



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

MEKONG RIVER

Laos, known for its natural beauty and historic sites, faces a new threat from a multibillion-dollar dam project on the Mekong River, with concerns that it could jeopardize the UNESCO status of the iconic city of Luang Prabang.

5 FEB - 10 FEB 2024

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GENERAL STUDIES – 1

Topics: Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

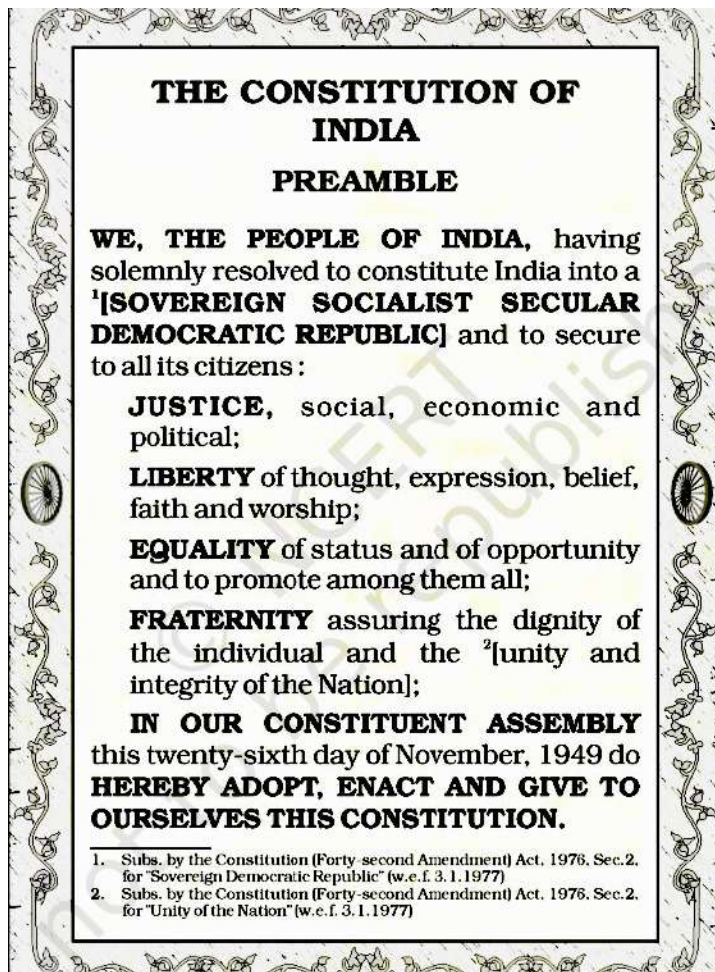
1. INDIAN SOCIETY: CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES: SECULARISM AND PLURALISM

Context:

Controversy arose during the new Parliament’s inaugural session when Members received copies of the Indian Constitution without the terms ‘**Socialist**’ and ‘**Secular**’ in the **Preamble**. The [article](#) discusses **controversies over the Indian Constitution’s preamble** and emphasizes the **importance of “We the People” in popular sovereignty**.

About the Indian Preamble:

The Indian Preamble serves as an **introductory statement to the Constitution**, outlining its objectives and guiding principles. It declares India as a **sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic, committed to justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity** for all citizens. The Preamble reflects the **aspirations of the Indian people** towards building a just and inclusive society.



Background of Preamble:

The Indian Preamble, based on the **Objectives Resolution**, was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in the Constituent Assembly **on 13 December 1946** and adopted on 26 November 1949. It came into force on 26 January 1950, Republic Day. During the Indian emergency, Indira Gandhi amended it to include the words **“socialist,” “secular,” and “integrity.”** ([42nd Amendment Act of 1976](#))

Meaning of the phrase ‘We the People’ in the Preamble:

It signifies the **principle of popular sovereignty, emphasizing that power resides** with the citizens, not just the government. It forms the foundation of the Constitution’s goals of **justice, liberty, and equality for all citizens**. ‘We the People’ supports **non-elite movements**, such as farmers’ protests, highlighting marginalized groups’ assertions of rights in democracy. It contrasts **elite dominance in public discourse**, advocating for inclusive participation from all social segments.

Meaning of the words Socialist, Secular and Plural:

Term	Meaning	Example
Socialist	Refers to the principles of socialism, which advocate for equitable distribution of wealth and resources , and collective ownership of means of production.	India’s socialist policies aim to reduce economic disparities through initiatives such as land reforms and welfare programs .
Secular	Signifies the separation of religion from the state, ensuring equal treatment of all religions by the government. It promotes religious tolerance and neutrality in state affairs.	India’s secularism is reflected in its diverse religious landscape , with the state maintaining equal distance from all religions and protecting religious freedoms.
Plural	Emphasizes the acceptance and celebration of diversity, including various cultures , languages, and identities within the nation. It promotes inclusivity and unity amidst diversity.	India’s pluralistic society accommodates a multitude of languages, cultures, and traditions, fostering national unity while respecting regional diversity.

India, a land of **myriad cultures, religions, and traditions**, is often described as a vibrant tapestry of **secularism and plurality**. The constitutional principles of secularism embedded in the nation’s foundation affirm the equality of all religions, advocating for a harmonious coexistence of diverse faiths.

Secularism and plurality being implicit in Indian society:

- Ancient past:** India has been a pluralistic society for centuries with diverse religions, languages, and ethnicities co-existing mostly peacefully. This plural ethos is ingrained in Indian society.
- Multiple religions:** India is home to a multitude of religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and more. This diversity is exemplified by religious sites coexisting in close proximity.
 - For instance, in Delhi, the **Lotus Temple (Bahá'í Faith), Jama Masjid (Islam), and Akshardham Temple (Hinduism)** stand as symbols of India's acceptance and respect for different faiths.
- Ideals of tolerance, respect and peaceful existence** between different communities date back historically in Indian civilization.
 - Pluralism is an established feature of life in India and we have intense pride in **Ajanta caves, the Kashi temple, the Taj Mahal, Gommatesvara** of Shravanabelagola and the Golden Temple of Amritsar.
 - Though they represent **different faiths there is a sense of emotional experience** of being Indian in all these.
- India legally adopted secularism**, whereby the state is separate from religion, upon independence in 1947. This was aligned with the prevailing plural fabric.
 - E.g. India's Constitution, encompassing articles **14, 15, 19, 25, 29, and 30**, safeguards the rights of minority communities.

Issues with Indian Secularism and Plurality:

- Sectarian divide:** While the Indian constitution upholds secularism, the societal structure continues to be along religious, caste and other community identities that often lead to tensions between groups over access to resources and power.
 - E.g. Ongoing conflict in **Manipur between Kuki and Meiteis**.
- Vote bank politics:** Politics in India has often been enmeshed in employing religious symbolism and sentiments for electoral gains, violating principles of secularism. This threatens inter-community relations.
 - E.g. Increased instances of communal violence during election.
- Incidents of communal violence, prejudice, discrimination** against religious minorities violate secular traditions and undermine plurality in society.
 - E.g. incidents of discriminations against minority and socially disadvantaged communities
- Issues with imitating western system:** Es.g., Japanese historians, **influenced by Western Orientalism**, created a distorted view of Asia, portraying themselves as superior during the 1st half of 20th century (during World Wars). This mindset justified their **aggression and exploitation**.

Measures to Make Indian Society Secular and Plural:

- Promote Interfaith Dialogue and Understanding:** "Religion must mainly be a matter of principles only. It cannot be a matter of rules." - Mahatma Gandhi
- Education on Pluralism and Secularism:** Integrate lessons on secularism and pluralism into educational curricula to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity from a young age.
- Empower Marginalized Communities:** Implement policies and programs that **uplift marginalized communities**, ensuring their equal participation and representation in all aspects of society.
- Ensure Equality Before Law:** Uphold the principle of equality before the law, regardless of caste, creed, religion, or gender, to promote a sense of justice and fairness in society.
- Combat Discrimination and Prejudice:** Take proactive measures to address discrimination and prejudice in all forms, including legislative reforms and awareness campaigns.
- Encourage Grassroots Movements:** Support grassroots movements and community initiatives that promote secularism, pluralism, and social justice, empowering ordinary citizens to drive positive change.
- Political and Social Reforms:** Advocate for political and social reforms that dismantle hierarchical structures and promote inclusivity, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all members of society.

Conclusion

The path forward is to cultivate a **pluralistic and secular society**, engaging all communities, **especially marginalized ones**. This entails promoting **dialogue and solidarity** across social divisions and acknowledging grassroots movements as integral to democracy. Such an approach resonates with Ambedkar's call for constitutional morality and Gandhi's vision of Swaraj, aiming for a fairer and more inclusive democracy.

Prelims Links:

Q. What was the exact constitutional status of India on 26th January 1950? (UPSC 2021)
 (a) A Democratic Republic
 (b) A Sovereign Democratic Republic
 (c) A Sovereign Secular Democratic Republic
 (d) A Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic

Answer: B

Q. Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2020)

- The Constitution of India defines its 'basic structure' in terms of federalism, secularism, fundamental rights, and democracy.
- The Constitution of India provides for 'judicial review' to safeguard the 'citizens' liberties and to preserve the ideals on which the constitution is based.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- [a] 1 only
- [b] 2 only
- [c] Both 1 and 2
- [d] Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: B

GENERAL STUDIES – 2

Topics: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure; Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.

1. UTTARAKHAND: UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC) 2024 BILL

Context:

The Uttarakhand government recently introduced the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) 2024 Bill in the Assembly, proposing significant changes in marriage, divorce, and succession laws. This has sparked a renewed debate on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India.

What is UCC?

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

The principle behind UCC:

The concept of a UCC is rooted in **the idea of equality and uniformity before the law** and it aims to **replace the personal laws based on religious practices** that currently govern matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and succession.

Historical Perspectives on UCC

1. **British rule:** There was a **lack of uniformity in civil matters** as personal laws based on religious customs and traditions were recognized for different communities. The idea of a UCC emerged **as a response to this fragmentation** and as a means to promote a common civil identity.
2. **Portuguese rule:** When Goa was under Portuguese rule until 1961, a Uniform Civil Code based on the **Portuguese Napoleonic code** was implemented.
3. **Nehruvian Vision:** Jawaharlal Nehru envisioned a modern and progressive India and saw the **UCC as an essential element of nation-building**.
 - a. He believed that a UCC would help eliminate divisions based on religion and promote equality among citizens.
4. **Hindu Code Bill:** The Hindu Code Bill sought to codify and modernize Hindu personal laws relating to

marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance. It was seen as a step towards a UCC, as it aimed to bring uniformity in personal laws within the Hindu community.

5. **Shah Bano Case (1985):** The Supreme Court judgment, in this case, sparked debates on the **need for a UCC to ensure gender justice and equal rights** for women across religious communities.

Constitutional Perspectives on UCC

1. **Constituent Assembly Debates:** During the framing of the Indian Constitution, the debates witnessed diverse viewpoints, with some members advocating for a UCC as a way to promote gender equality and secularism, while others expressed concerns about preserving religious and cultural rights.
2. **Directive Principles of State Policy: Article 44 of the Indian constitution** states that the state shall endeavour to secure for its citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.
3. **Article 162 of the Indian Constitution states** that a State's executive power extends to matters within the State Legislature's authority to legislate. **Since Entry 5 of the Concurrent List covers areas like marriage, divorce, and succession**, the Uttarakhand government **can enact the UCC within its jurisdiction**.

How do Personal laws govern different communities (currently) in India?

Community	Personal Law	Description
Muslims	Muslim Personal Law	Governed by Muslim Personal Law , except for Muslims married under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 , who are not subject to this law.
Hindus	Reformed Hindu Personal Law	Applies to Hindus after the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 ; Renounced Hindus are still under Hindu Law.
	Hindu Personal Law in Special Marriage Act	Hindus married under the Special Marriage Act, 1954, are still governed by Hindu Personal Law.
Goa	Goa Civil Code (UCC)	Retained common family law is known as the Goa Civil Code after liberation from Portuguese rule in 1961.
Other Communities	Respective Personal Laws	Governed by their laws based on religious or community identity.

Key Changes in the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

Community	Key Changes		
Muslims	<p>1. Minimum age of marriage: 18 for women, 21 for men. This makes it at par with the minimum age of marriage provided in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and the Special Marriage Act, 1954.</p>		
	<p>2. Succession laws: Under the Uttarakhand UCC, testamentary and intestate succession align with the Indian Succession Act, 1925. In testamentary succession, there's no restriction on property bequeathal. In intestate succession, priority is given to Class-1 heirs like children and widows; if none exist, Class-2 heirs like siblings inherit, followed by the closest relative.</p>		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td> <p>Testamentary succession (with a will): Under the Uttarakhand UCC, there's no restriction on property bequeathal through a will.</p> </td> <td> <p>Previously, Muslims could bequeath only one-third of their property via a will, with the rest divided according to Islamic law.</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Testamentary succession (with a will): Under the Uttarakhand UCC, there's no restriction on property bequeathal through a will.</p>	<p>Previously, Muslims could bequeath only one-third of their property via a will, with the rest divided according to Islamic law.</p>
	<p>Testamentary succession (with a will): Under the Uttarakhand UCC, there's no restriction on property bequeathal through a will.</p>	<p>Previously, Muslims could bequeath only one-third of their property via a will, with the rest divided according to Islamic law.</p>	
<p>Intestate succession (without a will): Under Uttarakhand UCC, if someone dies without a will, the Indian Succession Act applies. Priority in inheritance goes to Class-1 heirs like children, widows, and parents. If none, it passes to Class-2 heirs such as siblings, nieces, nephews, and grandparents, and then to the closest relative if none of these exist.</p>			
	<p>3. Ban on polygamy, Nikah Halala, and Iddat</p>		

Hindus	<p>1. Abolition of distinction between ancestral and self-acquired property: Under the new UCC Bill, a father can dispose of both his self-acquired and ancestral property.</p>	<p>Previously, a father could only dispose of his self-acquired property due to coparcenary rights. These rights, provided by the Hindu Succession Act, have been abolished by the new UCC Bill.</p>
	<p>2. Elevation of both parents as Class I heirs in intestate succession: Both parents—mother and father—are now Class I heirs in intestate succession, whereas previously only the mother was included.</p>	
	<p>Explanation: Suppose a person named A passes away without leaving a will (intestate). According to the current Hindu law, if A had any property, it would primarily go to their mother if they had one, and then to other relatives like their spouse or children. However, the father was not considered as one of the primary heirs. Now, under the new law, both the mother and the father are considered as equally important heirs</p>	
Other Changes: Live-in relationship	<p>All live-in relationships must be registered with the designated authority.; children born out of such unions are granted legal rights.</p>	
	<p>If either partner is under 21, their parents will be informed, and the registration will be sent to the local police.</p>	
	<p>Children from such relationships will have legal rights.</p>	
	<p>Married individuals cannot enter into live-in relationships.</p>	
Marriage Registration	<p>Mandatory marriage registration within 60 days</p>	
	<p>Providing false information during registration could lead to a three-month jail term and a fine of ₹25,000. Failure to register the marriage may result in a ₹10,000 fine.</p>	
Divorce	<p>Divorce can only be granted through court proceedings. Violating this rule could result in up to three years of imprisonment.</p>	
Exemption for STs	<p>Scheduled tribes (STs) are not covered by the bill. This exemption comes in response to the concerns raised by the tribal population, which makes up approximately 3% of the state, regarding the special status granted to them.</p>	

Benefits of UCC

Benefits	Explanation
National Integration and Secularism	UCC fosters a common identity among citizens, promoting national integration . It treats all religions equally, reducing communal conflicts and promoting secularism.
Gender Justice and Equality	UCC ensures gender justice by removing discriminatory laws , and granting equal rights to women in marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc. E.g. the draft Uttarakhand UCC treats men and women equally in matters such as inheritance and marriage . The Code is also likely to extend an equal property share to Muslim women against the existing 25% share accorded under Muslim personal laws.
Simplification and Rationalisation of Legal System	UCC simplifies the legal system by eliminating complexities and contradictions of multiple laws. It harmonizes civil and criminal laws, enhancing accessibility for the common people.
Modernisation and Reform of Outdated Practices	UCC modernizes and reforms outdated practices, aligning personal laws with human rights and constitutional values . The proposed Uttarakhand UCC bans polygamy, halala, iddat, triple talaq, and child marriage . It suggests a uniform marriage age for girls and mandatory registration of live-in relationships .

Limitations of UCC:

Limitations	Explanation
Diverse Personal Laws and Customary Practices	Harmonizing India's diverse laws and practices to establish uniformity is complex, especially when many laws are undocumented or contradictory . For instance, the Special Marriage Act, 1954, which is secular, prohibits marriage between first cousins , a practice common in some communities.
Resistance from Religious and Minority Groups	Some religious and minority groups argue that UCC could impose majority views and undermine their constitutional rights , particularly under Article 25 guarantees freedom of religion.
Lack of Political Will and Consensus	Concerns exist regarding potential communal tensions and conflicts arising from its implementation, highlighting the lack of political will and consensus.

Practical Difficulties and Complexities	Implementing UCC would involve substantial efforts such as drafting, codifying, harmonizing, and rationalizing personal laws and practices.
Threat to cultural diversity	UCC may homogenize laws, posing a risk to India's multiculturalism . For example, it could overlook diverse religious and cultural practices, including those of Scheduled Tribes.

Law Commission Views:

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

Supreme Court Views:

Landmark Cases	Ruling and Implications
Shah Bano Case (1985)	The Supreme Court upheld the right of a Muslim woman to claim maintenance from her husband even after the Iddat period. It highlighted the need for a UCC to remove contradictions based on ideologies .
Sarla Mudgal (1995)	The Supreme Court stated that a Hindu husband cannot convert to Islam and marry without dissolving his first marriage . It emphasized that a UCC would prevent fraudulent conversions and bigamous marriages.
Shayara Bano case (2017)	The Supreme Court declared triple talaq as unconstitutional and violative of Muslim women's dignity and equality . It recommended that Parliament enact a law to regulate Muslim marriages and divorces.

Conclusion:

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

Insta Links:

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

Mains Links:

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

Prelims Links:

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

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

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

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

Ans: B

Topics: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

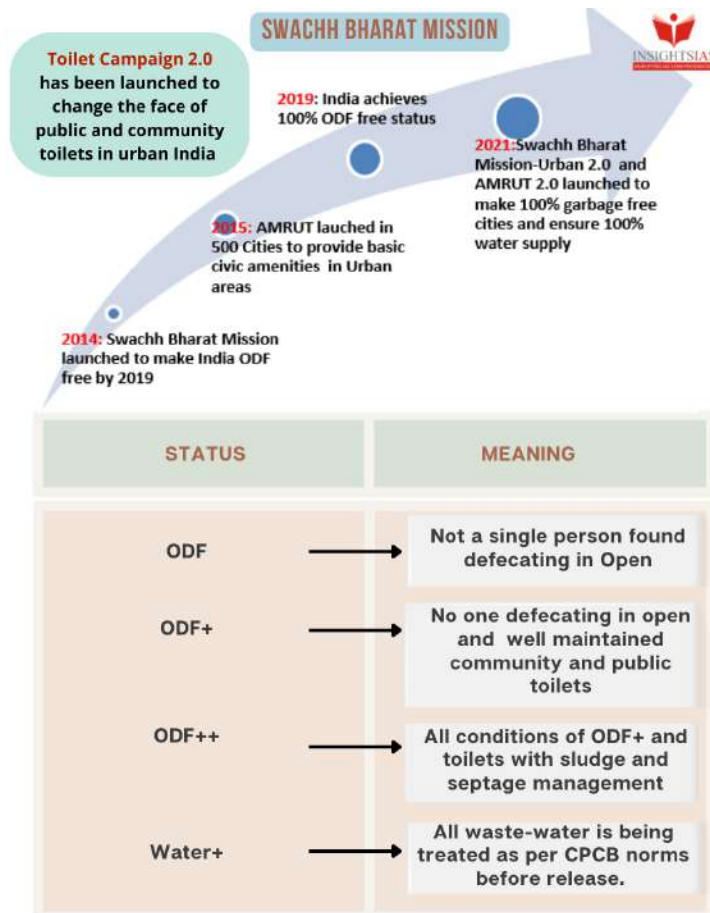
2. SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Context:

In the past decade, **rural India has witnessed remarkable progress** in sanitation coverage, aligned with **Goal 6 of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals**.

About SBM:

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) was launched on **October 2, 2014**, to fulfil the vision of a cleaner India by October 2, 2019. The objective of the Mission was to **eliminate open defecation, eradicate manual scavenging, and promote scientific solid waste management**.



Achievements of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in promoting cleanliness and sanitation:

1. **Sanitation coverage in India:** It **surged from 39% in 2014 to 100% in 2019** under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G).
 - a. SBM aimed to achieve **Open Defecation Free (ODF) status by October 2019**, with a subsequent goal to transition to ODF Plus by 2024-25.
2. **ODF Status:** Currently, about **85% of villages have attained ODF Plus status**.
3. **Toilet Access:** According to the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) Round 3, **95% of India’s rural population had toilet access**, with 79% owning their facilities
 - a. This has helped **reduce open defecation which leads to diseases**.
4. **Public toilets:** The mission has helped construct **over 6 lakh community and public toilets** across India.
5. **Waste collection:** Several cities and towns have seen improvements in door-to-door **waste collection, waste segregation**, and scientific **waste processing** through biomethanation plants, material recovery facilities etc.
 - a. This is helping tackle India’s immense waste management challenge.
6. **Behavioural Change and Awareness:** The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan emphasized behavioural change through mass awareness campaigns, encouraging citizens to adopt cleaner practices.
 - a. Swachh Bharat Mission has helped **bring**

sanitation and cleanliness into public discourse like never before.

7. **Competition for cleanliness:** Activities like **Swachhata leagues and rankings of clean cities** have created a positive competition between towns and cities to improve cleanliness systems and practices.
 - a. **Surveys** show rising public satisfaction with sanitation and cleanliness.
8. **Waste management:** The mission has mobilized over **Rs 20,000 crores** for investment in **solid and liquid waste management systems**. This is strengthening urban infrastructure across India.

Limitations of Swachh Bharat Mission:

1. **Low Toilet Usage:** Despite achieving 100% sanitation coverage by 2019, only 85% of rural Indians utilize safe and hygienic toilets, indicating a usage gap.
2. **Quality and Infrastructure Issues:** Problems such as malfunctioning facilities, unhygienic conditions, and structural defects like full pits or collapsing superstructures impede toilet usage.
3. **Water Scarcity Impact:** Limited water access, particularly in rural areas like **Gujarat's Dahod district**, contributes to increased non-usage of toilets.
4. **Behavioural and Social Norms:** Cultural norms and behaviours influence toilet usage, with some households repurposing toilets for activities other than defecation.
5. **Caste-Based Variances:** Toilet access and usage exhibit variations across castes, with surprising trends **showing higher non-usage rates among upper castes**.
6. **Challenges in Larger Households:** Overcrowding and inadequate facilities pose challenges to toilet usage in larger households.
7. **Issues in solid waste management:** While toilet construction has been successful, **scientific collection, segregation and disposal of growing waste volumes** remain an issue due to resource and capacity constraints of urban local bodies.
8. **Partial focus on plastic waste:** The mission has focused mostly on toilet construction and solid waste. Effectively tackling and recycling plastic waste is still a gap area.
9. **Centralized approach and targets:** The focus has been on meeting toilet construction targets in a centralized, top-down manner. **Decentralized, community-driven efforts have been fewer**.

Way forward:

1. **Greater focus on behaviour change** communication and public awareness campaigns, especially for hygienic toilet use, waste segregation and not littering. Engaging school children and youth groups can be highly impactful.
 - a. **The "Darwaza Band" campaign** and community-level awareness programs have promoted positive sanitation norms.

2. **Innovations in Technology:** Decentralized sewage treatment plants, as seen in **Devanahalli**, highlight technological advancements in sanitation.
3. **Strengthening capacities of urban local bodies** for scientifically collecting, segregating, transporting and processing different types of waste. **Mechanized sweeping, underground waste bins** etc. can be expanded.
4. **Linking with other programmes:** Align sanitation initiatives with other related programs like the Jal Jeevan Mission for better outcomes.
5. **Developing localized waste management models** through community participation, and public-private partnerships, so that solutions are tailored to local needs.
 - a. **Programs like the "Nirmal Gram Puraskar"** foster community involvement and awareness in achieving open-defecation-free villages.
6. **Expanding solid waste processing infrastructure** through **biomethanation plants**, material recovery facilities, composting units etc. across towns and cities.
7. **Improved monitoring for functionality and maintenance** of public/community toilets through citizen oversight and social audits.
8. **Expanding coverage of toilets** to include slums and public spaces like bus stops, and parks, through customizable, prefabricated toilet models.
9. **Incentivizing waste segregation**, recycling and reuse through both regulatory policies as well as awareness programs on circular economy principles.

Other initiatives for sanitation:

1. **Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP):** Launched in 1986, it was India's initial step towards improving rural sanitation with substantial subsidies.
2. **Total Sanitation Campaign:** Started in 1999, this marked a shift to a lower subsidy, demand-driven approach.
3. **Phase II of SBM-G:** Focuses on sustainability, promoting solid and liquid waste management, and covering households left out earlier.
4. **National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS):** Conducted to assess rural sanitation coverage, showing 95% of rural India having toilet access.
5. **Rural Sanitation Strategy 2019 to 2029:** The Ministry of Jal Shakti's Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) has initiated a **10-year Rural Sanitation Strategy spanning from 2019 to 2029**.

Conclusion

The mission should transition from a toilet-construction-focused programme to a more holistic, decentralized, community-driven cleanliness model relying on public participation for sustainability. The aim should be to make Swachhata a national way of life.

Insta Links:

- [75% of Villages Are Now ODF Plus under Swachh Bharat Mission – Grameen](#)

3. PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS (PREVENTION OF UNFAIR MEANS) BILL, 2024

Context:

The new Public Examinations Bill aims to **curb cheating in exams by listing illegal actions** such as question paper leakage and tampering with answer sheets. The bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha

Need for the Bill:

The bill is introduced against the **backdrop of widespread exam cancellations** due to paper leaks in various competitive tests across states like Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat, and Bihar. **Over 1.5 crore students have been affected by paper leaks from 2016 to 2023**, with more than 70 cases reported during this period. Despite these incidents, **there is currently no specific law to address unfair practices** in public examinations conducted by the central government and its agencies.

Key Highlights of the Public Examinations Bill:

Highlights	Description
Objective	Enhance transparency, fairness, and credibility in public exams.
	Reassure youth of fair rewards for sincere efforts .
	It will supplement the other initiatives government in this direction such as introducing self-attestation; shortening the examination cycle (from 18-22 months to 6-10 months) , etc.
Applicability	Covers central recruitment and entrance exams conducted by UPSC, SSC, RRBs, IBPS, and NTA.
	All central ministries, departments, and recruitment offices are included.
Exclusion of Students	Candidates are not targeted by the bill .
	Covered under existing administrative provisions of exam authorities.
Punishments	Prison terms of 3-5 years for paper leak involvement .
	Up to 10 years if linked to organised crime .
	A fine of Rs 1 crore; firms may be barred from conducting exams.
Unfair Means Defined	Section 3 lists 20 offences , including impersonation and tampering.

Nature of Offences	Cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable.
	Cognizable: Offences for which police can make an arrest without a warrant
	Non-bailable: Offences for which bail is not guaranteed and must be determined by a magistrate
	Non-compoundable: Offences that cannot be settled out of court, requiring a trial to proceed regardless of any agreement between parties involved
Investigation	Led by officers of rank, not below Deputy Superintendent of Police or Assistant Commissioner of Police.
	Option to send a probe to Central agency.
National Technical Committee	Formed to enhance security in computerized exams.
	Develop protocols for IT security and surveillance.
Model Draft for States	Binding for central authorities; model for states.

Concerns with the Bill:

1. **State Government Discretion:** The bill’s reliance on state governments to draft their own acts may lead to partisan interests, as seen in past model bills.
2. **Exploitable Loopholes:** Excluding students from criminal sanctions may allow paper leak gangs to pose as students to evade punishment.
3. **Lack of Committee Composition:** The absence of clarity on the composition and qualifications of the National Technical Committee on Public Exams raises concerns about potential partisanship.
4. **Subordinate Legislation Scope:** The bill’s allowance for subordinate legislation grants executive authorities extensive discretionary power in implementation.

Ethical issues related to cheating in exams include:

1. **Violation of academic integrity:** Cheating undermines the principles of honesty, fairness, and trustworthiness in academic settings, compromising the integrity of educational institutions.
2. **Unfair advantage:** Cheating gives dishonest individuals an unfair advantage over their peers who choose to abide by the rules, distorting competition and merit-based evaluations.
3. **Deception and dishonesty:** Cheating involves deception and dishonesty, as individuals misrepresent their knowledge, skills, or abilities to achieve undeserved academic outcomes.
4. **Lack of personal accountability:** Cheating reflects a lack of personal accountability and responsibility for one’s actions, as individuals prioritize short-term

gains over long-term integrity and character development.

5. **Diminished learning and skill development:** Cheating inhibits genuine learning and skill development by promoting shortcuts and rote memorization instead of critical thinking, problem-solving, and mastery of academic content.
6. **Damage to reputation:** Cheating tarnishes the reputation of individuals and institutions involved, eroding trust and credibility within academic communities and beyond.
7. **Ethical erosion:** Engaging in cheating can lead to a **slippery slope of ethical erosion**, where individuals become desensitized to dishonest behaviour and compromise their ethical standards in other areas of life.

Conclusion:

The bipartisan support of the bill underscores the **seriousness of the issue and the government’s commitment** to ensuring transparency and fairness in examinations. The bill’s focus on **strict punishments for offenders and technological solutions** signifies a step towards protecting the integrity of examination systems.

Mains Links:

Q. In India, why do you think there are so many instances of paper leaks for competitive exams and government posts? Elaborate on the moral hazards of the same.

GENERAL STUDIES – 3

Topics: [Government Budgeting.](#)

1. BUDGET 2024: HIGHEST EVER GENDER BUDGET

Context:

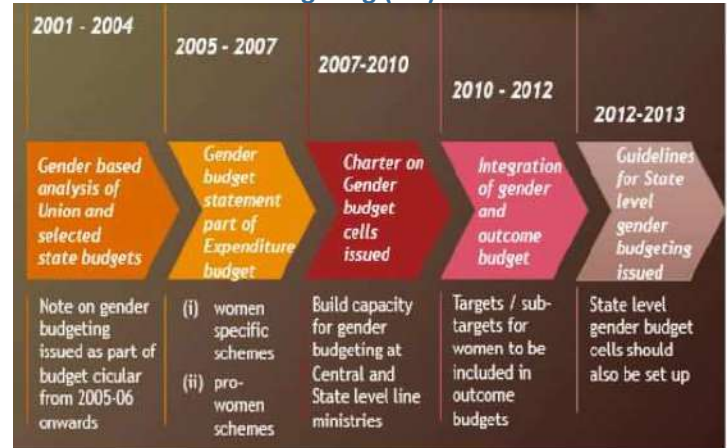
In the Union Interim Budget 2024-25, the Gender Budget witnesses its highest-ever increase of about **38.6%**. It stands at **₹3 lakh crore, almost 6.5% of the total expenditure**. **The Ministry of Rural Development receives the largest share**, followed by Education, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Health, Housing and Urban Affairs.

About Gender Budget:

Gender budgeting is an approach that **aims to incorporate a gender perspective into the process of budgeting at all levels of government**. The goal of gender budgeting is to **promote gender equality** and ensure that **public resources are used effectively** to address the needs and priorities of women and men. India has been **implementing gender budgeting since 2005**.

The Gender Budget is **not a separate budget for women** but an accounting statement highlighting allocations for women beneficiaries or girls.

Timeline of Gender Budgeting (GB) in India:



Gender budgeting leads to a more equitable future

Social factors

- **Empowerment of women-** through the encouragement of **women entrepreneurship, skill development, and provision of credit.**
- **Achievement of social goals-** helps achieve the **sustainable development goal(SDG) 5 of gender equality.**
- **Reduced Gender Disparities:** gender budgeting can be used to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to programs that **promote girls’ education, improve maternal health, and provide women with employment opportunities.**

Economic factors

- **Efficient distribution of resources-** targeting areas that impact women, and ensuring accountability. **Ex-Nirbhaya fund.**
- **Care economy-** gender budgeting accounts for the unpaid care economy, **neglected in GDP calculation.**

Political factors

- **Promoting Women’s Participation:** For example, gender budgeting can be used to ensure that **women’s voices are heard** and that their needs and priorities are adequately represented in the budgeting process.

Issues of concern:

- **Insufficient allocation:** Budget 2024 has allocated **just 6.5% of the total budget** for GB. The gender budget was, on average, about **5.2%** of the total expenditure over the 2008-09 to 2019-20 periods.
- **The concentration of funds in a few sectors** Only a few ministries such as Rural Development, Education, Health and MWCD have received between **85-90% of the Gender Budget expenditure.**
- **Inefficient implementation:** Though it is mandatory to release the GB, **there are no accountability mechanisms** mandating impact assessment of allo-

cations for female beneficiaries.

- **At State Level:** About 16 states in India currently undertake GRB, however, **the quality of statements produced, and allocation undertaken** vary significantly by State, owing to inadequate training for government officials.
- **Linked to schemes rather than outcomes**
- **Lack of monitoring:** Monitoring remains one of the weakest links in the GRB work with no designated mechanism for monitoring it at the national level.

Way forward:

- **Political Will:** Gender budgeting requires political will from **policymakers and government officials**. **Intergovernmental coordination** is essential to achieve the best outcomes.
 - Ex- coordination between **MoWCD, MoHFW, and MoE**
- **Increase allocations for women-focused programmes:** E.g., **Sweden** created a framework for **gender-sensitive allocations** at each stage of their budget process.
- **Improve targeting:** E.g., **The United Kingdom** introduced tax-free universal child care to make it easy for new mothers to re-join work.
- **Create a ranking for state-level gender budgets:** Akin to the ease of doing business ranking. Capacity building and technical support should be provided to State-level Gender Budget Cells
- **Improve accountability:** E.g., **Iceland legally mandates** that the Ministry of Finance ensure the Budget Bill lays out its impact on gender equality.
- **The Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO)** (an attached office of Niti Aayog) has pitched in for the **Gender Budgeting Act** to the mainstream of gender-based budgeting across all ministries

Lahiri committee recommendations-

- **Preparing analytical metrics for gender budgeting, and institutional mechanisms such as Gender budgeting cells** at all levels of government.
- **A platform for the collection of gender-disaggregated data-** for informed decision-making.
- **Outcome-based allocation-** Ex- addressing specific goals such as improving mathematical abilities in female children.

Conclusion:

There is a pressing need to prioritise **women's safety, education, health, and workforce participation**; which necessitates a significant increase in allocations and implementation of gender-based budgeting.

Insta Links

- [Basics: Gender Responsive Budgeting](#)

Practice Questions

Q. Discuss the concept of 'Gender budgeting' and analyse its significance in the Indian context. (250 words)

Topics: Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

2. PARLIAMENTARY PANEL REPORT ON THE COTTON SECTOR

Context:

The **Parliamentary Panel on Labour, Textiles, and Skill Development** advised the government to devise umbrella policies for the cotton sector and closed jute mills.

About Cotton:

Cotton is one of the most important commercial crops cultivated in India and India accounts for **around 25% of the total global cotton production**. Due to its economic importance in India, it is also termed as **"White-Gold"**. In India, around **67% of India's cotton is grown in rain-fed areas** and 33% in irrigated areas.

Status of India:

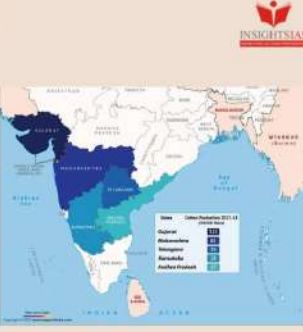
1. India has the **largest area under cotton cultivation**
2. India is the **second largest producer (after China)** and second largest consumer of cotton
3. Majorly, cotton is **produced in 11 states** with Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Telangana having a major share.

Significance of Cotton in India:


1. **Triple Role:** Cotton in India provides food, feed, and fibre, making it a crucial crop for agriculture and the textile sector.
2. **Cotton Components:** After harvesting cotton (Kapas), the breakdown is approximately **36% fibre, 62% seeds, and 2% waste**.
 - a. Cottonseed is essential for **vegetable oil and feed cake production**.
3. **Market Contribution:** Cottonseed oil is the third-largest domestically produced vegetable oil in India, following mustard and soybean. It also ranks second in feed cake production, with soybeans leading.
4. **Textile Dominance:** Cotton is the dominant fibre in India's textile industry, accounting for about two-thirds of the total consumption.

Cotton

- **Type:** Kharif Crop
- **Climate:** 21-30 degree C and minimum of 180 frost-free days
- **Rainfall:** 50-100 cm (nearly 65% of cotton cropped area is rain-fed)
- **States:** Guj> MH> Telangana> Andhra> RJ
- **India's position:** 2nd (China is largest cotton producer)
- **Soil:** Black cotton soil (high water retention)
- **Species of Cotton** (all four are grown in India): **Asian Cotton** (*Gossypium arboreum* and *G. herbaceum*); **Egyptian Cotton** (*G. barbadense*); **American Upland Cotton** (*G. hirsutum*)



*Maps - For representation purpose only.



Cotton belts of the world

Main determinants of the location of Cotton textile industries in various parts of the world:

1. **Availability of Raw Materials:** Cotton textile industries require a steady and abundant supply of raw cotton. Therefore, proximity to cotton-producing regions is a crucial factor in determining the location of these industries.
 - a. For example, Ahmadabad and Surat are from Gujarat.
2. **Labour Supply:** Textile manufacturing is a labour-intensive industry, and the availability of a skilled and affordable workforce is an essential consideration.
 - a. **E.g. Bangladesh and Vietnam** are emerging as major suppliers of cotton textiles due to the availability of cheap labour.
3. **Infrastructure and Transportation:** For instance, Cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou have well-developed transportation systems, facilitating the movement of raw materials and finished goods.
4. **Market Access:** Proximity to domestic and international markets is an important determinant. Cotton textile industries often locate themselves close to their target markets to minimize transportation costs and ensure timely deliveries.
5. **Power supply:** Cotton textile manufacturing is an energy-intensive process, and the availability of reliable and affordable energy sources is crucial.
 - a. For instance, **Cotton Textiles Industries shifted from Kanpur** to the western region of the country due to an erratic power supply.
6. **Access to Technology and Innovation:** E.g. Chemnitz and Aachen cities of Germany have strong positions in this sector primarily due to their access to cutting-edge technology.

Key challenges contributing to the decline in cotton production in India:

1. **Climate change:**
 - a. **Erratic Rainfall Patterns:** Changing climate patterns result in unpredictable and irregular rainfall, adversely affecting cotton crops.
 - i. Cotton's specific water requirements are jeopardized, leading to water stress, reduced yields, and compromised quality.
 - b. **Extreme Weather Events:** Increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like droughts, floods, and hurricanes pose severe threats to cotton fields.
 - i. Floods damage cotton plants, while droughts lead to water scarcity and hinder growth.
 - c. **Temperature Extremes:** Rising temperatures alter flowering and fruiting patterns, reducing the productivity of cotton crops.
 - d. **Deterioration in soil health** due to the absence of crop rotation and proper crop residue management.
2. **Low yield:** India's **extremely low per hectare cotton yield** (447 Kgs/ hectare compared to China's 1993 Kgs/hectare) due to **outdated Bt seed technology**, whitefly and pink bollworm infestation.
3. **Pest and Diseases:** Cotton's susceptibility to pests and diseases is exacerbated by the emergence of resistant strains. **Monoculture farming practices** contribute to the build-up of pests and diseases, increasing the risk of infestations. E.g. **emergence of the pink bollworm**
4. **High Input Costs:** The cost of agricultural inputs, including high-quality seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, labour, and machinery, has steadily risen. Licensing fees for genetically modified (GM) cotton seeds add to the financial burden.
5. **Competition from Other Crops:** Cotton faces competition for land and water resources from more profitable or less risky crops like **pulses and oilseeds**.
 - a. Farmers opt for alternative crops due to higher market prices, better returns, and lower resource intensity.
6. **Profitability Concerns:** Farmers may switch to crops offering higher profitability and returns, reducing the attractiveness of cotton cultivation.
 - a. Some alternative crops are less resource-intensive and have shorter growth cycles, minimizing risks.
7. **Drought Resistance:** Alternative crops may exhibit greater resilience to changing climate conditions, making them a preferred choice in regions prone to water scarcity.
 - a. E.g. **depletion of groundwater table** in key cotton-producing states like **Maharashtra, Gujarat etc.**
8. **Limited Market Access:** A significant number of cotton growers in India face constraints in reaching markets and are compelled to sell their harvest at reduced rates to intermediaries.

Parliamentary committee's Recommendations:

The government should **implement an umbrella policy approach for the cotton sector**, integrating activities across all areas. This would involve **overhauling the cropping system**, strengthening **market linkages**, enhancing research and development for new cotton varieties, and improving pest management practices. Additionally, the Government should **focus on expanding irrigation to increase cotton cultivation** productivity and address issues farmers face in obtaining genetically modified seeds, possibly through **price caps and government-led seed development initiatives**.

Way forward:

- Integrated Pest Management (IPM):** Promote the adoption of integrated pest management strategies that incorporate natural controls, trap crops, and beneficial insects.
 - Reduce dependency on pesticides while effectively managing pest populations for sustainable cotton cultivation.
- Community-Based Seed Banks:** Establish community-level seed banks to conserve and share traditional cotton seed varieties. Preserve genetic diversity, promote the cultivation of higher-yielding strains, and empower communities with resilient seed resources.
- Market Linkage Platforms:** Develop digital platforms that directly link cotton farmers with buyers and textile manufacturers.
 - Minimize middlemen involvement**, ensure fair pricing, and enhance market access for cotton producers.
- Value Addition through Local Processing:** Promote value addition by establishing local cotton processing units capable of ginning, cleaning, and processing cotton fibre.
 - Create employment opportunities** locally and add value to the cotton supply chain, contributing to economic development.

Initiatives in the cotton sector:

- PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA)** Parks Scheme
- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** to promote the production of MMF Apparel, MMF Fabrics and Products of Technical Textiles
- Cotton development programme** under the National Food Security Mission (NFSM)
- Mobile app **Cott-Ally** to increase awareness about Minimum Support Price for Cotton
- Branding of Indian Cotton as "**Kasturi Cotton India**"
- Project "Targeting technologies to agro-ecological zones**-large scale demonstrations of best practices to enhance cotton productivity" under NFSM
- SAMARTH** (Scheme for Capacity Building in the Textile Sector)
- Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme** (ATUFS)

Conclusion

Implementing these **initiatives requires collaboration among farmers, local communities, government agencies, and the private sector**. These interventions aim to foster sustainability, resilience, and economic empowerment within the cotton farming ecosystem.

Insta Links:

- [Textile industry seeks govt support to stay competitive](#)
- [Sustainable Cotton Textiles](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Analyse the factors for the highly decentralised cotton textile industry in India. (UPSC 2013)

CONTENT FOR MAINS ENRICHMENT

1. HERITAGE TOURISM

Context:

The President of India cited **impressive visitor numbers at prominent sites like Kashi, Mahakaal, and Kedar Dham** and anticipated tourism to become a significant source of employment in the near future.

What is Heritage Tourism?

Heritage tourism involves travelling to places of **historical, cultural, and natural significance** to explore and experience the preserved remnants of the past.

Significance:

The significance of heritage tourism lies in **preserving and promoting cultural heritage, generating income and employment**, enhancing India's image and reputation, and fostering cross-cultural understanding and exchange.

India's Rich Heritage:

Aspect	Examples
Rich Cultural Heritage	Historical monuments like the Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar
Diverse Architectural Styles	Jaipur's Hawa Mahal, Hampi's Vijaya Vittala Temple
Ancient Temples and Shrines	Khajuraho Temples, Konark Sun Temple
Vibrant Festivals and Traditions	Varanasi's Ganga Aarti, Rajasthan's Pushkar Fair
UNESCO World Heritage Sites	Ajanta Caves, Ellora Caves, Red Fort India boasts 42 World Heritage sites, including 34 cultural sites, 7 natural sites , and one mixed site
Living Heritage and Crafts	Varanasi's Ghats, Rajasthan's Handicrafts

Culinary Heritage	Diverse regional cuisines across the country
Pilgrimage Centers	Varanasi, Rishikesh, Golden Temple in Amritsar
Strong Global Presence	The influential Indian diaspora has played a role in promoting India’s cultural heritage globally, contributing to increased awareness.
Supportive Government Policies	Initiatives like Incredible India, Swadesh Darshan, PRASAD, and Adopt a Heritage have been launched by the government to support and promote heritage tourism. Creation of facilities like Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi

2. DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE HEARING AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN MOVIE HALLS

Context:

The deadline for public comments on draft accessibility guidelines for movie halls catering to the hearing and visually impaired ends next week.

As per the Census 2011, **2.21% of the total population in India** has been marked as ‘disabled’, of which **19 per cent are with disability in seeing**, and another **19 per cent are with disability hearing**.

What does the guideline include:

Aspect	Summary
Purpose	To ensure accessibility for the hearing and visually impaired individuals in movie halls.
Compliance Requirement	Film production houses and movie theatres are mandated to provide dedicated shows or accessibility provisions .
Accessibility Features	Audio description - Open/closed captioning - Indian Sign Language Interpretation
Producer Requirement	Provide two sets of films for certification : one original, and one with accessibility features.
Theater Requirement	Offer dedicated showings with accessibility services - Provide necessary equipment for accessibility during regular screenings
Equipment Options for Theaters	Smart glasses for captions - Closed caption stands - Separate small screen for captions - Headphones for audio description
Compliance Monitoring	Licensing authorities to monitor accessibility provision. A committee was set up by the I&B Ministry to oversee implementation.

Information Publication	CBFC to annually publish accessible services provided in certified feature films.
--------------------------------	--

The proposal aligns with the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**, and aims to promote universal access to films.

Benefits: The guideline promotes inclusivity and equal access to cultural experiences for individuals with hearing and visual impairments. By mandating accessibility features in movie theatres, the guidelines **uphold principles of fairness, dignity, and respect for all** members of society.

3. SAFE CITY PROJECT

Context:

U.N. Women has partnered with the **Kerala State government to support its Safe City project and gender data hub**. They will offer technical assistance in collaboration with the State’s gender parks.

Background:

Ministry of Home Affairs had in 2018 sanctioned Safe City Projects under the Nirbhaya Fund Scheme in eight cities (including Bengaluru), which involves **identifying hotspots for crime against women and deploying infrastructure**, technology, and capacity-building programs.

Technologies deployed as part of the project: Audio-visual systems including drones, CCTV cameras and emergency **call boxes in “vulnerable” areas of the city**.

Other measures: Setting up Pink Police Out-posts, Augmentation of existing Asha Jyoti Kendra, Improving Street Lighting in Hot Spot areas; Setting up Pink Toilets; **single Emergency number ‘112’**; Gender sensitization awareness campaigns Etc.

Benefits: The Safe City Project aims to provide safety, equality, and privacy for women. It prioritizes the **safety and security of women while ensuring equality and non-discrimination in urban environments**.

Usage: The example can be used in questions related to women’s safety/Gender justice.

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

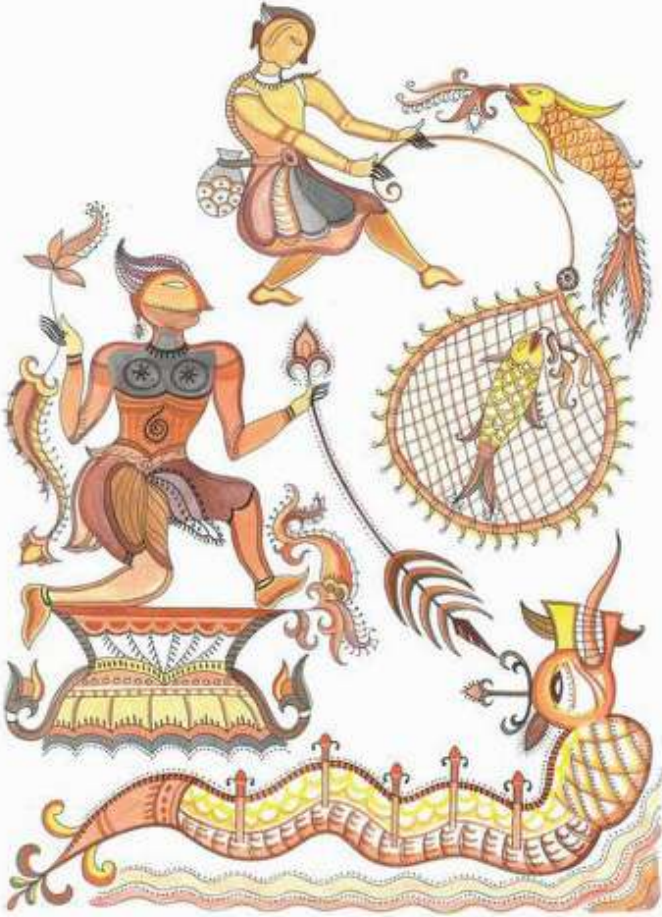
GS-1

1. SUBIKA PAINTINGS

Context: An Assistant Professor from Manipur University is **dedicated to preserving the ancient painting style used in**

Puyas (*archaic Manipuri manuscripts*), specifically the **Subika paintings, which are on the verge of extinction.**

About Subika Paintings:



- The Subika painting style is **deeply connected to the Meitei community’s cultural history** through its **six surviving manuscripts** - Subika, Subika Achouba, Subika Laishaba, Subika Choudit, Subika Cheithil and Thengra-khel Subika.
- The paintings are a composition of **cultural motifs** created by **pre-existing features** and other influences. However, the **Subika painting style is nearly extinct due to neglect.**
- The Subika Laishaba is a composition of **cultural motifs influenced by the cultural worldviews of the community.**
- Its illustrations incorporate visual elements like **lines, shapes, forms, colours, and patterns.**
- These visual images serve as **cultural motifs, creating visual effects and expressing cultural significance.**
- The paintings are done on **handmade paper, and the materials for manuscripts, such as handmade paper or tree bark, are prepared locally.**

2. MAA KAMAKHYA DIVYA LOK PARIYOJANA

Context: The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for **Maa Kamakhya Divya Lok Pariyojana**, which aims to **enhance access and amenities for pilgrims visiting the Ka-**

makhya temple (under the PM-DevINE scheme)

The Kamakhya Temple is a significant pilgrimage site and one of the largest Shakti shrines in India. It is located on the **Nilachal hills in Guwahati, Assam.**

The temple is dedicated to the **goddess Kamakhya** and is a centre of **Tantric practices.** It is also the site of the **Ambubachi Mela**, an annual festival that celebrates the **goddess’s menstruation.**

About

PM-DevINE is a Central Sector scheme introduced in the Union Budget 2022-23. It aims to fund infrastructure projects and support social development initiatives in the North-East Region (NER). Implemented by the Ministry of Development of the North-East Region, it focuses on ensuring connectivity, addressing critical issues, and empowering youth and women in the NER.

3. GRAMMY AWARDS 2024

Context:

Shankar Mahadevan and Zakir Hussain’s fusion band Shakti earned recognition at the 66th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, **winning the Global Music Album award for their album “This Moment.”**

- **Formation: Shakti was formed in 1973** after the disbandment of the first Mahavishnu Orchestra.
- **Album: Shakti reformed in 2020** and released their first album in 46 years, **“This Moment,” in 2023**, featuring eight new compositions.
- The highlight is the historic achievement of **Ustad Zakir Hussain winning three Grammys in one night.**

The Grammy Awards, often referred to simply as the Grammys, is an **annual ceremony recognizing outstanding achievements in the music industry.** Hosted by the **Recording Academy**, the awards cover various genres and categories, **including pop, rock, rap, country, classical, and more.** Winners are selected through a **voting process involving music industry professionals.** The Grammy Awards ceremony features live performances by popular artists and serves as a platform to celebrate artistic excellence and innovation in music.

4. UNDERWATER CANYON

Context:

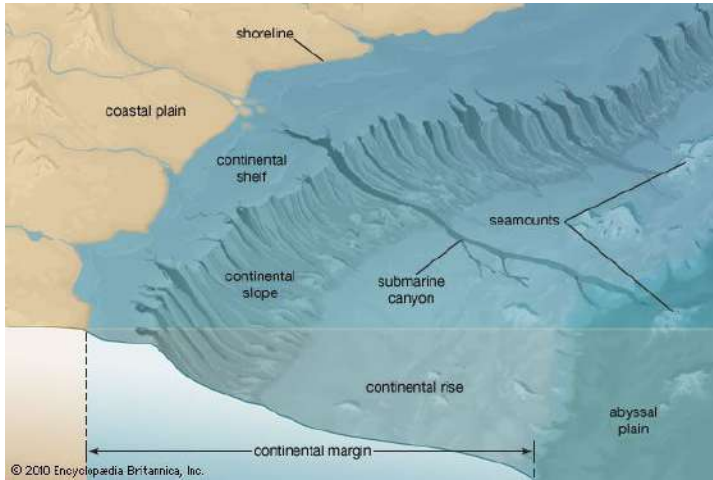
The Geological Institute of Israel has discovered a previously **unknown underwater canyon near Cyprus**, named **Eratosthenes after the nearby underwater mountain.**

- This canyon dates back to the **Messinian Event approximately 5.5 million years ago.**
- It measures about **10 kilometres wide and 500 meters deep and was formed during a period of decreased Mediterranean Sea levels and increased**

salinity, resulting in gravity currents and subsidence of the seabed.

This discovery sheds light on the environmental conditions during the Messinian event, also known as the Messinian salinity crisis, **when the Mediterranean Sea experienced partial or nearly complete desiccation**

A submarine canyon is a **steep-sided valley that cuts into the continental slopes and rises of the ocean.**



5. SATYENDRA NATH BOSE

Context:

Satyendra Nath Bose, born on January 1, 1894, and passing away on February 4, 1974, was an **eminent Indian mathematician and physicist renowned** for his collaboration with Albert Einstein in developing a **theory concerning the gas-like properties of electromagnetic radiation.**

- Bose's contributions to quantum physics are significant, **with his name associated with the Boson particle, Bose-Einstein condensate, and Bose-Einstein statistics.**
- His achievements earned him prestigious honours, **including the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian award, and a Nobel Prize nomination** for his contributions to Bose-Einstein statistics.

Contributions:

His ground-breaking work **introduced a new class of particles and laid the foundation for quantum statistics**, bridging the gap between classical and modern quantum mechanics.

His collaboration with Einstein led to the **development of the Bose-Einstein condensate theory, predicting the existence of a unique state of matter.**

Deduced **Planck's Black body radiation** law without any reference to classical electrodynamics.

Einstein applied Bose's method to give the theory of ideal quantum gas and predicted the phenomenon of Bose-Einstein Condensation (BEC).



6. KOKBOROK

Context:

After protests and dialogue, the **Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE)** has announced that both **Roman and Bengali scripts will be allowed for Kokborok exams**

Kokborok is the **mother tongue of the Borok people**, also known as Tripuris, residing in Tripura and other North-Eastern states, including Uttarakhand. As a member of the **Tibeto-Burman language family**, it serves as the **lingua franca among various tribal communities in Tripura**. Additionally, Kokborok is officially recognized as one of the state languages of Tripura

7. DEEPASTAMBHAM (LAMP POST)

Context:

Archaeologists in Nalgonda, Telangana, uncovered a significant discovery - **a 20-foot-tall lamp post along the River Krishna**, shedding light on the **region's trade connections during the early medieval period.**

- The pillar, bears a **multi-lingual inscription dating back to June 1635**, primarily in Telugu with traces of Tamil.
- Dedicated to **Kasi Viswanatha**, the pillar likely served as a **lighthouse on the riverine trade route due to its imposing height.**

- The inscription credits Madiraju Narasayya for engraving it and Polinedu, son of Vali Munulayya, for its erection.
- This finding suggests active trade links in the area, **supported by the discovery of an eighth-century inscription from the Badami Chalukya era**, affirming the village's role in trade routes over millennia.

GS-2

1. GHAR (GO HOME AND RE-UNITE) PORTAL

Context:

The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** has launched the **GHAR (GO Home and Re-Unite) Portal** for the digital monitoring and tracking of the **restoration and repatriation of children** as per the protocols under the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**.

- The portal facilitates the **digital tracking and monitoring of children** in the Juvenile Justice system who need to be **repatriated to another country, state, or district**.
- It enables the **digital transfer of cases to the concerned Juvenile Justice Board/Child Welfare Committee** for speedy repatriation and allows for requests for **translators or interpreters if required**.

The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** is a statutory body in India that was **established in 2007**. The NCPCR's mandate is to ensure that **all laws, policies, and administrative systems** align with the **rights of the child as outlined in the Constitution of India** and the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

2. C-CARES

Context:

The Union Minister of Coal, Mines, and Parliamentary Affairs, inaugurated **the C-CARES web portal of the Coal Mines Provident Fund Organization (CMPFO)**.

- Developed by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)**, the portal marks a **significant step in digitizing CMPFO's records and processes**.
- CMPFO administers the **Provident Fund and Pension schemes for coal sector workers**.
- The portal **enables online processing and settlement of PF and pension claims**, enhancing efficiency, transparency, and record management.
- C-CARES allows subscribers to **access their details and subscription status**, while coal management can submit contributions, subscriber particulars, and claims for online settlement.

3. ARTICLE 142

Context:

The Supreme Court of India, has ordered the release of a **man sentenced to 20 years in jail for raping a minor girl whom he later married in 2014**.

- The court invoked its **powers under Article 142 of the Constitution** due to the **peculiar circumstances of the case**, despite previously upholding the conviction twice.
- Judgement was delivered in response to curative petition which is **the last recourse open to a petitioner after the review petition is dismissed**.

Article 142 of the Constitution of India gives the **Supreme Court the power to pass any decree or make any order to ensure complete justice in any matter pending before it** Any decree so passed or order so made shall be **enforceable throughout the territory of India**

4. LOKPAL

Context:

A committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has selected **Supreme Court judge Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar** as the new **chairperson of Lokpal**, and Aeratu S. Rajeev, managing director of Bank of Maharashtra, as the **Vigilance Commissioner**

Lokpal is an anti-corruption authority or body of ombudsman that represents the public interest. The Lokpal Act was passed in 2013 and came into force on January 16, 2014. The Lokpal's purpose is to inquire into **allegations of corruption against public functionaries**

Lokpal and Lokayukta

Context: A parliamentary panel report has pointed out that Lokpal disposed of 68% corruption complaints against public servants without any action in the last 4 years.

The Lokpal of India is India's first anti-corruption body instituted in 2019 to investigate complaints against public functionaries, including the Prime Minister. Though the Lokpal Act was passed in 2013, the country's first Lokpal, **Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghosh**, was appointed in 2019 along with eight other members.

Basis for Comparison	Lokayukta	Lokpal
Meaning	Lokayukta is the body operating at state level, set up to investigate individual's complaints against public servants or any politician with respect to corruption.	Lokpal is the body operating at union level, set up to investigate individual's complaints against public servants or any politician with respect to corruption.
Jurisdiction	All the members of legislative assembly and state government employees.	All the members of Parliament and central government employees.
Appointment	Governor	President
Members	It is a three member body. (depending on the state laws)	It comprise of a maximum of eight members.

GS-3

1. INPUT SERVICE DISTRIBUTOR (ISD) UNDER GST

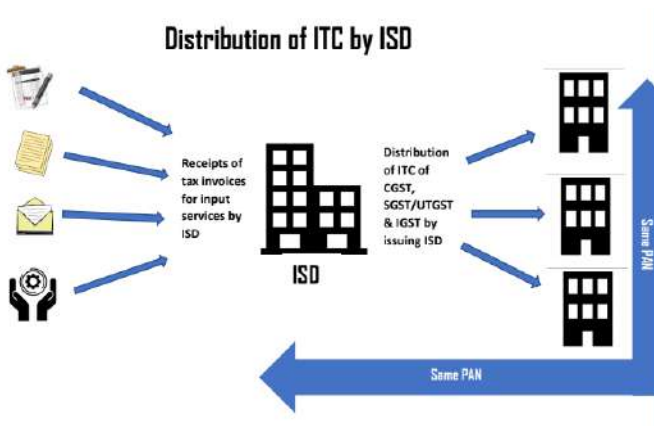
Context:

The **Finance Bill 2024 proposed** an amendment for **mandatory registration of Input Service Distributor (ISD) offices**, which receive invoices for common input services.

What is an Input Service Distributor (ISD) under GST?

An input Service Distributor (ISD) is an office of a goods or services supplier that receives tax invoices for input services and issues a prescribed document to distribute the tax credit to branches with the same PAN. ISD is essential for businesses with multiple branches, ensuring proper distribution of Input Tax Credit (ITC) on common expenditures.

The ISD receives invoices for common services and instead of each branch dealing with these invoices separately, the **ISD takes care of it centrally.**



2. ASTEROID RYUGU

Context:

Scientists analysing **samples from the asteroid Ryugu**, brought back to Earth by Japan's **Hayabusa2 mission**, have detected **two organic compounds essential for living organisms.**

- A study published in the journal Science Advances suggests **that these samples contain evidence of cometary organic matter** being transported **from space to regions near Earth.**
- The analysis found **melt splashes on the sample surfaces**, created when **Ryugu was bombarded by micrometeoroids of cometary dust.**
- The study proposes that **cometary matter could have been transported from the outer solar system to a region near Earth.**

Asteroid Ryugu is a **carbonaceous or C-type asteroid**, which means it **contains a lot of carbon and water.**

3. GREEN HYDROGEN – SHIPPING AND STEEL SECTORS

Context:

The Government of India has issued **guidelines for pilot projects using green hydrogen in the shipping and steel sectors** under the **National Green Hydrogen Mission.**

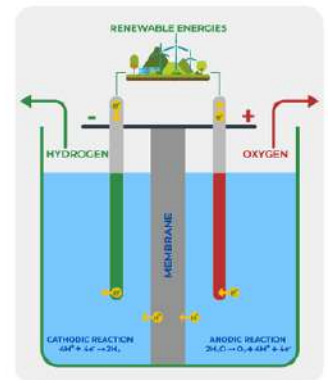
- The **Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE)** will implement these projects, focusing on **replacing fossil fuels with green hydrogen** in the shipping and steel industries.
- For shipping, the **pilot projects will retrofit existing ships for green hydrogen use** and **develop bunkering and refuelling facilities** in ports on international shipping lanes.

Green hydrogen is hydrogen produced by **splitting water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen using renewable electricity.** The process is called electrolysis.

HOW IS GREEN HYDROGEN OBTAINED ?

Producing green hydrogen by electrolysis from renewable sources involves breaking down water molecules (H₂O) into oxygen (O₂) and hydrogen (H₂).

1. The water used in the electrolysis must contain **salts and minerals** to conduct the electricity.
2. Two electrodes are immersed **in the water** and connected to a power source and a direct current is applied.
3. The dissociation of hydrogen and oxygen occurs when the electrodes attract **ions with an opposite charge** to them.
4. During the electrolysis an **oxidation-reduction reaction** occurs due to the effect of the electricity.



4. MANATEES

Context:

A record-breaking **gathering of nearly 1,000 manatees** has in Florida, **marking a very unusual phenomenon.**

- Manatees, **typically solitary animals**, are known **to gather in warm waters during colder weather.**
- The recent influx may be attributed to **a drop in the water temperature in the nearby St Johns River**, compelling the manatees to seek warmer waters in the park's hot springs.

Manatees are **large, aquatic mammals that are sometimes called "sea cows".** Manatees are **herbivores that eat over 60 different types of plants.**

IUCN Status: Vulnerable



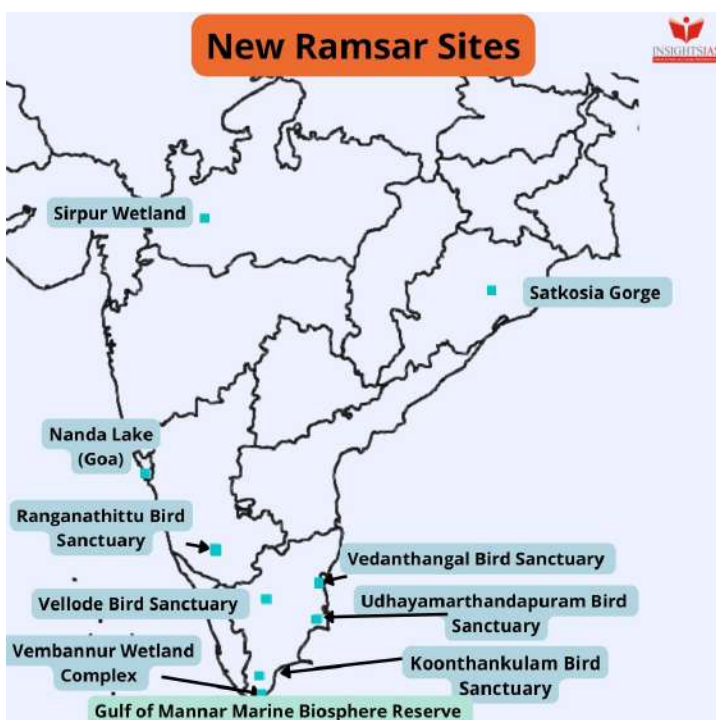
5. WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2024 – 2ND FEBRUARY

Context:

India celebrated World Wetlands Day 2024 at Sirpur Lake, a Ramsar site in Indore.

- The theme of World Wetlands Day 2024 was ‘Wetlands and Human Wellbeing,’ emphasizing the **critical role wetlands play in flood protection, clean water, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities.**
- India increased its **tally of Ramsar sites to 80** by designating five more wetlands as Ramsar sites recently.

Wetlands are low-lying areas of land that are saturated with water, either permanently or seasonally. They are transition zones between land and water, where the flow of water, the cycling of nutrients, and the energy of the sun meet.



6. UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE (UPI)

Context:

India formally launched the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) at the iconic Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, during the Republic Day reception.

- It is a significant step towards taking UPI global and fostering stronger ties.

About UPI:

UPI, developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPIL) in 2016, enables round-the-clock mobile-based payments through virtual payment addresses

It merges multiple banking features, seamless fund routing, and merchant payments into a single mobile application, allowing Indian tourists in France to make payments in rupees

7. SAGARSETU (NLP-MARINE) PLATFORM

Context:

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH launched two digital modules, the Maritime Single Window (MSW) and the Mercantile Marine Department (MMD), within the SagarSetu (NLP-Marine) platform.

- These initiatives align with the Maritime Vision 2030, **focusing on operational efficiency, technology integration, and improved ease of doing business in India’s maritime sector.**

Module	Objective	Impact
MSW	Reduce waiting time for vessels and goods in ports by up to 40%	Facilitate faster turnaround times through online submission/approval processes
MMD	Enhance transparency and planning of vessel departure and arrival processes, reducing processing time by up to 30%	Improve vessel monitoring, inspection, and release processes, ensuring efficiency and coordination

8. LUNAR NUCLEAR REACTOR PROJECT

Context:

NASA has completed the first phase of its project to develop a nuclear fission reactor for the Moon, aiming to create a small electricity-generating reactor for future lunar missions and outposts.

- The project involves **designing a reactor, power conversion systems, heat rejection mechanisms, and power distribution systems.**

- This initiative supports NASA’s goal of establishing a **sustained human presence on the Moon for at least a decade.**

Nuclear power is seen as a **reliable option for lunar exploration**, especially during extended **lunar nights, as it operates independently of solar conditions.**

9. ERGOSPHERE

Context:

Scientists theorize that extracting matter and energy from the Ergosphere, the region between the event horizon and the stationary limit of a rotating black hole, is possible.

What is Ergosphere?

The ergosphere is a region **surrounding a rotating black hole**, located between the event horizon and the stationary limit. In this area, space-time itself is dragged along with the **rotation of the black hole**. Objects within the ergosphere are forced to rotate along with the black hole’s spin due to the distortion of spacetime caused by its immense gravitational pull.

The event horizon, on the other hand, is **a theoretical boundary around a black hole beyond which no radiation can escape.**

Its distribution range extends **from Ladakh to West Nepal**, flying between **3,500 to 4,800 meters** in the inner Himalayas.



11. ANNUAL SURVEY OF INDUSTRIES (ASI)

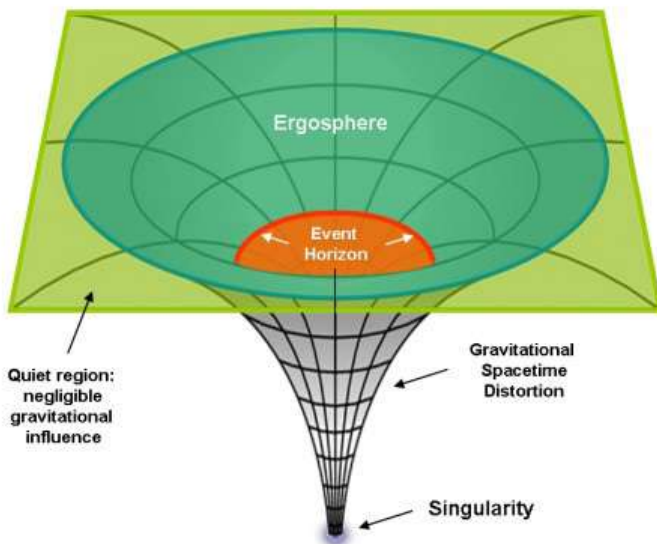
Context:

The **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)** for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22 revealed **significant growth across various parameters in the manufacturing sector.**

Key Findings:

- Gross Value Added (GVA) increased by **8.8% in 2020-21 and by a remarkable 26.6% in 2021-22** compared to the respective previous years.
- Industrial output witnessed a **growth of more than 35% in 2021-22 over the previous year.**
- Total employment in the sector showed a **robust growth of 7.0% in 2021-22 over the previous year, exceeding pre-pandemic levels by over 9.35 lakh.**
- Among the major states, **Gujarat remained at the top in 2020-21, while Maharashtra ranked first in 2021-22.**
- **Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh** were among the top five states contributing significantly to manufacturing GVA and employment in both years.

Black Hole Regions



10. DUSTED APOLLO

Context:

The **Dusted Apollo (Parnassius stenosemus)**, a rare **high-altitude butterfly**, has been sighted and photographed for the first **time in Himachal Pradesh’s Chamba district.**

- Discovered in 1890, this species is **extremely rare** and has **never been photographed** in the region before.

The Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) is a **statutory survey** that has been conducted in India since 1959.

It is the **primary source of industrial statistics in the country.**

The ASI is used to assess changes in the **structure and growth of registered manufacturing units.**

It also helps to build a **database on labour cost, earnings, employment, labour turnover, and absenteeism in manufacturing industries.**

12. SMART FOOD GRAIN STORAGE SYSTEM (SAFEETY) TECHNOLOGY

Context:

The Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) has **transferred the Smart Food Grain Storage System (SAFEETY) technology** to Paras Défense and Space Technology Ltd.

- SAFEETY, developed by the Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering and Research (SAMMEER) **under MeitY's guidance**, features **conveyORIZED loading and unloading of grain bags with RFID traceability**, online weight and moisture measurement, and Radio Frequency Based Removal of Moisture from Grain.
- This advanced system can handle **nearly one truck-load (approximately 28 tons) of grains** in just 40 minutes.
- The transfer marks a step towards **realizing the Innovation, Science, and Technology theme of Viksit Bharat @2047**, showcasing collaboration between **government entities and the private industry** to leverage technology for national progress and development.

13. GRAPES-3 EXPERIMENT

Context:

The **GRAPES-3 experiment**, conducted by **the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Ooty, India**, has identified a **new feature in the cosmic-ray proton spectrum** around **166 tera-electron-volts (TeV)**, expanding our understanding of cosmic-ray origins and acceleration mechanisms.

- Cosmic rays, the universe's **most energetic particles**, constantly bombard Earth's atmosphere, **producing particle showers**.
- This finding **challenges the traditional single power-law description** of cosmic rays and **could prompt a re-evaluation of existing models**.

The GRAPES-3 experiment, also known as the **Gamma Ray Astronomy PeV EnergieS phase-3**, is a **collaboration between the Indian Tata Institute**. The experiment is **located in Ooty, India and is designed to study cosmic rays**.

The experiment uses an **array of air shower detectors and a large area muon detector** to study cosmic rays in the energy **range from a few TeV to over 10 PeV**. The experiment's goal is to probe the **acceleration of cosmic rays in four astrophysical settings**.

14. THE HEALTHY INDIAN PROJECT (THIP)

Context:

The Healthy Indian Project (THIP), a health information platform in India, has joined the **World Health Organization's Vaccine Safety Net (VSN)**, a global network of websites providing **trustworthy vaccine safety information**.

- This move reflects THIP's commitment to **delivering credible vaccine safety information** to the Indian population.
- By joining VSN, THIP strengthens its role as a **reliable source of verified vaccine safety information**, contributing to the global dissemination of accurate immunization details.

About Vaccine Safety Net (VSN):

- The Vaccine Safety Net (VSN) is a **global network of websites that provide reliable information on vaccine safety**. The VSN is an initiative of the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
- The VSN is a **diverse group of websites** that provide **vaccine safety information in various languages**.
- The **Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS)** advises the WHO on vaccine-related safety issues. The **GACVS was established in 1999** and enables the WHO to respond quickly and efficiently to vaccine safety issues with potential global importance.

The Healthy Indian Project (THIP) is a **health information and fact-checking platform in India**. The platform's goal is to **improve health literacy among Indians**. THIP offers trusted health information, question and answers, fact checks, and health literacy.

15. BLACK-NECKED CRANE

Context:

The **Wildlife Institute of India and the Zoological Survey of India** have been conducting assessments of **the black-necked crane population**.

About Black Necked Crane:

The black-necked crane (*Grus nigricollis*) is a medium-sized crane that is native to Asia. It is the only alpine crane species in the world and lives at high altitudes in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan Plateau.

The black-necked crane is listed in **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, receiving the highest degree of **protection**.

It is also listed in **Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora** and the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species.



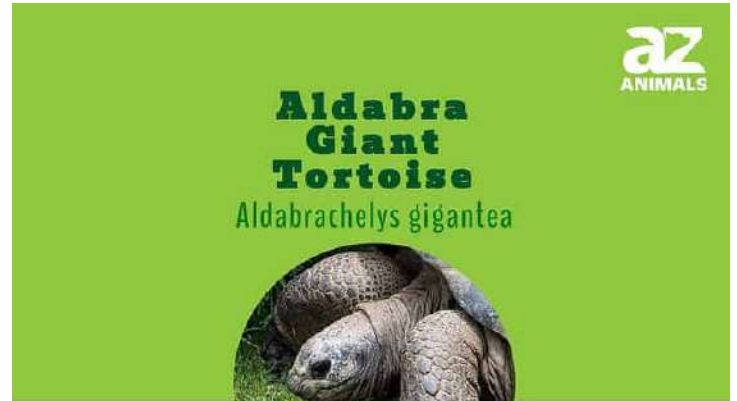
16. INVASIVE THRIPS

Context:

In a session of the Rajya Sabha, it was disclosed that the **invasive pest species Thrips Parvispinus** may have **significantly damaged chilli crops in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**, causing up to **80% of the crop loss**

Thrips parvispinus is an **invasive pest species that is native to Thailand** and is most prevalent in **Southeast Asian countries**. It is also known as **Taiwanese thrips** or **Southeast Asia thrips**.

Thrips parvispinus can **feed on a variety of host plants**, including **ornamental plants, vegetables, and fruit crops**. It can cause **severe damage, wilting, and yield loss by piercing the cells of plant tissues and extracting their contents**



	POPULATION 152,000		LOCATION Seychelles Islands, Indian Ocean
	CONSERVATION STATUS Vulnerable		WEIGHT 330-550 lbs
	HABITAT mangrove forests, swamps, coastal beaches		

One of the largest species of land tortoise, these friendly giants with long necks can live up to 255 years!

17. ALDABRA GIANT TORTOISES

Context:

A project spanning six years has successfully **reintroduced Aldabra giant tortoises to Madagascar**, potentially leading to **thousands of these megaherbivores** repopulating the island for **the first time in 600 years**.

- This initiative aims to restore the island's degraded ecosystems, **including forests, grasslands, and shrublands, which were previously maintained by giant tortoises**.

Reintroducing the Aldabra giants could contribute **to re-establishing habitat mosaics across Madagascar**, benefiting biodiversity, and tourism, and potentially mitigating the impacts of climate change.

The **Aldabra giant tortoise (Aldabrachelys gigantea)** is a species of **tortoise native to the Seychelles**. It's one of the **world's largest land tortoises**, with males weighing up to 550 pounds and measuring up to 4 feet long. Aldabra tortoises can live to be over 150 years old, **making them one of the longest-living animals on earth**.

18. PAYMENT AGGREGATORS

Context:

Several startups, **including Decentro, Juspay, and Zoho**, have recently **obtained regulatory approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as payment aggregators (PAs)**.

- Other notable companies that received licenses earlier include **Zomato, Stripe, and Tata Pay**.

A payment aggregator is a service provider that allows **businesses to process card payments and mobile transactions**. They act as an **intermediary between businesses and financial institutions**, simplifying the process of accepting electronic payments.

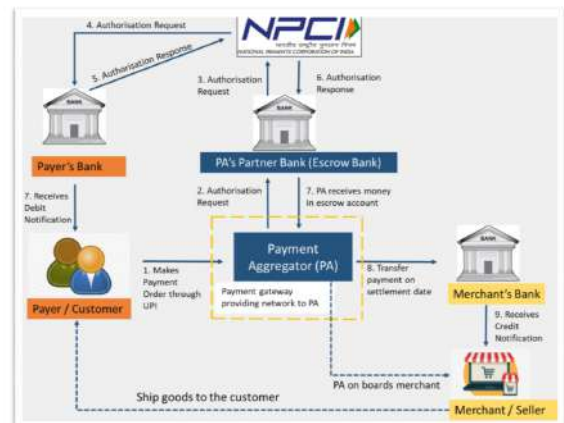


Fig 1: End to end non-bank payment aggregator transactional flow. The blue dotted lines in the fig. do not form part of payment system, but forms an important part of legal basis in merchant onboarding process and shipment of goods to the customers in a PA business model. Source: Author

19. HYPERVELOCITY EXPANSION TUNNEL TEST FACILITY

Context:

The **Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK)** has developed and successfully tested **India's first hypervelocity expansion tunnel test facility**, making the country one of the few nations with this advanced hypersonic testing capability.

- The facility, **named S2 or "Jigarthanda,"** is located within IIT Kanpur's hypersonic experimental aerodynamics laboratory (HEAL) and is **capable of simulating hypersonic conditions with flight speeds ranging from 3 to 10 km/s.**

The facility aims to inspire aerospace enthusiasts, foster innovation, and strengthen India's space and defence sectors by providing sophisticated **hypervelocity testing capabilities domestically.**

Hypersonic means **moving at a speed that is five times or more the speed of sound.** Hypersonic speeds are often stated to **start at Mach 5 and above.** Typical speeds for hypersonic aircraft are greater than 3000 mph and Mach number M greater than five.

20. RED DWARF STAR TOI-715

Context:

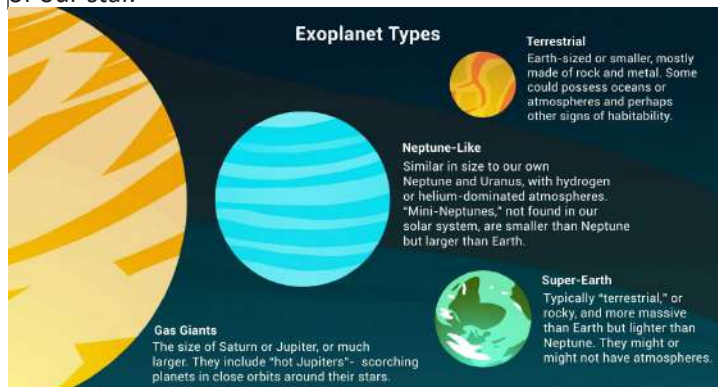
Astronomers utilizing data from **NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS)** have identified a super-Earth exoplanet, **TOI-715b,** orbiting the nearby **red dwarf star TOI-715** in the constellation of Volans.

- This planet, **approximately 1.5 times the width of Earth,** resides within the habitable zone of its parent star, **suggesting conditions suitable for liquid water.**

About TESS:

The **Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS)** is a NASA **space telescope** that searches for **exoplanets.** TESS was launched on April 18, 2018, and is designed to search for exoplanets around 200,000 nearby stars.

An exoplanet is a planet that orbits a star outside of our solar system. The word "exoplanet" comes from the term "extrasolar planet", which means it exists beyond the influence of our star.



MAPPING

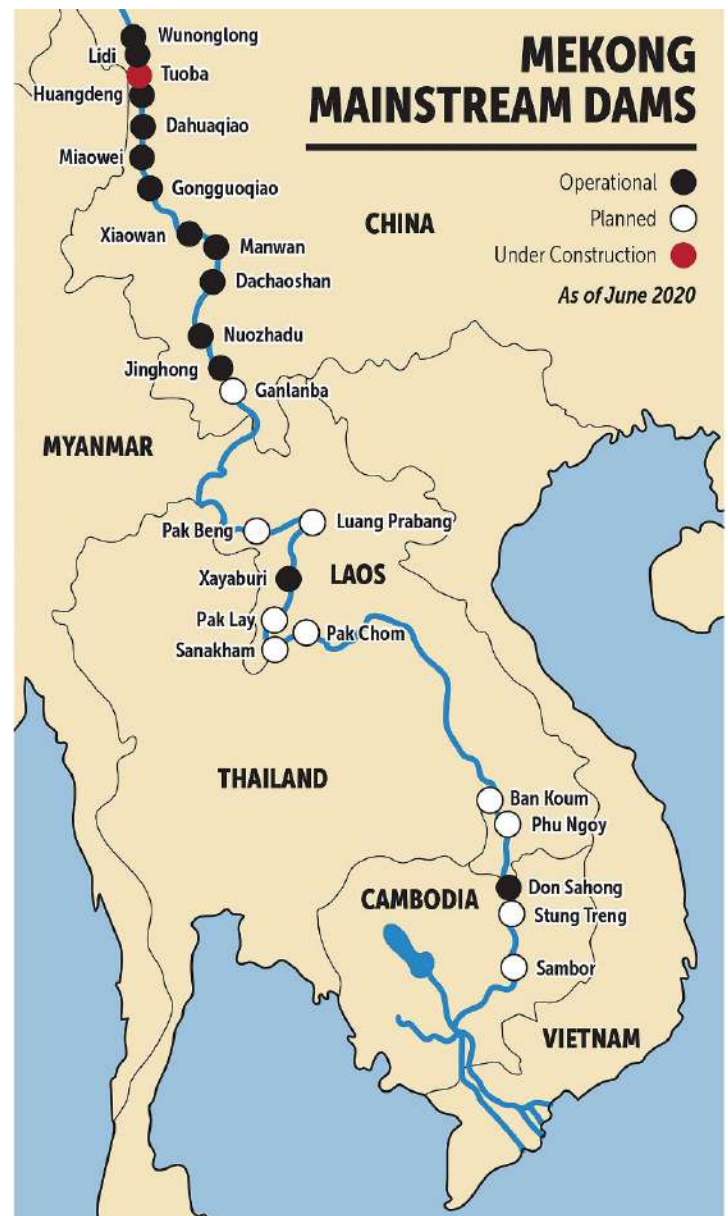
1. MEKONG RIVER

Context:

Laos, known for its natural beauty and historic sites, faces a new threat from a **multibillion-dollar dam project on the Mekong River,** with concerns that it could jeopardize the **UNESCO status of the iconic city of Luang Prabang.**

About :

The Mekong River is a significant transboundary river in East and Southeast Asia, ranked as **the world's twelfth-longest and Asia's third-longest.** Originating from the Tibetan Plateau, it flows through **Southwest China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and southern Vietnam.** Despite being a crucial trade route between Tibet and Southeast Asia, its **extreme seasonal fluctuations and natural obstacles** like rapids and waterfalls pose challenges to navigation.



2. KALADAN MULTIMODAL TRANSIT TRANSPORT PROJECT (KMTTP)

About the KMTTP:

Aspect	Information															
Project Name	The Kaladan Road Project is an initiative connecting the Kolkata seaport in India to the Sittwe seaport in Myanmar via sea . It extends to Paletwa in Chin State through the Kaladan river route , and then by road to Mizoram state in Northeast India.															
Route	Kolkata (India) – Sittwe (Myanmar) – Paletwa (Myanmar) – India-Myanmar border <table border="1"> <caption>Table 1: The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Stretch</th> <th>Mode</th> <th>Distance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Kolkata to Sittwe port in Myanmar</td> <td>Shipping</td> <td>539 km</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sittwe to Paletwa (River Kaladan)</td> <td>Inland Water Transport (IWT)</td> <td>158 km</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Paletwa to Indo-Myanmar Border (in Myanmar)</td> <td>Road</td> <td>110 km</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Border to NH.54 (Lawngtlai) (in India)</td> <td>Road</td> <td>100 km</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Stretch	Mode	Distance	Kolkata to Sittwe port in Myanmar	Shipping	539 km	Sittwe to Paletwa (River Kaladan)	Inland Water Transport (IWT)	158 km	Paletwa to Indo-Myanmar Border (in Myanmar)	Road	110 km	Border to NH.54 (Lawngtlai) (in India)	Road	100 km
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Challenges	The region around Paletwa faces challenges due to conflicts involving the Chin and Rohingya communities, as well as militant groups like the Arakan Army and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army .															
Significance	Reduces distance from Kolkata to Sittwe by approximately 1328 km . Provides an alternative route to connect northeast and mainland India. Reduces dependence on the narrow Siliguri corridor for transporting goods															
Status	Under construction. 98% of the project is complete . Sittwe Port was made operational last year (2023)															



3. DACHIGAM NATIONAL PARK

Context:

In Winter 2024, Wildlife SOS provided a **specialized diet to Himalayan Black Bears at the Dachigam National Park** in Jammu and Kashmir to support them during their natural hibernation period. Due to heavy snowfall and cold weather, regular food sources became scarce for the bears.

About **Himalayan Black Bear (Ursus thibetanus laniger)** (IUCN: Vulnerable):

It is a **subspecies of the Asian black bear**, playing a crucial role as an **ecological indicator and keystone species in its environment**. Known for its role as a primary seed disperser, it maintains ecosystem stability. Typically nocturnal and elusive, it hibernates in the winter in the northwestern Himalayas but remains active year-round in the eastern Himalayas. Being **omnivorous**, it has a varied diet and is found mainly in the Himalayas of India, Bhutan, Nepal, China, and Pakistan.

About **Dachigam National Park**:

It is located **22 km from Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir**, and spans 141 sq km. Its name, meaning **'ten villages'**, possibly commemorates the relocation of ten villages for its creation. Initially established to safeguard **Srinagar's water supply**, it became a national park in 1981, protected since 1910. Situated between 5500 ft to 14,000 ft, it harbours the **endangered Hangul (Kashmir stag)** and diverse flora including wild cherry, apple, oak, and pine.

