WEEELY UPDATES – (07 MAY – 14 MAY)

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

CPEC's Extension to Afghanistan

Context:- Recently, China and Pakistan have held the 4th round of the **Foreign Minister-level Pakistan-China Strategic Dialogue** Islamabad, Pakistan, where they agreed to extend the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** into Afghanistan.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- The CPEC is a collection of infrastructure projects that have been under construction throughout Pakistan beginning 2013.
- The initiative is planned to be completed by 2049.
- The CPEC is part of China's larger Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to spread Chinese investments in trade and connectivity infrastructure to bring Central Asian and European markets closer.
- The CPEC is a 3,000 km route of infrastructure projects that seek to create a series of contiguous economic and trade hubs with road and rail infrastructure.
- It will **link places like China's restive western province of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and the new Gwadar port** in Pakistan's equally unquiet **Balochistan state.**
- **Funding:** Originally valued at $47 billion, the value of CPEC projects bumped up to $62 billion as of 2020.

Mutual Benefit for China and Pakistan:

For China:

For China, the project will bypass the Strait of Malacca, which can be a choke point in case of a conflict with the US or other adversaries.

For Pakistan:

On the other hand, Pakistan expects CPEC to be a lifeline for its deteriorating economy, leading to a multiplier effect on production and employment generation and sustainable economic growth.

The move is expected to pave way for investment of billions of dollars for infrastracture projects in the country which is hit by sanctions and is facing an economic crisis.

Why does Afghanistan seem Significant for Both Pakistan and China?

- **Access to Rare Minerals:** Afghanistan has a large amount of **Rare Earth Minerals** (1.4 million tonnes) that are important for making electronics and military equipment. However, since the Taliban took over, the country has been facing economic difficulties because foreign aid has been withdrawn.
- **Energy and Other Resources:** Afghan participation in CPEC will allow Islamabad and Beijing to harness energy and other resources, as well as gain access to Afghanistan's vast wealth of untapped

natural resources, ranging from copper, gold, uranium, and lithium, which are critical components for a variety of advanced electronic technologies and high-tech missile guidance systems.

Implications for India on CPEC's Extension to Afghanistan

Reduces India's Scope in Central Asia:

Afghanistan's involvement in CPEC can reduce the scope of India's investment in Iran's Chabahar port. India intends to project the port as a gateway to lucrative prospects for commerce between India, Iran, and Afghanistan with Central Asian countries.

China can take Lead from India in Development Aid

Security Concerns:

China may control Afghanistan's Bagram air force base.

The Bagram airport is the biggest airport and technically well-equipped as the Americans kept it for their use till the end, instead of the Kabul airport.

Undermining India's Sovereignty:

The CPEC passes through PoK, which undermines India's sovereignty. India has repeatedly raised concerns over this issue as a violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Terrorism and Strategic Concerns:

If Afghanistan becomes a part of the CPEC, it will boost economic development but may also give Pakistan a strategic advantage in the region, which could be a threat to India's interests.

It may lead to an increase in terrorism from Pakistan against India, as it seeks to gain the upper hand in the region.

India, US, UAE and Saudi Arabia Discuss Infrastructure Initiatives

Context:-Recently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted a special meeting of the National Security Advisers (NSAs) of India, the US, and the UAE.

Significance of the meeting

- The focus of the meeting was **regional infrastructure initiatives**.
- This meeting is particularly noteworthy since it took place only a week after the U.S. NSA's visit to Iran, which recently agreed to restart ties with Saudi Arabia in a meeting brokered by Beijing.
- **Growth and Stability**: According to the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the leaders discussed ways to strengthen relations between their countries to promote growth and stability in the region.
- **Interconnectivity**: The U.S. White House also released a statement indicating that the meeting aimed to advance their shared vision of a more secure and prosperous Middle East region that is interconnected with India and the rest of the world.
- The news portal Axios from Tel Aviv said the meetings on infrastructure were meant to provide a counter to China's Belt and Road initiative and other inroads in the region.
- It further added that among the projects is a plan to connect Gulf countries via a railway network and connect to India via shipping lanes from "two ports" in the region".

Key Highlights of the Meeting?

- The discussions **aimed to strengthen relations and ties** between the countries in a way that enhances growth and stability in the region.
- The meeting focused on **regional initiatives on infrastructure**.
- The meeting sought to advance their shared vision of a more **secure and prosperous Middle East region interconnected with India and the world.**
- Among the projects discussed, a plan to connect Gulf countries via a railway network and connect to India via shipping lanes from "two ports" in the region is highlighted.
  - This is meant to provide a counter to China's Belt and Road initiative and other inroads in the region.
- The idea for the initiative came up during talks held over the past 18 months by the I2U2.
- The **I2U2 Quad**, works on connecting **"South Asia to the Middle East to the United States in ways that advance economic technology and diplomacy".**

About I2U2 Quad

- I2U2 is a new grouping formed by **India, Israel, the UAE, and the US.**
- It is also referred to as the **West Asian Quad.**
- It is focused on expanding **economic and political cooperation** in the Middle East and Asia.
- The framework aims to **foster support and cooperation in infrastructure, technology and maritime security.**
- I2U2 was initially formed in **October 2021** following the **Abraham Accords**.
- The Abraham Accords normalized **relations between Israel and a number of Arab Gulf countries**.

POLITY

Power Distribution Between Delhi Government and Centre

Context:- The Supreme Court (SC) unanimously ruled in favour of the Delhi government on the issue of control of bureaucracy in the national capital.

Background of the Issue:

- The issue is whether the Government of NCT of Delhi has **legislative and executive powers** in relation to 'services' under Schedule VII of the Constitution and whether officers of the various 'services' allocated to Delhi by the Union, come under the administrative control of Government of NCT of Delhi.
- The Delhi government challenged the constitutional validity of the Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Act 2021, which provided that the term "government" referred to in any law made by the Legislative Assembly of Delhi will imply the **Lieutenant Governor (L-G).**

About the Supreme Court Verdict:

- A 5 judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India held that the **legislature has control over bureaucrats in administration of services**, except in areas outside the legislative powers of the NCT and would not extend to entries related to **public order, police and land**.
- SC held that it was unable to agree with **Justice Ashok Bhushan's judgement that Delhi government has no power** at all over services.
- It said that **Article 239A establishes a legislative assembly for the National Capital Territory of Delhi**. Members of the legislative assembly are elected by the Delhi electorate. Thus, Art 239A must be interpreted so as to **further the representative democracy**."
- The SC pointed out that if officers stop reporting to ministers, the principle of **collective responsibility will be affected and the principle of triple chain of accountability will become redundant**.

UTs Administeretion in India

- Part VIII (Articles 239 to 241) of the Constitution deals with the Union Territories.
- UTs in India are administered by the **President through an administrator appointed** by him/her. The administrator is not elected but rather a **representative of the President.**
    - In some UTs, such as Delhi and Puducherry, the administrator holds significant powers, including the ability to make laws and regulations for the UT.
    - In other UTs, such as Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the administrator's powers are limited to providing advice to the elected government.
    - The judiciary in UTs is also governed by the Constitution and the laws made by the Parliament. However, in some **UTs, such as Delhi, the High Court has wider powers than** in other UTs, such as Lakshadweep.

Special Provisions for Delhi and Puducherry:

- The Union Territories of **Puducherry (in 1963), Delhi (in 1992) and Jammu and Kashmir in 2019** (yet to be constituted) are provided with **a legislative assembly and a Council of Ministers** headed by a Chief Minister.
    - The Legislative assembly of the UT of Puducherry may make laws with respect to matters **enumerated in List II or List III in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution** in so far as these matters are applicable in relation to the Union Territory.
    - The legislative assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi also has these powers with the exception that **Entries 1, 2 and 18 of the List II are not within the legislative competence** of the legislative assembly.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Polygamy in India

Context:-Recently, the Chief Minister of Assam has said that the state government will move to ban the practice of Polygamy through **"Legislative Action",** and that an **"Expert committee" would be formed to examine the issue.**

What are the provisions that ban polygamy?

- Polygamy is governed both by personal laws and the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act 1936** - Prohibited polygamy in the Parsi community.
- The law regulates the marriage and divorce among Parsis.
- **Shariat Act 1937** - Governs the marriage in Islam. The act allows Muslim man to have 4 wives.
- The Supreme Court in ***Sarla Mudgal v Union of India*** held that religious conversion for the sole purpose of committing bigamy is unconstitutional.
- The Supreme Court in ***Lily Thomas v Union of India*** case reiterated the judgment of ***Sarla Mudgal v Union of India.***
- **The Special Marriage Act 1954** - A radical legislation that proposed the requirement of monogamy.
- ***Section 4*** of the act states that "at the time of marriage neither party should have a spouse living".
- **The Hindu Marriage Act 1955** - Outlawed the concept of having more than one spouse.
- Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs are also included under the Hindu Marriage act 1955.
- ***Section 17*** of the act states that bigamy is an offence.
- **IPC Section 494** - Penalizes bigamy or polygamy. A person wife or husband in any case engages in second marriage should be imprisoned for e period of 7 years and liable to fine.
- This provision does not apply to a marriage which has been declared void by a court
- **Section 495 of the IPC** - Protects the rights of the second wife in case of a bigamous marriage.
- **Article 44** - States that the State shall endeavor to secure for all the citizens a ***Uniform Civil Code***.

What is polygamy ?

- Polygamy comes from two words: "poly," which means "many," and "gamos," which means "marriage." As a result, polygamy **relates to marriages that are several.**
  - Thus, polygamy is marriage in which **a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate** at the same time.

What is the status of polygamy in India?

- **Kanwal Ram and Ors v The Himachal Pradesh Administration (1965)** - The Supreme Court reiterated the legal position that the standard of proof must be of marriage including second marriage should be performed as per customs.
- So the live-in-relationship doesn't come into the ambit of the second marriage.
- **Desertion of marriage** - IPC Section 494 penalizing polygamy doesn't apply in case of desertion by the spouse that is who has been continuously absent for 7 years.
- **Goa** - A crucial exception to the bigamy law for Hindus is Goa, which follows its own code for personal laws.
- A Hindu man in the state has the right to bigamy under specific circumstances mentioned in the Codes of Usages and Customs of Gentile Hindus of Goa.
- These specific circumstances include a case where the wife fails to conceive by the age of 25 or if she fails to deliver a male child by the age of 30.
- **No uniform civil code** - Even now various religions are governed by their respective religion personal laws.
- **Tribal population** - Since they are governed and protected by special laws and the prevalence of polygamy is high among tribal population.

What is Bigamy?

- When one is already married additionally, the marriage continues to be valid, then married with someone else is known as **bigamy** plus the person committing this will be called bigamist.
- It is considered a criminal offense in many countries, including India. In other words, it is the act of entering into a marriage with someone else while still being in a valid marriage with another person.

AGRICULTURE

India Latest Farm Exports Data

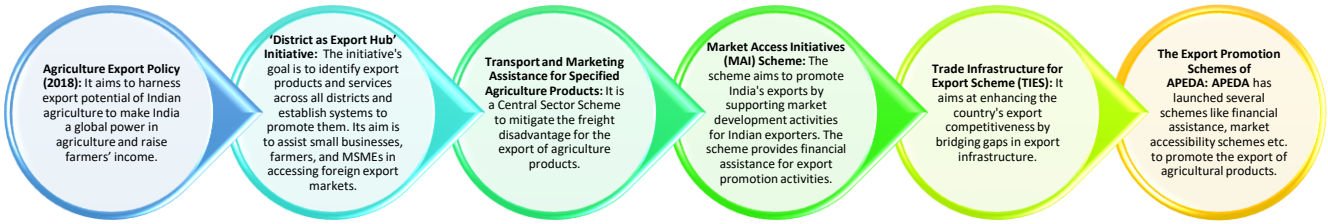
Context:- Provisional data released recently by the Department of Commerce has shown that **both agricultural exports from and imports into India have scaled new highs** in the fiscal year that ended March 31, 2023.

- The data shows that total farm exports were at USD 53.15 billion and imports at USD 35.69 billion during 2022-23, surpassing their previous year's records.
- The resultant agricultural trade surplus has marginally dipped from USD17.82 billion to USD 17.46 billion.
- Between 2013-14 and 2015-16, India's agricultural exports sharply fell from USD 43.25 billion to USD 32.81 billion, primarily due to the crash in global prices, as reflected the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Food Price Index (FFPI).
- However, imports continued to rise, leading to a decline in the farm trade surplus.
- In recent years, the FFPI has recovered, making India's agricultural commodities more globally price competitive, resulting in a surge in exports during 2020-2023.
- India's basket of imported farm produce is less dominated by agricultural products compared to its exports.
- Among these imports, the most significant is vegetable oils, whose imports have more than doubled in value terms between 2019-20 and 2022-23.
- Imports meet roughly 60% of India's vegetable oil requirements while the dependence on pulses imports is hardly 10% now.
- The value of pulses imports has also come down halved from USD4.2 billion in 2016-17 to USD1.9 in 2022-23.
- Imports of spices, cashew, and cotton commodities where India has traditionally been a net exporter have shown a rising trend.
- Spice imports going up are a reflection of reduced-price competitiveness, while cotton imports have risen as an outcome of stagnant or falling domestic production.

Key Drivers behind this Increase in Exports

- Between 2013-14 and 2015-16, India's agricultural exports sharply fell from USD 43.25 billion to USD 32.81 billion, primarily due to the crash in global prices, as reflected the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Food Price Index (FFPI).
- However, imports continued to rise, leading to a decline in the farm trade surplus.
- In recent years, the FFPI has recovered, making India's agricultural commodities more globally price competitive, resulting in a surge in exports during 2020-2023.

Measures taken by the Government to Promote Agri Export



FAO's Food Price Index?

- The FFPI is a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities. It measures changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar.
- **Base Period: 2014-16**.
- **FFPI increases** when international food prices rise.

GOVERNANCE

Government Programme for NCD Renamed

Context: The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) in India has been renamed the **National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD)** due to the addition of new diseases and health initiatives.

- It has been renamed to subsume all types of NCDs.
- Also, **Comprehensive Primary Healthcare Non-Communicable Disease (CPHC NCD IT) system** has been renamed as the National NCD Portal

About NPCDCS/NP-NCD

- NPCDCS is being implemented under the **National Health Mission (NHM)** across the country.
- **Aim**:- NPCDCS was launched in 2010 with a focus on strengthening infrastructure, human resource development, health promotion, early diagnosis, management and referral of common non-communicable diseases (NCDs) under the National Health Mission
- Management NCD Cells are being established at the National, State and District levels for programme management.
- **NCD Clinics** are also being set up at District and **Community Health Centres (CHC)** levels to provide services for early diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up for common NCDs.

- Other measures to control NCD WHO's Global action plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2020 to 2030; **Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT)** Deendayal outlet, Jan Aushadhi stores
- **Achievement:** Under NPCDCS, 677 NCD district-level clinics, 187 District Cardiac Care Units, 266 District Day Care Centres and 5,392 NCD Community Health Centre-level clinics have been set up.

What is non-communicable disease?

- **Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** are a group of chronic medical conditions that are not caused by infectious agents and cannot be transmitted from one person to another but are caused by a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors.
  - Eg., cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, and mental disorders.
  - **Causes:** Tobacco use, unhealthy diet, harmful use of alcohol, physical inactivity and air pollution are the main risk factors contributing to these conditions.

Global

Agenda for Sustainable Development: As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **heads of state and government committed to develop ambitious national responses, by 2030,** to reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment (**SDG** target 3.4).

Global Action Plan: In 2019, the World Health Assembly extended the WHO Global action plan for the **prevention and control of NCDs 2013–2020 to 2030** and called for the **development of an Implementation Roadmap 2023 to 2030 to accelerate progress on preventing and controlling NCDs.**

Curtailing Misleading Food Ads

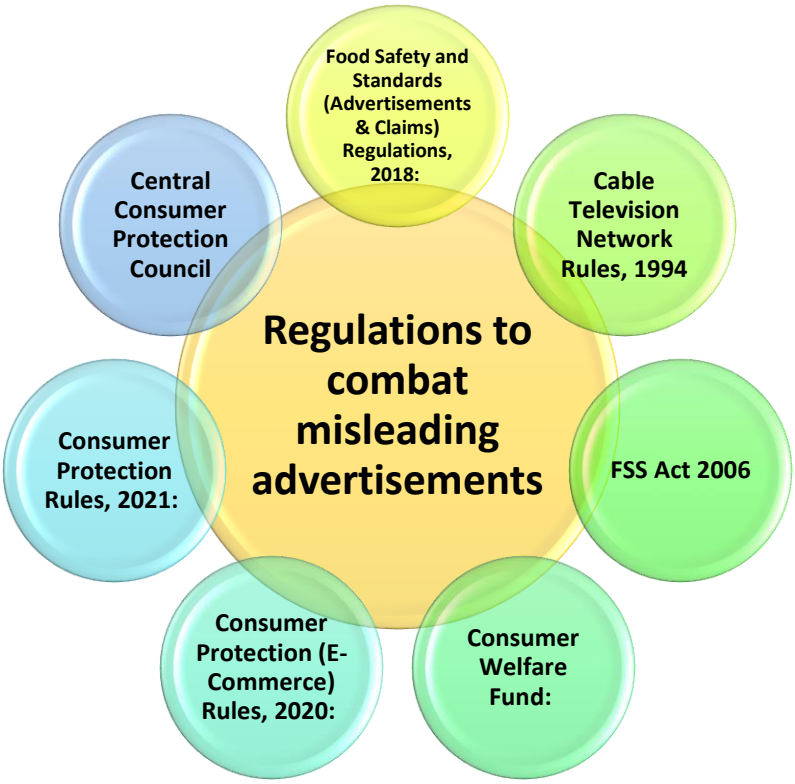
Context: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has flagged 32 new cases of misleading advertisements and claims made by food business operators.

- FSSAI has referred the cases to licensing authorities and warned that offenders face penalties of up to INR 10 lakh or suspension or cancellation of licenses for repeated offences.

What are the Concerns?

- The FSSAI has discovered that some **companies selling nutraceutical products, refined oils, pulses, flours, millet products**, and ghee have been making false claims about their products. These claims have not been **scientifically proven and could mislead consumers.**
  - The FSSAI has referred these cases to the licensing authorities, who will issue notices to the companies to withdraw or modify their misleading claims.
  - Failure to comply may result in penalties, suspension or cancellation of their licenses, as making false claims or advertisements is a punishable offense under **Section-53 of the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006.**
- The concerns related to misleading food advertisements mainly revolve around **false or unsubstantiated claims made about a product's nutrition**, benefits, and ingredient mix.
- This problem is widespread across different food categories, and there have been a significant number of violative food advertisements.
- Additionally, non-disclosure **by food influencers is also a major concern.** Misleading advertisements can lead to consumer confusion and potential harm to their **health if they make incorrect food choices based on false claims.**

Regulations to combat misleading advertisements



Draft Notification on EPR on Waste Oil

Context- A draft notification on **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** for waste oil was recently released by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC).**

Key Highlights

- In India, the Union Budget for 2023–2024 places an emphasis on sustainable development and a circular economy. The plan aims to move from a linear model to a circular one by replacing the use of natural resources with valuable waste.

What is EPR?

- It makes **producers responsible for the environmental impacts** of their products throughout their life cycle.
- EPR aims to **promote better waste management** and **reduce the burden on municipalities.**
- It **integrates environmental costs into product prices** and encourages the **design of environmentally sound products.**
- EPR is applicable to various types of waste, including **plastic waste, e-waste, and battery waste.**
- The E-Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011 introduced **the concept of EPR for the first time in India.**

What is the Draft Notification on the EPR for Waste Oil?

- The goal of EPR on waste oil is to make waste oil management more circular. Waste oil is a contaminant that can pollute soil and freshwater with harmful substances.
- Because it contains benzene, zinc, cadmium, and other impurities that have the potential to pollute freshwater, waste oil can be a contaminant.
- **Aim**: Bring waste oil collection and recycling into the formal sector to prevent pollution.
- **Recommendation:** It suggests that stakeholders register on the online portal of the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, which includes producers, collection agents, recyclers, and importers of waste oil.
- **Applicability:** Producers and bulk generators (like industries, railways, transport companies, power transmission companies, etc.) can use EPR on waste oil.

EPR Targets:

- increasing waste oil recycling targets gradually from 2024 to 2025.
- Initial goal of 10%, with an annual increase of 10% until 2029.
- Future goals based on the annual amount of lubrication oil imported or sold.

Eight Years of Jan Suraksha Schemes

Context:- Recently, the three social security (**Jan Suraksha**) schemes – **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)**, **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)** and **Atal Pension Yojana (APY)** – completed 8 years of providing social security net.

- PMJJBY and PMSBY were launched to ensure that the people from the unorganised section of the country are financially secure while APY was introduced to cover the exigencies in old age.

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)

- **About the scheme:** The Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) is a government-backed one-year life insurance scheme that offers coverage for death due to any reason.
- **Eligibility:** Individuals between the ages of 18 and 50 who have an individual bank or post office account are eligible to enroll in the scheme. Those who join the scheme before turning 50 can continue to have their lives covered up to the age of 55 by paying regular premiums.
- **Benefits:** The scheme provides a life cover of Rs. 2 lahks against an annual premium of Rs. 436.
- **Status of the scheme:** The scheme has had more than 16.19 crore cumulative enrollments as of 26.04.2023 and has paid out Rs. 13,290.40 crores for 6,64,520 claims.

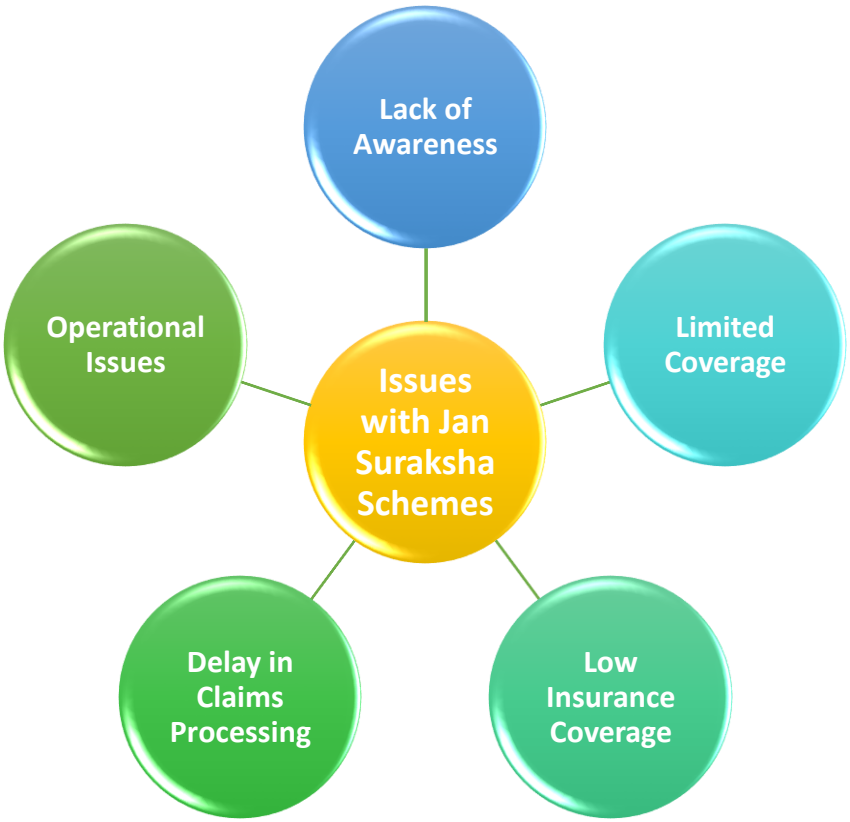
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)

- **About the scheme:** The Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) is a renewable one-year accidental insurance scheme that offers coverage for death or disability due to accidents.
- **Eligibility:** Individuals between the ages of 18 and 70 who have an individual bank or post office account are eligible to enroll in the scheme.
- **Benefits:** The scheme provides an accidental death cum disability cover of Rs. 2 lakh (Rs. 1 lakh in case of partial disability) for death or disability due to an accident against an annual premium of Rs. 20.

- **Status of the scheme:** The scheme has had more than 34.18 crore cumulative enrollments as of 26.04.2023 and has paid out Rs. 2,302.26 crores for 1,15,951 claims.

Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

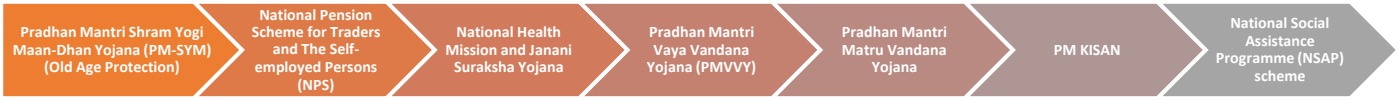
- **About the scheme:** The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) is a social security scheme initiated by the Government to ensure financial stability for all, especially those in the unorganized sector. It is administered by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) under the National Pension System (NPS).
- **Eligibility:** The scheme is available to all non-income tax-paying bank account holders between 18 to 40 years of age, with contributions varying based on the pension amount chosen.
- **Benefits:** Upon reaching 60 years of age, subscribers will receive a minimum monthly pension of Rs. 1000 or Rs. 2000 or Rs. 3000 or Rs. 4000 or Rs. 5000 based on their contributions.
- **Disbursement of Scheme Benefits:** Subscribers, their spouse, or nominee will receive the pension corpus upon the subscriber's death. If the subscriber dies before turning 60, their spouse can continue contributions until the subscriber would have attained 60 years of age.
- **Contribution by Central Government:** The Government guarantees the minimum pension, funding any shortfall in the corpus. If returns on investment exceed expectations, subscribers receive enhanced benefits.
- **Payment Frequency:** Contributions can be made monthly, quarterly or half-yearly.
- **Withdrawal:** Subscribers can exit the scheme under certain conditions, with deductions for government co-contribution and interest.
- **Achievements:** As of 27.04.2023, over 5 crore individuals have subscribed to APY.



What is the significance of Jan Suraksha Schemes

- These schemes are especially relevant for low-income earners, casual workers, and those engaged in the informal sector who may not have access to traditional insurance products due to high costs or lack of awareness.
- These schemes provide affordable insurance and pension products that offer protection against financial contingencies such as accidental death, disability, and natural death.
- They also encourage savings and help in building a culture of savings and investment among people who would otherwise not have access to these products.

Other Social Security Schemes launched by Govt of India



Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi

Context:-The Union Minister for Women and Child Development introduced the government's flagship program 'Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi', which will focus on **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** at **anganwadis** across the country.

- ECCE is an important component of **Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0** (Mission Poshan 2.0) and envisaged under the National Education Policy.

Key Highlights of the program:

- It envisages **training of anganwadi workers** through the **National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD).**
- It targets **children's development in every domain** mentioned in the National Curriculum Framework, like physical and motor development, cognitive development etc.
- It will focus on **promoting holistic and quality early stimulation** and pre-primary education for children.
- The objective of the program is to **transform anganwadi centers into not just nutrition hubs but also education-imparting centers.**

  - The ECCE program will prioritize education in the mother tongue, aligning with the principles of the New Education Policy.

- Through the changes introduced by the "Poshan bhi, Padhai bhi" ECCE policy, every child would be provided with at least two hours of high-quality pre-school instruction daily.

Anganwadis

- Anganwadi is a type of rural childcare center in India.
- It was established as part of the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program.**
- Close to**9 lakhs operational Anganwadi centers across the country** are **providing supplementary nutrition and early care and education** to around 8 crore beneficiary children under the **age of 6 years.**

Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0:

- It is an Integrated **Nutrition Support Programme** approved for implementation during the 15th Finance Commission period 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- It seeks to **address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers**.

SAKSHAM- LMIS

Context: The Union Health Ministry has launched the SAKSHAM (Stimulating Advanced Knowledge for Sustainable Health Management) Learning Management Information System (LMIS) developed by the National Institute of Health & Family Welfare (NIHFW)

About:

- SAKSHAM is a **dedicated and unified platform for providing online training and medical education to all health professionals** in the country.
- It has been developed **by** the **National Institute of Health & Family Welfare (NIHFW**), New Delhi.
- It will ensure inclusive **capacity building of health professionals from primary health centers** located in **rural and remote areas** all the way **up to tertiary care** and corporate hospitals in metropolitan cities.
- It will be developed as a centralized resource repository for training and teaching material.

Enforcement Directorate

Context:-Centre has informed the **Supreme Court (SC)** that the tenure of the Chief of **Enforcement Directorate (ED)** will not continue in office beyond November 2023.

What is the Issue?

- In November 2021, the **President of India** issued two ordinances allowing the tenure of the Director of the ED to be extended from two years to up to five years, with the possibility of three annual extensions.
- This move was upheld by the SC, which allowed the extension of ED Chief but only in rare and exceptional cases for a short period.
    - The Union Finance Ministry stated in an affidavit that extension in the term of the director of ED was necessitated from the administrative standpoint wherein continuity of the head of the

organisation is required for several cases which are at crucial juncture and require historical knowledge and background for supervision of such cases.
    - A newly appointed director would take considerable time to take stock and acclimatise to the new office and the working of the ED and could find it difficult to operate at an optimal level of efficiency.

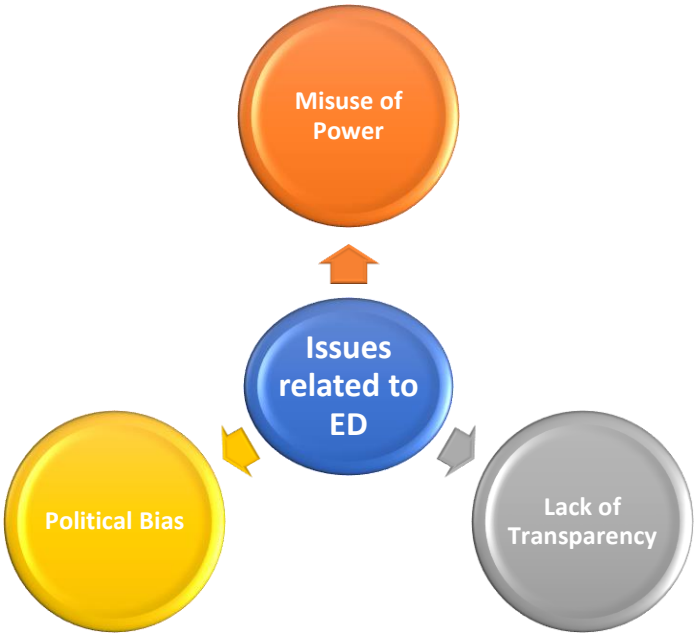
- This decision has been challenged in the SC again, as some are questioning the legality of **extending the tenure beyond what was previously deemed acceptable** by the court. The case is currently pending.

What is Enforcement Directorate (ED)?

The Directorate General of Economic Enforcement (Enforcement Directorate) is a law enforcement and economic intelligence agency responsible for enforcing economic laws and fighting economic crime in India.

- It was formed with the purpose of handling Exchange Control Law violations under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act,1947.
- Initially established under the Department of Economic Affairs in 1956 as an 'Enforcement Unit', it was later shifted to the Department of Revenue for administration in 1960.
- It was renamed as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in 1957.
- Now, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is administered by the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance.
- The ED has its headquarters in New Delhi and has many regional offices all over the country.
- It is headed by the Director of Enforcement, who is an IRS officer (Indian Revenue Service).

Objective: The Organization is mandated with the task of enforcing the provisions of two special fiscal laws – **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)** and the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA).**



Harit Sagar: The Green Port Guidelines 2023

Context: The Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways has launched the 'Harit Sagar' Green Port Guidelines to achieve the larger vision of achieving the Zero Carbon Emission Goal.

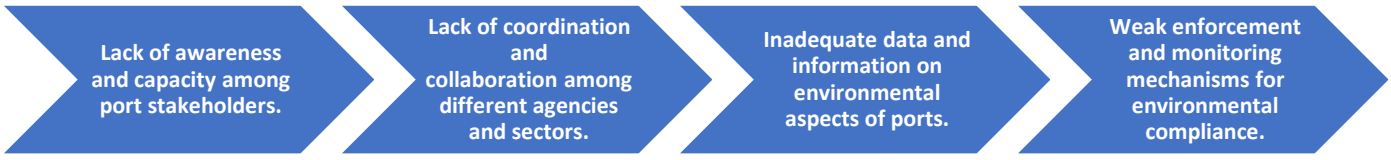
- 'Harit Sagar' is a comprehensive set of guidelines for enhancing the environmental performance of Indian ports and promoting sustainable development of the maritime sector.

Objectives :- It is a visionary initiative of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, which aims to transform Indian ports into green ports by adopting best practices and technologies for reducing carbon footprint, improving energy efficiency, conserving water resources, managing waste and biodiversity, and ensuring social responsibility.

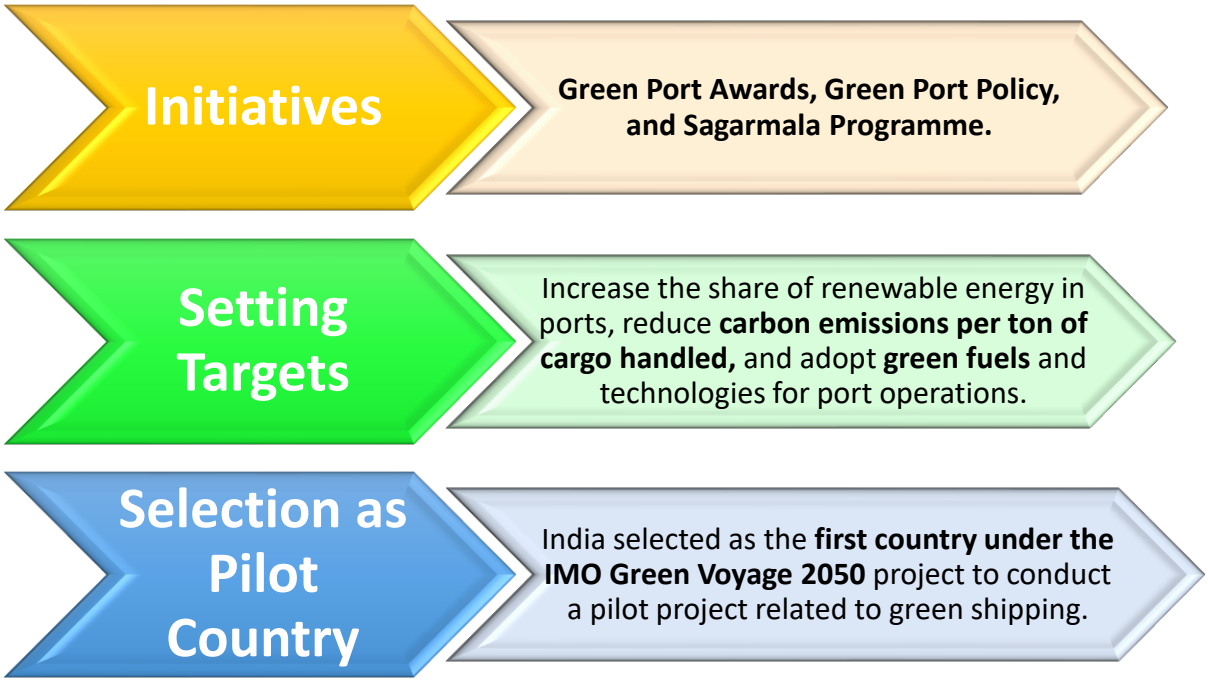
Key Highlights of the Guidelines

- It provides a framework for assessing the environmental performance of ports based on a set of indicators and benchmarks and also suggests measures for improvement and innovation.
- It covers various aspects of green port practices such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste management, water conservation, biodiversity conservation, air quality management, noise reduction, carbon footprint reduction and social responsibility.
- It provides incentives and recognition for ports that adopt green port practices and achieve excellence in environmental performance.
- It will help in enhancing the competitiveness and efficiency of Indian ports while ensuring minimal impact on the environment and local communities.

Challenges and Barriers for Implementing



India's Efforts for Green Port Development?



ECONOMY

Multimodal Logistics Park (MMLP) in Assam

Context:-The **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush,** visited the construction site of **India's first International Multi-Modal Logistics park(MMLP) in Jogighopa, Assam,** to review the progress made so far.

- Multi Modal Logistics Park is likely to **Boost Connectivity** in the **Northeast.**

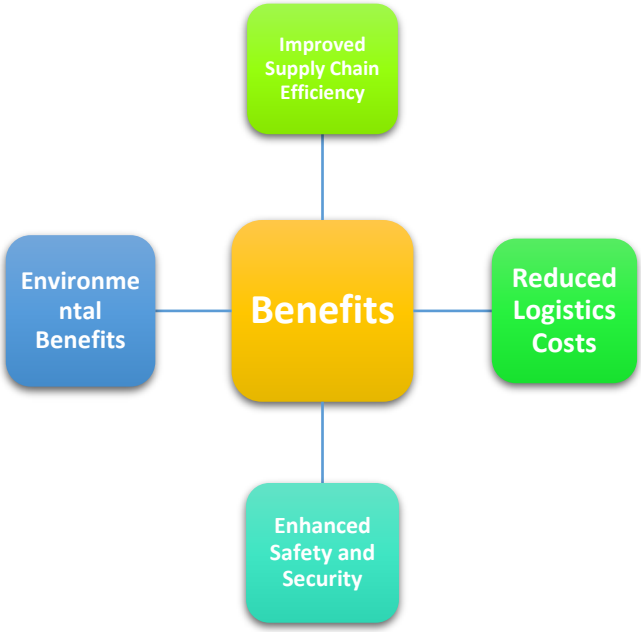
About :-

- The park is being **developed under the ambitious Bharatmala Pariyojana** of the Government.
  - Bharatmala Pariyojana is an umbrella program for the highways sector that focuses on optimizing efficiency of freight and passenger movement across the country by bridging critical infrastructure gaps.
- This park is being **made by National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).**
- The park will be **connected to road, rail, air, and waterways**.
- It is being developed in 317-acre land along the Brahmaputra.

- Project is likely to unlock huge potential for the region along with neighboring countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh.

MMLP:

- A MMLP is a **transportation hub that combines different modes of transport in one location** to enable efficient movement of goods.
- They are **designed to handle a large volume of goods, with facilities for warehousing, distribution**, and value-added services such as packaging and labeling.
- These logistics parks are typically **located near major transportation nodes**, such as ports, airports, and highways.



RBI's Gold Reserves

Context:-As per **RBI's Half Yearly Report on Management of Foreign Exchange Reserves: October 2022 - March 2023**, its gold reserves touched 794.64 metric tonnes in FY 22-23, an increase of nearly 5% over FY 21-22(760.42 metric tonnes)

- **Gold reserves** along with foreign currency assets, **special drawing rights** and reserve tranche position in the **International Monetary Fund** make up **India's forex reserves.**

Gold reserves

- **Meaning:** It is the gold held by a national central bank.
- **Purpose**: A guarantee to redeem promises to pay depositors, note holders/paper money/trading peers, during the era of the gold standard – a monetary system (until 1971) in which the standard economic unit of account is based on a fixed quantity of gold.
- Currently, a store of value/ to support the value of the national currency.

Why gold is used as a reserve in Central banks?

- Unlike fiat currencies, which can be subject to inflation or devaluation due to various economic factors, the value of gold tends to be relatively stable over time, which makes it an attractive asset for central banks to hold as a reserve. Additionally, gold is highly liquid, which means it can easily be converted into cash or used to settle international transactions.

Reasons for Increase in Buying Gold

- The RBI has kept buying gold as part of the diversification process, considering the fact that gold is more safe, secure, and liquid asset, amidst global uncertainty and a rising inflation scenario.
- In addition, gold is a safe asset due to its liquid nature, has a transparent international pricing, and it can be traded anytime.

Gold purchasing by countries: Recent trends

- Currently, RBI is among the top five central banks that are buying gold.
- On the global front, the **People's Bank of China (PBoC)** and the **Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey** have been purchasing gold.
- The central banks from the Middle East, including Egypt Iraq, the UAE, Qatar and Oman have also boosted their gold reserves in recent years.
- The Central Bank of Uzbekistan in 2022 also became a net purchaser of gold.
- The Monetary Authority of Singapore in January 2023 became the largest single buyer of gold after it bought 69 tonnes to its gold reserves

Why RBI and other Central Banks hold Gold as a Reserve

RBI's Share of Gold in Forex Reserves

- Out of the total reserves, RBI has held 437.22 tonnes of gold overseas in safe custody with the Bank of England and the Bank of International Settlements (BIS).
- The rest 301.10 tonnes of gold is held domestically.
- As of March 2023, RBI' foreign exchange reserves (Forex) stood at $578.449 billion. The value of gold reserves in foreign exchange reserves pegged at $45.2 billion.
- The percentage of gold increased from about 7 per cent at the end of March 2022 to about 7.81 per cent at the end of March 2023.

Forex Reserves

- Foreign Exchange Reserves consist of foreign currency assets, gold, **special drawing rights (SDR)** and reserve tranche position in the International Monetary Fund. It is expressed in US Dollars.
- Foreign currency asset is the largest component of the forex reserve. It is expressed in dollar terms. It consists of currency other than the country's own currency.
- The SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF. It is a potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF members.
- It is calculated from a weighted basket of major currencies, such as U.S. dollar, the euro, the British Pound, Japanese yen, and Chinese Renminbi.
- Reserve tranche of IMF is the portion of the required quota of currency each member country must provide to the IMF that can be utilized for its own purposes

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT

Petersberg Climate Dialogue 2023

Context:-The **Petersberg Dialogue on Climate Change was hosted in Berlin, Germany** from May 2-3, 2023, by **Germany and the United Arab Emirates**, which is hosting the **28th Conference of Parties (COP28)** to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change(UNFCCC).**

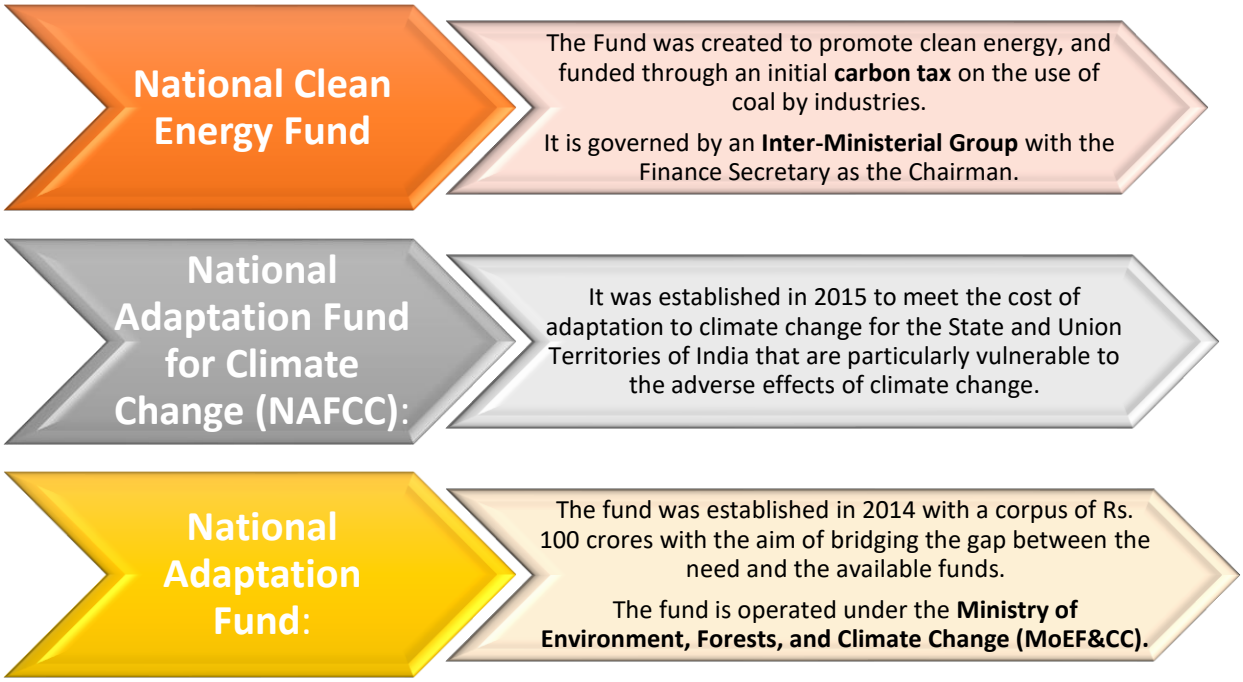
Petersberg Dialogue

- The Petersberg Climate Dialogue is an annual high-level political and international forum held before the **United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COP).**
- It was initiated in 2010 by former German Chancellor Angela Merkel.
- The forum aims to prepare for successful negotiations at COP climate change conferences.
- The central goal is to strengthen trust in multilateral climate negotiations and between states.
- The dialogue focuses on climate adaptation, climate finance, and dealing with loss and damage.

About Petersberg Climate Dialogue 2023:

- The Petersberg Dialogue on Climate Change has emphasised on **"cleaning-up our economies**" and driving **decarbonization in every sector** to achieve a **5-degree global warming pathway**.
- It has also called for an **Acceleration Agenda** where all countries **fast-forward their Net Zero deadlines** and **phase out coal by 2030** in OECD countries and by **2040 in others.**
- It also held discussions around a **potential global target for renewables** at the next climate conference, with a focus on expanding wind and solar energy.
- The conference called for **tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030** and **doubling by 2040**, but remains silent on the phaseout of fossil fuels.
- **Developed countries** on track to **deliver the promised $100 billion per year** for climate finance, but it is far less than the estimated **need of $1 trillion per year by 2030** for emerging markets alone.
- The dialogue also called for an **urgent need for global financial systems** transformation to unlock **crucial climate finance** for the most vulnerable countries.
- It declared **2023 as the year for the Global Stocktake** which would focus on climate change impacts, actions, and responses in relation to the developmental priorities of developing countries, including poverty eradication.

India's Initiatives for Climate Change and Green Energy



River Cities Alliance

Context:- **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** in association with the **National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)** organized the '**River-Cities Alliance (RCA)** Global Seminar: Partnership for Building International River-Sensitive Cities'.

About:

- The River Cities Alliance (RCA) has been launched with the objective to provide the member cities with a platform to discuss and exchange information on aspects that are vital for sustainable management of urban rivers, sharing best practices and supporting innovation.
- The alliance has been launched initially with 30 cities namely Dehradun, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Srinagar, Varanasi, Kanpur, Prayagraj, Farrukhabad, Mirzapur, Mathura, Bijnor, Ayodhya, Patna, Bhagalpur, Begusarai, Munger, Sahibganj, Rajmahal, Howrah, Jangipur, Hugli-Chinsurah, Behrampore, Maheshtala, Aurangabad, Chennai, Bhubaneshwar, Hyderabad, Pune, Udaipur and Vijaywada.
- The Alliance is open to all river cities of India. Any river city can join the Alliance at any time.
- State Governments are implementing Action Plans for restoration of water quality of the identified polluted river stretches.
- The implementation is being monitored regularly at State level by Chief Secretary of the respective State/UT and at Central level by the Central Monitoring Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

National Mission for Clean Ganga

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is implemented by the **National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga also known as the National Ganga Council.**
- This mission was established on 12th August 2011 under the **Societies Registration Act,1860** as a registered society.

Objectives:

- The mission incorporates rehabilitating and boosting the existing **STPs (Sewage Treatment Plants**) and instant short-term steps to curb pollution at exit points on the riverfront in order to check the inflow of sewage.
- To maintain the continuity of the water flow without changing the natural season variations.
- To restore and maintain the surface flow and groundwater.
- To regenerate and maintain the natural vegetation of the area.
- To conserve and regenerate the aquatic biodiversity as well as the riparian biodiversity of the river Ganga basin.
- To allow participation of the public in the process of protection, rejuvenation and management of the river.

Initiatives Related to Ganga

Convention on Migratory Species

Context:- The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change in collaboration with the **United Nations Environment Programme/ Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS)** had organized a meeting of Range Countries to strengthen conservation efforts for migratory birds and their habitats in the **Central Asian Flyway (CAF).**

- The meeting was attended by 11 countries, including Armenia, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait. The delegates agreed on an institutional framework for the CAF and a draft roadmap for updating the CMS CAF Action Plan.

About CMS

- In order to protect the migratory species throughout their range countries, a Convention on **Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS**), has been in force, under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme.
- Also referred to as the **Bonn Convention**, it provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats and brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
- **Classification of species:** Under this convention, migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on **Appendix I** and Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in **Appendix II** of the Convention.
- CMS is only global and UN-based intergovernmental organization established exclusively for conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range.

What are migratory species? Why protect them?

- Migratory species are those animals that move from one habitat to another during different times of the year, due to various factors such as food, sunlight, temperature, climate, etc.
- The movement between habitats, can sometimes exceed thousands of miles/kilometres for some migratory birds and mammals. A migratory route can involve nesting and also requires the availability of habitats before and after each migration.

Migratory Species

- A species or lower taxon of wild animals of which the entire population or any geographically separate part of the population **cyclically and predictably cross one or more national jurisdictional boundaries.**
  - The word **'cyclically' relates to a cycle of any nature,** such as astronomical (circadian, annual, etc.), life or climatic, and of any frequency.
  - The word 'predictably' implies that **a phenomenon can be anticipated to recur in a given set of circumstances,** though not necessarily regularly in time.

What is Central Asian Flyway

- The **CAF** is a major migratory route for birds, **covering 30 countries from the Arctic Ocean to the Indian Ocean.**
  - Indian subcontinent is a part of a CAF with at least 279 populations of 182 migratory waterbird species (including 29 globally threatened species).

Efforts made by India for Migratory Species

National Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Birds (2018-2023): India has launched the National Action Plan for the conservation of migratory species along the Central Asian Flyway.

- **To reduce pressure on critical habitats and migratory routes** by addressing the various challenges faced by migratory birds, including habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, hunting, poaching, pollution, and climate change.
- **To stop the decline of migratory birds** and reverse the scenario by 2027.
- **To avoid threats to habitats and migratory routes** and ensure their sustainability for future generations.
- **To support trans-boundary cooperation among various countries** along the Central Asian Flyway to conserve migratory birds and their habitats.
- **To improve the database on migratory birds** and their habitats to enhance our understanding of their conservation needs.

Forest Fires in Goa

Context:-The inquiry of bushfires that broke down in March 2023 by Goa Forest department has found that the fires were largely triggered by natural causes.

Findings of Forest Department Inquiry

- **Cause behind Forest Fire:** The report suggests that a **conducive environment and extreme weather conditions — deficient rainfall** in the preceding season, **unusually high temperatures, low moisture and humidity** — led to the fires.
- Very little rain in Goa since October 2022, **along with heat-wave-like conditions and low humidity, created conditions that were ripe for forest fires.**

Goa's Forest Fire:

- The **India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021** published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) classifies **100% of Goa's forest cover as "less fire prone".**
- **Also, Goa does not experience crown fires** (caused by friction of trees) which mostly occur abroad.
  - Surface fires are common in moist deciduous forests of Goa.

- Minor surface fires that burn undergrowth and dead organic matter on the forest floor are common due to the **slash-and-burn techniques** used by villagers to clear grazing land for cattle.

What are Forest Fires?

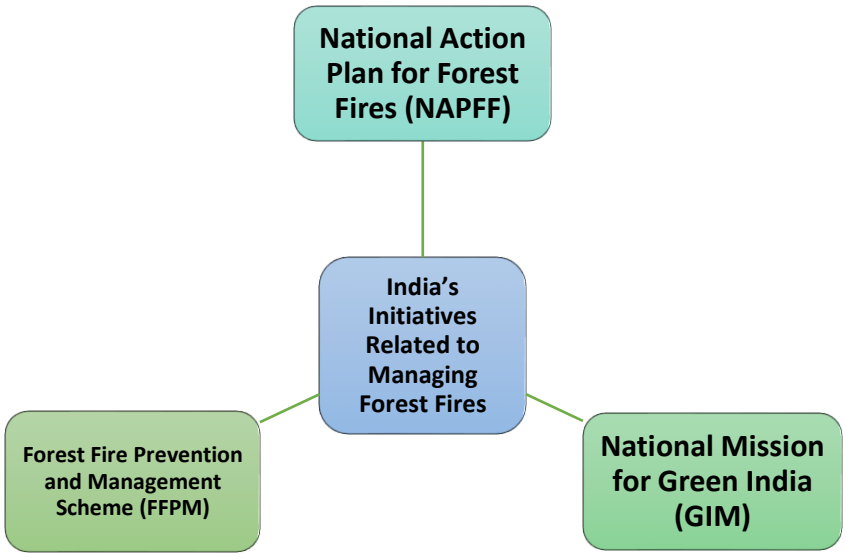
- **Meaning**: It is an unplanned, uncontrolled and unpredictable fire in an area of combustible vegetation.
- **Causes**: These include natural (lightning, high atmospheric temperatures and low humidity (dryness) and man-made (agricultural practices like Jhum, a source of fire (cigarette, bidi, etc)].
- **Types of forest fire:**
  - **Crown fires** burn trees up their entire length to the top. These are the **most intense and dangerous wildland fires.**
  - **Surface fires** burn only surface litter and duff. These are the **easiest fires to put out and cause the least damage** to the forest.
  - **Ground fires** (sometimes called **underground/subsurface fires) occur in deep accumulations of humus**, peat and similar dead vegetation that become dry enough to burn.

Advantages:

Disadvantages:

Vulnerable areas in India:

- The forest fire season normally extends from November to June in India.
- 62% of Indian states are prone to high-intensity forest fires.
- Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, MP, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Telangana, and the Northeastern states are most prone to forest fires.
- Mizoram has seen the highest incidence of forest fires over the last two decades, and 95% of its districts are forest fire hotspots.
- There has been a 10-fold increase in forest fire incidences in the last two decades, attributed both to climate change and man-made factors.



Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

Context:-The **European Union (EU)** has announced that its **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** will be introduced in its transitional phase from October 2023, which will levy a carbon tax on imports of products made from the **processes which are not Environmentally sustainable or non-Green.**

- CBAM will translate into a 20-35 % tax on select imports into the EU starting 1st January 2026.

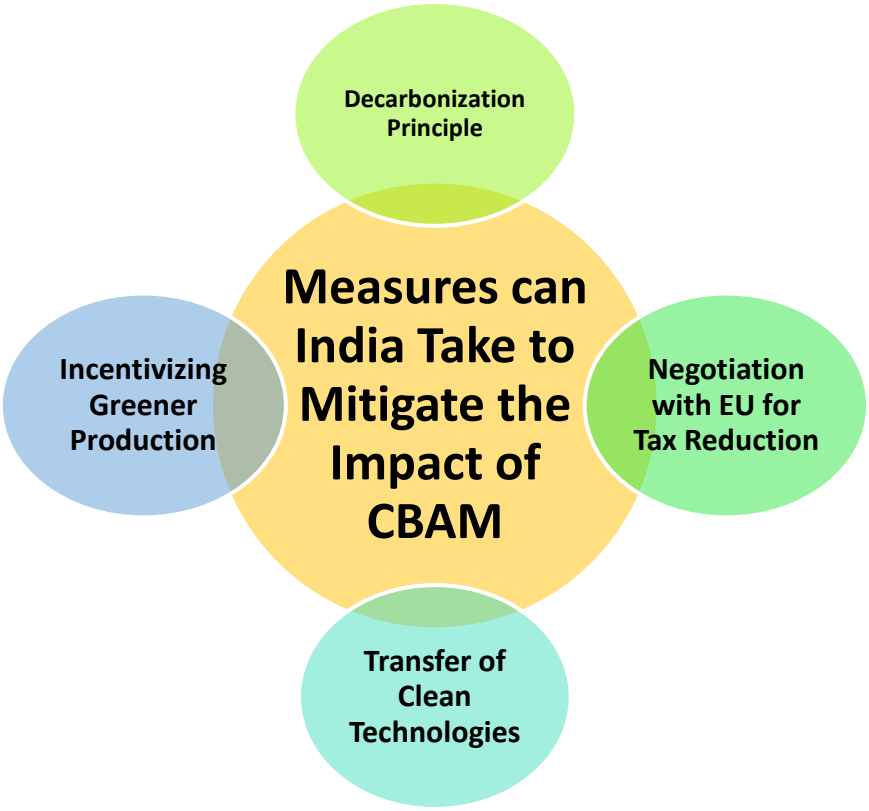
CBAM	•CBAM is part of the **"Fit for 55 in 2030 package"**, which is the EU's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions **by at least 55% by 2030** compared to 1990 levels in line with the **European Climate Law.** •The CBAM is a policy tool aimed at reducing **Carbon Emissions** by ensuring that imported goods are subject to the same carbon costs as products produced within the EU.
Objectives:-	•Reduce carbon emissions from imported goods •Promote a level playing field between the EU and its trading partners •Protect EU companies that have invested in green technologies
Coverage	•Applies to imported goods that are carbon-intensive
Implementation	•CBAM taxes would be imposed on the carbon content of imported goods at the border, and the tax rates would be based on the carbon price in the EU ETS

Advantages of CBAM

- Encourages non-EU countries to adopt more stringent environmental regulations, reducing global carbon emissions.
- Prevents carbon leakage by discouraging companies from relocating to countries with weaker environmental regulations.
- Generates revenue that could be used to support EU climate policies.

Challenges with CBAM

- Difficulty in accurately measuring the carbon emissions of imported goods, especially for countries without comprehensive carbon accounting systems.
- Potential for trade tensions with the EU's trading partners, especially if other countries implement retaliatory measures.



Sludge Management

Context:-The **sludge found in Indian sewage treatment plants (STPs)** plays a significant role in the efforts to treat polluted water from the **Ganga River.** A recent study of this sludge revealed its potential for **use as fertilizer and a potential biofuel.**

- The **National Mission for Clean Ganga**, aimed at preventing pollution and rejuvenating the Ganga River, has introduced an emerging initiative called **'Arth Ganga' (economic value from Ganga).**
  - This initiative aims to derive livelihood opportunities from the river rejuvenation program and includes measures to monetize and **reuse treated wastewater and sludge.**

What is Sludge?

- Sludge is the **thick residue generated during the treatment of wastewater or sewage in sewage treatment plants.**
- It is the **semi-solid material** remaining after the liquid portion of the sewage has been separated and treated.
- The composition of sludge can vary depending on the source and treatment processes used.
  - It typically **contains organic compounds, nutrients (such as nitrogen and phosphorus), and microorganisms.**
  - However, sludge can also contain **contaminants like heavy metals, industrial pollutants, and pathogens.**
  - Treatment and processing of sludge **can yield organic fertilizers, biogas for energy production, or construction materials.**
  - Contaminants in sludge require careful handling to avoid negative impacts on water bodies and agricultural land.

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- The composition of sludge can vary depending on the source and treatment processes used.
  - It typically **contains organic compounds, nutrients (such as nitrogen and phosphorus), and microorganisms.**
  - However, sludge can also contain **contaminants like heavy metals, industrial pollutants, and pathogens.**

Findings from the Study

- Most of the **dried sludge analyzed falls into the class B category.**
- **Nitrogen and phosphorus levels** exceed **India's fertilizer standards,** while **potassium levels are lower than recommended.**
- Total organic **carbon content is higher than recommended**, but **heavy metal contamination and pathogen levels surpass fertilizer standards.**
- Calorific value of sludge ranges from 1,000-3,500 kcal/kg, lower than that of Indian coal.

Recommendations for Improving Sludge Quality:

- **Storage of sludge** for at least three months is recommended to **kill pathogens**.
- **Blending sludge with cattle manure,** husk, or local soil can reduce heavy metal content.
- Converting sludge into class A would require more extensive treatment.

REPORT

Mpox no Longer a Global Health Emergency: WHO

Context:-The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has announced that **Mpox,** formerly known as **monkeypox**, no longer constitutes a **global health emergency.**

- Additionally, the WHO has recently announced that **Covid-19** no longer represents a **"global health emergency".**

What Led to the Decision?

- The emergency committee for mpox recommended that the outbreak **no longer represents a public health emergency of international concern.**
- The committee's recommendation was based on a **decrease in reported cases** and a **robust response from countries** affected by the virus.

Mpox

- Mpox is a **viral zoonotic disease with symptoms** similar to smallpox, although with less clinical severity.
- The infection was **first discovered in 1958 following two outbreaks of a pox-like disease in colonies of monkeys** kept for research — which led to the name '**monkeypox'.**

Symptoms of Monkeypox

- Infected people break out in a **rash that looks like chickenpox**. Symptoms include fever, malaise, headache, and enlarged lymph glands

Transmission of Monkeypox

- Primary infection is through direct contact with the blood, bodily fluids, or cutaneous or mucosal lesions of an infected animal. Eating inadequately cooked meat of infected animals is also a risk factor. Human-to-human transmission can occur.

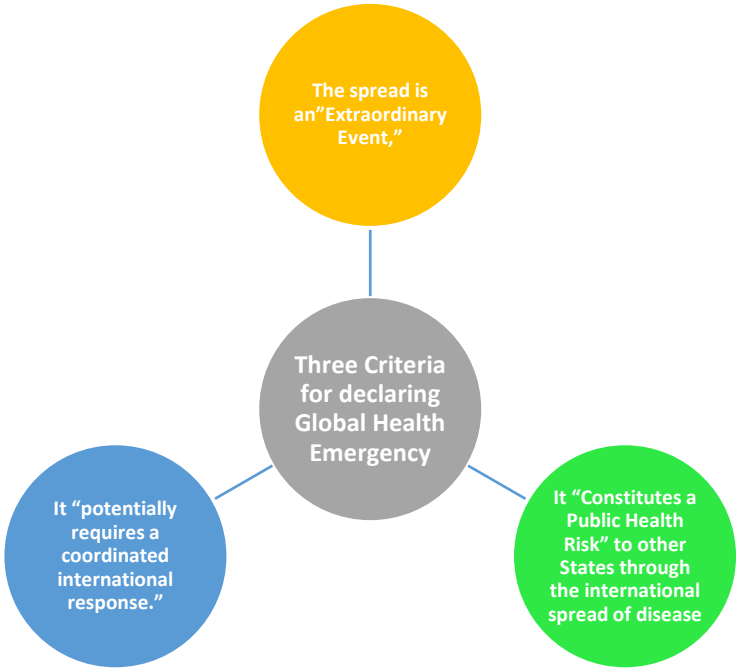
Treatment and Vaccine

- There is **no specific treatment or vaccine** available for Monkeypox infection, but the European Union has recommended the **Smallpox Vaccine, Imvanex.**

What is Global Health Emergency?

- A global health emergency is a situation that poses a serious threat to public health on an international scale.
- **Examples**:- COVID-19 pandemic, the West African Ebola outbreak, and the Zika virus outbreak.

Three Criteria for declaring



UN Report on Maternal and Infant Health

Context: According to a report by the United Nations global progress on improving maternal and newborn health has halted since 2015.

Objective of the report: It outlines progress at the mid-point for the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals**, and highlights priority actions towards eliminating preventable maternal and newborn deaths and stillbirths.

Global Findings:

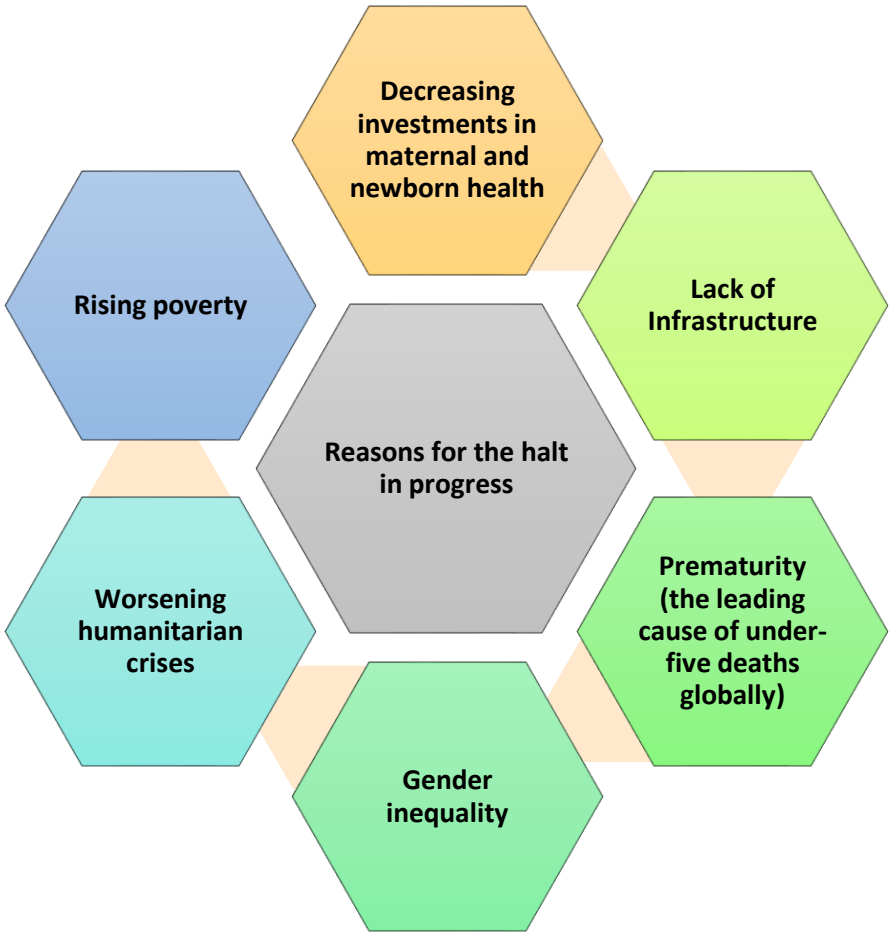
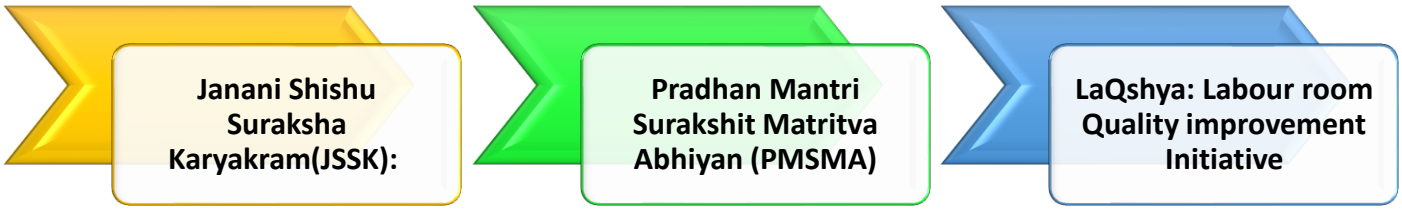
- Global progress in reducing deaths of pregnant women, mothers and babies has stagnated for eight years
- **Deaths**: Over 4.5 million women and babies die every year during pregnancy, childbirth or the first weeks after birth – mostly from **preventable or treatable causes if proper care was available**.
  - **290 000** maternal deaths each year
  - **1.9 million stillbirths** (babies who die after 28 weeks of pregnancy)
  - **2.3 million newborn** deaths (in the first month of life)

India Findings:

- **India** tops the list of 10 countries which bear **60% of global maternal deaths, stillbirths & newborn deaths burden**
- India accounts for 17 per cent of global **maternal deaths**, **stillbirths** and **neonatal births**

- Despite the high numbers, As per the **Sample Registration System (SRS)** report by the Registrar **General of India (RGI),** the **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** of India has reduced from 130 per 100,000 live births in 2014-16 to 113 per 100,000 live births in 2016-18.

Reasons for the halt in progress:



Government Initiatives Related to Maternal and Infant Health