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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Sudan Crisis and Operation Kaveri

Context:- India has started 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate its nationals owing to the Current Crisis in Sudan.

- Sudan is facing a crisis due to fighting between two rival military factions.
- The conflict involves the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).
- The fighting began in April 2022 after tensions rose following the coup that saw the two factions topple a civilian government in October 2021.
- The conflict began when an internationally-backed plan to launch a new transition with civilian parties was floated.
- Under the plan, both the army and the RSF had to cede power, but two issues were contentious: the formal placing of the army under civilian oversight and the timetable for the RSF to be integrated into the regular armed forces.

What is Operation Kaveri?

- Operation Kaveri is a codename for India's evacuation effort to bring back its citizens stranded in Sudan amid intense fighting between the army and a rival paramilitary force there.
- The operation involves the deployment of Indian Navy's INS Sumedha, a stealth offshore patrol vessel, and two Indian Air Force C-130J special operations aircraft on standby in Jeddah.
- There are about 2,800 Indian nationals in Sudan, and there is also a settled Indian community of about 1,200 in the country.

Implications of the Conflict

- The volatile region, which borders the Red Sea, the Sahel, and the Horn of Africa, could be destabilized if the fighting continues.
- **Economic Crisis:** Sudan's economy is struggling, battered by hyperinflation and crippled by massive foreign debt.
- Since Sudan's location borders seven countries, this conflict may spill over into neighboring countries and destabilize the region. Chad and South Sudan are particularly vulnerable.
- The situation could lead to major external intervention if the fighting continues. Refugees from Sudan's contested areas have already arrived in Chad.

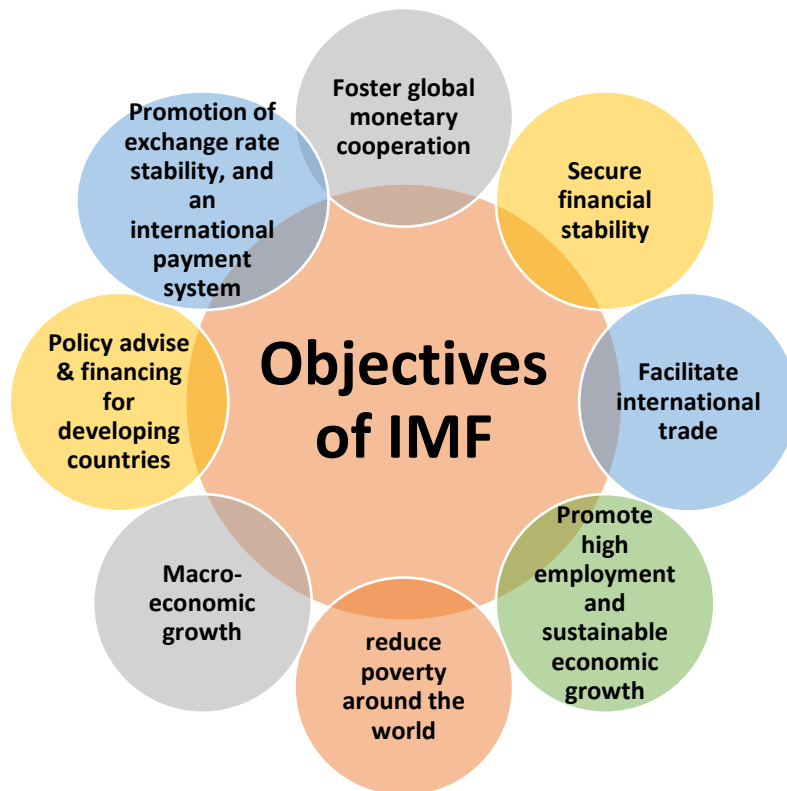
Spring Meetings 2023

Context:- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group (WBG) held their Spring Meetings in Washington DC, United States.

- The discussions focused on issues of international concern, such as the international debt crisis, rising inflation, climate and development, poverty eradication, and slowing economic growth.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an organization of 190 member countries, each of which has representation on the IMF's executive board in proportion to its financial importance, so that the most powerful countries in the global economy have the most voting power.



World Bank Group

- With 189 member countries, the World Bank Group is a unique global partnership: five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.
- The Bank Group works with country governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, regional development banks, think tanks, and other international institutions on issues ranging from climate change, conflict, and food security to education, agriculture, finance, and trade.
- The World Bank's two institutions comprise IBRD and IDA whereas the World Bank Group consists of five organizations in total, all of which share a commitment to eradicating poverty, increasing shared prosperity, and promoting sustainable development. These 5 institutions are:

1. IBRD- The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

2. IDA- The International Development Association

3. IFC- The International Finance Corporation

4. MIGA- The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency

5. ICSID- The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Dispute

India and EFTA

Context:- In a recent meeting held in New Delhi, India and the four European countries that form the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) have expressed their willingness to resume their negotiations for a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) that has been stalled since 2018.

- The TEPA aims to boost bilateral trade and economic cooperation between the two regions by reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers, enhancing market access, and promoting investment flows.

European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is the intergovernmental organization of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.
- These countries are not part of the European Union (EU).
- It was set up in 1960 by its then seven Member States for the promotion of free trade and economic integration between its members.
- EFTA was founded by the Stockholm Convention in 1960.
- EFTA was founded as an alternative for states that did not wish to join the European Community (EC).
- EFTA was founded by the Stockholm Convention on May 3, 1960, with Austria, Denmark, Great Britain, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland as its founding members.

POLITY

Governor's Power

Context:- Supreme Court (SC) have observed that bills sent to the governor for assent must be returned "as soon as possible" and not sit over them, causing Gubernatorial Procrastination and making state Legislative Assemblies wait indefinitely.

The SC observed as a part of judicial order in a petition filed by the State of Telangana complaining that the Governor has kept pending several important Bills sent.

Constitutional Position of the Governor

- **Article 153:** Article 153 of the Indian Constitution mandates the appointment of a Governor in each state. The 7th Amendment to the Constitution however, allows for the appointment of the same person as Governor of two or more states.
- **Article 154:** The Governor shall have executive power over the state, which he shall exercise either directly or through officers subordinate to him in conformity with this Constitution.
- **Article 163:** There shall be a council of ministers, led by the Chief Minister, to assist and advise the Governor in the exercise of his powers, except when he is compelled to execute his functions at his discretion.
- **Article 164:** The council of ministers is collectively responsible to the state's legislative assembly. This provision is the cornerstone of the state's parliamentary system of governance.

The Constitutional Power of the Governor related to State Bills

- What Article 200 says: The Constitution provides certain options for the Governor to exercise when a Bill reaches him from the Assembly.
- Article 200 of the Indian Constitution deals with the Governor's powers in relation to assenting to legislation enacted by the State legislature and other functions of the Governor such as reserving the bill for consideration by the President.

There are Four Possible Scenarios:

- i. **Assent:** He may give assent.
- ii. **Reconsider:** He can send it back to the Assembly requesting it to reconsider some provisions of the Bill, or the Bill itself. In this case, if the Assembly passes the Bill without making any change and sends it back to the Governor, he will have to give assent to it.
- iii. **Reserve:** The third option is to reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President.
- iv. **Withhold:** The fourth option, of course, is to withhold the assent

Veto over State Bills

- The governor is empowered to reserve certain types of bills passed by the state legislature for the consideration of the President.
- Then, the Governor will not have any further role in the enactment of the bill.
- The President can withhold his assent to such bills not only in the first instance but also in the second instance.
- Thus, the President enjoys absolute veto (and not suspensive veto) over state bills.
- Further, the President can exercise pocket veto in respect of state legislation also..

Issues with Pending Bills:



Way Forward

Timeframe for assent:

The Supreme Court can consider fixing a reasonable time frame for Governors to take a decision on a Bill passed by the Assembly, in the larger interest of federalism in the country

Dialogue between the Centre and States:

There is a need for a dialogue between the Centre and States to address this issue and ensure that the constitutional provisions are upheld.

Public awareness and activism:

It is important to raise public awareness and activism on this issue and demand that the constitutional provisions are followed in a transparent, fair, and timely manner.

Mandal Commission

Context:- The second phase of the caste survey beginning in Bihar and several other political debates have brought Mandal Politics once again in news.

Mandal Commission:

- The Mandal Commission or the second Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission, was established in India in 1979 with a mandate to "identify the socially or educationally backward classes" of India.
- It was headed by B. P. Mandal and submitted its report in 1980 and was implemented in 1990.
- The Commission reported that 52% of the country's population was comprised of OBCs. Initially, the commission argued that the percentage of reservations in government service should match this percentage.

Mandal Commission Recommendation

In accordance, the Mandal Commission reports that the country is composed of 52 % OBCs. In the beginning, the Government argued that the percentage of the reservation provided must match the total percentage of OBCs in the country. However, this would breach the orders of the Supreme Court. The following points mentioned below analyzed the Mandal Commission recommendations in detail.

- Reservation of 27% of seats for the people belonging to the lower strata of society in the central government and public sector services.
- Reservation of 27% of the promotions for the Other Backward Class in the Public services.
- The Age relaxation would be the same as that of Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe.
- Reservations are to be made for the OBCs in various sectors like Public Sector undertakings, banks, government services, schools, and colleges, along with universities.
- A roster system should be made for the backward classes as that of Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe.
- The Government of India to make necessary and required provisions to implement all these recommendations.

Impact Of Mandal Commission

The Mandal Commission had its own advantages and disadvantages. While it gave privileges to the lower section of society, the egalitarian view of society was compromised. The following points mentioned below analyze the impacts of the Mandal Commission report and its merits and demerits:

- The then Prime Minister V.P Singh announced the implementation of the Mandal Commission in 1990. This led to violent protests in the northern and western parts of India. Many students from different backgrounds immolated themselves in the protest. As a result, various students died due to the protest.

- However, the southern part of India has a very mild reaction. As there were 50 % of the reservations touched in these states. Moreover, the youth of these states were not dependent upon government-provided services because they had a better industrial sector. In 1993, Prime Minister Narshima Rao intended to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. However, the reaction from the public was mild.

Dima Hasao Peace Pact

Context:- Recently, the Dimasa National Liberation Army (DNLA) signed a Peace Agreement with the Assam government and the Union Government.

What is Dimasa National Liberation Army(DNLA)?

- Dimasa National Liberation Army(DNLA) is an insurgent group operating mostly in Assam's Dima Hasao district.
- It was established in April 2019 seeking a sovereign territory for the Dimasa tribals and launched an armed insurgency to achieve its goal.

Dima Hasao Peace Pact

- The peace pact makes the DNLA lay down its arms and abide by the Constitution of India.
- The group will disband tier-armed organization, vacate all camps occupied by DNLA cadres and join the mainstream.
- The central and state governments will provide Rs 500 crore each for the development of the Dimasa tribal areas.
- Dimasa Welfare Council will be set up by the Government of Assam to protect, preserve and promote a social, cultural, and linguistic identity to meet political, economic and educational aspirations.
- Government will also ensure speedy and focused development of the Dimasa people residing outside the jurisdiction of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC).

Dimasas

- The Dimasas (or Dimasa-Kacharis) are the earliest known rulers and settlers of Assam, and now live in Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai and Nagaon districts of central and southern Assam, as well as parts of Nagaland.
- Some of the historians describe them as "aborigines" or the "earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley".

ECONOMY

Small Savings Instruments

Context:- Government has increased interest rate on various small savings schemes for the fourth quarter of the current Financial Year starting from 1st January, 2023.

About Small Saving Schemes/Instruments

- Small Savings Schemes are a set of savings instruments managed by the central government with an aim to encourage citizens to save regularly irrespective of their age.
- They are popular as they not only provide returns that are generally higher than bank fixed deposits but also come with a sovereign guarantee and tax benefits.
- They are the major source of household savings in India and comprises 12 instruments.
- The depositors get an assured interest on their money.
- Collections from all small savings instruments are credited to the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF).
- The rates on these small savings schemes are calculated on the yields on government securities (G-secs).
- Small savings have emerged as a key source of financing the government deficit.

Small savings instruments can be classified as

- Postal Deposits comprising savings account, recurring deposits, time deposits of varying maturities and monthly income scheme.
- Savings Certificates: National Small Savings Certificate (NSC) and Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP).
- Social Security Schemes: Sukanya Samridhi Scheme, Public Provident Fund (PPF) and Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme (SCSS).

CGTMSE Scheme

Context:-The Union Minister for MSME recently launched the revamped Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) Scheme.

CGTMSE Scheme

- CGTMSE is jointly set up by the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Government of India and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to catalyze flow of institutional credit to Micro & Small Enterprises (MSEs).
- Established in 2000, CGTMSE has been instrumental in providing:
- Guarantee cover to collateral and/or third party guarantee free credit facilities
- CGTMSE has created a new landmark by touching the milestone figure of approving guarantees worth `1 lakh crore during FY 2022 - 23.

Changes in CGTMSE

- The modifications included reduction in guarantee fees for loans up to ₹1 crore by 50% bringing the minimum guarantee fee to the level of 0.37% pa only.
- Another major change announced was raising of ceiling for guarantee from ₹2 crore to ₹5 crore
- Enhancing the threshold limit for claim settlement without initiation of legal action to ₹10 lakh.

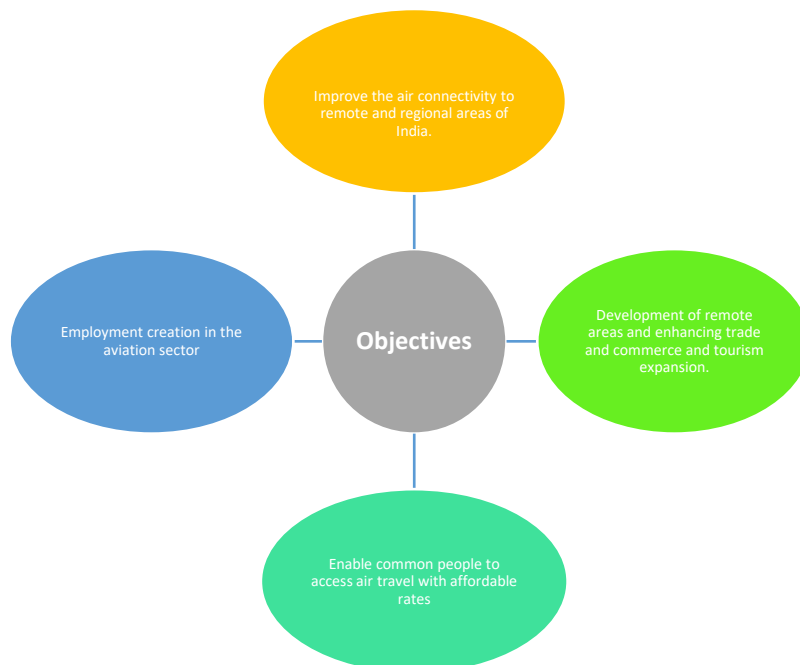
GOVERNANCE

UDAN 5.0 Scheme

Context:- Government has launched the fifth round of the Regional Connectivity Scheme – UDAN (UDAN 5.0).

UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme

- The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation for regional airport development and regional connectivity enhancement.
- It is a part of the National Civil Aviation Policy 2016.
- The scheme is applicable for a period of 10 years.



Features of UDAN Scheme

- Improving air transport infrastructure in all parts of the country with a special focus on remote areas.
- Making 425 unserved and underserved airports operational in the country.
- Improving the economy of the country by facilitating faster connectivity.
- Creating job opportunities in the aviation sector.
- Making air services available at lower prices.

Inter-State Water Dispute

Context: Odisha has complained to the Ministry of Jal Shakti under the Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act 1956 accusing Chhattisgarh of misleading the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT) by releasing water in Mahanadi river in the Non-Monsoon Season.

- The MWDT was formed in March 2018. The tribunal has been asked to submit its report by December 2025 by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- There is no inter-state agreement between Odisha and Chhattisgarh regarding Mahanadi basin water allocation.

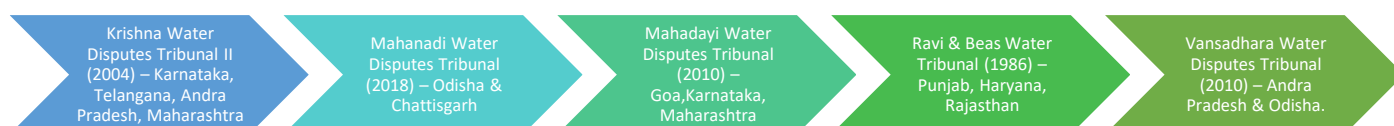
Concern of Odisha?

- Chhattisgarh has opened 20 gates at Kalma Barrage through which 1,000-1,500 cusecs of water is flowing into Mahanadi's low catchment area during the non-monsoon season.
- Chhattisgarh's reluctance to release water during non-monsoon seasons has often resulted in the non-availability of water in the lower catchment of Mahanadi.
- This also affects the Rabi crops and aggravates the drinking problem in Odisha.

Inter-State River Disputes in India

- The Inter-State River Water Disputes are one of the most contentious issues in Indian federalism today.
- The recent cases of the Krishna Water Dispute, Cauvery Water Dispute and the Satluj Yamuna Link Canal are some examples.
- Various Inter-State Water Disputes Tribunals have been constituted so far, but they had their own problems.

Active River Water Dispute Tribunals in India



VVPAT Machines

Context:-The Election Commission of India was criticized for not being transparent and keeping political parties out of the loop regarding defects in the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines.

What is VVPAT?

- Voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) is a method of providing feedback to voters using EVMs.
- A VVPAT is intended as an independent verification system for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results.
- It contains the name of the candidate for whom vote has been cast and symbol of the party/individual candidate.

Significance and the need for VVPATs:

- The VVPAT helps to detect potential election fraud or malfunction in the Electronic Voting Machine.
- It provides a means to audit the stored electronic results. It serves as an additional barrier to change or destroy votes.
- The EVMs with VVPAT system ensure the accuracy of the voting system with fullest transparency and restores the confidence of the voters.
- EVMs and VVPATs also speed up the election process as counting votes on EVMs takes much lesser time than counting paper ballots.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana

Context: According to a recent RTI application, only 329 claims out of 647 claims filed for the accident insurance cover provided to bank account holders under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) have been settled in the past two financial years.

About PMJDY

- It aims to ensure access to financial services, namely, basic savings & deposit accounts, remittance, credit, insurance, and pension in an affordable manner.

Benefits under PMJDY:

- There is no requirement to maintain any minimum balance in PMJDY accounts and interest is earned on the deposit in PMJDY accounts.
- Rupay Debit card is provided to the PMJDY account holder.
- An overdraft (OD) facility up to Rs. 10,000 to eligible account holders is available.



Code on Social Security for Gig Workers

Context: Recently, the Ministry of State for Labour and Employment told the Lok Sabha that the definition of 'gig worker' and 'platform worker' has been provided for the first time in the Code on Social Security (SS), 2020.

Who is a Gig worker?

According to the Code on Social Security, 2020, a gig worker is a person who performs work or participates in work arrangements and earns from such activities, outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship

Gig Economy and India:

- The gig economy in India has been growing rapidly in recent years, with the increasing availability of digital platforms that allow individuals to offer their services on a freelance or part-time basis.
- According to a report by Boston Consulting Group, India's gig workforce comprises 15 million workers employed across industries such as software, shared services and professional services.
- According to a report by the International Labour Organization, India's gig economy is expected to grow by 23% by 2025.

Provisions under Social Security Code, 2020?

- The Code aims to regulate the organized/unorganized (or any other) sectors and extend social security benefits, during sickness, maternity, disability, etc. to all employees and workers across different organizations.
- Integrates Labour Laws: The Code undertakes integrating the following 9 labour laws relating to social security into one integrated Code:

The Employees Compensation Act, 1923.



- The Code has widened coverage by including the unorganised sector, fixed term employees and gig workers, platform workers, inter-state migrant workers in addition to contract employees.
- The Code applies to everyone on wages in an establishment, irrespective of occupation.

Revised Definition:

- On employees: The term 'employees' now also includes workers employed through contracts.
- On inter-state migrant workers: It also includes self-employed workers who have migrated from another state.
- Gig workers: Freelancers, independent contractors, etc. who engage in hourly or temporary work and share a non-traditional employer-employee relationship are grouped as gig workers.
- Platform workers: Workers who use an app or website to get connected to their customers are classified as platform workers.

Safe City Project

Context :- Delhi is all set to implement the Safe City Project, which aims to provide better security for citizens, particularly women.

What is Safe City Project ?

- It aims to create a safe, secure and empowering environment for women in public places.
- It is a cutting-edge security system meant for preventing and investigating crimes.

- It will further maintain surveillance at crucial public installations.
- Launched in Bengaluru city.
- The project aspires to make the country's police system the best in the world.

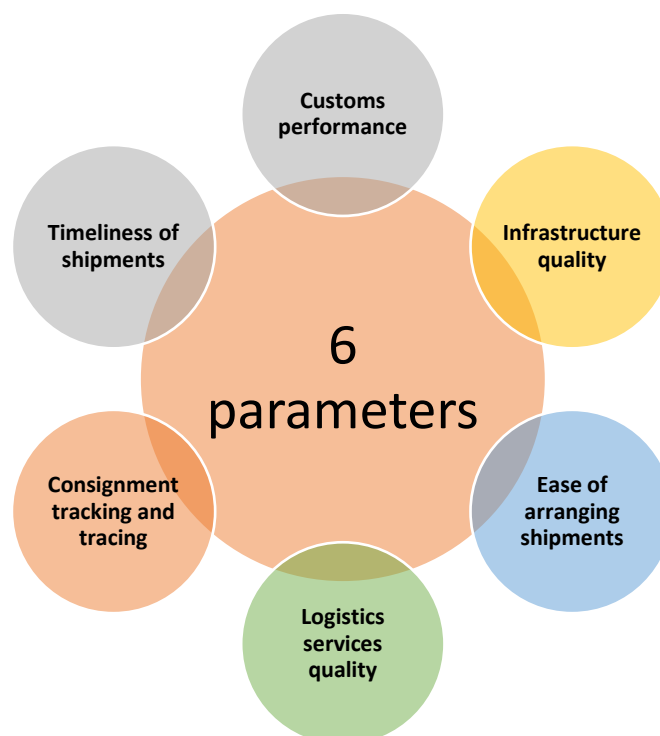
Coverage:- Currently it is being implemented on a trial basis.

- The Empowered Committee under Nirbhaya Fund approved Safe City projects in the following 8 selected cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Lucknow.
- More than 4,100 security cameras and 8 camera mounted drones have also been procured.

Logistics Performance Index 2023

Context:- India has climbed six places on the **World Bank's Logistic Performance Index (LPI) 2023**, now ranking 38th in the 139 countries index.

- This is a significant improvement from its previous ranking of 44th in 2018 and 54th in 2014.
- Earlier, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry released the **Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report 2022**.
- It measures the ease of establishing reliable supply chain connections and the structural factors that make it possible.
- The LPI considers 6 parameters to evaluate logistics performance, namely:



About Logistics Performance Index (LPI):

- It is released by **World Bank**.
- It is an interactive benchmarking tool created to help countries identify the challenges and opportunities they face in their performance on trade logistics and what they can do to improve their performance.
- It measures the ease of establishing reliable supply chain connections and structural factors that make it possible, such as the quality of logistics services, trade and transport-related infrastructure, as well as border controls.

Highlights of LPI 2023:

- The LPI 2023 allows for comparisons across 139 countries.
- The LPI 2023, for the first time, measures the speed of trade with indicators derived from big datasets tracking shipments.
- Singapore and Finland are the most efficient and highest-ranked LPI countries as per the 2023 LPI.
- India is ranked 38 out of 139 countries, climbing six places from the previous index.
- Two major factors for India's jump in the index could be modernisation and digitalisation, which the report quotes as a reason for emerging economies like India to leapfrog advanced countries

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT

State of the Global Climate 2022: WMO

Context:- World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has released the State of the Global Climate Report 2022.

- The report focuses on key climate indicators – Greenhouse Gasses, Temperatures, Sea level rise, Ocean Heat and Acidification, Sea ice and Glaciers. It also highlights the impacts of climate change and extreme weather.
- Earlier, the WMO released the provisional State of the Global Climate report, 2022.

Key Findings of the Report:

➤ High Global Mean Temperature:

- In 2022, the global mean temperature was 1.15 [1.02 to 1.28] °C above the average temperature of 1850-1900.
- The years between 2015 and 2022 were the eight warmest years recorded since 1850. Even though there were three consecutive years of cooling La Niña, 2022 was still the 5th or 6th warmest year.

- This is a rare occurrence as such a “triple-dip” La Niña has only happened three times in the past 50 years.

➤ **Concentrations of 3 Main GHGs:**

- In 2021, the levels of the three primary greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide – reached the highest observed levels in the period between 1984 and 2021.
- The amount of methane concentration increased significantly from 2020 to 2021, making it the highest annual increase recorded. Presently, real-time measurements from particular locations indicate that the levels of these greenhouse gases continued to rise in 2022.

➤ **Ocean Heat:**

- Ocean heat content reached a new record high in 2022.
- Around 90% of the energy trapped in the climate system by greenhouse gases goes into the ocean, somewhat ameliorating even higher temperature increases but posing risks to marine ecosystems.

➤ **Ocean Acidification:**

- CO₂ reacts with seawater resulting in a decrease of pH referred to as ‘ocean acidification’, threatening organisms and ecosystem services.
- The **IPCC Sixth Assessment Report** concluded that “There is very high confidence that open ocean surface pH is now the lowest it has been for at least 26 [thousand years] and current rates of pH change are unprecedented since at least that time.

➤ **Sea Ice:**

- Sea ice in **Antarctica** dropped to 1.92 million km² in February 2022, the lowest level on record and almost 1 million km² below the long-term (1991-2020) mean.

➤ **Socio-Economic and Environmental Consequences**

- East Africa has been suffering from drought, with below-average rainfall in five consecutive wet seasons, resulting in over 20 million people facing acute food insecurity in the region as of January 2023.
- Pakistan experienced extensive flooding in July and August, with over 1,700 deaths, 33 million people affected, and almost 8 million people displaced, causing damage and economic losses of US\$ 30 billion.
- Europe had record-breaking heatwaves in the summer, which led to excess deaths of over 15,000 across several countries. China also experienced its most extensive and long-lasting heatwave on record, resulting in the hottest and second-driest summer on record.
- Food insecurity affected 2.3 billion people in 2021, with 924 million facing severe food insecurity, and projections estimated that 767.9 million people would face undernourishment in 2021.
- Heatwaves in India and Pakistan in 2022 led to a decline in crop yields and threatened the availability and stability of staple foods.
- Somalia had almost 1.2 million internally displaced people due to drought, with over 60,000 people crossing into Ethiopia and Kenya during the same period.
- Climate change is having significant impacts on ecosystems, including the expansion of the temperate zone in the Tibetan Plateau and the disruption of recurring natural events like cherry blossom

flowering in Japan. The timing of spring events, such as bird migration, is also becoming mismatched with other important events, potentially contributing to declines in some bird populations.

Mass Nesting of Olive Ridley Turtles

Content:-The Rushikulya beach in India's Odisha state recently witnessed the highest-ever congregation of Olive Ridley sea turtles in the past few decades.

Olive Ridley Turtles

- **Scientific name:** *Lepidochelys olivacea*; also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle.
- **Location:** Found in warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans
- The Olive ridley turtles are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
- These turtles are carnivores and get their name from their olive-colored carapace.
- They are best known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- Odisha's Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary is known as the world's largest rookery (a colony of breeding animals) of sea turtles.

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
- Schedule I of Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- CITES Appendix I

Sea Turtles in India: There are **five species** of sea turtles in Indian waters viz.,



Supreme Court Modifies Order on ESZ

Content:- The Supreme Court modified its previous judgment regarding Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ) around protected forests, stating that ESZs cannot be uniform across the entire country, and instead need to be tailored to the specific protected area.

The previous judgment of SC:

- On June 3, 2022, the apex court had ordered the 1-km buffer zone for protected areas to act as a “shock absorber”.
- Its judgment was to have mandatory eco-sensitive zones (ESZ) of a minimum one kilometre around protected forests, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries across the country.

Issue:

- However, the Centre and several States, including Kerala, had returned to the apex court seeking modification of the June 2022 judgment, saying the judicial direction affected hundreds of villages in the peripheries of forests.

Eco-Sensitive Zones

- The National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016) of the MoEFCC stipulated that state governments should declare land falling within 10 km of the boundaries of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries as eco-fragile zones or Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986.
- While the 10-km rule is implemented as a general principle, the extent of its application can vary.
- Areas beyond 10 km can also be notified by the Union government as ESZs, if they hold larger ecologically important “sensitive corridors”.

Prohibited Activities within ESZs Include



Permitted Activities:



Significance



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

PSLV C55 and TeLEOS-2 Satellite

Context:- (Indian Space Research Organization) has successfully launched the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle)-C55/TeLEOS-2 mission from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

TeLEOS-2 and Lumelite-4

- TeLEOS-2 and Lumelite-4 are the two Singapore-made satellites that were launched aboard the **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)** from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- TeLEOS-2, weighing 741 kg, is a commercial Earth Observation satellite **developed by the Government of Singapore and Singapore Technologies Engineering Limited**.
- Lumelite-4, on the other hand, is a small, 16 kg satellite developed by the **Singapore-based ST Engineering Geo-Insights Pte Ltd**, with the **purpose of augmenting the maritime safety** of the city-state

PSLV-C55 Mission

- The PSLV-C55 mission, under which the two satellites were launched, is significant in more ways than one. It marks ISRO's first commercial mission of the year 2022, and also its first mission to use the **PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM)** – a spent fourth stage of the launch vehicle that has been repurposed as an experimental platform for scientific experiments.
- The POEM is carrying seven non-separable payloads, including the **Navigation Guidance and Control (NGC)** system, which will be used for attitude stabilization, and the Starberry Sense Payload developed by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, which is a low-cost device to accurately identify and measure star positions in space.

LockBit Ransomware

Context:- Cybercriminals have developed new ransomware encryptors designed to target macOS devices, making this the first major ransomware operation to specifically target Apple computers.

What is LockBit ransomware?

- First reported in September 2019 and dubbed the “**abcd**” virus, due to the file extension used when encrypting victim’s files, the LockBit ransomware is designed to infiltrate victims’ systems and encrypt important files.
- The virus is categorised as a “**crypto virus**” due to its requests for payment in cryptocurrency to decrypt the files on the victim’s device.
- The ransomware is therefore typically deployed against victims who feel hindered enough by the disruption to pay heavy sums in exchange for access and can afford to do so.
- **Target:** Historically, ransomware has targeted Windows, Linux, and VMware ESXi servers. However, the LockBit is now working to create encryptors targeting Macs for the first time.
- It works as a self-spreading malware, not requiring additional instructions once it has successfully infiltrated a single device with access to an organisational intranet.

EU Introduces MiCA for Crypto Regulation

Context:- Recently, the European Parliament has approved the Markets in Crypto Assets (MiCA) regulation, the world’s first comprehensive set of rules that aims to bring largely unregulated cryptocurrency markets under government regulation.

- The regulation will come into force after formal approval by member states.
- The European Parliament is the legislative body of the European Union

What is MiCA Legislation?

- The MiCA law seeks to address concerns like money-laundering, protection of consumers and investors, accountability of crypto firms, stablecoins and the environmental footprint of crypto mining.
- It would regulate the “wild west” of crypto assets and provide legal certainty for those issuing crypto assets, while ensuring high standards for investors and consumers.
- It also excludes non-fungible tokens, but the EU may make a horizontal legislation for NFTs in 18 months, after a separate assessment.

The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Bill 2010

Context:- The plan to build six nuclear power reactors in Maharashtra's Jaitapur, which is currently the world's biggest nuclear power generation site under consideration, has been delayed for over a decade due to issues related to India's nuclear liability law.

Jaitapur Nuclear Reactors: Maharashtra

- Jaitapur would be the world's most powerful nuclear power plant. There would be six state-of-the-art Evolutionary Power Reactors with an installed capacity of 9.6 GWe that will produce low carbon electricity.
- The six nuclear power reactors, which will have a capacity of 1,650 MW each, will be set up with **technical cooperation from France**.
- It would provide electricity to seven crore households. That's huge. It's a complex project. Both countries are dedicated to reaching an agreement.
- This project will embody the strong **partnership between India and France**, a commitment to low carbon future, and will directly benefit Maharashtra with thousands of local jobs

Supplier Liability Clause an Issue in Nuclear Deals

- **Deters Foreign and Domestic Suppliers:** Foreign as well as domestic suppliers of nuclear equipment have been wary of operationalizing nuclear deals with India as it has the only law where suppliers can be asked to pay damages.
- **Makes Suppliers Vulnerable:** The suppliers have raised concerns about potentially getting exposed to unlimited liability under CLNDA as the compensation amount is not fixed under the law as it has been fixed for the operator.
- **Lack of Clarity involves Other Laws:** In the absence of a comprehensive definition on the types of 'nuclear damage', the act potentially allows civil liability claims to be brought against the operator and suppliers through other civil laws.
- **Attracts Criminal Liability:** The Act does not prevent a person from bringing proceedings against the operator under any law other than this Act. It allows criminal liability to be pursued against the operator and the supplier wherever applicable.

Status of Nuclear Energy in India:

- India has consciously proceeded to explore the possibility of tapping nuclear energy for the purpose of power generation.
- In this direction a three-stage nuclear power programme was formulated by Homi Bhabha in the 1950s.
- The Atomic Energy Act, 1962 was framed and implemented with the set objectives of using two naturally occurring elements Uranium and Thorium having good potential to be utilised as nuclear fuel in Indian Nuclear Power Reactors.