, the present outcomes highlight the significance of India's chairing of the summit, the expansion of SCO membership, cooperation on key issues, and India's stance on regional security concerns.

For details about SCO, How India gains from SCO, Challenges: [Click here \(India and SCO\)](#)

Insta Links: [SCO](#)

Mains Links: SCO serves India's quest for geopolitical balance and regional engagement, however, any benefits from it are cancelled out by the presence of China and Pakistan. Has India gained anything substantial from the SCO? Critically examine. (15M)

SARPANCH PATI

Context:

The Supreme Court of India has stated that the **issue of men wielding power behind elected women in grassroots politics (also called as sarpanch Pati)** should be addressed by the government and not the judiciary.

- The court advised an NGO, to make a representation before the Ministry of Panchayati Raj regarding this matter.
- The NGO argued that **unelected male relatives exerting political and decision-making power behind elected women is a mockery of constitutional democracy**, despite the one-third quota for women in panchayat governance introduced by the **Seventy-Third Constitution Amendment Act in 1992**.

About Sarpanch Pati:

The phenomenon of **sarpanch Pati** or **husbands who wield control in panchayats by making their wives contest is neither new nor rare**. Even the Prime Minister has taken cognizance of the problem and identified it as a hurdle to women's progress.

Examples:

- In a case in Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh, a man even had a 'power of attorney' document which gave him the right to take decisions in place of the elected woman sarpanch whose election expenses he had purportedly paid for.
- A woman sarpanch from Odisha also 'authorised' her husband to carry out her duties as sarpanch saying that she did not do it under pressure but citing domestic responsibilities.

Reasons behind the practice of Sarpanch Pati:

- Patriarchal gender norms
- Lack of capacity building and training for women to take leadership roles in local government.
- Poor social status of a woman with high levels of illiteracy.
- Absence of strong deterrence laws to punish men.
- Absence of recognition of women and their contributions.

Insta Links: [Women in Indian political system](#)

Mains Link: Q. What do you understand by 'Sarpanch Pati' in the context of Indian society? Examine the causative factors and impact of such culture. (150 words)

DUE PROCESS CLAUSE AND THE BASIC STRUCTURE DOCTRINE

Context:

The Supreme Court of India provided two safety devices for the natural rights of the citizenry - namely, the **due process clause** and the **basic structure doctrine**.

The due process of law:

- **Taken from:** The due process clause is an **American** construct.
- **Based on natural laws:** The term 'law' in the due process clause stands for natural law. Natural law, as higher law, renders state-made laws invalid when the state-made laws are contrary to natural law.
- **Meaning:** No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law. Due process has two aspects -
 - **Substantive due process:** It anticipates that the substantive/ fundamental provisions of any legislation should be rational and not arbitrary in nature, and
 - **Procedural due process:** It refers to the gen-

eral procedures that must be followed before a person's life, liberty, or property can be taken from him.

The debate in the Constituent Assembly of India:

- The leading members of the Assembly agreed on the idea that the **due process clause must be incorporated into the Constitution**.
- However, the prominent opposers (like GB Pant) of the clause believed that the clause would be a **hurdle in the implementation of social reform laws** such as the abolition of the zamindari system.
- The drafting committee dropped the due process clause from the draft and replaced it with '**except according to procedure established by law**' - a term borrowed from the **Japanese Constitution of 1946**.

The resurrection of due process: In **Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India (1978)**, the SC held that when 'personal liberty' under Article 21 was affected by any law, courts would seriously interrogate and probe the **purpose, rationale, and legitimacy of the law**.

Significance of the judgement:

- The Court has not used 'due process' to invalidate social welfare legislation (which the Constitution makers fear).
- In fact, the Court has used due process doctrines to **protect the interests of vulnerable sections of society** such as pavement dwellers and prisoners.

The basic structure doctrine:

- It is a **judicial creation** enunciated by the SC in the **Kesavananda Bharati case (1973)**.
- A **13-judge Constitution Bench** of the SC (with a 7-6 majority) redefined the relationship between Parliament and the Constitution by ruling that the "**basic structure**" of the Constitution is inviolable, and cannot be amended by Parliament.
- While the Parliament had vast powers to amend the Constitution, **certain parts** ("basic structure") **are so inherent and intrinsic to the Constitution** that even Parliament cannot touch it.
- While parliamentary democracy, fundamental rights, judicial review, and secularism are all held by courts as basic structures, **the list is not exhaustive** (decided by the court on a case-by-case basis).
- The basic structure doctrine (origins are found in the German Constitution) has **formed the bedrock of judicial review** of all laws passed by the Indian Parliament.

Comparing the two doctrines:

- Unlike the basic structure doctrine, the due process clause was **duly discussed** by the Constituent Assembly.
- The due process clause **has a splendid place in the constitutional history** of the world.

- It is the due process clause, not the basic structure doctrine, **that offers a surer guarantee for the citizen's natural rights.**
- Hence, the due process clause **must be firmly embedded** in the constitutional architecture of India and incorporated into the constitutional text.

Conclusion:

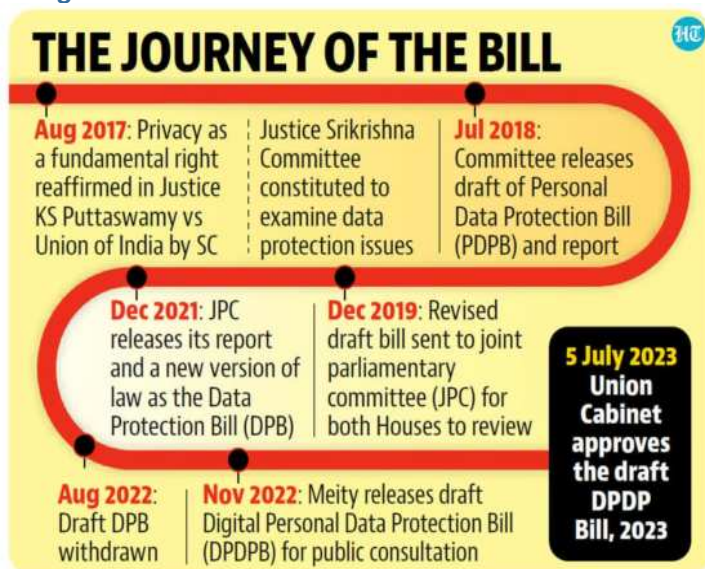
As the basic structure doctrine highlighted in the Kesavananda Bharati case has touched 50 years, its efficacy to protect the natural rights of the citizen in relation to the due process clause is worth examining.

DATA PROTECTION BILL: CONTENT, CONCERNS

Context:

The Union Cabinet cleared the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill (DPDP) Bill.

Background:



- With the Union Cabinet's approval, **the Centre has made a 2nd attempt at framing legislation for the protection of data.**
- The Bill is expected to be tabled in **Parliament's Monsoon Session** that begins on July 20.
- The Bill, once it becomes law, will play a **crucial role in India's trade negotiations with other nations**, especially regions like the EU, whose General Data Protection Rules (GDPR) are among the world's most exhaustive privacy laws.

The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill:

Decoding the data protection bill

WHAT IT MEANS FOR CONSUMERS

- **DATA** can be processed or shared by any entity only after consent.
- **SAFEGUARDS**, including penalties, introduced to prevent misuse of personal data.
- **ALL** data to be categorized under three heads—general, sensitive and critical.

THE GOVERNMENT & REGULATORY ROLE

- **GOVT** will have the power to obtain any user's non-personal data from companies.
- **THE** bill mandates that all financial and critical data has to be stored in India.
- **SENSITIVE** data has to be stored in India but can be processed outside with consent.

WHAT COMPANIES HAVE TO DO

- **SOCIAL** media firms to formulate a voluntary verification process for users.
- **SHARING** data without consent will entail a fine of ₹15 crore or 4% of global turnover.
- **DATA** breach or inaction will entail a fine of ₹5 crore or 2% of global turnover.

Source: Mint research

- It will apply to the processing of digital personal data within and outside (if it is done for offering goods or services or for profiling individuals) India.
- It requires entities that collect personal data/ data fiduciaries to maintain the accuracy of data, keep data secure, and delete data once their purpose has been met.
- It is expected to allow "voluntary undertaking", which means that organisations who violate its rules can bring it up to the **data protection board** - an adjudicatory body that will deal with privacy-related grievances and disputes.
 - The board may decide to stop legal action against the organisation by accepting settlement payments.
 - Higher financial penalties may be imposed for similar offences committed repeatedly.
- **The highest penalty** - to be levied for failing to prevent a data breach - has been prescribed at Rs 250 crore per instance.

What changes are likely from the original version (proposed in Nov 2022)?

- **Cross-border data flows to international jurisdictions:** Moving from a 'whitelisting' (where personal data of Indian citizens can be transferred) approach to a 'blacklisting' mechanism.
- A provision on "deemed consent" could be made stricter for private entities, while allowing government departments to assume consent while processing personal data on grounds of national security and public interest.

What is the significance of privacy law?

- Considering the dramatic expansion of the digital economy in the country, bringing in a robust data

protection architecture is of critical importance.

- **The Bill is a crucial pillar of the overarching framework of technology regulations**, which also includes the Digital India Bill, the draft Indian Telecommunication Bill 2022, and a policy for non-personal data governance.

What are the concerns around the draft Bill?

- **Largely retained the contents of the original version.**
- **Wide-ranging exemptions** for the central government and its agencies, were among the most criticised provisions of the previous draft.
- **The central government can exempt** “any instrumentality of the state” from adhering to the provisions on account of **national security, relations with foreign governments, maintenance of public order**, etc.
- **The control of the central government** in appointing members of the data protection board and **determining the terms and conditions of their service.**
- **The definition of “per instance” is subjective** and is open to interpretation by the data protection board on a case-by-case basis.
- **The law could dilute the Right to Information (RTI) Act**, as the personal data of government functionaries is likely to be protected under it.

Comparing India's proposal with other countries:

- According to the UNCTAD, **137 out of 194 countries** have put in place legislation to secure the protection of data and privacy.
- **Africa and Asia** show 61% (33 countries out of 54) and 57% (34 countries out of 60) adoption respectively.
- **Only 48% of Least Developed Countries** (22 out of 46) have data protection and privacy laws.

EU model	It has been criticised for being excessively stringent and imposing many obligations on organisations processing data, but it is still the template for most of the legislation drafted around the world.
US model	Privacy protection is largely defined as “ liberty protection ” focused on the protection of the individual's personal space from the government.

China model

The Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) gives Chinese data principals new rights as it seeks to prevent the misuse of personal data.

The Data Security Law (DSL) requires business data to be categorised by levels of importance and puts new restrictions on cross-border transfers.

Conclusion:

This Bill needs to go through a process of extensive discussion in Parliament. The provisions need to be tightened, ambiguities removed, and discretion minimised.

Insta Links: [New draft digital data protection bill: How it compares with the older version and laws elsewhere](#)

Mains Links: [Q. The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill must ensure that individuals' personal data is collected and processed in a manner that respects their privacy rights under Article 21 of the Indian constitution. Comment.](#)

GS3

6 YEARS OF GST

Context:

With the implementation of a Goods and Services Tax (GST) on July 1 2017, India took a huge step towards modifying its indirect taxation system.

About Goods and Services Tax (GST):

Types Of GST in India	Valid On	Collected By	VOTING STRENGTH	GST COUNCIL
1 CGST (Central Goods and Services Tax)	Intrastate	Central Government	Centre 1/3 VOTE IN COUNCIL	Chairperson Union finance minister
2 SGST (State Goods and Services Tax)	Intrastate	State Government	States 2/3 WEIGHT IN COUNCIL	Other Member From Centre Minister of state for finance
3 ITGST (Integrated Goods and Services Tax)	Interstate	Central Government		Vice-chairperson One of the state finance ministers
4 UTGST (Union Territory Goods and Services Tax)	Union Territory (UT)	Union Territory (UT Government)	DECISIONS NEED 75% VOTE SUPPORT	Members State finance ministers

- It is an **indirect tax** (not directly paid by customers to the government) that came into effect on July 1, 2017, as a result of the **101st Amendment to the Indian Constitution**.
- It is imposed on both manufacturers and sellers of goods, as well as suppliers of services.
- For tax collection, it is divided into five tax slabs - **0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%**.

About GST Council:

- It is an **apex committee** to modify, reconciles or make recommendations to the Union and the States on GST, like the goods and services that may be subjected or exempted from GST, model GST laws, etc.
- **Article 279A** of the Indian Constitution empowers the President of India to constitute a joint forum of

the Centre and States called the GST Council.

Need for GST:

- **The inclusion of several indirect taxes** at various levels of the supply chain **hampered the Indian tax system.**
- **This resulted in a complicated and fragmented tax framework** that included excise duty, service tax, VAT, central sales tax (CST), and other taxes.
- These led to tax **cascading (tax on tax)**, raising the entire tax burden on goods and services.
- Hence, the primary goal of GST is -
 - **To simplify the tax system by substituting a single indirect tax for several indirect levies**
 - Eliminating tax cascading by establishing a uniform tax structure

Achievements of GST:

- **Revenue collection:**
 - The average growth rate of Gross GST revenue from 2018-19 to 2022-23 stands at **12.3%**, surpassing the nominal GDP growth rate of 9.8%.
 - **The (June 2023) collection has crossed the 1.6 lakh crore mark** for the 4th time since the inception of GST.
 - This is noteworthy as indirect taxes **typically exhibit lower buoyancy** - an increase in its revenue rate without increasing the tax rate.
- **A seamless market and digitised compliance:**
 - GST laid the foundation for a seamless national market, **reshaping India's tax landscape and driving economic growth.**
 - By digitising processes from registration to return filing, the GST portal ensured **smoother compliance for businesses, fostering a tech-enabled environment.**
 - It paved the way for **other significant indirect tax reforms, including e-way bills and e-invoicing**, promoting transparent data sharing between businesses and the government.
- **Empowering the manufacturing sector:** GST's impact on the manufacturing sector was remarkable, as it eliminated the cascading effect of taxes and reduced manufacturing costs.

Challenges still persisting:

- **Complexities** in return forms and the **ambiguity** surrounding tax rates and **classifications** of certain goods and services lead to **disputes and uncertainty.**
- **Combating tax fraud remained a priority**, with measures in place to ensure compliance and weed out fraudulent businesses.

Some areas that deserve attention are:

- **Commence taxation** of petroleum crude, high-speed

diesel, petrol, natural gas and aviation turbine fuel and similarly, alcohol meant for human consumption;

- **Inclusion of other levies** such as electricity duty, stamp duty, etc;
- **Clarifying** taxation of online gaming activities, transactions involving cryptocurrency, etc.
- **The officials should also look into** rationalisation of the tax rates (slabs); upgrading the law to deal with a digital world and keep up with the various technological developments.

Conclusion:

- The implementation of GST has definitely been a success **but is still a new reform with the potential to witness phenomenal growth and harmonisation** in the coming years.
- **GST has shown immense promise**, reshaping the economy, and driving digitization while also confronting challenges and fraud.

Insta Links: [Five years stronger](#)

Mains Links: [Q. Explain the rationale behind the Goods and Services Tax \(Compensation to States\) Act of 2017. How has COVID-19 impacted the GST compensation fund and created new federal tensions? \(UPSC 2020\)](#)

Prelims Links: (UPSC 2017)

Q. What is/are the most likely advantages of implementing 'Goods and Services Tax (GST)'?

1. It will replace multiple taxes collected by multiple authorities and will thus create a single market in India.
2. It will drastically reduce the 'Current Account Deficit' of India and will enable it to increase its foreign exchange reserves.
3. It will enormously increase the growth and size of the economy of India and will enable it to overtake China in the near future.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

1. 1 only
2. 2 and 3 only
3. 1 and 3 only
4. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: 1

DIFFERENT ARTICLES RELATED TO SPACE

Context:

There were multiple articles on space in the last week, we have tried to compile them together here.

The origin of life and the presence of organic molecules in space:

- Scientists have **identified key steps for life to**

emerge, such as the formation of complex organic molecules.

- Organic molecules, including those essential for life, are **primarily carbon-based**.

Discovery of the CH₃⁺ molecule and its implications for life:

- CH₃⁺ is a **basic building block** for more complex reactions.
- The molecule's unique "fingerprints" were identified in **light emitted by a disk of dust and gas around a young star in the Orion Nebula**.

Euclid telescope mission to investigate dark energy and dark matter:

- The Euclid telescope, **developed by the European Space Agency**, aims to **investigate dark energy and dark matter**.
- Dark energy and dark matter are **believed to constitute 95% of the known universe**.
- It will **survey galaxies up to 10 billion light years away and precisely measure their distances**.

Neutrino Observatory's view of the Milky Way and its cosmic insights:

- The IceCube Neutrino Observatory in Antarctica detected neutrinos emitted by astrophysical sources.
- Neutrinos are "ghost particles" ideal for studying **high-energy processes in the universe**.
- Researchers **analyzed data from ten years and identified nearly 60,000 neutrino events**.
- The findings offer insights into cosmic rays and provide a basis for future advancements.

Discovery of low-frequency gravitational waves and their significance:

- Scientists confirmed the **existence of low-frequency gravitational waves predicted by Einstein's General Theory of Relativity**.
- Gravitational waves are **ripples in space-time caused by the movement and merging of massive objects**.
- Radio telescopes studying **pulsars detected inconsistencies in radiation bursts**, indicating the **presence of gravitational waves**.
- These waves likely originated from the **merger of large black holes at the centres of galaxies**.
- The discovery expands our understanding of the **universe, black holes, and the workings of space-time**.

Insta Links: [Space Technology](#)

Mains Link: Q. Discuss India's achievements in the field of Space Science and Technology. How the application of this technology has helped India in its socio-economic development?

WHO: GUIDELINES TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF FOOD MARKETING

Context:

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released **new guidelines to protect children from the harmful effects of food marketing that promotes unhealthy dietary choices**.

Need for the guidelines:

In 2017, to understand the linkages between food and NCDs, the Delhi-based think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) conducted the [Know your diet — school children survey](#). The survey found that

- Most schoolchildren were not eating a balanced diet**
- Children had a low frequency of intake of cereals, vegetables and millet
- Packaged food was more popular** among children than non-packaged food

Previous guidelines:

- 2010 WHO [Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children](#)
- In March 2023, WHO published a set of nutritional criteria which **aimed to protect children from marketing that promoted unhealthy food and non-alcoholic beverages**.

The recommendations include:

Recommendations	Description
Implement comprehensive mandatory policies	Protect children of all ages from the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages that are high in saturated fatty acids, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, and/or salt through the implementation of comprehensive mandatory policies.
Restrict marketing of unhealthy foods	Restrict the marketing of specific unhealthy food categories to children, including high in saturated fatty acids, trans-fatty acids, free sugars and/or salt (HFSS), fast food, etc.
Address marketing in various settings	Address food marketing in locations where children frequently gather, such as schools and sports clubs. Also, regulate marketing during children's television viewing times, in digital spaces popular among young people, and in magazines targeting children and adolescents.

Consider country context	Take into account the country's nutritional situation, cultural context, locally available foods, dietary customs, available resources and capacities, and existing governance structures while formulating policies.
Use a nutrient profile model	Encourage countries to use a nutrient profile model to identify and classify unhealthy foods and beverages that should be subject to marketing restrictions.
Minimize migration of marketing	Design policies that are comprehensive enough to minimize the migration of marketing across different channels or settings.
Protect all children	Emphasize the protection of all children, using the definition of a child from the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The guidelines aim to ensure that marketing regulations apply uniformly to children of all ages, including younger and older children, to safeguard their health and well-being.
Establish strong and comprehensive regulations	Encourage governments to establish robust and comprehensive regulations to address the aggressive and pervasive marketing of foods and beverages high in fats, sugars, and salt to children.

Dental health problems	Frequent consumption of sugary foods and beverages can contribute to tooth decay and cavities.
Disrupted eating habits and food preferences	Exposure to unhealthy food marketing can influence children's food preferences, leading to a preference for unhealthy, non-nutritious foods.
Negative impact on overall health and well-being	Non-nutritious food can contribute to low energy levels, fatigue, poor immune function, and a general decline in overall health and well-being.
Development of unhealthy dietary patterns and lifelong habits	Regular consumption of non-nutritious food during childhood can establish unhealthy dietary patterns that persist into adulthood, leading to long-term health consequences.
Decreased consumption of nutrient-dense foods	Non-nutritious food choices often replace nutrient-dense options, resulting in a reduced intake of essential vitamins, minerals, and dietary fibre.
Emotional and psychological effects	Unhealthy food consumption can contribute to emotional issues like low self-esteem, poor body image, and negative relationships with food.

Harmful Effects of Eating Non-nutritious Food for Children:

	Examples
Nutritional deficiencies	Lack of essential vitamins, minerals, and nutrients necessary for growth and development.
Childhood obesity	Excessive consumption of sugary snacks, fast food, and sugar-sweetened beverages leads to weight gain and obesity.
Increased risk of chronic diseases	Consumption of high-fat, high-sugar, and high-sodium foods is associated with an increased risk of developing chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension.
Poor cognitive function and academic performance	Inadequate intake of nutrient-rich foods can impair brain development, leading to poor cognitive function and reduced academic performance.

Related news: [Dark Patterns in Digital Advertisements](#)

Insta Links: [Surrogate Advertising](#)

Mains Links: [Do you think commercial advertisements need to be ethical? Comment. \(250 words\)](#)

ONE HEALTH PRIORITY RESEARCH AGENDA ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)

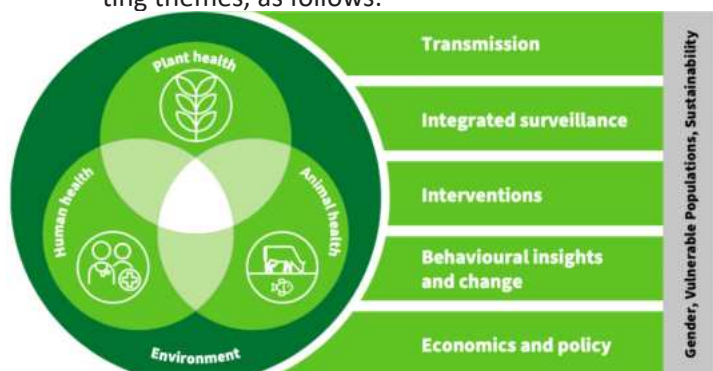
Context:

The Quadripartite - comprising the FAO, UNEP, WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) - released the One Health Priority Research Agenda on [Antimicrobial Resistance](#).

The agenda defines '**One Health**': The concept acknowledges the **health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the larger environment**, including ecosystems, are inextricably linked and interdependent.

The link between 'One Health' and AMR:

- At this One Health interface, addressing global health issues necessitates a **multisectoral, multidisciplinary response to AMR**.
- Using a mixed-methods approach, global experts identified five key pillars as well as three cross-cutting themes, as follows:



Five key pillars:

- Transmission:** This pillar focuses on the environment, plant, animal, and human sectors where AMR transmission, circulation and spread occur.
- Integrated surveillance:** This pillar aims to identify cross-cutting priority research questions in order to improve common technical understanding and information exchange among One Health stakeholders.
- Interventions:** This pillar focuses on programmes, practises, tools, and activities aimed at preventing, containing, or reducing the incidence, prevalence, and spread of AMR.
- Behavioural insights and change:** It focuses on research addressing human behaviour that affects AMR, including ways to combat it.
- Economics and policy:** This pillar considers the cost-effectiveness of an AMR investment case, financial sustainability, and long-term financial impact.

Purpose of priority research agenda:

- To better advocate for **increased research and investment** in antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
- To **guide a variety of stakeholders** in generating new evidence to address AMR, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- The agenda also **emphasises the importance of developing research capacity in LMICs**, which will be critical for addressing research gaps and developing evidence.

Significance of the agenda:

- It will serve as a **guide for countries, research institutes and funding bodies** to support One Health AMR research.
- It will also **allow policymakers, researchers, and the multidisciplinary scientific community** to collaborate across sectors.

Other similar efforts:

WHO also launched a global research agenda for AMR in human health, **prioritising 40 research topics for evidence generation** to inform policy and interventions by 2030.

Way ahead:

The priority research agenda requires **contextualisation** at the regional and country level and the development of specific research relevant to the needs of different countries and One Health settings.

Conclusion:

Implementing this research agenda will address the threat of AMR and support the national action plan (NAP) implementation and achievement of the SDGs for 2030.

Insta Links: [A 'One Health' approach that targets people, animals](#)

Mains Links: [Q. What do you understand about the 'one health approach'? Examine its role in preventing outbreaks of various infections. \(250 words\)](#)

SOLAR GEOENGINEERING TO COUNTER GLOBAL WARMING

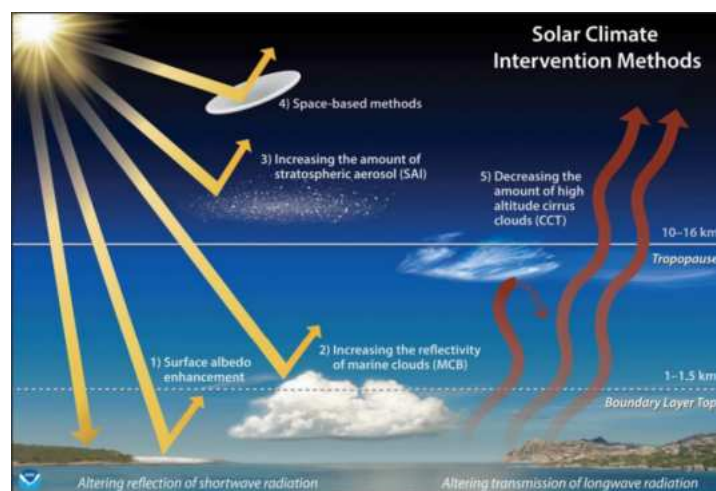
Context:

The US is eyeing a controversial tool to counter global warming: **Solar geoengineering**.

What is Solar geoengineering?

- Solar geoengineering, also referred to as **solar radiation management (SRM)** describes a set of proposed approaches to **reflect sunlight (back to space) to rapidly cool the Earth**.
- Within solar geoengineering, researchers are considering two main approaches.

Different SRM methods:



- Stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI):** It involves injecting tiny reflecting particles, known as aerosols,

into the upper atmosphere to cool the planet.

- **Marine cloud brightening (MCB):** It would use sea salt to stimulate cloud formation over the ocean, which would also help reflect sunlight in the region.

Why is solar geoengineering being considered?

- The Paris Agreement's target requires limiting global temperature increase well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.
- For this, nations need to bring net global CO₂ emissions to zero by no later than mid-century.
- Despite these ambitious goals, solar geoengineering is being considered to prepare for the possibility that global efforts may fall short.

The USA's plan:

- The White House stated that public or private actors could carry out activities such as injecting aerosols and MCB to reflect more sunlight into space.
- It called for research to enable better-informed decisions about the potential risks and benefits of the tool as part of its climate policy, in addition to mitigation and adaptation.
- This comes amid concerns raised by the experts over the high environmental (changes in precipitation patterns, ozone amounts, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, etc), social, and geopolitical risks that come with SRM.

Solar geoengineering risks:

- **Moral hazard:** The danger is that the technology will become an excuse to slow emissions reductions and stop moving toward a low-carbon economy.
- **Little is known about its impacts:** Research to scope the risks and potential of solar geoengineering has mostly been conducted through computer-based modelling and natural observations (volcanic eruption).

Way ahead:

Because solar geoengineering has global implications, its consideration as a climate response requires -

- **Effective international governance/** Mechanisms for oversight.
- **Outdoor experimentation** and funding for experiments should come only from governments.
- **Ways to involve the public in decision-making.**

Conclusion:

- Given the ethical and environmental risks these activities can present, atmospheric experiments to assess these technologies deserve timely public scrutiny and debate.
- Even as researchers assess the potential feasibility and effectiveness of geoengineering approaches, mitigation and adaptation must remain our first-line solutions.

Insta Links: [Cooling the Earth down](#)

Mains Links: [What is solar Geoengineering? Discuss the benefits and shortcomings linked with this technology.](#)

INTERNATIONALISATION OF RUPEE: WHY AND WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Context:

According to the RBI, with India remaining one of the fastest-growing countries and showing remarkable resilience in the face of major headwinds, the rupee has the potential to become an internationalised currency.

What does internationalisation of the rupee mean?

- **Internationalisation** is a process that involves increasing the use of the rupee in cross-border transactions - between residents in India and non-residents.
- It involves promoting the rupee for import and export trade and then other current account transactions, followed by its use in capital account transactions.
- Currently, the US dollar, the Euro, the Japanese Yen, and the pound sterling are the leading reserve currencies in the world.
- China's efforts to make its currency renminbi has met with only limited success so far.

Prerequisites:

The internationalisation of the currency, which is closely interlinked with the -

- Nation's economic progress.
- Further opening up of the currency settlement and a strong swap and forex market.
- **Full convertibility of the currency on the capital account** (allowing free movement of local financial investment assets into foreign assets and vice-versa) and
- Cross-border transfer of funds without any restrictions.

Current scenario:

- India has allowed only full convertibility on the current account as of now.
- The US dollar is said to enjoy an 'Exorbitant Privilege', supported by a range of factors, including the size of the US economy, a history of macroeconomic stability and currency convertibility, lack of viable alternatives, etc.
- Chinese Renminbi is the obvious challenger to the US dollar dominance. However, its ability to rival the US dollar will depend on the -
 - Chinese economy and its financial system to

- demonstrate the same long-term resilience, **Integrity, transparency, openness and stability**, which are characteristics of the US economy.

The RBI recommendations:

Short term	Long term
Adoption of a standardised approach for examining the proposals on bilateral and multilateral trade arrangements	<p>The inclusion of the rupee in IMF's SDR (special drawing rights)</p> <p>The SDR is an international reserve asset created by the IMF to supplement the official reserves of its member countries.</p> <p>The value of the SDR is based on a basket of five currencies - the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling.</p>
Encouraging the opening of the rupee accounts for non-residents both in India and outside India	
Integrating Indian payment systems with other countries for cross-border transactions	
Strengthening the financial market by fostering a global 24x5 rupee market and recalibration of the FPI (foreign portfolio investor) regime	
A review of taxes on masala (rupee-denominated bonds issued outside India by Indian entities) bonds, international use of Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) for cross-border trade transactions and inclusion of Indian Government Bonds in global bond indices	

These recommendations are significant:

- In light of the economic sanctions imposed by the US on Russia for invading Ukraine and the growing clamour for finding an alternative to the US dollar for international transactions.
- While reserves help manage exchange rate volatility and project external stability, **they impose a cost on the economy.**

Advantages of internationalisation of the rupee:

- Cross-border transactions **mitigate currency risk** for Indian businesses by protecting them from currency volatility. This will -
 - **Reduce the cost of doing business** and improve the chances for Indian businesses to grow globally.
 - **Add weight to the Indian economy** and enhance India's global stature and respect.
- Internationalisation of the rupee **reduces the need for holding foreign exchange reserves.**

- Reducing dependence on foreign currency **will make India less vulnerable to external shocks.**

Challenges:

- **Very little international demand:** The daily average share for the rupee in the global foreign exchange market is ~1.6%, while India's share of global goods trade is ~2%.
- **India does not permit full capital account convertibility:** It is driven by past fears of **capital flight** (outflow of capital from India due to monetary policies/lack of growth) and exchange rate volatility, given significant current and capital account deficits.

Reforms needed:

- **Rupee must be made more freely convertible**, with a goal of full convertibility by 2060.
- **The RBI should pursue a deeper and more liquid rupee bond market**, enabling foreign investors and Indian trade partners to have more investment options in rupees.
- **Indian exporters and importers** should be encouraged to invoice their transactions in rupee.
- **Currency swap agreements** (as with Sri Lanka) would further allow India to settle trade and investment transactions.
- **Tax incentives to foreign businesses** to utilise the rupee in operations in India would also help.
- **The Tarapore Committees'** (in 1997 and 2006) recommendations must be pursued including -
 - A push to reduce fiscal deficits lower than 3.5%,
 - A reduction in gross inflation rate to 3%-5%, and
 - A reduction in gross banking non-performing assets to less than 5%.

Insta Links: [Internationalisation of rupee](#)

Mains Links: It is essential to approach the internationalisation of the rupee cautiously, considering the potential advantages and risks associated with it. Critically examine.

INDIA'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

Context:

The creative economy is one of the youngest and fastest-growing sectors, with unique challenges that often go unnoticed by public and private investors.

What is the creative economy?

The creative economy refers to **the intersection of culture, creativity, and commerce. It encompasses economic activities** that are based on creative and cultural products and services, such as arts, design, media, entertainment, and technology.

- The creative industries include **advertising, architecture, arts and crafts, design, fashion, film, video, photography, music**, performing arts, publishing, etc.
- They are also considered an important source of **commercial and cultural value**.
- **Digital platforms and technology** have enabled Indian artists and artisans to reach wider audiences.

India's creative economy:

It is estimated to contribute ~8% of the country's employment, much higher than the corresponding share in Turkey (1%), Mexico (1.5%), Australia (2.1%), etc.

Advantages for the Indian economy:

- **Pay reasonably well** - 88% higher than the non-creative ones.
- Contribute ~20% to the nation's overall GVA.
- Can help **encourage India's soft power** by creating an ecosystem of innovative technology-based start-ups.

Challenges:

- **Economic sustainability**, market access, digital divide, and the preservation of traditional art forms in a rapidly changing society.
- **Crime in the art world** includes art theft, copyright infringement, forgery, fraud, and illicit trafficking.
- India's creative **exports** (\$121 billion in 2019, out of which services accounted for almost \$100 billion) **are only one-tenth** of those of the People's Republic of China.

MONDIACULT 2022:

- **Recognising the economic importance of culture**, the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022) was held.
- The goal was to share **a vision for the future of cultural policies** and to reaffirm the international community's commitment to **leveraging culture's transformative power for sustainable development**.

Way ahead:

- **Government initiatives** to provide financial assistance, training programmes, and opportunities for artists to exhibit their work.
- **A collaborative model promoting cultural economy** and providing guidance, technical support, infrastructure, access to investors, and networking opportunities.
- **Promote contemporary artists as brands** and ensure equal representation and financial assistance.
- **Increased security measures, international cooperation**, public awareness, and advanced technology for authentication and tracking.
- **Regular audits of acquired artworks** can enhance trust and preserve a collection's integrity.
- **Leveraging the latest ICT tools to enhance** their participation in the business ecosystem.

Conclusion:

Seeing the economic and cultural significance of the creative economy in India, **a facilitation mechanism** should support the growth and development of the sector.

CME

CLIMATE COUNSEL	<p>The Maharashtra Onion Farmers Group, consisting of around 2,000 farmer members, has been using social media platforms and in-person gatherings to share localized weather warnings and agricultural strategies to cope with climate change.</p> <p>The group helps farmers anticipate and prepare for extreme weather events and other impacts of climate change. They also share traditional and new cultivation methods to build climate resilience. The initiative aims to combat the biggest threat to small and marginal farmers' livelihoods posed by climate change.</p>
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DATA SCRAP- PING	<p>Twitter has implemented temporary reading limits to address issues of data scraping and system manipulation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verified accounts are now limited to reading 6,000 posts per day, while unverified or new accounts can read 600 and 300 posts per day, respectively. <p>What is Data Scrapping? Data scraping refers to the automated process of extracting large amounts of data from websites or digital platforms. It involves using software or scripts to gather information from web pages, or platforms like Twitter and then using the data for creating new content, journalism, or research purpose.</p> <p>Issues: Data Scraping may lead to copyright infringement, breach of privacy, manipulation and misuse of data etc.</p>
TAISHOKU DAIKO	<p>In Japan, where loyalty to companies and lifetime employment are highly valued, job-hopping is often stigmatized and seen as shameful. To assist those who want to quit their jobs, “taishoku daiko” or “job-leaving agents” have emerged in recent years.</p> <p>These services provide support to individuals, primarily in their 20s and 30s, who wish to leave their current employment. They offer advice on how to resign with minimal complications.</p>
NEERAJ CHOPRA	<p>He is the reigning Olympic champion, World Championships silver medallist and the Diamond League champion in the javelin throw. He is the first Asian athlete to win an Olympic gold medal in men’s javelin throw. He is the first track and field athlete to win a gold medal for India at the Olympics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With his recent win in Lausanne, he is now at the top of the Diamond League list and well on his way to qualifying for the 2023 Finals. <p>However, he remains grounded and true to his identity, embodying the values of humility and authenticity. From his early days as a young athlete, Neeraj demonstrated a quiet self-belief that has guided him through both successes and failures.</p> <p>Moreover, Neeraj has used his platform to support and motivate fellow athletes, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and highlighting their achievements.</p> <p>Beyond his athletic prowess, Neeraj has shown integrity and compassion off the field. He has been vocal in supporting fellow athletes and addressing relevant issues within the sporting community.</p> <p>As a role model, he has inspired aspiring athletes not only to excel in their respective sports but also to strive for personal growth and be better individuals.</p>

<h2>HACHIKO</h2>	<p>Hachiko, the world's most loyal dog, turns 100 this year. Born in November 1923 in Odate, Japan, Hachiko was sold to Hidesaburo Ueno, an agricultural scientist, as a puppy. Hachiko's enduring legacy stems from his unwavering loyalty to his master. Ueno would commute by train from Shibuya Station, and Hachiko would accompany him to the station and wait for his return. Unfortunately, Ueno passed away suddenly in 1925, but Hachiko continued to wait at the station every day, hoping to find his beloved master.</p> <p>When Hachiko passed away in 1935 at the age of 11, his funeral was attended by hundreds of people, and statues were erected in his honour.</p> <p>Usage: Hachiko's story has become a symbol of loyalty and devotion, inspiring books, and movies, and teaching children about his remarkable qualities. The example can be used in Ethics/ Essay paper.</p>
<h2>MO JUNGLE JAMI YOJANA</h2>	<p>The Odisha government has announced the launch of the "Mo Jungle Jami Yojana" (MJJY) scheme, aimed at effectively implementing the provisions of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006.</p> <p>If successfully implemented, Odisha will become the first state to be fully compliant with the Forest Rights Act, covering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual forest rights • community forest rights • habitat rights for particularly vulnerable tribal groups • conversion of forest and unsurveyed villages <p>The scheme will provide land ownership and access to forest resources, improving livelihoods and food security for the Scheduled Tribe and forest-dwelling population. It includes the digitization of records, conversion of unsurveyed and zero area villages into revenue villages, and the establishment of Forest Rights Cells for monitoring and review.</p>
<h2>INFOCHEMICALS</h2>	<p>Climate change is impacting chemical communication in the animal world, with significant consequences for ecosystems and human well-being. Chemical signals, known as infochemicals, play a crucial role in interactions between organisms and regulate ecological processes. Climate change is altering the production of these chemicals, such as pheromones, affecting various species and disrupting vital functions and behaviours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 1: Warming temperatures decay the pheromones used by some ant species, making it difficult for them to follow trails. • Example 2: Rising CO₂ levels in water affect the evasion abilities of water fleas, while coral reef damselfish lose their ability to recognize predators. • Example 3: Climate change-associated stressors disrupt chemical interactions across entire ecosystems, with implications for disease-causing pathogens and their hosts. <p>Understanding these impacts is essential for mitigating the effects of climate change on communication and preserving ecological balance.</p>

ROBOTS FOR SDGS	<p>The United Nations (UN) introduced 51 robots, including nine humanoid robots, at the AI for Good Global Summit held in Geneva. The summit aimed to accelerate the achievement of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.</p> <p>These robots were equipped with functions aligned with the SDGs, such as healthcare robots capable of understanding emotions and displaying empathy, E.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grace an advanced nursing humanoid robot developed by Hanson Robotics • SingularityNET assists elderly individuals
BHARAT INTERNET UTSAV	<p>Context: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has launched the “Bharat Internet Utsav” to celebrate the power of the Internet.</p> <p>It aims to highlight the transformative role of the internet by encouraging citizens to share their stories of how the internet has positively impacted their lives. It recognizes the internet as an essential tool for connectivity, knowledge-sharing, and socio-economic development.</p>

DALAI LAMA

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed his admiration for the Tibetan spiritual leader, Dalai Lama, on the **occasion of his 88th birthday**.

He also reaffirmed the **United States’ commitment to supporting the linguistic, cultural, and religious identity of Tibetans**, including their freedom to choose and venerate their religious leaders without interference.

Life Lessons from Dalai Lama:

Life Lesson	Example
Practising compassion and forgiveness leads to inner peace	Despite facing tremendous oppression and violence from the Chinese government, Dalai Lama has always preached non-violence and compassion towards his oppressors.
Education and knowledge are powerful tools for personal growth and societal progress	He himself is a voracious reader and has even established educational institutions in India to provide modern and traditional education to Tibetan refugees.
Building strong relationships and connections is essential for a fulfilling life	He has formed deep and meaningful relationships with people all over the world.
Embracing change	Dalai Lama has faced many challenges and changes in his life, including being forced into exile, losing his country and people, and being constantly under threat. However, he has always remained optimistic and adaptable, embracing change and looking for opportunities to grow and progress.
Cultivating self-awareness and mindfulness	Dalai Lama believes that cultivating self-awareness and mindfulness can help us identify and overcome negative emotions such as anger, fear, and anxiety.

Usage:

His life story can be used in Essay/Ethics to illustrate points and highlight the values of Compassion, Nonviolence, Respect for diversity, Humility, and morality.

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

GS1

HUL DIWAS

Context:

Hul Divas is observed annually on June 30 in memory of tribal leaders — **Sidho and Kanhu Murmu** — who led the Santhal hul (rebellion) on June 30, 1855, at Bhognadih in Sahebganj district (now Jharkhand).

About Santhal Rebellion:

Topic	Information
What is Santhal Rebellion?	Santhal rebellion (also known as 'Hul') (1855-1856) was a revolt against both the British East India Company and the zamindari system by the Santhal. The rebellion was led by the four sibling Brothers - Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav .
Santhals and their Migration	The Santhal people migrated from the Birbhum and Manbhum regions of Bengal to modern-day Santhal Pargana . The British relocated them to the forested area of Damin-i-Koh as part of their revenue collection strategy.
Reasons behind the Hul	The Santhals rebelled against the British due to extortions, oppressive extractions, dispossession of property, false measurements, and other illegalities .
Organization of the Hul	Contrary to popular belief, the Hul was a well-planned and organized political war . Preparations included guerrilla formations, military teams, detectives, secret bases , logistics, and a network of message carriers for co-ordination. Non-Adivasi Hindu castes also participated in the rebellion.
Contribution of Women	Phulo-Jhano , two sisters, led an army of 1,000 women who played crucial roles in the rebellion. The East India Company's army was defeated twice during the uprising.
End	After the rebellion started, martial law was proclaimed by the East India Company which lasted until January 3, 1856, when martial law was suspended and the rebellion was eventually suppressed by the Presidency armies .

Lasting Impact of the Hul

The Santhal rebellion inspired future uprisings, such as the Santhal involvement in the 1857 mutiny. It symbolized resistance against British colonialism and laid the foundation for subsequent movements in Jharkhand.

DHARMA CHAKRA DAY

Context:

President of India (at the **Dharma Chakra Pravartan Divas celebrations**) highlighted the **importance of Buddha's teachings** and called upon the youth to draw inspiration from them.

Key highlights:

- The president emphasized the significance of following **Sheel, Sadhachar, and Pragya** to empower the younger generation and create a **positive impact on society**.
- The construction contract for the **India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage in Lumbini, Nepal** was also awarded.

What is Dharma Chakra?

The **dharma chakra** or **wheel of dharma** is a widespread symbol used in Indian religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, and especially Buddhism. In Buddhism, the Dharma Chakra is widely used to **represent the Buddha's Dharma (Buddha's teaching and the universal moral order)**

About Dharma Chakra Day:

Dharma Chakra Day is celebrated to **commemorate Buddha's first teaching** after attaining enlightenment. It is observed **on the full moon day of Asadha** in the Indian sun calendar. It is also observed as **Guru Purnima**, a day to **honour spiritual teachers, by both Buddhists and Hindus**.

Date	4th July 2020
Organized by	Ministry of Culture in partnership with the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)
Significance	<p>Second most sacred day for Buddhists after Buddha Poornima (Vesak)</p> <p>Commemorates the Dhamma Cakka-Pavattana Sutta, including the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path</p> <p>The day marks the beginning of the Rainy Season retreat for monks and nuns.</p>

O t h e r Names	Asadha Poornima (India); Esala Poya (Sri Lanka); Asanha Bucha (Thailand)
Guru Purnima	Falls on a full-moon day in the Hindu month of Ashadh. Dedicated to Maharshi Veda Vyasa, editor of the Vedas and creator of Hindu scriptures. Also marks Lord Buddha's first sermon delivered at Sarnath on the same day. Believed to mark the onset of monsoons

GUTTI KOYA TRIBE

Context:

The tribe living along the Andhra Pradesh-Chhattisgarh border, keeps its customs and memories alive **through stone memorials erected in honour of their physician, priest, and village leader.**

- The memorials, made of **large stones**, **symbolize the tribe's gratitude and are accompanied by rituals and feasts** organized by the families of the deceased.

The Koya population is primarily found in **Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha**. They speak the **Koya language**, which belongs to the Dravidian language family. One of the most significant festivals celebrated by the **Koyas is the Sammakka Saralamma Jatra**, which occurs once **every two years** on the full moon day of the Magha Masam (January or February). This festival **takes place in Medaram village**, located in the Mulug taluk of Warangal district. Their livelihood depends on **animal husbandry and forest produce.**

TAM PÀ LING CAVE

Context:

New research published in **Nature Communications** has **revealed that humans arrived in Southeast Asia** much earlier than previously thought. The findings are based on evidence found in **Tam Pà Ling Cave in northern Laos.**

Findings:

- Early human migration to Asia** involved the **arrival of Homo sapiens in Southeast Asia at least 68,000 years ago**, according to recent evidence from **Tam Pà Ling Cave in Northern Laos.**
- This discovery **challenges previous assumptions** and suggests that the region, including mainland, coastal, and island locations, could have been a viable dispersal route.
- The presence of Denisovans**, an extinct human relative, further highlights the complexity of early human movements and interbreeding with other hominin species.

- Significance of the finding:** The discoveries in Tam Pà Ling Cave contribute to our understanding of the **ancient human journey across the world.**

About Tam Pà Ling Cave:

Tam Pa Ling is a **cave in the Annamite Mountains in north-eastern Laos**. It is situated at the top of **Pa Hang Mountain**, 1,170 m above sea level.

Who were Denisovans?

Denisovans were an **extinct group of hominins, or human relatives**, known primarily from remains found in **Siberia and Tibet**. They lived hundreds of thousands of years ago and coexisted with **Neanderthals** and early modern humans.

Dating method used in the cave:

Dating Method	Description
Luminescence dating	Measures the last exposure of crystalline materials to sunlight or heat. Uses quartz and feldspar.
Uranium series dating	Measures uranium and its decay products within a tooth to determine its age.
Electron spin resonance dating	Measures the number of electrons in tooth enamel to estimate the fossil's age.
Micromorphology	Examines sediments under a microscope to assess the layers' integrity containing the fossils.

LORD LANSDOWNE

Context:

The Lansdowne Cantonment Board has decided to rename the hill station of Lansdowne in Uttarakhand, India, as Jaswantgarh in honour of Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat, Maha Vir Chakra recipient and hero of the 1962 war with China.

About Lord Lansdowne (served as the Viceroy of India from 1888 to 1894):

Title	Lord Lansdowne
B a c k - ground	Lord Lansdowne arrived on the subcontinent when revenue was dwindling for the British, a constrained scheme for political reform, and unsettled relations with the amir of Afghanistan and the peoples of the northwestern frontier.
I n d i a n National Congress	Lord Lansdowne legitimized the work of the Indian National Congress , recognizing the rise of Indian nationalism as an inevitable byproduct of the British administration.

Indian Factory Act, 1891	The Indian Factory Act, 1891 was passed when Lord Lansdowne was the Viceroy of India .
Categorizing of Civil Services	On Aitchison Commission recommendations (1889) , Statutory Civil Service was abolished. The government's civilian officers were divided into three classes: Imperial Indian Civil Service, Provincial Civil Service, and Subordinate Civil Service.
Age of Consent Act, 1891	The Age of Consent Act, 1891, was enacted in British India in 1891, raising the age of consent for sexual intercourse for all girls, married or unmarried, from ten to twelve years in all jurisdictions, with violations punishable as rape.
Indian Councils Act	Lord Lansdowne introduced the Indian Councils Act of 1892 , which established additional members in the central and provincial legislative councils and introduced an indirect election system for council members. It was a step toward a representative government in India .
Setting up Durand Commission (1893)	Durand Line agreement was signed to secure the north-west and Afghanistan
Opium Commission	In 1893, a royal commission was issued to inquire into the results of using opium in India , and the possibility of prohibiting it. The commission's findings favoured the continued use of opium and led to the shelving of the idea of imposing a ban.

ZO PEOPLES OF MANIPUR & MIZORAM

Context:

The recent clashes in Manipur has raised attention of many leaders who called for a **reunification of the Zo people in view of the continuing ethnic violence** between the dominant **Meiteis** and the **Kuki-Zomi** tribes in the neighbouring state.

About Zo tribes:

- The Zo people comprise various tribes, including **Chin, Kuki, Mizo, Lushei, Zomi, and others, spread across Myanmar, India, and Bangladesh**. The tribes share a common history, including **migration and**

settlements in different regions, and are connected by their **Christian faith**.

- The movement for Zo reunification, **while emotionally appealing to the people of Mizoram**, faces political challenges in terms of carving out areas from Manipur, Tripura, and neighbouring countries for integration with Mizoram.

BASTILLE DAY

Context:

The Indian Navy Marching Contingent is set **to participate in the Bastille Day Parade in Paris, France** on July 14, 2023.

About Bastille Day

The National Day of France , also known as Bastille Day, is celebrated on July 14 every year .			
What was Bastille?	The Bastille was a fortress prison located in the heart of Paris, which had become a symbol of royal tyranny and oppression .		
History	The fall of the Bastille is widely considered the beginning of the French Revolution . The event also marked the beginning of a period of intense violence and social upheaval in France .		
French Revolution (1789 – 1799)	A significant period of social and political upheaval in France was characterized by the overthrow of the French monarchy , the establishment of a republic, and the execution of thousands of people, including King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette .		
Significance	The fall of the Bastille symbolized the people's victory over the monarchy and the end of the old regime . The event led to the abolition of feudalism , the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen , and the establishment of the First French Republic .		
Global Importance	The principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity espoused during the French Revolution have had a profound impact on the world's political and social landscape. These values have influenced many other revolutionary movements throughout history .		
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The **Indo-French strategic partnership**, which celebrates its **25th anniversary this year**, extends to the maritime domain and includes collaboration in shipbuilding.

- Collaborations:** Construction of **Scorpene class submarines by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited** in collaboration with Naval Group, France
- Naval exercise:** Varuna (initiated in 1993)

About Indian Navy:

The Indian Navy is **one of the largest navies in the world**, equipped with a diverse range of ships, submarines, and aircraft. Their motto, **"Sam No Varunah,"** meaning "May the lord of oceans be auspicious unto us," (from Rig Veda) reflects their commitment to excellence. It boasts its own **aircraft carriers, destroyers, frigates, and nuclear submarines**.

2,200 EARTHQUAKES IN ICELAND IN 24 HOURS

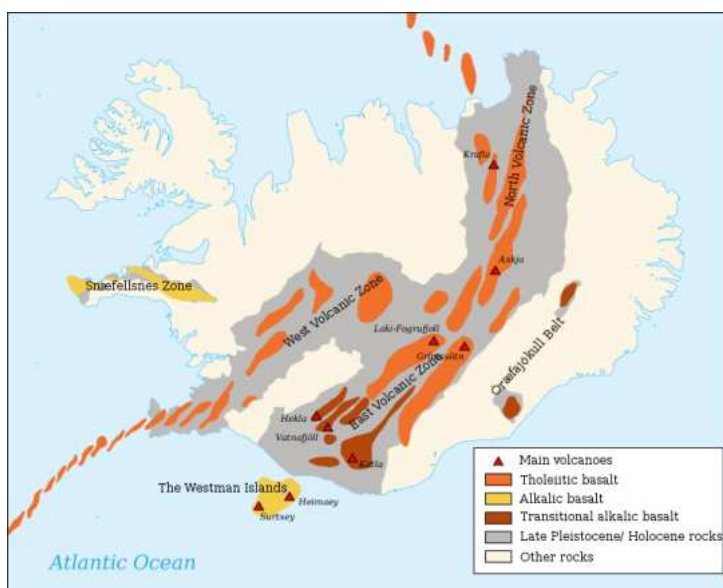
Context:

Nearly **2,200 earthquakes** have been recorded in the vicinity of **Reykjavik**, the capital of **Iceland in the past 24 hours**.

- The country's meteorological office has warned that this **seismic activity could be a signal of an impending volcanic eruption**.

Iceland experiences frequent volcanic activity, due to its **location both on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a divergent tectonic plate boundary, and over a hot spot**. Nearly thirty volcanoes are known to have erupted in the Holocene epoch; these include Eldgjá, the source of the largest lava eruption in human history.

The Mid-Atlantic Ridge is a **mid-ocean ridge (a divergent or constructive plate boundary) located along the floor of the Atlantic Ocean** and part of the **longest mountain range in the world**. In the North Atlantic, the **ridge separates the North American from the Eurasian Plate and the African Plate, north and south of the Azores Triple Junction**.



GS2

MAHILA SAMMAN SAVINGS CERTIFICATE, 2023

Context:

The Department of Economic Affairs, **Ministry of Finance**, has authorized Public Sector Banks and eligible Private Sector Banks to implement the Mahila Samman Savings Certificate, 2023.

About the scheme:

Feature	Description
Mahila Samman Savings Certificate, 2023 (introduced in this year's budget and started on 1 st April 2023) is a one-time savings scheme to provide financial security to girls and women in India.	
Purpose	To provide financial security to every girl and woman in India

Eligibility	Women can open the account for themselves or on behalf of a minor girl child
Tenure	Two years
Interest Rate	7.5% per annum , compounded quarterly
Investment	₹1000 min to 200,000 maximum.
Maturity Period	Two years from the date of opening the account
Partial Withdrawal	Up to 40% of the eligible balance can be availed after one year from the date of opening the account
Significance	Promotes financial independence and empowerment of women Encourages women investors, especially in rural areas

CENTRE ANNOUNCES SCHEME FOR MINOR RAPE VICTIMS

Context:

The Indian government has launched a **special scheme to provide support to minor rape victims who become pregnant as a result of the sexual assault**.

- The scheme, announced by the **Women and Child Development Ministry**, will operate under the **Nirbhaya Fund**.

Features of the Scheme:

- The scheme leverages the **administrative structure of Mission Vatsalya**, a program focused on **child protection and welfare**, in collaboration with state governments and **Child Care Institutions (CCIs)**.
- The support will be available to **minor victims up to the age of 18, and up to the age of 23 in aftercare facilities**.
- The government has already **established 415 fast-track courts under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act** to accelerate access to justice for minor rape victims.
- The scheme aims to provide **integrated support and assistance to victims**, including **access to education, police assistance, healthcare, psychological support, and legal aid**. It also provides insurance coverage for the victim and her newborn and does not require the victim to have a copy of the First Information Report (FIR) to avail of the benefits.

PLEA TO MAKE SCHEDULED CASTE STATUS 'RELIGION-NEUTRAL'

Context:

The SC has taken on board a plea to stop using religious identity as a criterion to afford or deny communities a place within the Scheduled Caste bracket.

The petition:

- Has challenged the **Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950** issued under **Article 341(1)** of the Constitution.
 - Article 341 (1)** authorises the President to declare certain castes and classes as Scheduled Castes in a State (after consultation with the Governor) or a UT.
 - The 1950 Order** mandates that anybody who is not a Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist cannot be granted Scheduled Caste status.
- Since the word 'religion' does not even exist in Article 341(1), the ban concerning Christians and Muslims in the 1950 Order should be deleted.

Scheduled caste status for Dalit converts:

- The Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission (2007)** recommended that Scheduled Caste reservation be provided for Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam. **The Centre had rejected the report.**
- A new Commission (under K.G. Balakrishnan)** was established in 2022 to report on the question of granting SC status to persons who have historically belonged to the SC but have converted to religions other than Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

'COMPLEX, CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION'

<p>➤ The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, states SC status can only be accorded to Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists</p> <p>➤ While BJP has been opposed to giving SC status to Dalit converts to Islam and Christianity, forming a panel suggests the party is exercising caution against any legal pitfall</p> <p>➤ Calling it 'a seminal & historically complex sociological and</p>	<p>Constitutional question given its sensitivity and potential impact', govt's gazette notification says change in definition of SCs can only be done on the basis of a detailed study</p> <p>➤ Panel to also study changes Dalits go through on converting to other religions in terms of their customs, traditions, social and other status, as well as discrimination and deprivation</p>
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Ex-CJI KG Balakrishnan will head the 3-member panel

CHATBOT FOR PEOPLE IN MENTAL DISTRESS

Context:

India's first **Tele-MANAS chatbot**, designed to engage with people in distress, has been launched in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

- The initiative aims to provide **round-the-clock access to health counsellors, clinical psychologists, and consultants**. The launch took place during the **J&K Health Conclave on Mental Health and Non-Communicable Diseases**.

Under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, **Tele-MANAS is a two-tier system**.

- Tier 1 comprises State Tele MANAS cells, which includes **trained counsellors and mental health specialists**.
- Tier 2 comprises specialists at **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)/Medical College resources for physical consultation and/or eSanjeevani for audio visual consultation**.

PERMANENT COURT OF ARBITRATION

Context:

India has stated that it **cannot be forced to participate in "illegal" proceedings at the Permanent Court of Arbitration** regarding the **Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects in Kashmir**.

- The court ruled that it has the **authority to consider the dispute between India and Pakistan on the matter**. India has argued that it will not join the proceedings initiated by Pakistan as the **dispute is already being examined by a neutral expert under the Indus Waters Treaty**.

About Indus Water Treaty:

The treaty, brokered by the **World Bank in 1960**, deals with **cross-border river matters**. India believes that the **parallel processes initiated by Pakistan violate the provisions of the treaty**. India has been participating in the neutral expert proceedings and has been in talks with Pakistan for treaty modification.

About Permanent Court of Arbitration:

- Established in 1899. An international **intergovernmental institute has been established in order to resolve disputes between states**.
- The PCA has a **three-part organisational structure** that includes the Administrative Council, which oversees its policies and finances, Members of the Court, a panel of independent prospective arbitrators, and the International Bureau, which is led by the Secretary-General.
- It has a **Financial Assistance Fund**, which attempts

to assist poor nations in meeting a portion of the expenses associated with international arbitration or other forms of dispute resolution offered by the PCA.

U.S. DESTROYS LAST OF ITS DECLARED CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Context:

The United States has completed the **destruction of its declared chemical weapons stockpile** (rockets filled with GB nerve agent), marking a significant milestone in the history of warfare dating back to World War I.

The deadline:

The U.S. faced a Sept. 30 deadline to eliminate its remaining chemical weapons under the International **Chemical Weapons Convention**, which took effect in 1997 and was joined by 193 countries.

Significance:

- The destruction of the stockpile is seen as a **defining moment for arms control efforts globally** and sets an example for other countries to follow.
- This achievement fulfils the **US commitment under the International Chemical Weapons Convention** and sends a message that such weapons are **no longer acceptable** on the battlefield.

About the Convention:

Chemical Weapons Convention is a multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons and requiring their destruction within the stipulated time. It makes it mandatory to destroy old and abandoned chemical weapons.

- **India signed** the treaty in January 1993.
- **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)** was formed (in 1997) under the Convention. It implements and enforces the terms of the CWC. It reports to the UN. It was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2013

India passed **Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000** to implement the CWC.

It provided for the establishment of a **National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention or NACWC** (formed in 2005), as a chief liaison between the government of India and the OPCW.

About GB nerve agent:

Sarin (military designation GB) is a nerve agent (chemicals that affect the nervous system) that is one of the most toxic of the known chemical warfare agents. It is generally odourless and tasteless. Exposure to sarin can cause death in minutes. Other examples of nerve agents are: soman (GD),

tabun (GA), Mustard agent and VX

About Chemical Weapons:

Chemical weapons were first used in modern warfare in World War I, where they were estimated to have killed at least 100,000. Despite their use being subsequently banned by the Geneva Convention, countries continued to stockpile the weapons until the treaty called for their destruction. Besides US stocks, some parties to the convention, particularly Russia and Syria, still possess **undeclared chemical weapons stockpiles**.

UNESCAP'S GLOBAL SURVEY ON DIGITAL AND SUSTAINABLE TRADE FACILITATION

Context:

India has achieved **outstanding performance in the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific's (UNESCAP)** Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation.

Trade facilitation refers to the **simplification, harmonization, and streamlining of international trade procedures and processes**. It involves reducing trade barriers, improving customs procedures, enhancing logistics and infrastructure, and promoting digitalization to make trade more efficient, cost-effective, and predictable.

Findings:

- **Score:** The survey places India at the forefront of global trade facilitation efforts with an impressive score of about **93% in 2023**, an improvement from **90% in 2021**.
- **India's success in various sub-indicators:** Perfect scores of 100% in Transparency, Formalities, Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation, and Paperless Trade.
- A substantial improvement in the **"Women in Trade Facilitation" component**, increasing from about **66% in 2021 to about 78% in 2023**, highlighting its commitment to **gender inclusivity and empowering women in the trade sector**.
- **Notable Initiatives:** Turant Customs (it encompasses Faceless Customs, Paperless Customs, and Contactless Customs.), Single Window Interface for Facilitation of Trade (SWIFT), Pre-Arrival data processing, and e-Sanchit
- **India stands as the best-performing country** in the South Asia region, surpassing several developed nations including Canada, France, the UK, and Germany

Significance:

These measures have contributed to enhancing India's ease of doing business and fostering a trade-facilitative environment in the country.

About the Survey:

The UNESCAP survey, which is **fact-based rather than perception-based**, covers a range of trade facilitation measures categorized into eleven sub-groups. It covers over 140 economies and evaluates 60 trade facilitation measures

About UNESCAP:

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (HQ: Bangkok; founded in 1947) is one of the five regional commissions under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

GS3

RECOVERY OF THE OZONE LAYER

Context:

World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has released a bulletin (after 7 years gap) indicating a **steady recovery of the ozone layer**, particularly over the Antarctic region.

About Ozone Layer:

The ozone layer or **ozone shield** is a region of **Earth's stratosphere** that absorbs most of the Sun's ultraviolet radiation. It contains a high concentration of ozone (O₃) in relation to other parts of the atmosphere, although still small in relation to other gases in the lower part of the stratosphere (15-35 Km above the surface of the earth)



Key findings:

- **Montreal Protocol and its amendments** are successful in **eliminating up to 99%** of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) (long-lived man-made chemicals which destroy the protective ozone layer)
- It **highlights the impact of climate change**, which is slowing down the recovery process and affecting the lower atmosphere's climate.

- **The eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano (in the southern Pacific) in January 2022** increased water vapour content in the stratosphere, leading to reduced ozone in the lower stratosphere of the southern hemisphere.
- This additional water vapour is expected to result in more **polar stratospheric clouds, enhanced ozone depletion, and larger and longer-lasting "ozone holes"** in the future.
- It highlights the **importance of monitoring and protecting the ozone layer** due to its crucial role in shielding life on Earth from harmful solar ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

NEWBORN GENOME-SEQUENCING

Context:

Newborn screening programmes are now in vogue in different countries, and have been deployed in India as well.

What is Newborn genome sequencing?

It is the process of **analyzing the complete genetic information** of a newborn baby. It involves **sequencing the entire genome to identify any genetic variations** or mutations that may be associated with specific diseases or conditions e.g., Sickle cell anaemia, Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome etc.

Genome sequencing is figuring out the order of DNA nucleotides, or bases, in a genome—the order of Adenine, Cytosine, Guanine, and Thymine that make up an organism's DNA.

Why is it important to sequence newborn genomes?

There are **6,000 or so genetic diseases**, of which around **3,500 diseases** have been documented. Sequencing newborn genomes is important because it **allows for early detection and diagnosis of genetic diseases**, enabling **timely interventions and treatments**.

- It provides valuable insights into the **prevalence of genetic disorders** and can help **identify potential risks** for future health issues.
- Sequencing healthy newborn genomes can uncover **unexpected genetic risks and enable better medical surveillance** for personalized healthcare.

Top of Form

Programmes:

- **Human Genome Project (1990)**: an international research effort to determine the sequence of the human genome and identify the genes that it contains.
- [Genome India Project](#)

Conclusion:

Ethical challenges related to **incidental findings, privacy,**

psychological impact, and equitable access need to be addressed. With careful consideration, rapid whole-genome sequencing could become a **standard procedure for detecting genetic disorders** and shaping a healthier future for every child.

TEJAS

Context:

The indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) called Tejas has **completed seven years of service** in the Indian Air Force.

About Light Combat Aircraft (LCA):

The LCA programme was started by the Government of India in **1984 to replace ageing Mig 21 fighter** planes. The government established the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) (under the Department of Defence Research and Development) to manage the LCA programme.

Designed by	Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)	
Manufactured by	Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)	
Features	Lightest, smallest, and tailless multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its class.	
Designed to carry a range of air-to-air, air-to-surface , precision-guided weapons.		
Air-to-air refuelling capability , care-free handling, enhanced manoeuvrability, multi-mode airborne radar, and self-protection suite		
Maximum payload capacity of 4000 kg .		
Maximum speed of Mach 1.8 .		
The range of the aircraft is 3,000 km .		

Variants	Tejas Trainer: 2-seater operational conversion trainer for training air force pilots.
	LCA Navy: Twin- and single-seat carrier-capable for the Indian Navy.
	LCA Tejas Navy MK2: Phase 2 of the LCA Navy variant.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCA Tejas Mk-1A: Improvement over the LCA Tejas Mk1 with a higher thrust engine. LCA Mk2 is an upgraded version of the LCA Tejas Mk1. It will replace Jaguars, MiG-29s, and Mirage 2000s. The General Electric GE-414 engine (from the USA) will power the LCA Mk2.

ESARAS MOBILE APP

Context:

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) has launched the **eSARAS mobile app** to support the marketing of products made by **women in self-help groups (SHGs)**.

The app aims to **provide a platform for the marketing of authentic handicrafts and handlooms**. The initiative aims to promote local products and enhance livelihood opportunities for SHG members.

Usage: The example can be used in e-governance/Governance questions related to SHGs.

GUCCHI MUSHROOM

Context:

Gucchi mushroom hunters are **facing distressing circumstances** for the second consecutive year as a **result of unpredictable weather patterns, early springs, and above-average temperatures, leading to another season of low yield**.

- These mushrooms are sought after for their **nutty, earthy flavour and are notoriously difficult to find**.

About Guichi Mushroom:

- The Guchhi mushroom is a **species of fungus in the family Morchellaceae of the Ascomycota**. They are **pale yellow in colour** with large pits and ridges on the surface of the cap, raised on a large white stem.
- These mushrooms are also **replete with health benefits**. They are **rich in potassium, vitamins and copper**. They are also a **rich source of vitamin D apart from several B vitamins**.
- It is further rich in **antioxidants that prevent health issues including heart diseases and diabetes by removing reactive oxygen species that harm the**

body.

Climate change, deforestation, and habitat destruction have also contributed to the rarity of gucchi mushrooms. The reduction in supplies has impacted both pickers and traders, leading to a decline in the overall production of morels.

FAUNAL AND FLORAL DATABASE

Context:

In 2022, India witnessed significant additions to its faunal and floral databases. A total of 664 animal species were added, including 467 new species and 197 new records.

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) compiled the faunal discoveries in a publication called "Animal Discoveries - New Species and New Records 2023," while the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) published the plant discoveries in "Plant Discoveries 2022."

Findings:

- The state of Kerala recorded the highest number of new discoveries, with 82 animal species and 15 new records.
- The discoveries encompassed various taxa, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, and more.

BHARAT 6G ALLIANCE

Context:

The Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA) has been formed as a collaborative platform involving public and private companies, academia, research institutions, and standards development organizations.

- The alliance aims to foster international collaboration, forge coalitions with global 6G alliances, and drive the design, development, and deployment of 6G technologies in India.

Objectives of B6GA:

- To enable India to become a leading global supplier of intellectual property, products and solutions of affordable 5G and 6G and other future telecom solutions.
- To deploy 6G technologies to act as a powerful force multiplier for India by 2030.
- To understand the business and societal needs of 6G beyond technology requirements.
- To develop recommendations for Bharat 6G Vision implementation readiness in India.

Other initiatives launched

Two agreements were signed for projects under Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF). TTDF scheme was launched by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) in

2022.

USOF is a body under DoT. 5% of annual collections from USOF are available for TTDF for funding R&D in rural-specific communication technology applications and form synergies among academia, start-ups, and industry to build and develop a telecom ecosystem.

JOINT OCEAN EXPEDITION TO STUDY MARITIME CHANGES

Context:

Scientists from Bangladesh and Mauritius have joined forces with Indian maritime experts for a landmark joint ocean expedition.

- The expedition involves research on ocean data to better understand and manage changes in the marine environment and oceanic parameters.
- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) is leading the expedition, which resulted from the CSC Oceanographers and Hydrographers.
- The research vessel 'Sagar Nidhi,' operated by the National Institute of Ocean Technology, is facilitating the expedition.
- Sagar Nidhi is a multidisciplinary vessel equipped with advanced technology for conducting geoscientific, meteorological, and oceanographic research.
- It has the capability to navigate in blue-water conditions and has previously ventured into Antarctic waters.

TRAFFICKING IN BORDER AREAS

Context:

The government has announced plans to assist border states and union territories in setting up homes for the rehabilitation of trafficking victims, particularly children and minors.

Ministry:

The Women and Child Development Ministry will provide financial aid to these regions to establish shelters that will offer protection, rehabilitation, and support services to victims of trafficking.

Provisions:

These homes will provide essentials such as shelter, food, clothing, counselling, and primary healthcare facilities.

What is Human trafficking?

Human trafficking refers to the illegal trade and exploitation of individuals through force, coercion, or deception for various purposes such as forced labour, sexual exploitation, and organ trafficking. It involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring, or receipt of people by means of threat, fraud,

or abduction for the purpose of exploitation.

India's Status:

India is both a **source and destination country for human trafficking**, with neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar being the main sources.

Constitutional Status:

- **Article 23 prohibits human trafficking** and begar (forced labour without payment).
- **Article 24 forbids the employment** of children below the age of 14 years in dangerous jobs like factories and mines.

Schemes:

- The Women and Child Development Ministry have been providing financial assistance under the **Nirbhaya Fund to establish Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTU)** across the country, including in **border guarding forces** like the BSF and SSB.
 - As of now, 788 AHTUs, including 30 in border guarding forces, are functional.
- Sponsorship under the **Mission Vatsalya Scheme**, which focuses on the protection and welfare of children.
- Anti-Trafficking Nodal Cell (Ministry of Home Affairs)

SWAMIH INVESTMENT FUND

Context:

The PM has congratulated new homeowners in Bengaluru's first project under SWAMIH Fund which has helped more than 3000 families in owning their dream homes.

What is the SWAMIH Investment Fund?

- The Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (**SWAMIH**) is a **social impact fund** specifically formed (in 2019) for **completing stressed and stalled residential projects**.
- **The Fund is sponsored by** the Ministry of Finance and is **managed by** SBICAP Ventures Ltd - a State Bank Group company.
- **It is considered the lender of last resort** for distressed projects since it considers -
 - First-time developers,
 - Established developers with troubled projects,
 - Developers with a poor track record of stalled projects,
 - Customer complaints and NPA accounts, and
 - Even projects where there are litigation issues.
- The Fund's presence in a project often acts as a **catalyst for better collections and sales** primarily in projects that were delayed for years.

- **It has raised Rs 15,530 crore so far** with an aim to provide priority debt financing for the completion of stressed, brownfield and RERA-registered residential projects that fall in the affordable, mid-income housing category.

REGULATION OF THE DIGITAL MARKET

Context:

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) and the Ministry of Information Technology (MeitY) in India have clarified their respective roles in the **regulation of the digital market, to remove the duplicity of regulations on digital markets**.

Demarcated Roles:

Ministry	Role
Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)	Oversees all competition issues in the digital market.
Ministry of Information Technology (MeitY)	Handles sector-specific and technical issues in the digital market.

Status of India's digital market:

- **India's digital market** is experiencing rapid growth and transformation. It encompasses various sectors such as e-commerce, digital payments, online services, social media, and digital advertising. It is expected to touch **\$ 1 trillion by 2025-26**.
- The government is working towards **introducing legislation including Digital India Act and Digital Competition Law** to regulate the growing digital market.

RELEASE OF TREATED WATER INTO THE SEA AT FUKUSHIMA

Context:

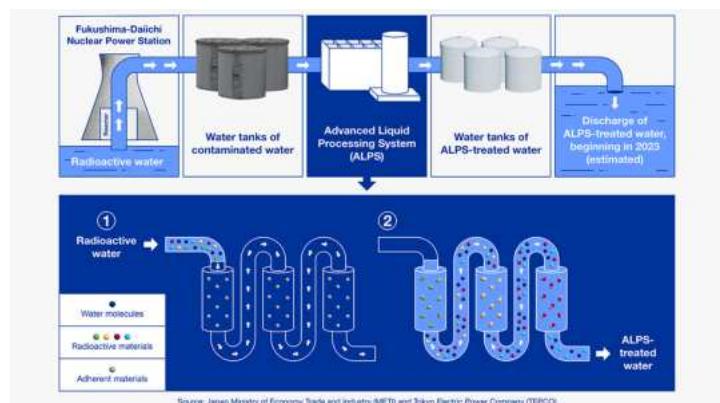
The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has conducted a safety review and concluded that Japan's plans to release treated water from the **Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station into the sea** are consistent with international safety standards.

Background of the event:

In 2011, a **major nuclear accident occurred at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station** in Japan following a **massive earthquake and tsunami**. The natural disaster led to a **loss of power and cooling system failures**, resulting in the meltdowns of **three reactors** and the release of **radio-active materials**. It was one of the most significant nuclear accidents since the **Chornobyl disaster in 1986**.

Water Treatment:

Water stored at the site got contaminated during the incident. The contaminated water had caesium and strontium. They were removed periodically and now the water has been treated through an **Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS)** to remove almost all radioactivity, aside from **tritium**. Before discharging, Japan will **dilute the water to bring the tritium to below regulatory standards**.



About IAEA:

The International Atomic Energy Agency (HQ: Vienna; founded: 1957) is an **intergovernmental organization** that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

Purpose:

The IAEA strengthens the **global nuclear safety and security framework**. It identifies and promotes best practices and safety standards and implements programs to assist states in applying these standards. The IAEA is also a **key player in the effort to prevent nuclear terrorism**.

FEROCIOUS BLACK HOLES REVEAL 'TIME DILATION' IN THE EARLY UNIVERSE

Context:

Scientists conducted a **study using observations of quasars, powerful black holes, to demonstrate "time dilation" in the early universe**.

- The study showed that **time passed only about a fifth as quickly as it does today**, around 12.3 billion years ago when the universe was much younger.

About Quasars:

- Quasars are **tremendously active supermassive black holes** millions to billions of times more massive than our sun, usually **residing at centres of galaxies**.
- They **devour matter drawn to them by their immense gravitational pull and unleash torrents of radiation** including jets of high-energy particles, while

a glowing disk of matter spins around them.

Significance:

- This supports Einstein's theory of relativity, **which states that time and space are intertwined and that the universe has been expanding since the Big Bang**.
- Time dilation means that if **one could travel back to that time, a second would still feel like a second, but from the perspective of a person today, a second back then would unfold in five seconds**. This study adds to **previous evidence of time dilation based on observations of supernovas**, and it **highlights the complexity of time in modern physics**.

GRAVITY HOLE

Context:

A recent study suggests that the **colossal and mysterious "Gravity Hole"** in the Indian Ocean may be the remnants of an ancient sea that disappeared millions of years ago.

What is Gravity Hole?

A "Gravity Hole" refers to a **large gravity anomaly**, an area where gravity is significantly different from the surrounding regions. It is characterized by a substantial decrease in gravitational pull compared to the expected value based on the Earth's normal gravitational field.

The causes of gravity holes can vary, **including geological structures, variations in mass distribution, or other factors that affect the gravitational field** in a particular area.

The phenomenon is estimated to have **formed approximately 20 million years ago** and is expected to endure for millions more.

More about the News:

The Gravity Hole is a **massive region in the Indian Ocean**, about 1,200 kilometres southwest of the southernmost tip of India, and has such a **low pull of gravity that the sea level of the Indian Ocean over the "hole" is around 106 metres below the global average**. This pronounced dip in the ocean is called **Indian Ocean geoid low (IOGL)** and was discovered in 1948

- Known as the **Indian Ocean geoid low (IOGL)**, this vast depression spans **over 2 million square miles and lies more than 600 miles beneath the Earth's crust**.
- The study proposes that the **IOGL consists of slabs from the Tethys Ocean**, which was a sea that separated the supercontinents of Gondwana and Laurasia.
- The Tethys Ocean is believed to have **influenced the African Large Low Shear Velocity province**, generating **plumes beneath the Indian Ocean**.

CMV AND TOMV

Context:

Tomato growers in Maharashtra and Karnataka have reported crop losses due to attacks by **two different viruses: the cucumber mosaic virus (CMV) in Maharashtra and the tomato mosaic virus (ToMV) in Karnataka** and other South Indian states.

- Both viruses belong to different viral families and spread through different means.
- ToMV primarily spreads through **infected seeds, saplings, and agricultural tools, while CMV is transmitted by aphids.**
- High temperatures followed by **intermittent rain create favourable conditions for CMV spread.**

Controlling these viruses involves following **biosafety standards, treating seeds, discarding infected material, and practising good agricultural practices.** CMV has a **wide range of hosts, making control more challenging, while ToMV can remain dormant in weeds and plant remains.**

NATURE RESTORATION LAW

Context:

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has called on the European Union (EU) to invest in nature restoration, emphasizing the long-term economic impacts of failing to do so.

What is Nature Restoration Law?

The Nature Restoration Law is a **proposed legislation aimed at restoring and conserving natural areas and ecosystems.** It sets **legally binding targets for nature restoration** in various sectors such as agriculture, forest, marine, freshwater, and urban systems.

EU's agreement:

- **In May 2023, the IUCN urged the EU to come up with a targeted and meaningful restoration for strengthening the resilience and sustainability of the EU economy.**
- The EU Council recently agreed to **restore 20% of its land and sea by 2030** and pledged to restore **entire ecosystems by 2050.**

Importance of Nature restoration:

- The IUCN highlights the **impressive returns of financing nature restoration, with every Euro spent having an eight-fold return and benefits worth 38 Euros.**
- Nature restoration is important for **resilience, climate, and biodiversity targets**
- It plays a critical role in **maintaining healthy ecosystems** in achieving these goals.

About IUCN:

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (HQ: Gland, Switzerland, founded: 1948) is an international organization working in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It is involved in data gathering and analysis, research, field projects, advocacy, and education.

FARMERS DISTRESS INDEX

Context:

The **Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA) in India** has developed a **unique early warning system known as the "farmers' distress index."**

Significance of the index:

- The purpose of this index is to **minimize agrarian distress, including crop loss, failure, and income shocks, which have led to an increase in farmer suicides.**
- The index's methodology involves **monitoring local newspapers, news platforms, and social media for reports of distress, followed by telephonic interviews with small and marginal farmers to assess early signs of distress using standardized questions.**
- The index allows for targeted interventions, **such as focusing on improving women's incomes if the distress is gender-based.**

NEW METHANE SOURCE

Context:

Climate change is causing **groundwater springs to release methane in the Arctic as retreating glaciers expose these methane-rich springs,** according to a study published in Nature Geoscience.

- The groundwater springs found in Svalbard, an archipelago in the Arctic, **could be emitting over 2,000 tonnes of methane annually, which is equivalent to 10% of Norway's methane emissions from its oil and gas industry.**
- The presence of methane near shale rocks suggests **a geologic or thermogenic source of gas that moves upward through fractures in the rocks and accumulates beneath the glacier.**

As global warming continues and glaciers retreat further, **the release of methane from glacial groundwater springs is expected to increase, highlighting the need to assess the risk and impact of these emissions.**

MICROPLASTICS

Context:

A report by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** highlights the significant impact of **microplastics and nano plastics on human and animal gut microbiomes and the environment.**

Findings:

- Exposure to plastic has been **observed to cause intestinal inflammation and gut dysbiosis, altering the gut microbiome and microbiota.**
- Microplastics and nano plastics are known to **affect soil microorganisms and can enter the food chain.** Evidence suggests that these particles have been **found in human lung tissue, placenta, stool, blood, and meconium.**
- Most studies in the report indicate **alterations in the host due to microplastic exposure, including changes in gene markers, biochemical markers, mucus layer, gut permeability, oxidative stress, immune response, and liver function.**

About Microplastics:

Microplastics are plastic particles less than 5mm in diameter. They are of two types,

- **Primary Microplastics:** They are tiny particles designed for **commercial use and microfibers shed from clothing and other textiles.** E.g., microbeads found in personal care products, plastic pellets, and plastic fibres.
- **Secondary Microplastics:** They are formed from the **breakdown of larger plastics such as water bottles.**

WORLD INVESTMENT REPORT

Context:

Recently, UNCTAD released the **World Investment Report 2023.**

About World Investment Report:

- The World Investment Report focuses **on trends in foreign direct investment (FDI) worldwide, at the regional and country levels and emerging measures to improve its contribution to development.**
- It also **provides an analysis of global value chains and the operations of multinational enterprises, with special attention to their development implications.**

Key Findings:

- **India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were the top recipients, with a 10% and 5% increase respectively. Asia accounted for over 50% of global FDI.**

- The FDI growth in developing countries was **concentrated in a few large emerging economies, with India, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the United Arab Emirates accounting for nearly 80% of FDI flows to the region.**
- India saw a **10% increase in FDI, making it the third-largest host country for greenfield project announcements** and the second-largest for international project finance deals.
- Singapore was the largest recipient of FDI in the Southeast Asian region.
- The report highlights the **widening investment deficit in developing countries as they strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in energy, water, and transport infrastructure.**

The World Investment Report 2023 calls for a **compact outlining priority actions**, including financing mechanisms and investment policies, to ensure sustainable energy for all. The report also provides an analysis of **FDI trends**, rankings of **transnational corporations**, policy recommendations, and statistical data at the country level.

PESTE DES PETITS RUMINANTS (PPR)

Context:

An outbreak of a highly contagious disease, known as “sheep and goat plague,” has resulted in the death of around 60 sheep and goats, with over 200 animals falling sick in the **Hadsar pasture near Tindi of Lahaul-Spiti.**

PPR is a **highly contagious viral disease**, caused by a **morbillivirus** closely related to the rinderpest virus, and affects goats, sheep, and some wild relatives of domesticated small ruminants, as well as camels. It is characterized by severe morbidity and mortality rates. The virus does not infect humans.

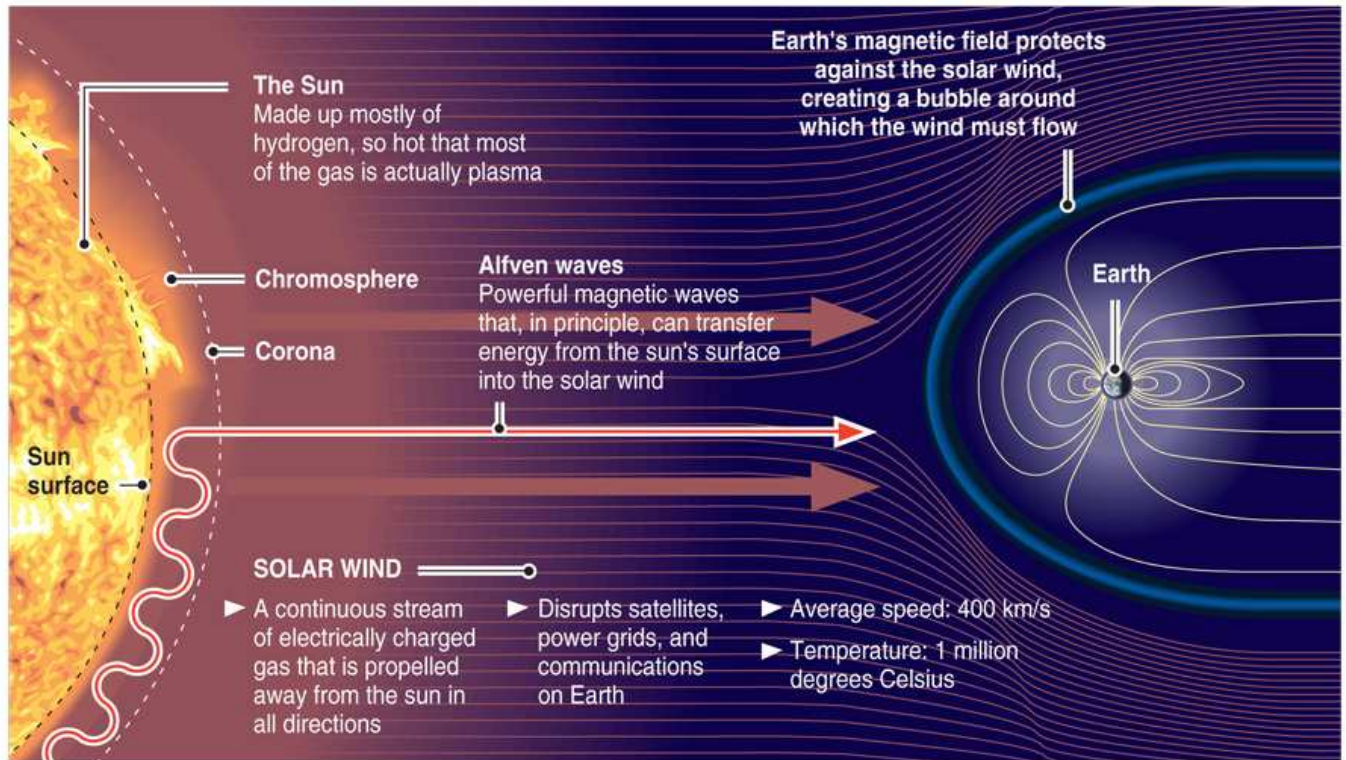
X-CLASS SOLAR FLARE

Context:

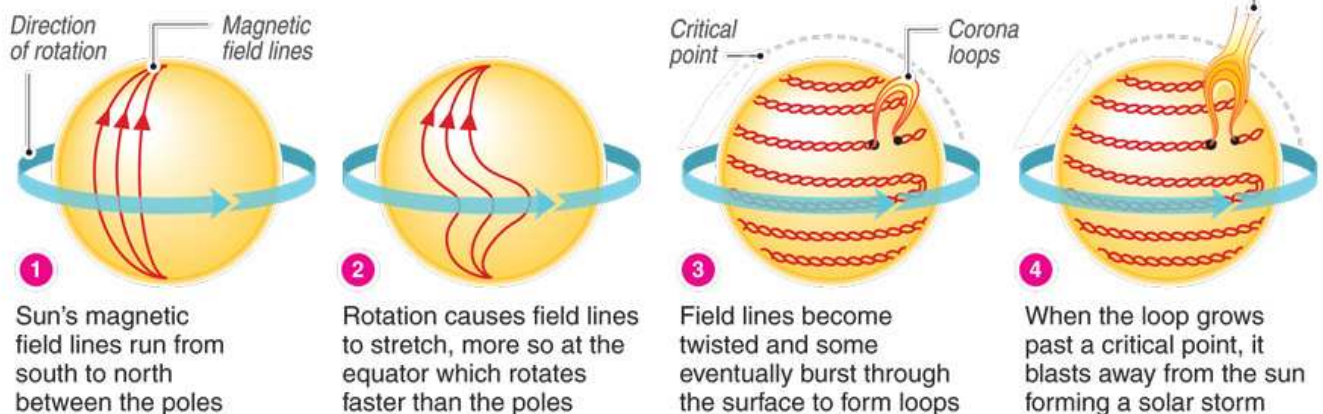
Recently, a powerful solar flare, **classified as an “X-class” flare**, hit Earth, causing an **eruption of X-ray and ultraviolet radiation.**

- The flare resulted in a radio blackout for about an hour in **parts of southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand due to the ionization of the upper atmosphere.**
- This event follows a series of **strong solar activities, including coronal holes and eruptions, which even led to the appearance of the Northern Lights as far south as Arizona.**
- The Sun has already produced **three moderate “M-class” flares in the past day**, and there is a forecast for more M-class flares in the coming days, with a slight chance of another X-class flare.

SOLAR FLARES



HOW A SOLAR FLARE IS FORMED



Source: NASA

Drawings are not to scale

Graphic: K. Pong/G. Cabrera/RNGS

REUTERS

The frequency of solar flares and eruptions is **expected to increase** as the Sun approaches the peak of its 11-year solar cycle in 2025.

Solar flare classification	Associated X-ray flux - I (W/m ²)	Possible effects on Earth
B	$I < 1E-06$	none
C	$1E-06 \leq I < 1E-05$	Possible effects on space missions.
M	$1E-05 \leq I < 1E-04$	Blackout in radio transmissions and possible damages in astronauts outside spacecraft.
X	$I \geq 1E-04$	Damage to satellites, communication systems, power distribution stations and electronic equipment

LIGO-INDIA

Context:

LIGO-India, a **new gravitational-wave observatory**, is set to put India on the research map and contribute to our understanding of the Universe.

- Currently, there are two LIGO setups in the US, and a third one will be built in the **Hingoli district of Maharashtra, India**. The facility's construction is expected to be completed by 2030.

LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory) is a physics experiment designed to **detect gravitational waves**, which are ripples in the fabric of spacetime caused by massive objects in accelerated motion.

What are Gravitational Waves?

Gravitational waves are ripples in the **fabric of space and time** that travel at the speed of light. They are created by the **motion of massive objects**, such as black holes or neutron stars, which generate gravitational waves when they orbit or collide with each other.

According to **Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity**, any object with mass warps the space-time around it. When two massive objects orbit each other or collide, they produce ripples or waves in space-time that propagate outward at the speed of light.

Gravitational waves are **extremely weak and difficult to detect**. They were first directly detected by the **Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO)** in 2015, a century after they were predicted by Einstein's theory.

Know more about LIGO-India: [Here](#)

Other Gulf countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia have also invested in their space programs, with Saudi Arabia even sending the **first female Arab astronaut to space**.

India- UAE Space Cooperation:

ISRO and UAE Space Agency (UAESA) signed an MoU to facilitate cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes in 2016. **UAE's first nanosatellite, 'Nayif-1'**, was launched by PSLV from Sriharikota to collect environmental space data.

EX SALVEX

Context:

The **Indian Navy and the US Navy** recently collaborated for the **seventh edition of the IN-USN Salvage and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) exercise**, known as **SALVEX**.

- During the **ten-day exercise**, the teams engaged in **knowledge and experience sharing in maritime salvage**. They focused on various disciplines, including **mine detection and neutralization, wreck location, and salvage**.

Through joint training, the **participants developed lasting bonds and improved their operational capabilities, promoting interoperability and adopting the best practices** from each other's maritime traditions.

- SALVEX 2023 is regarded as a **significant milestone in naval cooperation, highlighting the dedication to excellence in salvage operations and EOD expertise demonstrated by the Indian and US Navies**.

UAE AND SPACE

Context:

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has made **significant strides in its space exploration ambitions**, with a focus on becoming a **global power in the sector**.

Key aims and achievements:

- The UAE has established a **National Space Fund of AED 3 billion (₹6,600 crores)** to strengthen its position in the space industry and diversify its economy.
- Projects launched:** Emirates Mars Mission, which aims to study the atmosphere and climate of Mars
- Planning to launch** Rashid Rover, UAE's Moon Mission
- Arab Space Pioneers program** which trains young talents in space technologies.
- It sent **astronauts to the International Space Station**
- It launched **satellites for remote sensing and urban planning purposes**
- UAE's long-term goals include **building a human settlement on Mars by 2117** and exploring the asteroid belt.

MAPPING

PANGONG TSO LAKE

Both India and China have ramped up infrastructure development on the north bank of **Pangong Tso Lake in eastern Ladakh** and western Tibet. China is constructing a bridge to connect the north and south banks of the lake, while India is building a **black-topped road** on its side of the north bank. The ongoing tensions between the two sides have led to **gridlock in Corps Commander-level talks, with remaining friction points at Depsang and Demchok**.

Pangong Tso is an **endorheic lake** (bodies of water that do not flow into an ocean or a sea) **spanning** eastern Ladakh and West Tibet situated at an elevation of 4,225 m. It is 134 km long and divided into five sub-lakes. It is the **world's highest saltwater lake**. Its water, which seems to be dyed in blue, stands in stark contrast to the arid mountains surrounding it. One-third of the Pangong Lake lies in India and the other two-thirds in China.



INDIA-MYANMAR-THAILAND TRI-LATERAL HIGHWAY

According to the Union Ministry of Road and Transport, approximately 70% of the construction work on the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway has been completed.

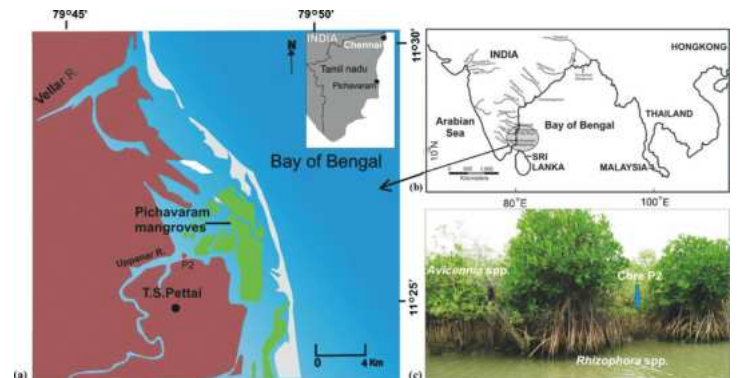
India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (IMT Highway), a 1,360 km long route, is a highway under construction under India's **Look East policy** that will connect **Moreh, India with Mae Sot, Thailand via Myanmar**. Also, there is a proposal to extend it to **Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam**



PICHAVARAM REGION

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department has **formulated a comprehensive plan to restore coastal habitats and rehabilitate degraded mangroves in the Cuddalore district**, particularly in the Pichavaram region.

Pichavaram consists of a **number of islands interspersing a vast expanse** of water covered with mangrove forest. The **Pichavaram mangrove Forest** is one of the largest mangrove forests in India covering about **45 sq km of area**. It is separated from the **Bay of Bengal** by a sand bar.



BOGIBEEL IN DIBRUGARH

The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, has laid the foundation stone for an **Inland Waterways Transport (IWT) terminal** at Bogibeel in Dibrugarh, Assam (by the bank of the river Brahmaputra (National Waterways 2)).

The government intends to increase the share of Inland Water Transport (IWT) to 5% as per **Maritime India Vision (MIV)-2030**.

Bogibeel has Bogibeel Bridge. It is the **longest rail-cum-road bridge in India**, measuring **4.94 kilometres** over the Brahmaputra River



KENYA

Kenyan President William Ruto has lifted a **six-year ban on logging** despite concerns from environmentalists. Ruto argued that it was wasteful to let mature trees rot in forests while local industries faced a **shortage of timber**.

Kenya is a country in East Africa with a coastline on the Indian Ocean. It encompasses the **savannah, Lakelands, the dramatic Great Rift Valley** and mountain highlands. It's also home to **wildlife like lions, elephants and rhinos**. From Nairobi, the capital, safaris visit the Maasai Mara Reserve, known for its annual wildebeest migrations, and Amboseli National Park, offering views of Tanzania's **5,895m Mt. Kilimanjaro**.



TAIWAN

Taiwan has announced the **opening of its third representative office in India**, in Mumbai, in a **move aimed at strengthening economic linkages** between the two countries. Despite **not having formal diplomatic relations**, India and Taiwan have made progress in various domains such as economics, trade, and technology.

Taiwan produces **92% of the world's most advanced logic chips** and **70% of smartphone chipsets**, among other critical components.

Taiwan, officially the Republic of China, is a country in East Asia. It is located at the junction of the **East and South China Seas** in the northwestern Pacific Ocean, with the People's Republic of China to the northwest, Japan to the northeast, and the Philippines to the south.



ZAPORIZHZHYA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT (UKRAINE)

The Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine, currently in a war zone, faces several risks to its safety and operation. The plant has VVER-1000 reactors and incorporates safety enhancements implemented after the Chornobyl and Fukushima accidents.

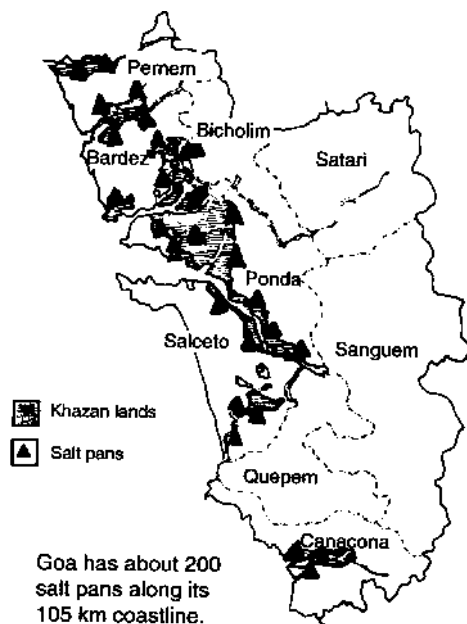
Ukraine is a country in Eastern Europe. It is the second-largest European country after Russia. It is also bordered by Belarus to the north; **Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary** to the west; and by Romania and Moldova to the southwest; with a coastline along the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov to the south and southeast



KHAZAN LAND (GOA)

Recently, NGT highlighted the **failure of the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority** to follow environmental rules for **construction on Khazan land** at Cavelossim.

Khazans are coastal wetlands of Goa. They were reclaimed from mangrove forests (in the pre-Christian Era) by an intricate system of dykes, sluice gates and canals and put to multiple productive uses such as agriculture, aquaculture and salt panning. **They are low-lying, saline water-logged areas.**



ANTARCTICA'S BLOOD FALLS

After more than a century of curiosity, scientists have finally unravelled the mystery behind **Antarctica's Blood Falls**, a **bright red waterfall that flows from Taylor Glacier**. The iconic red hue is caused by the **presence of small "iron-rich nanospheres"** (various elements such as iron, silicon, calcium, aluminium, and sodium) in the water.

The Taylor Glacier is an Antarctic glacier about 54 kilometres long, flowing from the plateau of Victoria Land into the western end of Taylor Valley, north of the Kukri Hills, south of the Asgard Range.



ZANZIBAR (TANZANIA)

India is set to establish its **first Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) campus** outside the country in Zanzibar, Tanzania. This move aligns with **India's National Education Policy 2020** and aims to enhance educational cooperation between the two nations.

Zanzibar is a Tanzanian archipelago off the coast of East Africa. It is Stone Town, a historic trade centre with Swahili and Islamic influences.

Tanzania is an East African country known for its vast wilderness areas. They include the plains of Serengeti National Park, populated by the "big five" game (elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, rhino), and Kilimanjaro National Park, home to Africa's highest mountain.

